

Localizing ‘Global’ Jihad: The Organization and Narration of Violence and Community in Islamist Insurgencies

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Abstract

Recent decades have witnessed the rise of multiple Islamist insurgent organizations that have embarked on locally-rooted proto-state-building projects seeking to contest the rule and legitimacy of formal political authorities and internationally-recognized governments. In direct opposition to formal political authorities, these militant Islamist (*jihadi*) organizations have attempted to build new and distinct governing institutions as a means to advance and consolidate their political and military power. From the Indian Ocean coastline of Somalia and the cities and countryside of Syria and Iraq to the mountains of Afghanistan and northern Pakistan, a number of Islamist rebel organizations have utilized a high degree of actual, as well as symbolic, violence in the pursuit of their political and ideological objectives.

Utilizing primarily the cases of the Islamic State (IS; *al-Dawlat al-Islāmīya*) in Syria and Iraq and Al-Shabaab (*Ḥarakāt al-Shabāb al-Mujāhidīn*) in Somalia, this dissertation examines the reasons underlying the variations in the objectives and strategies of Islamist militant groups in their quest to establish civil administrations and institutions of governance and law and order. Specifically, the thesis addresses the extent to which these militant Islamist organizations have achieved relative success in terms of generating support among segments of the civilian population, exerting hegemonic control over territory and local communities, and consolidating power through the use of strategic modes of violence.

Violence is one of the most important tools and the most publicly and widely visible of the framing processes undertaken by Islamist rebel groups. However, in contrast to much of the work on the subject, this study argues that militant Islamist violence is organized and rational rather than senseless and that it also contains symbolic information vital to understanding the ways in which violent acts are linked to symbolic processes and framed within a rebel

organization's broader social, political, economic, and theological/ideological program. Indeed, as I argue throughout this study, any comprehensive attempt to understand the strategic use of violence as deployed by territorial aspirant Islamist militant organizations—defined herein as Islamist insurgent organizations seeking to build a civil administration and governance structures alongside their military branches and campaigns—must be analyzed within a social movement and rebel governance framework. This is because the utilization of violence by these groups is an essential component of a broader set of culturally-embedded political performances that not only generate support and acquiescence from local communities through coercive means but also resonate among local residents in ways that may enhance the militant organization's broader territorial and political goals. These goals primarily involve the struggle to capture, retain and exert legitimate political authority over territory. Consequently, the organization and symbolic framing of legitimate versus illegitimate violence is one of the most important tasks for any Islamist rebel organization with territorial governance ambitions and it serves as a principle tool in an organization's attempt to establish territorial control by framing it within an aura of political and religious legitimacy. For this reason, this dissertation maps the ways in which Islamist rebel organizations, which emerge and operate in different social, political, and conflict environments, design and deploy symbolic power and symbolic repertoires to advance their proto-state-building and governance projects.

In more theoretical terms, this study complements and contributes to the broader academic literature on social movements, rebellion and insurgency, political Islam, Islamist militancy, and the strategic and symbolic underpinnings of political violence. Methodologically, this research draws on print, audio, and visual primary sources. These include important and previously unstudied Islamist rebel administrative and political documents including films, radio

broadcasts, photography, billboards and public signage, and official public artwork and architecture produced by Islamist militant groups and Islamist rebel organizations presently pursuing state-building and governance projects.

Résumé

Les dernières décennies ont vu plusieurs organisations islamistes insurgées qui se sont embarquées dans des projets de construction de proto-Etats localement implantés et cherchant à contester le règne et à la légitimité d'autorités politiques formelles et gouvernements reconnus internationalement. En opposition directe aux autorités politiques formelles, ces organisations islamistes militantes (*djihadī*) ont tenté de construire de nouvelles institutions distinctes afin d'avancer et consolider leur pouvoir politique et militaire. Du littoral somalien de l'océan indien et centres urbains et campagnes de la Syrie et l'Irak jusqu'aux montagnes de l'Afghanistan et du nord du Pakistan, un certain nombre d'organisations islamistes rebelles ont utilisé un haut degré de violence, symbolique mais aussi réelle dans la poursuite de leurs objectifs politiques et idéologiques.

En se focalisant sur l'Etat Islamique en Syrie et Irak, et Al-Shabaab (*Ḥarakāt al-Shabāb al-Mujāhidīn*) en Somalie, cette thèse examine les raisons sous-jacentes des variations de stratégies et objectifs des groupes militants islamistes dans leur quête d'établir une administration civile et des institutions de gouvernance par l'ordre et la loi. Plus particulièrement, l'étude se penche sur le degré avec lequel ces organisations islamistes militantes ont atteint un succès relatif dans la génération de soutien parmi des segments de la population civile, exerçant un contrôle hégémonique sur du territoire et des communautés locales, et consolidant le pouvoir par l'utilisation stratégique de certaines formes de violence.

La violence est un des outils de propagation de discours les plus importants, les plus publiquement accessibles et les plus visibles déployés par les groupes rebelles islamistes. Contrairement à de nombreux travaux menés sur le sujet, cette étude soutient que la violence islamiste est organisée et rationnelle plutôt qu'insensée, et qu'elle contient des informations

symboliques primordiales à la compréhension des manières selon lesquelles les actes de violence sont liés aux procédés symboliques et articulés, plus largement, au sein d'un programme social, politique, économique et théologique de l'organisation rebelle. En effet, ainsi que soutenu dans cette étude, toute tentative de comprendre, de manière exhaustive, l'utilisation stratégique de la violence ainsi déployée par les organisations islamistes militantes territoriales aspirantes – définies ici comme des organisations insurgées islamistes cherchant à construire et établir une administration civile et structure de gouvernance aux côtés de leurs branches et campagnes militaires – doit être analysée dans le cadre de la théorie des mouvements sociaux et gouvernance rebelle. Cela est dû au fait que l'utilisation de la violence par ces groupes est un composant essentiel d'une série plus large de performances culturellement intégrées qui non seulement génèrent le soutien ou l'acquiescence de communautés locales à travers des moyens coercitifs, mais aussi de susciter l'intérêt de résidents locaux d'une manière qui puisse améliorer, plus largement, les objectifs territoriaux et politiques de l'organisation militante. Ces objectifs comprennent principalement la lutte liée à la capture, la conservation et l'exercice d'une autorité politique légitime. Par conséquent, l'organisation et l'élaboration symbolique de la violence légitime contre la violence illégitime est une des tâches les plus importantes pour toute organisation rebelle islamiste ayant des ambitions de gouvernance territoriale et sert comme outil principal dans l'établissement d'un contrôle territorial et une aura de légitimité politique et religieuse du groupe. Pour cette raison, cette thèse schématise comment des organisations islamistes rebelles émergeant et opérant dans différents environnements sociaux, politiques et conflictuels conçoivent et déploient un pouvoir et registres symboliques afin d'avancer leurs projets de construction de proto-Etat et gouvernance.

Dans des termes plus théoriques, cette étude complète et contribue plus largement à la littérature académique sur les mouvements sociaux, la rébellion et l'insurrection, l'Islam politique et le militantisme islamiste, et les sous-jacents stratégiques et symboliques de la violence politique. D'un point de vue méthodologique, la recherche menée par l'étude s'appuie sur des sources primaires imprimées, audio et visuelles. Celles-ci incluent d'importantes sources n'ayant jamais été étudiées auparavant comme des documents administratifs et politiques de rebelles islamistes. Cela inclue ainsi des films, émissions radio, photographies, panneaux d'affichage, signalisations, architecture et œuvres d'art officiels, produits par des groupes militants islamistes et des organisations rebelles islamistes poursuivant actuellement des projets de gouvernance et construction étatique.

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Christopher Anzalone
Cambridge, Massachusetts

A Note on Transliteration and Names

The system of transliteration used in this dissertation is a modified version of the one used by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (reproduced below).

Personal and place names and terms/words that are widely used in English are transliterated and italicized but do not include diacritical marks, for example (italicized here for emphasis): *Iraq* and not *al-‘Irāq*; *Baghdad* and not *Baghdād*; *jihād* and not *jihād*; *Muhammad* and not *Muḥammad*; *Qur’an* and not *Qur’ān*; *Abu* and not *Abū*; and *Al-Qaeda* and not *Al-Qā‘ida*. For transliterated personal names and words, the initial ‘*ayn* is maintained (e.g. ‘*Ali*), as is the final *hamza* except in cases where it would be confusing when used with possessive constructions such as ‘*ulamā*’, in which cases it is dropped (‘*ulamā*). For prominent individuals who have standard or preferred English spellings of their names, these have been maintained, for example, *Saddam Hussein* and not *Ṣaddām Ḥusayn*; *Mu‘ammar Qadhafi* and not *Mu‘ammar al-Qadhdhāfī*; and *Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi* and not *Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī*.

Somali personal and place names and words follow a modified version of Somali orthography. Arabic personal and group names generally follow Somali orthography, for example, *Mohamed* and not *Muhammad* or the Somali *Maxamed*; *Ahmed* and not *Ahmad* or the Somali *Axmed*; *Mohamud* and not *Mahmoud* or the Somali *Moxamuud*; ‘*Abdiqadir* and not *Abd al-Qādir* or the Somali *Cabdulqaadir*; and *Al-Shabaab* and not *Al-Shabāb* or the Somali *Alshabaab* (the name also appears in Somali as *Al-Shabaab*). Primary sources in Arabic produced by the Somali militant Islamist organization Al-Shabaab are transliterated according to the Arabic transliteration system explained above with the exception of personal names so as to avoid confusion between the main text and the footnotes. Honorific titles originating from

Arabic, such as *shaykh*, are transliterated according to the Arabic system laid out above and not directly from the Somali (e.g. *sheekh*).

The spellings and transliteration styles in direct quotations and titles are kept in their original format and not subject to the transliteration system described above.

Personal and organizational names and honorific titles from languages other than Arabic, Somali, or Persian are spelled in their common English usage, for example, *Tehrik-i Taliban Pakistan* and not *Tehrik-i Ṭālibān Pākistān*; *Taliban* and not *Ṭālibān*; *mawlana* and not *mawlānā*; and *mullah* and not *mullā*.

CONSONANTS

A = Arabic, P = Persian, OT = Ottoman Turkish, MT = Modern Turkish

| | A | P | OT | MT | | A | P | OT | MT | | A | P | OT | MT |
|---|----|----|----|--------|---|----|----|--------|--------|----------------|----------------|--------|----------------|----------------|
| ا | ā | ā | ā | — | ز | z | z | z | z | ك | k | k or g | k or n | k or n |
| ب | b | b | b | b or p | ژ | — | zh | j | j | | | | or y | or y |
| پ | — | p | p | p | س | s | s | s | s | | | | or ğ | or ğ |
| ت | t | t | t | t | ش | sh | sh | ş | ş | گ | — | g | g | g |
| ث | th | ṣ | ṣ | s | ص | ṣ | ṣ | ş | s | ل | l | l | l | l |
| ج | j | j | c | c | ض | ḍ | ẓ | ẓ | z | م | m | m | m | m |
| چ | — | ch | ç | ç | ط | ṭ | ṭ | ṭ | t | ن | n | n | n | n |
| ح | ḥ | ḥ | ḥ | h | ظ | ẓ | ẓ | ẓ | z | ه | h | h | h ¹ | h ¹ |
| خ | kh | kh | h | h | ع | ‘ | ‘ | ‘ | — | و | w | v or u | v | v |
| د | d | d | d | d | غ | gh | gh | g or ğ | g or ğ | ي | y | y | y | y |
| ذ | dh | z | z | z | ف | f | f | f | f | ا ² | a ² | | | |
| ر | r | r | r | r | ق | q | q | ķ | k | آ ³ | ā ³ | | | |

¹ When h is not final. ² In construct state: at. ³ For the article, al- and -l-.

VOWELS

ARABIC AND PERSIAN

OTTOMAN AND MODERN TURKISH

| | | | | | | |
|------------|--------------------|-----|--------------------|-------------------|---|-----------------------------------------|
| Long | ā | ا | ā | ā | { | words of Arabic and Persian origin only |
| | ū | و | ū | ū | | |
| | ī | ي | ī | ī | | |
| Doubled | īyy (final form ī) | يِي | īyy (final form ī) | iy (final form ī) | | |
| | ūww (final form ū) | وَو | ūww (final form ū) | uvv | | |
| Diphthongs | au or aw | اَو | au or aw | ev | | |
| | ai or ay | اَي | ai or ay | ey | | |
| Short | a | ا | a | a or e | | |
| | u | و | u | u or ū / o or ö | | |
| | i | ي | i | i or ī | | |

Introduction

In November 2008, *Ḥarakāt al-Shabāb al-Mujāhidīn* (Al-Shabaab) rolled into the Somali port town of Marka (Merca), a key trading hub situated in the Lower Shabelle region about 56 miles southwest of the capital city of Mogadishu. With their ranks swollen by young domestic and foreign fighter recruits eager to eject Ethiopian troops occupying parts of the country and armed with mounted “technicals”—jeeps and flatbed trucks armed with mounted heavy machine guns or recoilless guns—members of the *jihadi* insurgent group quickly began to capitalize on their rapid sweep across much of southern, western, and central Somalia in the summer and autumn of that year, moving toward setting up a civil administration to carry out governance as part of their campaign to create an Islamic state in Somalia. The militant group’s moves came on the heels of the collapse of the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC), a coalition of local clan-based *shari‘a* courts that had succeeded in 2005-2006 in setting up Somalia’s first working governing administration, at least in the central and southern parts of the country, since the overthrow of the country’s authoritarian president, General Siyaad Barre, and his “MOD” (Mareehan, Ogaden, and Dhulbahante sub-clans of the larger Darod clan family) regime centered around the social groups to which he and his immediate family belonged. The collapse of the Barre regime was followed by the disintegration of formal governance structures and the descent of the country into a longrunning and bitter civil war that saw clan militias and warlords fight over control of territory and resources. The UIC had brought, however briefly, a sense of hope to many Somalis domestically and in the diaspora that their country was at last emerging from the darkest days of the civil war. The UIC’s “big tent” approach to coalition-building, however, meant that more moderate and more radical Islamist voices were both included, though the latter held a distinct advantage with regard to military power and prowess thanks, in part, to Al-Shabaab’s presence within the UIC’s military wing. Ethiopia, alarmed by the rise of the

UIC and goaded, in part, by more provocative statements from the Islamist coalition's more hawkish officials, invaded Somalia in late December 2006 with thousands of troops. Though Ethiopia succeeded in toppling the UIC by January 2007, its invasion and subsequent occupation, together with the continued corruption and ineptness of the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG), laid the groundwork for the rise of Al-Shabaab by making local communities long for the return of a semblance of law and order and justice, even if rough, to the country.

On November 13, insurgent leaders called a meeting for local residents and publicly announced the establishment of a new system of law and order, one based on Al-Shabaab's particular and thoroughly modern brand of Islamic law (*shari'a*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) that centered on the enforcement of a strict penal and behavioral code backed by the implementation of the "set" (*hudūd*) and discretionary (*ta'zīr*) punishments. The militant group's *hudūd*-centered form of law and order stood in contrast to Somalia's previous history and traditional practice and interpretation of Islam, which saw the country's people, the overwhelming majority of whom have long been Sunni (Shāfi'ī legal school/*madhhab*) and inclined toward varying forms of Sufism, though Salafism began to spread in influence beginning in the 1970s.¹ Despite the newness of Al-Shabaab's system of law, the group's interest in reinstating a semblance of law and order over territory as it swept across ever larger parts of the country in 2008 and 2009 made a *hudūd*-centered national legal system particularly attractive to insurgent leaders because of its usefulness in cracking down on socially destabilizing crimes such as highway banditry and uncontrolled, "illegitimate" violence (*hirāba*), theft (*sariqa*), and wanton interpersonal violence including murder. Local populations also desired a return to normalcy after over a decade of civil war and large

¹ On Salafism in Somalia, see Abdurahman Abdullahi, *The Islamic Movement in Somalia: A Historical Evolution with a Case Study of the Islah Movement (1950-2000)*, Ph.D. dissertation, McGill University, 2011.

numbers of local residents had enthusiastically supported the UIC previously, which also implemented a more *shari'a*-centered form of law during its brief tenure, and many initially either supported or acquiesced to Al-Shabaab's new political order.

The new insurgent order was backed by the public implementation of physical punishments. Most notably, these punishments were promoted at the outset through a multi-tiered communications and media campaign using symbolic power as a tool with which to shape the governed population's behavior and sense of identification vis-à-vis their new rulers. This media campaign was aimed at domestic, regional, and international audiences including members of Somali diaspora communities in North America, Europe, and Sub-Saharan and particularly East Africa. Invoking the Qur'an and *sunna* of the Prophet Muhammad and the early Muslims, Al-Shabaab's leadership sought to create and deploy symbolic repertoires drawing on cultural and local beliefs, identities, and norms as well as a transnational sense of a common "Islamic" and Muslim identity. Although the insurgents' heavy focus on a *shari'a*-centered legal system was new in the Somali context, Al-Shabaab attempted to both win over locals to its view of Islam and Islamic law as well as link itself to other issues of interest to a large number of Somalis, particularly domestically and regionally in the Horn of Africa. The latter included Somali nationalism, despite Al-Shabaab's claim to have rejected nationalism as "un-Islamic," which has manifested itself most clearly since the group's emergence as a non-state insurgent territorial power in 2008 by its invocation of the idea of a "Greater Somalia" which includes the historically ethnic Somali-majority regions of northeastern Kenya (the North Eastern Province; formerly the Northern Frontier District) and the Ogaden region of eastern Ethiopia. Additionally, Al-Shabaab's leaders and administrative officials, while decrying the "destructive clannism" of the civil war, have continued to play the clan politics game and recognize the continued resonance of clan conventions and mechanisms of law and conflict management (*xeer*), establishing and

maintaining relationships with a wide number of Somali clans and sub-clans as well as with influential local notables and businesspeople.² The group has also drawn on Somali historical memory of the “Mad *Mullah*,” Mohamed ‘Abdullahi Hassan, and his Dervishes movement as well as other Somali religious leaders and resistance fighters, who waged anti-colonial rebellion against the British, Italians, and Ethiopian Christian empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³

The rebel group’s purpose was made clear a day later after the congregational Friday prayer in central Marka in a speech by senior Al-Shabaab leader and founding member Mukhtar Robow who announced that the new governing regime would harness the divinely-sanctioned and required system of law—the *shari‘a*—to safeguard the wealth of local residents and the public’s welfare under the organizational rubric of *hisba* (here referring to the regulation of public behavior and social and economic interactions generally). Similar public gatherings were held across insurgent-controlled Somalia to herald the coming of a new governing order and the creation of a *jihadi*-rebel proto-state that ultimately sought to replace the beleaguered but internationally-recognized national government.

Much the same played out in Iraq, Syria, and Libya as Islamic State (*al-Dawla al-Islāmīya*) evolved and expanded from a small, clandestine guerilla organization in 2002-2003 to a full-fledged *jihadi* rebel proto-state by 2013-2014. Like Al-Shabaab did in Somalia, Islamic State between 2012 and 2014 emerged as a territorial player in the context of civil

² On *xeer* and traditional conflict management in Somali society, see Ken Menkhaus, “Traditional Conflict Management in Contemporary Somalia,” in *Traditional Cures for Modern Conflicts: African Conflict “Medicine,”* edited by I. William Zartman (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 183-200. On the history and social role of Somalia’s clans, see I.M. Lewis, *Blood and Bone: The Call of Kinship in Somali Society* (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1994) and Part II in Markus Virgil Höhne and Virginia Luling, eds., *Peace and Milk, Drought and War: Somali Culture, Society, and Politics: Essays in Honour of I.M. Lewis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

³ Mohamed Haji Ingiriis, “The Invention of Al-Shabaab in Somalia: Emulating the Anti-Colonial Dervishes Movement,” *African Affairs* (2018), advance copy of the article at <https://academic.oup.com/afraf/advance-article/doi/10.1093/afraf/ady001/4833880>, last accessed 13 April 2018 and Robert L. Hess, “The ‘Mad Mullah’ and Northern Somalia,” *The Journal of African History* 5, no. 3 (1964), 415-433. Ironically, in light of Al-Shabaab’s profound hostility toward “extreme Sufism” and popular Sufi practices including shrine visitation, many of these historical resistance commanders and religious figures were well-known practitioners of Sufism and members of Sufi orders.

war, this time in Syria where the formal institutions of the authoritarian Ba‘th Party regime under Bashar al-Asad were collapsing in many parts of the country and were being replaced with the informal governing mechanisms of various rebel groups or leading to zones where lawlessness and warlordism reigned. Islamic State initially, through 2013, cooperated with some Syrian rebel groups and other *jihadi* insurgent organizations in taking land and key strategic positions away from the Syrian government including the city of Raqqa and the Menagh Airbase in northern Aleppo governorate, but eventually began to target these and other groups as it sought to consolidate its hold of territory and begin building its own proto-state through an informal system of insurgent governance. In neighboring Iraq, Islamic State’s path to territorial control and power was slightly different but in many ways linked to the political and conflict processes happening concurrently across the border in civil war-torn Syria.⁴ The insurgent group played off of the anger of many Iraqi Sunni Arabs at their country’s central government under Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, which they perceived as being virulently sectarian and controlled by anti-Sunni Shī‘ī Islamist parties backed by Iran. The Iraqi government’s violent crackdown on demonstrations by Sunni Arabs in the governorates of Anbar, Saladin, and Diyala in 2012 and 2013 opened the door for Islamic State to harness local grievances as fuel for insurgency.⁵ In Iraq, Islamic State was also able to take advantage of existing government and specifically social services infrastructure in urban centers such as Mosul as a framework on which to build up its own informal governing institutions.

Both Al-Shabaab and Islamic State first rose to prominence in the contexts of intra-state conflict and different forms of state collapse, the latter in the aftermath of the fall of the

⁴ For an argument that the Syria and Iraqi conflicts are more accurately seen as one, crossborder and intimately interconnected conflict, see William Harris, *Quicksilver War: Syria, Iraq and the Spiral of Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁵ BBC News, “Iraq Sunni Protests in Anbar against Nouri al-Maliki,” 28 December 2012, at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-20860647>, last accessed 13 April 2018.

Iraqi Ba‘th Party state in the Spring of 2003 following the external military intervention and invasion by the United States and United Kingdom and the former during a civil war environment following the collapse of General Barre’s government in 1991, the subsequent descent of Somalia into clan-based civil war and warlordism, and the overthrow of the UIC in late 2006 and early 2007 as a result of the external military intervention of Ethiopia with U.S. support. Islamic State and Al-Shabaab also adhere to similar interpretations of Sunni Islam and militant Islamism in which military *jihad* and battlefield martyrdom and self-sacrifice are believed to be the central mechanism through which to bring about substantive change to the existing social and political order. The organizations share a thoroughly modern and revolutionary interpretation of Sunni Islam that prioritizes a primarily militaristic view of Islam as a lived faith tradition, which in turn significantly impacts the way which the leaderships of both groups draw upon and understand Islamic sacred history. Finally, both Islamic State and Al-Shabaab have also been influenced by the ideology of the original Al-Qaeda organization and particularly its founder, Usama bin Laden, and were, for different lengths of time and to varying degrees, formally affiliated with Al-Qaeda.

As part of their construction of informal systems of governance and the affiliated public relations and media campaigns that accompany their bids to set up insurgent proto-states, Islamic State and Al-Shabaab both draw upon Islamic history and rituals to bolster their claims to legitimacy and integrate their civil administrations deeper into local communities and civil society. Chief among these were the communal celebrations and religiously-mandated congregational prayers that mark major holidays such as ‘Eid al-Fiṭr and ‘Eid al-Aḍḥā and the Friday congregational prayer, attendance at which is mandatory for adult Muslim men. In addition to these events, Islamic State and Al-Shabaab organized meetings with key segments of local communities including tribal and clan elders, merchants and businesspeople, and religious leaders. Both groups also organized public classes and

special courses and competitions for local residents including children and other youth for the memorization and recitation of the Qur'an, Islamic history, and on Islamic law and jurisprudence.

The purpose of public events such as communal prayers and celebrations was to demonstrate and perform rebel claims to social, political, and religious authority and historical authenticity and to strategically organize the insurgents' utilization of violence and coercion as a means of social control. In addition to the religious and ideological importance of the *shari'a* to *jihadi* rebel governing projects, Islamic law and jurisprudence also provided the new rulers with a historically and religiously-grounded framework through which to use "official" violence to advance a claim of legitimacy and to demonstrate their coercive capabilities, framing these claims as challenges to the international order and against the alleged illegitimacy and ineptness of sitting governments.

Despite the significant similarities between Islamic State and Al-Shabaab, there are also a number of important differences between the two organizations. Each emerged and operate in different sociocultural and political contexts, have differing relations to both internal domestic and external actors, implemented violence as a strategic tool of governance at different levels, hold different political goals—Islamic State's being grander in terms of geography and revolutionary ideology and Al-Shabaab's, in contrast, being more limited territorially—and have, in the main, enjoyed varying outcomes and trajectories, particularly with the longevity of their governance projects and institutions.

Given these similarities and differences in the organizational histories and ideology between two seemingly very similar non-state armed groups, the dissertation maps how Islamist insurgent organizations develop and deploy discursive framing and symbols and symbolic repertoires as an integral part of their governance projects in order to legitimize and rationalize their use of different types of violence. This research argues that the strategic

utilization of Islamist discursive framing and symbolic repertoires which takes into account local sociocultural beliefs and practices is more likely to achieve a greater degree of resonance with important segments of local communities—among the laity, specific classes such as businesspeople and merchants, and local notables such as tribal and clan elders—and thus helps explain the varying levels of success and longevity of governing institutions that these Islamist insurgent organizations have experienced.

Rebellion and *Jihadi* Governance

The advent of *jihadi*-insurgent governing projects in Somalia, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, North Africa and the Sahel, the North Caucasus, and Pakistan provides an opportunity to link the study of territorial *jihadi* rebels—that is, those *jihadi* rebel groups that control territory over which they establish mechanisms of governance including systems of social and economic control—with the growing academic literature on rebel governance. In doing so, the study of jihadism more generally can also be increasingly situated within the broader study of social movements and political violence, drawing upon insights from studies of other radical social movements which have also used violence and invoked identity politics and religious theology as a means of legitimization. By situating the study of militant Islamist movements and organizations within a broader historical framework and alongside studies of other similar radical identitarian movements, scholars are able to draw upon theoretical insights from social movement theory while also broadening the empirical study of Islamic movements within the humanities and social sciences.

In order to understand how *jihadi* insurgent organizations shape their governance structures and tactics, it is necessary to first examine how they draw upon a mixture of both local and region-specific as well as transnational or “globalist” elements and discursive frames in advancing specific claims. A discursive frame is “the set of cultural viewpoints that informs the practices of a community of social movement organizations” or a particular

organization.⁶ The frame both “defines the goals and purposes of the organization and provides guidance for the actions of the organization.” In order to succeed, discursive or mobilization frames must first diagnose the problem(s) that the organization wishes to fix and then offer a set of prescriptions for how to do so in a way that achieves *frame resonance* with the target audience, that is, to convince them that collective action and mobilization is necessary despite the risks involved. With regard to local communities, *jihadi* insurgent non-state actors with governing ambitions must also succeed in convincing segments of the local population living in territories under their control of the legitimacy of the diagnoses and prescriptions offered in their discursive frames. The process requires the careful construction of two sets of discursive/mobilization frames: (1) frames that make local and regional conflicts resonate with distant, external audiences and (2) frames that localize transnational ideas such as pan-Islamism for more localized audiences. This process is not unique to *jihadis* and can also be seen in the localization of transnational Islamic intellectual and methodological currents such as Salafism within specific local and regional environments.⁷

Rebel organizations often face greater hurdles than the governments they are seeking to replace and thus are constantly engaged in a process of self-definition to attract both domestic and external support. The quest for external allies—foreign states, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the news media, international organizations, and world public opinion—is fraught with challenges and few rebel organizations succeed in winning

⁶ Robert J. Brulle, “The U.S. Environment Movement” (n.p., n.d.), at <http://www.pages.drexel.edu/~brullerj/Twenty%20Lessons%20in%20Environmental%20Sociology-Brulle.pdf>, last accessed 13 April 2018.

⁷ The classification of Salafism and Salafi activism has been discussed and debated in Quintan Wiktorowicz, “Anatomy of the Salafi Movement,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 3 (2006), 207-239; Roel Meijer, “Yusuf al-‘Uyairi and the Making of a Revolutionary Salafi Praxis,” *Die Welt des Islams* 47, no. 3/4 (2007), 422-459; and Joas Wagemakers, “Revisiting Wiktorowicz: Categorising and Defining the Branches of Salafism,” in *Salafism after the Arab Awakening: Contending with People’s Power*, eds. Francesco Cavatorta and Fabio Merone (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 7-24. On the localization of Salafism, see Alexander Thurston, *Salafism in Nigeria: Islam, Preaching and Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 152-155. Thurston argues that Boko Haram under the leadership of Abu Bakr Shekau has moved into a “post-Salafi” phase in that the group emphasizes a more basic, “stripped-down, propagandistic” form of jihadism rather than a creed that is truly representative of scholastic Salafism; see 214-219.

significant or sustained external support for their domestic projects.⁸ The limited number of possible external allies and the multitude of rebel groups seeking to win their support means that competition is fierce between them to win a transnational patron, requiring support-seeking groups to achieve *frame resonance* by casting their often locally or regionally-focused projects, parochial goals, and particularistic identities in a way that attracts external audiences.⁹ What explains, then, when and where rebel organizations succeed and when and where they fail to generate local support or, at the very least, acquiescence to set up working informal structures of governance?

Sunni Islamist insurgencies must frame their projects in a way that convinces distant audiences that there is a shared interest in their realization and implementation. They must attract a limited amount of external support to themselves instead of to other groups, in effect marketing themselves more convincingly than other competing insurgent and activist “brands.”¹⁰ In addition to their marketing strategies, rebel groups may also enjoy periods when they emerge as the “it” project, coming into vogue and attracting a great deal of attention and support for a set period of time,¹¹ such as was the case for Islamic State between 2013 and 2017 and particularly after it swept across vast swaths of Syria and western Iraq in 2014. Support-seeking movements time their appeals to coincide with major politically and emotionally-charged events and look to attract international attention by carrying out political spectacles—“highly visible, sometimes novel” events—that often bring significant attention

⁸ Clifford Bob, *The Marketing of Rebellion: Insurgents, Media, and International Activism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1-4.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4-6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

for relatively low cost, demonstrating the performative propaganda aspect of political violence or the “propaganda of the deed.”¹²

Bob notes that “more desperate” movements will be less picky in choosing potential patrons and even seek to win over external supporters who possess only limited power and few resources even if doing so alienates potentially wider backing.¹³ Islamic State, however, may have proven to be the exception to this, at least to a degree, in that its organizational goal and stated purpose required it to be constantly “expanding” geographically as the claimed neo-caliphate, even if some of its new local allies and affiliates were limited in terms of their organizational reach and capabilities. For their part, the more powerful Islamist militant movements that chose to affiliate with Islamic State in 2014 and 2015, such as defectors from the disintegrating Tehrik-i Taliban Pakistan (TTP) umbrella and Boko Haram in Nigeria, used affiliation as a means through which to engage in local and regional competitions for power and influence and to advance their own organizational profiles. In short, these local and regional groups used Islamic State as a tool and a cudgel to bolster their local/regional and international reputations, broaden their support and recruitment networks, and advance their own interests in much the same way as Islamic State used their pledges of allegiance (*bay‘a*) as a way to demonstrate the legitimacy of its official claim to be “remaining and expanding” (*bāqīya wa tatamaddad*).¹⁴

This dissertation, at its most general level, seeks to situate the study of Islamist insurgencies and territorial rebel movements more directly within the growing literature on rebel governance and governing strategies and practices—particularly the use of symbols, symbolic processes, and symbolic repertoires and the process of framing elucidated in the

¹² *Ibid.*, 25-26 and Neville Bolt, *The Violent Image: Insurgent Propaganda and the New Revolutionaries* (London: Hurst & Co., 2012).

¹³ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁴ This does not preclude organization ties between the core Islamic State group and its affiliates.

social movement theory literature—as well as highlight the interaction of local and region-specific dynamics within transnational or “global” Islamism and specifically militant Islamism, referred to herein as “jihadism.” In addition to utilizing theoretical insights from the rebel governance literature, this research also analyzes new primary sources that have been produced by *jihadi* rebel organizations in tandem with source triangulation through local and international news media, governmental, NGO, and independent sources to trace the evolution and organization of *jihadi*-insurgent governance projects in Somalia, Syria, and Iraq while also proposing arguments that are more broadly applicable to other cases. Finally, this project also attempts to contribute to the expanding body of case studies on specific Islamist rebel/insurgent (here used interchangeably) organizations by situating them historically within the broader field of Islamic studies.¹⁵

¹⁵ Notable examples include Stig Jarle Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group, 2005-2012* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism since 1979* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Alexander Thurston, *Boko Haram: The History of an African Jihadist Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018); Jean-Pierre Filiu, “The Local and Global Jihad of al-Qa‘ida in the Islamic Maghrib,” *The Middle East Journal* 63, no. 2 (2009), 213-226; Charles Lister, *The Syrian Jihad: Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State and the Evolution of an Insurgency* (London: Hurst & Co., 2015); Cole Bunzel, *From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State* (New York: The Brookings Institution, 2015), Analysis Paper no. 19; Hassan Abbas, *The Taliban Revival: Violence and Extremism on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014); Imtiaz Gul, *The Most Dangerous Place: Pakistan’s Lawless Frontier* (New York: Viking, 2010); Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* (London: Hurst & Co., 2007); Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); Vahid Brown and Don Rassler, *Fountainhead of Jihad: The Haqqani Nexus, 1973-2012* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013); Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn, *An Enemy We Created: The Myth of the Taliban-Al Qaeda Merger in Afghanistan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Knopf, 2006); Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and Pharaoh* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Stephen Taniel, *Storming the World Stage: The Story of Lashkar-e-Taiba* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); Brian Fishman, *The Master Plan: ISIS, Al Qaeda, and the Jihadi Strategy for Final Victory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016); Jessica Stern and J.M. Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror* (New York: Ecco Press, 2015); Raphaël Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama: The Perilous History of Syria’s Muslim Brotherhood* (London: Hurst & Co., 2013); Fawaz Gerges, *ISIS: A History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); William McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Domsday Vision of the Islamic State* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror* (New York: Regan Arts, 2015); Aaron Y. Zelin, “The Islamic State’s Territorial Methodology,” Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Research Notes 29 (January 2016) at <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-islamic-states-territorial-methodology>, last accessed 9 October 2017; David Wasserstein, *Black Banners of ISIS: The Roots of the New Caliphate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017); and Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990). This list is not exhaustive and only includes studies on Sunni militant Islamist/*jihadi* movements and organizations.

The research undertaken here has relevance beyond the two main cases and can be extended to the study of other Islamist and non-Islamist rebel organizations intent on establishing informal structures of governance. In the realm of Islamist territorial rebel groups, organizations such as the Afghan Taliban, Pakistan's multiple Taliban factions, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and its sister group Anṣār al-Sharī'a, Malian and Sahelian Islamist rebel groups, and Syria's larger rebel organizations including Hay'at Taḥrīr al-Shām and Aḥrār al-Shām have all followed similar strategies of linking themselves to local communities and local concerns while also utilizing, to varying degrees, transnational and "globalist" symbols and symbolic repertoires as part of campaigns to build informal insurgent systems of governance. This stands in contrast to other *jihadi* organizations, such as the Boko Haram faction led by Abubakar Shekau, whose activities remain largely focused on insurgency rather than building working governance structures (though the reverse is true with the Islamic State-aligned faction of Boko Haram).¹⁶ However, a growing number of Islamist/*jihadi* insurgent organizations are starting to make concerted efforts to form proto-states through informal governance. Indeed, the beginning of the twenty-first century has emerged as the golden age of *jihadi*-insurgent territorial ambitions and saw the establishment of a number of *jihadi* proto-states between 2011 and the present day.

Ideology and Mobilizing Action: The Role of Ideas

Ideology is commonly defined as an actor's system of beliefs and, as such, is clearly recognized as an important driving force explaining the onset of civil wars.¹⁷ In the case of *jihadi* rebel organizations, the framing and re-framing of particular notions of Islamic history, tradition, and law helps explain not only the driving force behind rebellion and insurgency

¹⁶ On Boko Haram's limited focus thus far on building insurgent governance structures, see Thurston, *Boko Haram*.

¹⁷ On the importance of ideology in analyses of civil war processes, see Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín and Elisabeth Jean Wood, "Ideology in Civil War," *Journal of Peace Research* 51, no. 2 (2014), 213-226.

but also provides a framework for understanding the process through which *jihadi* rebel governance is structured and the use of violence strategically framed and deployed. Islamic law and jurisprudence as interpreted by *jihadi* rebels serves not only as an ideological and religious marker but also provides governing regimes with historically-embedded and religiously-authentic, at least in terms of how they are justified and framed, means with which to exercise control over economic transactions, trade, and social order.

Establishing an environment of law and order is a particularly important task for rebel groups operating in environments such as civil wars where social order has fallen apart and locals have grown weary of enduring long period of predation by warlords and others seeking to profit from their misery and the continuing conflict.¹⁸ While ideology is certainly not the only dynamic at play in the shaping of *jihadi* rebel proto-state projects and cannot alone fully explain causality in determining group behavior since it is not autonomous or formed in a vacuum,¹⁹ it is an important element central to organizational identity. Ideology influences an organization's strategy and approach to achieve a range of social, political, military, and economic goals including the framing of revenue collection and distribution and the legitimization of violence. A group's ideology is not static and indeed may become more hybridized or less homogenous over time.

Islamist Rebels in the Context of the “Islamism” Debate

The question of how best to conceptualize Islamist actors has been central to the study of political Islam. Once presumed to be an example of the dying gasp of pre-modern or “medieval” (and backwards) religious and societal tendencies in parts of the “Third World,”

¹⁸ Islamist movements in civil war and other conflict environments have proven to be particularly attractive to local businesspeople, merchants, and notables because of their ability to implement social order more capably than many of their competitors. On this, see Aisha Ahmad, *Jihad & Co.: Black Markets and Islamist Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017) and “The Security Bazaar: Business Interests and Islamist Power in Civil War Somalia,” *International Security* 39, no. 3 (2015), 89-117.

¹⁹ See Jeroen Gunning, “Critical Reflections on the Relationship between Ideology and Behavior,” in *Contextualising Jihadi Thought*, eds. Jeevan Deol and Zaheer Kazmi (London: Hurst & Co., 2012), 219-242, especially 226.

Islamism is now more accurately seen as being composed of a number of different ideological currents that share certain similarities, in general the privileging of a particular interpretation of religious theology, creed, and practice within the social and political organization of society.²⁰ There remain disagreements and debates within the academic literature about how precisely to define “Islamism” or “political Islam” and even whether the use of such terms is useful or, rather, detrimental to analysis of the phenomenon and the social movements and political organizations that espouse it.²¹ Hirschkind, for example, questions the separation of the “political” and “nonpolitical” domains of social life, noting that there is an inconsistency between many critics who allege that political Islam has overstepped its “proper” place in the religious domain by attempting an “illegitimate extension” into the public sphere but who then ignore or downplay the expansion of the secular state into “vast domains of social life” that were previously considered beyond its purview as a part of the nation-building project.²² *Jihadi* rebel governing regimes, though they reject the modern nation-state system and the resulting international order, find themselves inextricably bound by the existing global system and have adopted a definition of government and political authority and social control that emerges more from the modern bureaucratic state than any historical Muslim state with regards to the rights and reach of the state into the private and semi-private realms of its citizenry.

The marriage of religion and politics in Islam is not required by the faith’s scriptural sources. The theory of an “Islamic state” was historically a mostly theoretical and juridical

²⁰ Three of the earliest seminal studies that contested previous simplistic and overly generalized accounts of Islamism included in this comprehensive examination bibliography are: James P. Piscatori, *Islam in a World of Nation States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), Nazih N. M. Ayubi, *Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Arab World* (New York: Routledge, 1991), and Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982).

²¹ An excellent collection of essays debating how to define political Islam and specifically the usefulness or harm of the terms “Islamism” and “Islamist” can be found in Richard C. Martin and Abbas Barzegar, eds., *Islamism: Contested Perspectives on Political Islam* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

²² Charles Hirschkind, “What is Political Islam?”, *Middle East Report* 27, no. 205 (1991): 12.

exercise undertaken by some *'ulamā*, what Ayubi describes as being “little more than elaborate fiqh presented as though it was pure shari‘a.”²³ The religious and temporal political realms, that of *shari‘a* and *sīyāsa*, were gradually separated for Sunnis as political and military chieftains and rulers dominated the state formation of the latter and the religious scholars occupied themselves with the questions of theology, religious practice, and political and moral theory. The *'ulamā*, though often honored by the political and military elites, were secondary in terms of their authority over society. The attractiveness of an idealized “Islamic state” that would bring back the “golden age” of Islamic civilization became more important as the Muslim world began to decline during the age of European colonialism between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries.²⁴ The concern of the jurists tended to be, however, on the idealized community (*Umma*) and not the exact organization of a state (*dawla*) in the modern sense.²⁵ Ayubi posits that the role of the political authority (the state) was simply to ensure the security of the *Umma* and oversee the existence of a society in which Muslims can fully attend to their religious duties, as prescribed in the Qur‘an and *Sunna*.²⁶ The proposed singular “Islamic state” as envisioned by contemporary Islamists of all varieties is, in short,

²³ Nazih N. M. Ayubi, *Political Islam*, 17.

²⁴ Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, 10 and Chapter 2 and Ayubi, 17. Enayat notes that the abolition of the Ottoman (Turkish) caliphate was welcomed by many Arab nationalists including Islamists since they desired an end to the perceived Turkish domination and chauvinism of the previous centuries. The end of the caliphate was greeted with the most alarm not in the Arab Middle East but among non-Arab Muslims, particularly in South Asia. A number of conferences were organized in both the Arab and non-Arab Muslim world, including one organized by a group of al-Azhar-educated *'ulamā* headed by the seminary’s rector, Muhammad Abu al-Fadl al-Jizawi, to discuss how to respond to Atatürk’s abolishment. Some Sunni modernist intellectuals and scholars, such as the Egyptian ‘Ali ‘Abd al-Raziq (d. 1966), even questioned traditional Sunni political thought and challenged the very argument that a caliphate was a necessity. See Enayat, Chapter 2.

²⁵ Ayubi, 18.

²⁶ Ayubi, 22. He describes the idealized Islamic state of the Muslim juridical theorists as a “nomocracy,” a state run by the rule of law (in this case the *shari‘a*) and not on arbitrary whims.

an anachronistic and thoroughly modern creation and not a return to medieval Islam as it actually existed historically.²⁷

Jihadism is a subset of Islamism, one that prioritizes militant activism and armed struggle as the main driver of social and political change—violent contention is its *raison d'être*.²⁸ Whereas the widely used definition of Islamic and Islamist movements has grown out of the social movement perspective and *jihadi* organizations are most frequently viewed through the lens of terrorism studies, the dissertation research here proposes to examine a subset of Islamist actors in the context of rebel insurgent organizations. Islamists and Islamist movements, in the broadest sense, are individuals and organizations whose members believe that Islam as a historical faith tradition, Islamic law, and Islamic ethics and values should play a prominent role in public life and the shaping of both systems of government and interpersonal relations in Muslim-majority societies. Islamist actors attempt to achieve this through the use of Islamic symbols and sacred history interpreted for local and transnational audiences through discursive frames and by either making demands on existing formal political authorities or, in their most revolutionary form, seeking to take direct control of the state through political or other means. Rebels and rebel organizations are most commonly defined as armed non-state actors who oppose existing national governments and have political goals and pursue their achievement through military means. Political, economic, social, and ideological goals of rebel organizations can vary greatly from group to group. My research herein examines non-state Islamist armed actors as insurgent groups and

²⁷ For arguments about the “medieval” nature of modern Islamism, see Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror* (New York: Modern Library, 2003) and *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); and Daniel Lav, *Radical Islam and the Revival of Medieval Theology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

²⁸ A useful essay situating jihadism within the broader field of political Islam can be found in Cole Bunzel, “Jihadism on Its Own Terms: Understanding a Movement,” Hoover Institution, 17 May 2017, at <https://www.hoover.org/research/jihadism-its-own-terms>, last accessed 9 October 2017.

sees these groups—including Islamic State and Al-Shabaab—as a type of Islamist social movement organization (SMO) that utilizes discursive mobilization frames built on symbolic repertoires based in Islamic sacred history and the Islamic tradition as part of a program to build and maintain informal systems of governance and (proto-) state-community relations with local populations living in insurgent-controlled territory, using violence strategically as a tool for statebuilding and social control.

Debating *Jihadi* Salafism: Social Movement Theory, the Role of Ideas, and Political Violence

If social movement theory does not always capture the nature of *jihadi* rebel organizations, it has contributed greatly to our understanding of the ideational underpinnings that help to explain the use of Islamically-rationalized violence used by Islamist insurgents to achieve their political, social, moral, and economic objectives. The social movement theory literature provides a number of useful analytical tools with which to understand the different forms of Islamism and Muslim political activism including jihadism and *jihadi*-insurgencies. Social movement theory's emphasis on patterns of contention, tactics of dissent, framing, resource mobilization, and the role of opportunity structures allows for the demystification of Islamic politics and political activism including political violence by moving away from arguments of exceptionalism and instead examining the similar social processes at play in comparable Muslim and non-Muslim social movements.²⁹ The social movement theory approach, which has gained increasing popularity in studies of political Islam since the beginning of the twenty-first century, has been advanced significantly in studies by Wiktorowicz, Ismail, Singerman, Wickham, Schwedler, and others.³⁰

²⁹ A pioneering study in this regard is Quintan Wiktorowicz, ed., *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

³⁰ Representative studies include Wiktorowicz, ed., *Islamic Activism*; Salwa Ismail, *Rethinking Islamist Politics: Culture, the State and Islamism* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2003); and Asef Bayat, "Islamism and Social Movement Theory," *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 6 (2005), 891-908.

Social movement theory is particularly useful in moving away from the tendency to see mass violence as irrational or “senseless” and instead to understand radicalization and the use of violence as the result of a socialization process that is impacted by a number of different factors including the type (*selective* versus *indiscriminate*) and timing (*preemptive* versus *reactive*) of state repression as well as the organizational resources available to the movement.³¹ In cases of severe state repression where targeting is reactive and indiscriminate, Islamist opposition groups are more likely to decide that violent contention is both justified and necessary. They will also more likely feel the need to develop exclusive (closed) organizations in order to ward off agent provocateurs working for the state from infiltrating and destroying the groups from within. This type of severe repression also encourages opposition actors to develop antisystem frames that call for the complete eradication of the status quo while shutting down the possibility of reforming the system, thus rejecting revitalization frames. The conflict between the group and the state is seen as an all-or-nothing struggle to the death; if the group stops fighting, the state will crush it completely.³²

The question about how to conceptualize and classify the political outlook and actions of Islamist movements is a continuing debate. The adoption of terms such as “Islamism/Islamist,” “*jihadi*,” and “*Jihadi* Salafism/Salafi” has spread from academia and analysts to the mainstream news media. The precise meanings of these terms, however, are often unclear and the terms are used in quite subjective ways, sometimes as analytical terms and sometimes as mostly, or purely, pejorative.³³ In order to move toward a clearer definition

³¹ Mohammed M. Hafez, “From Marginalization to Massacres: A Political Process Explanation of GIA Violence in Algeria,” and Mohammed M. Hafez and Quintan Wiktorowicz, “Violence as Contention in the Egyptian Islamic Movement,” both in *Islamic Activism*.

³² *Ibid.* (Hafez and Hafez and Wiktorowicz).

³³ For examples of a variety of positions on these terms, see Martin and Barzegar, *Islamism*.

and more consistent application of these terms as descriptors of organizational or movement political behavior, Hegghammer argues that the rationales and strategies of individual Islamist movements should be central.³⁴

“Salafism” is frequently used to describe Sunni Islamist militants.³⁵ For those Sunni Muslims who embrace the label, Salafism has positive connotations regarding the methodology’s claimed “return” to the practices of the Prophet Muhammad and the first generations of Muslims who are believed to have been the most pious adherents to the faith who will ever live. Salafism in this usage also references the focus on a supposedly stricter reliance on the Qur’an and *sunna* and the casting off of cultural accretions and innovations (*bid’a*) that have crept into local “Islams” over the centuries as well as the canonization, according to Salafis, of the four Sunni legal schools of thought. In contrast, enemies and critics of mainstream Salafism and militant “*jihadi*-Salafism” use the terms “Salafi” and “Wahhabi” as pejoratives to link Salafis of all stripes with controversial religious preachers and would-be reformers such as the eighteenth century Najdi Hanbali Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. By linking the methodology of Salafism to a person, critics of Salafism seek to counter Salafi claims that their approach and intellectual current represent the purist form of Islam. These critics also attempt to link all Salafis to violent organizations labeled “*jihadi*-Salafi,” arguing that the latter’s violence is caused by “Salafism.”

The popularity of using “Salafi” and “Salafism” to describe a diverse array of social and political actors only adds to the confusion surrounding the term as a useful analytical description. While those Sunnis who self-describe as “Salafi” undoubtedly share certain key aspects of their methodology, they represent a variety of different and often opposing positions with regard to political activism, rebellion against the government and rulers, and

³⁴ Thomas Hegghammer, “Jihadi-Salafis or Revolutionaries? On Religion and Politics in the Study of Militant Islamism,” in *Global Salafism: Islam’s New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 244-245.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 248-249.

positions regarding non-Muslims and minority Islamic sects such as Shi'ism, as sketched out by Wiktorowicz.³⁶ The term "Salafi" can also either denote specific and separate political preferences in relation to other actors, such as the Muslim Brotherhood or missionary movements like the Jamā'at al-Tablīgh, or instead refer generally to a Sunni group's self-definition as an actor using a more "authentic" methodological approach toward the Islamic tradition based on the Qur'an, *sunna*, and *aḥādīth*.³⁷ Despite their claims to represent a purer and more historically authentic practice of Islam, Salafis also go against the Sunni mainstream by arguing against the reification of the founders and scholars of the four Sunni legal schools of thought in favor of the Qur'an and *sunna*. Some self-identified Salafis have also been allegedly inconsistent with regard to their approach toward the legal positions of revered historical religious jurists and scholars such as Ahmad ibn Hanbal, with inter-Salafi conflicts often including allegations that rivals remain wedded to the legal schools (particularly the Ḥanbalī school) and were thus not "true Salafis."³⁸

More recently, militant Islamist organizations such as Al-Qaeda and Islamic State have been labeled as being representative of an offshoot of Salafism, "*jihadi*-Salafism." The origins of the term are unclear but seem to have first gained traction among Sunni Islamists in London during the early 1990s.³⁹ The label is used as a self-descriptor by some militant Sunni Islamists and rejected by others who, even though they may praise some Salafi juridical figures and religious scholars such as Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, prefer to

³⁶ Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement."

³⁷ Hegghammer, "Jihadi-Salafis or Revolutionaries," 249-251.

³⁸ This allegation has even been made against Saudi Salafi religious scholars and Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb by seminal Salafi theorists such as Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī. On this, see Stéphane Lacroix, *Awakening Islam: The Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), particularly Chapter Three.

³⁹ Hegghammer, "Jihadi-Salafis or Revolutionaries," 251.

describe themselves solely as Muslims (since they reject Shi'ism outright).⁴⁰ The term also suffers from the lack of an agreed-upon, clear definition beyond references to supposed similarities between mainstream Salafis and “*jihadi*-Salafis” regarding the use of the Qur'an and *sunna* in the creation of their jurisprudence and religious practices, allegations that “*jihadi*-Salafi” actors are more extreme and intransigent than other groups, and claims that they are defined by their “anti-Westernism.”⁴¹ Hegghammer notes the problems with these general criteria including questions about how one measures “levels” of extremism, how to explain why some “extremist” actors have criticized other extremists despite both parties allegedly being “*jihadi*-Salafi,” and how to see groups who traditionally have not been grouped under the “Salafi” label such as Egyptian militant Islamists in the 1970s.⁴²

Wagemakers has also usefully interrogated the way in which one popular typology for different groups of Salafi actors, that of Wiktorowicz, divides them into three large but distinct currents, “purists” who largely refrain from politics and focus instead on pietistic concerns, “politicos,” and “*jihadis*.”⁴³ Wagemakers is particularly (and correctly) critical of the way in which Wiktorowicz's classifications have often been employed, pointing out that they are flexible rather than rigidly fixed categories and that Salafi actors demonstrate significant flexibility in their decision-making. Wagemakers argues that Wiktorowicz's use of the term “*manhaj*” to refer primarily to each Salafi current's approach towards politics and his use of the term “purists” to describe only one of the three currents are problematic since all Salafis share a belief that theirs is the most correct and “pure” form of Islam.⁴⁴

Wagemakers proposes an alternative categorization of Salafism that takes into account their

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 252-253.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 253.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 254.

⁴³ Wiktorowicz, “Anatomy of the Salafi Movement.”

⁴⁴ Joas Wagemakers, “Revisting Wiktorowicz: Categorising and Defining the Branches of Salafism,” in *Salafism after the Arab Awakening: Contending with People's Power*, edited by Francesco Cavatorta and Fabio Merone (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 7-24.

shared adherence to the same basic creed (*'aqīda*) and the differing political and social aspects of their approaches to *manhaj*. In doing so, he argues that the three currents—purists/quietists, politicians, and *jihadis*—can more accurately be analyzed with the recognition that each current is divided further into different sub-categories.

Similarly, the argument that what makes these militant actors “Salafi” is their adoption of the central Salafi concept of “loyalty to the believers and disavowal of the disbelievers” (*al-walā' min al-mu'minīn wa-l-barā' 'an al-kāfirīn*) raises the question about how to classify non-Salafi Muslim actors who adhere to similar beliefs regarding the need to remain loyal to their fellow Muslims over non-Muslims and distance themselves from those individuals considered hostile to Islam and Muslims. The latter include both non-Salafi Sunnis and Twelver Shi'is, the latter of whom are supposed to disavow individuals who criticize or insult the Imams or who are believed to seek to harm the Shi'a.⁴⁵ Opposition to Western states, Hegghammer notes, is also not unique to “*jihadi*-Salafis” and a number of prominent “*jihadi*-Salafis” have also not focused their criticisms or activism directly against the West.⁴⁶

As an alternative approach toward conceptualizing the political behavior of Islamist activists, Hegghammer proposes the use of preference-based terms that focus on the political goals and strategies of specific groups.⁴⁷ These terms allow for better analysis, he argues,

⁴⁵ Maher has also attempted to more clearly and specifically define “*jihadi*-Salafism,” proposing that it is defined by adherence to five things: (1) *tawhīd*, (2) *ḥākīmīya*, (3) *al-walā' min al-mu'minīn wa-l-barā' 'an al-kāfirīn*, (4) *takfīr*, and (5) *jihad*. See Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea* (London: Hurst & Co., 2016), 13-16. While helpful, the problem posed by hybridized movements and organizations such as factions of the Tehrik-i Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which espouse both Salafi or Salafi-zed as well as more *madhhab*-based creedal and juridical positions, remains. When showing a friend and colleague who specializes on Islamic law and conflict in South Asia a creedal document produced by a TTP group, he remarked, upon reading it, how closely it adhered to a number of normative Hanafi legal positions despite its supposed “Salafism.” Despite its popularity, the term “*jihadi*-Salafism” remains analytically problematic, especially for scholars of Islamic civilization and societies, Islamic history, and Islamic law and jurisprudence, at least in certain cases because it can obscure more than it reveals.

⁴⁶ Hegghammer, “Jihadi-Salafis or Revolutionaries,” 255.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 258-259.

because they are based on the observable principle behavior and discourse of Islamist groups that can be more clearly defined and explained than can theological descriptors such as “Salafism.”⁴⁸ They also allow for a greater degree of nuance.⁴⁹ In his proto-typology, he identifies five main rationales for Islamist activism, which he argues “represent the most important *reasons for which Islamists act* [emphasis in the original]”⁵⁰: (1) state-oriented, which seeks to change the social and political layout of the state; (2) nation-oriented, which seeks to capture control of a specific territory or state that they believe to be occupied or otherwise dominated by non-Muslims or apostates; (3) *Umma*-oriented, which sees the *Umma* as an idealized transnational community that it seeks to protect from external threats from non-Muslims; (4) morality-oriented, which is focused on changing Muslims’ social conduct and steer it toward a more “conservative and literalist direction;” and (5) sectarian, which is defined by hostility toward other Islamic sects or methods of practice.⁵¹ All five rationales include both non-violent as well as violent manifestations and describe short and mid-term rather than longer term political goals, a distinction which is important because of the difficulty in determining with any certainty the actual end goals of a political actor given their often vague explanations as well as the role of unforeseen dynamics and events in changing an actor’s strategy, guiding ideology, or final social and political aims.⁵² The relative importance of these different rationales to a specific actor is determined through their behavior and discourse, and it is possible for an actor to adhere to different rationales, which Hegghammer notes are not mutually exclusive.⁵³

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 261.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 258.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 260.

Violent Islamist Groups: A Typology

Violent Islamist groups can, according to Hegghammer's typology, be classified into five ideal types, which are also not mutually exclusive: (1) Socio-revolutionaries who fight to capture the state from an "apostate" Muslim government; (2) Violent irredentists who seek to free a specific territory from a local, non-Muslim occupier, (3) Violent pan-Islamists attempting to defend the entire *Umma* as an idealized transnational community, divided into Classical *Jihadis* who fight using conventional means within a geographically-bound local conflict zone and Global *Jihadis* who use a variety of tactics to fight against "apostate" Muslim regimes and non-Muslim states in multiple locations locally and abroad; (4) Vigilantists who use violence to force other Muslims to change their behavior; and (5) Violent sectarians who use violence in a conflict with competing sects.⁵⁴

Nuanced preference-based classifications are particularly useful in the study of armed Islamist groups such as Al-Shabaab and the Afghan Taliban that exhibit multiple rationales—or ideological hybridization—in their guiding ideology and decision-making.⁵⁵ Al-Shabaab, for example, is both state-oriented and, despite its leaders' claims to reject nationalism, nation-oriented with regard to being wedded to aspects of Somali ethno-nationalism. The group also espouses an *Umma*-oriented rationale, though its on-the-ground decision-making suggests that its primary objectives remain largely domestic (Somalia-specific) and regional in that they include a dedication to a pan-Somali state that includes historically Somali-majority ethnic regions in what are now Kenya and Ethiopia. The influx of and increasing reliance on non-Somali Kenyan foreign fighters, however, may also shift Al-Shabaab's goals over time.

⁵⁴ Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia*, 5-8.

⁵⁵ Thomas Hegghammer, "The Ideological Hybridization of Jihadi Groups," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, 18 November 2009, at <https://www.hudson.org/research/9866-the-ideological-hybridization-of-jihadi-groups>, last accessed 21 December 2017.

Furthermore, Al-Shabaab's behavior includes a mix of different ideal types of violent Islamist activism including socio-revolutionary, violent irredentist, vigilantist, and violent sectarian aspects. Unlike the still Somalia and East Africa-centric preferences and behavior of Al-Shabaab, the original Al-Qaeda organization and Islamic State, in contrast, represent perhaps the most globalist and transnational incarnations of violent Islamism that the world has seen, albeit in forms that are not detached from local dynamics. This attachment of even the most transnational and pan-Islamist groups to local and regional dynamics is best seen in the preferences of the two organizations' regional affiliates or, in the case of Islamic State, "provinces," whose leaderships embrace both pan-Islamism as well as more geographically-bound irredentism and regionalism with regard to their operations and strategies.

Hegghammer's theory of the ideological hybridization of *jihadi* groups is useful in analyzing the mixed behavior of some militant Islamist actors. He defines an ideologically hybridized group as "one whose behavior and ideological discourse display influences of more than one type of ideal rationale in near equal measure."⁵⁶ Alliances and organizational affiliation or collaboration are not synonymous with ideological hybridization because it is possible for two organizations to cooperate without necessarily embracing the same rationales for action.⁵⁷ He uses as an example the Uyghur Islamist rebel group the East Turkestan Islamic Party (ETIP), which has interacted closely with a host of other militant Islamist groups in Pakistan's Pashtun tribal regions including Al-Qaeda Central, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, and factions of the Tehrik-i Taliban Pakistan while, at the time, continuing to focus its physical and verbal attacks on China.⁵⁸ Since the article's publication in 2009, the ETIP has expanded operations to include a strong branch in Syria where it is

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

aligned with various Syrian rebel groups against the Ba‘th regime while also retaining a strong focus on China. Can the ETIP now be considered to have undergone ideological hybridization or is the group’s involvement in the Syrian civil war instead more representative of the influence of “classical jihadism”—that is, the desire to defend fellow Muslims from persecution and attack in a manner which is aligned more closely to traditional and more mainstream legal views regarding the justification and necessity for defensive military *jihad*?

In the case of Al-Shabaab, I argue in the following chapters that the group is representative of a certain type of militant Islamist actor, like the Afghan Taliban, whose motivations have been hybridized since their founding and continue to be influenced by a combination of different rationales up to the present day—what Hegghammer labels a “born hybrid” group. Transnationalism or pan-Islamism, irredentism, and vigilantism (the latter presented as a form of Islamically-mandated *hisba*) each play an important role in the construction of the group’s ideology, actions, and strategic decision-making, with multiple rationales often being exhibited in the same action. The Somali group fits closest, though not fully, within the parameters of a “born hybrid” organization because its early goals included a combination of irredentist, revolutionary, and pan-Islamist themes and, as it evolved, Al-Shabaab has continued to be primarily focused on Somalia and East Africa in spite of its strong pan-Islamist, global *jihadi* rhetoric. Al-Shabaab also continues to exhibit elements of vigilantism in its governing project and sectarianism, with the latter being aimed particularly at Somali Sufis.⁵⁹ The influence of the local sociopolitical environment in places such as Somalia on the evolution of Islamist movements must also be considered. Particular attention is paid in this dissertation to the contextual factors that shape *jihadi*-insurgent ideology and

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

decision-making including economic aims and preexisting societal dynamics and social formations such as clans and tribes.

Salafism as both an intellectual religious interpretive tradition and a methodological approach toward Islam's sacred sources, the Qur'an and *Sunna* of the Prophet Muhammad including the *ḥādīth* canon, is shaped by contextual realities and local dynamics that determine the preferences of both Islamist and non-Islamist actors. Like other intellectual currents and approaches towards activating Islam as a lived tradition and model with which to structure daily life, Salafism is not a uniform or unchanging mode of thought or action despite the adherence by all Salafis to certain core principles regarding what they see as proper '*aqīda*, interpretation of sources, and actualization of Islamic principles in daily life across the social and political spectrum as well as to a particular canon of religious texts.⁶⁰ What Salafism does do is give those Islamic and Islamist organizations and social movements, both militant and non-militant, which draw from the Salafi tradition, methodology, and canon both a sense of identity as well as a methodological guide to follow in their interpretation of Islamic theology, '*aqīda*, and law.

Framing and Culture

The level of success of the discursive framing of "authentic Islam," drawing either wholecloth or on elements from within the Salafi tradition, by Islamist/*jihadi* rebel organizations is determined by the manner in which these groups frame their objectives and actions toward achieving them. *Jihadi* rebel organizations enjoy the most success as proto-state actors when they take into account local factors and contexts in shaping their approach toward informal statebuilding, governance, and framing and utilization of violence.

⁶⁰ This canon of religious scholars and texts gives individual and group Salafi actors a sense of identity and membership in a unique and, in their eyes, a superior religious community intimately linked to Islamic sacred history through the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions. On the role of the "Salafi canon" in transmitting and spreading Salafi theology and creedal beliefs in a particular Islamic context, see Thurston, *Salafism in Nigeria*, particularly Chapter One.

The dissertation draws on the concept of framing and the three core tasks that the framing process must achieve: (1) frame construction and diagnosis of a problem or set of problems, (2) proposal of solutions, and (3) providing persuasive rationale to support the proposed solutions and mobilize and motivate support for collective action including the willingness to participate in high-risk activism.⁶¹ The framing process draws on culture as a “tool kit” to shape symbolic repertoires and mobilization (collective action) frames to construct and convince people to undertake specific “strategies of action”—defined here as “persistent ways of ordering action through time.”⁶² This dissertation generally adopts Swidler’s definition of culture as “symbolic vehicles of meaning, including beliefs, ritual practices, art forms, and ceremonies, as well as informal cultural practices such as language, gossip, stories, and rituals of daily life.”⁶³ Culture, though it offers a tool kit that social movement entrepreneurs can draw upon, should not be confused with causality of actions taken by social movement organizations or movement activists.⁶⁴ This tool kit of symbols may be used in different ways by different individuals and groups to determine modes of action to address specific problem types.⁶⁵ The concept of *strategies of action* takes into account the fact that action is a part of a broader process and is not undertaken piecemeal according to interests or values.⁶⁶ “Strategies” here refers not to a plan of action that has a

⁶¹ Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000), 615-618. See also: Sidney G. Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics: Revised and Updated Third Edition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), Chapter Seven.

⁶² Ann Swidler, “Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies,” *American Sociological Review* 51, no. 2 (1986): 273-286.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 273.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 276.

specific goal but rather “a general way of organizing action” that may result in the achievement of different goals.⁶⁷ She notes:

People do not build lines of action from scratch, choosing actions one at a time as efficient means to given ends. Instead, they construct chains of action beginning with at least some pre-fabricated links. Culture influences action through the shape and organization of those links, not by determining the ends to which they are put. [...] real cultures contain diverse, often conflicting symbols, rituals, stories, and guides to action. [...] A culture is not a unified system that pushes action in a consistent direction. Rather, it is more like a ‘tool kit’ or repertoire from which actors select differing pieces for constructing lines of action.⁶⁸

Analysis of culture should also take into account its interaction with social structures as well as how it can change during periods of calm and tumult.⁶⁹ Culture is best considered not as a unified whole but rather as being composed of multiple parts or “chunks.”⁷⁰

Strategies of action are cultural products; the symbolic experiences, mythic lore, and ritual practices of a group or society create moods and motivations, ways of organizing experience and evaluating reality, modes of regulating conduct, and ways of forming social bonds, which provide resources for constructing strategies of action.⁷¹

The formation of collective action/mobilization frames is a process that “implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction” involving the agency of the social movement organization or movement activists and the contentious process of developing interpretative frames to address desired changes in the existing social order.⁷² To be successful, frames must achieve *frame resonance* with their intended audiences and be both credible and salient.⁷³

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 277.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 283.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 285.

⁷² Benford and Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements,” 614.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 619-622; David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, “Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization,” in *International Social Movement Research, Vol. 1: From Structure to Action: Comparing Social Movement Research across Cultures*, ed. Bert Klandermans, Hanspeter Kriesi, and Sidney Tarrow (London: JAI Press, 1988); David A. Snow and E. Burke Rochford, Jr., Steven K. Worden, and Robert D. Benford, “Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation,” *American Sociological Review* 51, no. 5 (1986), 464-481; and Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974).

Williams argues for the broadening of the cultural perspective in analysis of social movements so as to pay closer attention to the *cultural environment* in which specific social movements emerge as well as to how these environments shape collective action.⁷⁴ He is also critical of the “tool kit” metaphor because it “underplays the affective, moral, and even unacknowledged ways in which culture holds and shapes those within it.”⁷⁵ He proposes instead the concept of *repertoire* because, he argues, the concept of culture “must be able to deal with written and spoken language used as rhetoric—that is, instrumentally meant to persuade—as well as capturing the distinctive properties of actions, rituals, and other expressive dimensions of symbols.”⁷⁶ Further, he says that *repertoire* “seems to combine a sense of choice within structured options, leaving theoretical room for agency and strategic decisions, while still recognizing that cultural and historical circumstances circumscribe the options available, and even privilege some choices over others.”⁷⁷

Performing Culture

Culture exists not only within social movement organizations or among activists but is also composed of the “*public enactment of culture* [emphasis in the original]” that is at stake with many social movement challenges. The publicness of cultural displays aimed at social change produces distinct challenges to understanding the cultural resources used by movements. Public enactments form much of the cultural context that shapes the substance, form, and trajectory of movement challenges and the meanings of the cultural resources that movements use.”⁷⁸ Social movement activists engaged in claims-making participate in

⁷⁴ Rhys H. Williams, “The Cultural Contexts of Collective Action: Constraints, Opportunities, and the Symbolic Life of Social Movements,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, eds. David A. Snow, Sarah Anne Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 91-115.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 100-101.

contentious performances that are organized and play out according to specific scripts and repertoires of action while using repertoires to frame their actions.⁷⁹

In the context of territorial Islamist rebel organizations, the public enactment and ritualization of Islamic symbols and symbolic repertoires is an integral part of these groups' discursive framing process. The meanings of the *jihadi* proto-state's decisionmaking, particularly but not only its use of violence as a means of social regulation and control, only achieve full frame resonance with the local governed population through the public referencing and performance of these organizations' particular brand of Islam and Islamic culture. For example, it is through the ritualized performance of violence to punish a range of legal and societal infractions that Islamic State's and Al-Shabaab's invocation and implementation of Islamic law and specifically the *hudūd* are framed as a successful means through which to crack down on insecurity and bring about an improvement in local people's daily lives. The local population may or may not buy in to a *jihadi* rebel organization's frames but this does not change the importance of public performance and ritual to the the proto-state group's project of establishing, maintaining, and seeking to legitimate informal mechanisms of governance. Public performance and enactment of discursive frames, which draw on specific sets of Islamic and other cultural symbols, serve as both a way to project power domestically as well as frame the organization as capable, formidable, and "on the rise" to transnational audiences. Lacking the resources of most functioning state governments, Islamist rebels must find alternative ways to collect revenue, implement law and order, and legitimate various forms of violence. The dissertation will, in part, consider how territorial Islamist rebel organizations utilize repertoires and contentious performances including actions that advance proto- or counter-state claims. Violence is used as a lens through which to understand the construction and deployment of specific social, political,

⁷⁹ Charles Tilly, *Contentious Performances* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

historical, and ideological/religious claims. The role of culture in the creation of repertoires and culture as a concept for analysis is also discussed.⁸⁰

Changes in *political opportunity structures* may also facilitate or constrain the resonance and success of the framing process, though Benford and Snow note that the degree or extent of political opportunities is “seldom, if ever, a clear and easily read structural entity” and that “its existence and openness is subject to debate and interpretation and can thus be framed by movement actors as well as others.”⁸¹ Mobilization frames seek in part to link individual and group identities in a way that encourages particular forms of action.⁸² With specific regard to the use of the concept of framing in the study of militant Islamism, Snow and Byrd rightly point out that a monolithic application and definition of the concept of ideology obscures more than it explains because it fails to recognize ideological variation and flexibility as well as different links between ideas, events, and actions.⁸³

Insurgent leaders are often accused of trying to hide their “true intentions” behind symbolism and rhetoric but such allegations often ignore the role played by the intended audience for symbolic repertoires.⁸⁴ Mampilly points out symbolic repertoires can provide rebel leaders with an advantage by allowing them to “cultivate different audiences with distinct messages” and argues that the task of analysts is not to dismiss outright insurgent

⁸⁰ New methods of conceptualizing culture as an analytical concept in social movement research are covered in Britta Baumgarten, Priska Daphi, and Peter Ullrich, *Conceptualizing Culture in Social Movement Research* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). The contributors look at different definitions of culture from the very narrow to the extremely broad, the artificial separation of culture from structural approaches such as resource mobilization and organizational structure, internal movement cultures and their influence on movement activity, and the interaction and relation between individual and collective/group behavior.

⁸¹ Benford and Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements,” 631.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 631-632.

⁸³ David A. Snow and Scott C. Byrd, “Ideology, Framing Processes, and Islamic Terrorist Movements,” *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (2007), 119-136.

⁸⁴ Zachariah Mampilly, “Performing the Nation-State: Rebel Governance and Symbolic Processes,” in *Rebel Governance in Civil War*, Ana Arjona, Nelson Kasfir, and Zachariah Cherian Mampilly, eds. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015) 87.

symbolic constructions but instead to “determine the intended audience through a close reading of its symbolic repertoire.”⁸⁵

The concept of “framing” will allow for analysis that goes beyond existing discussions of the violence carried out by the militant Islamist organizations through the popular paradigm of religious “fundamentalism” and senseless, “religiously-mandated” terrorism. In doing so, violence becomes less “random” and is instead more intelligible as a set of actions and frames resting on a set of strategic political and ideological interests and enacted as the result of a social process that can only be fully understood within the environment and context in which it is employed. The symbolism of violence is also an integral part of the way in which violent acts are performed, which constitutes a form of political ritual and spectacle. Rather than look at these *jihadi* groups in the bubble of “Islam” alone, this thesis will draw upon the theoretical contributions from studies on other Muslim and non-Muslim cases in order to examine the social processes at play and the symbolic use of violence more broadly across cultures and contexts.⁸⁶

“Enjoining the Right and Forbidding the Wrong:” Framing, Territoriality, and the Organization of Violence

The capture of territory presents those *jihadi* rebel organizations interested in advancing a proto-state project with the substantial challenge of setting up a durable yet flexible systems of informal governance and governing administration. The transition from a solely military movement to one that includes a civil bureaucratic wing presents rebel leaders with the challenge of how to divide and balance their limited human and financial resources as well as with the central task of developing and maintaining clear lines of communication and interaction with the local population. This transition process also requires *jihadi* rebel

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ This project also attempts to utilize the new sub-field of study on “*jihadi* culture” represented by Thomas Hegghammer, ed., *Jihadi Culture: The Art and Social Practices of Militant Islamists* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

groups to actualize what had previously been a solely theoretical exercise in mapping out methods of functioning governance including resource allocation between their civil and military wings and exercising social control through the organization of violence and coercion. Transnational appeals, which were vital in attracting external funding and recruits (foreign fighters) to groups such as Al-Shabaab, have to work alongside local appeals and can result in tensions between local and foreign organization members. Foreign fighters may also not be dedicated to a rebel group's primarily localized goals and can destabilize its internal membership. Advances in technology and media, such as the expansion of social media networks like Twitter and YouTube, necessitate the development of more nuanced analysis with regard to an organization's construction of the local, translocal, and transnational and "globalist" space and frames.⁸⁷

Jihadi rebel territorial control is based on each organization's conception of law and order, justice (‘*adl*), “enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong” (*amr bi-l-ma‘rūf wa-l-nahy ‘an al-munkar*),⁸⁸ and organizational interests. Law and order is achieved through the strategically deployed and organized use of official (legitimate) violence—that is, violence enacted by *jihadi* rulers as part of their claim to be the legitimate civil as well as military authority in a given territory. In order to situate their use of violence within an aura of sociohistorical legitimacy, *jihadi* governing regimes couch the violence of social control—referred to herein as the *violence of control*—within the legal and political framework of enacting the commandments of God and the Prophet Muhammad as represented in the *shari‘a* and Islamic jurisprudence, particularly but not solely criminal or penal law. *Jihadi*

⁸⁷ On how social media has created a new translocal dimension to what would have otherwise been remote, local struggles, see Michael Dahlberg-Grundberg and Johan Örestig, “Extending the Local: Activist Types and Forms of Social Media Use in the Case of an Anti-Mining Struggle,” *Social Movement Studies* 16, no. 3 (2017), 309-322.

⁸⁸ On the role of this doctrine as an impetus for social action, see Roel Meijer, “Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong as a Principle of Social Action: The Case of the Egyptian al-Jama‘a al-Islamiyya,” in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 189-220.

rebel governance is particularly obsessed with the physical demonstration of their religious credentials in the form of carrying out set and discretionary punishments for offenses such as theft, highway banditry, robbery, fornication, slander, and the consumption of alcohol or other banned substances. In interpreting the *shari‘a* in such a narrow way, *jihadi* rebels ironically embrace the post-Enlightenment view of both religion and law in which both are seen primarily as being in direct competition with Western secularism rather than as a comprehensive framework for life, as was the case in pre-modern Islamic societies. This tension between the desire to “bring back” an idealized golden age of Islam and the thoroughly modern characteristics of Islamism generally and territorial jihadism specifically, is discussed in depth in Chapter One.

The following chapters examine the different types and nature of violence and its use as a governance tool by non-state *jihadi* rebel groups with cross-regional bases and social networks, arguing that violence is deployed in a symbolically-embedded and strategic manner rather than being “senseless” or disorganized. The dissertation also analyzes the instrumental and symbolic dimensions of violence in order to investigate the complex interplay between the sociopolitical environments in which these rebel groups operate, their organizational structures and goals (including economic aims), and the formation and role of ideology.

Not Just Islam: Similarities between Movements’ Use of Identity Frames

The social movements and political violence literatures demonstrate the significant similarities between Islamic and non-Islamic actors and provide useful analytical tools for the study of militant Islamism undertaken herein. These include insights about the use of social networks and processes,⁸⁹ analysis of the motivations of recruits to violent clandestine

⁸⁹ See: Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, particularly the chapters by Diane Singerman, Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, and Janine A. Clark; Mohammed M. Hafez, *Why Muslims Rebel: Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), Chapter 4 and Chapter 5; and Jacob N. Shapiro, *The Terrorist’s Dilemma: Managing Covert Violent Organizations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 133.

organizations, the dynamics at play in domestic and foreign fighter recruitment and volunteering,⁹⁰ and a focus on material and psychological appeals and incentives in organizational outreach and individuals' decisions to engage in violent, high-risk activism.⁹¹

Appeals to identity are particularly influential because of their ability to be interpreted and shaped at the personal level to fit the needs of individuals in a state of anomie who are seeking a sense of purpose and belonging.⁹² Recruiters to clandestine militant social movement organizations, whether to militant Islamist or non-Islamic groups like the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacist organizations, attempt to manipulate the anomic condition to make target audiences more receptive to their appeals—for example, by playing off feelings of profound unease and listlessness in a rapidly changing home environment and an individual's feelings that their cultural, social, or economic status and opportunities are being threatened or that their present status is preventing them from enjoying society's full benefits.⁹³ Globalization has contributed to this process by challenging individuals' long-

⁹⁰ Notable examples include David Malet, *Foreign Fighters: Transnational Identity in Civil Conflicts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Jennifer Mustapha, "The *Mujahideen* in Bosnia: The Foreign Fighter as Cosmopolitan Citizen and/or Terrorist," *Citizenship Studies* 17, no. 6-7 (2013), 742-755; Thomas Hegghammer, "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters: Islam and the Globalization of Jihad," *International Security* 35, no. 3 (2010/2011), 56-57 and "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists' Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting," *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 1 (2013), 1-15; Cerwyn Moore and Paul Tumelty, "Foreign Fighters and the Case of Chechnya," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 5 (2008), 412-433; Chen Bram and Moshe Gammer, "Radical Islamism, Traditional Islam and Ethno-Nationalism in the Northern Caucasus," *Middle Eastern Studies* 49, no. 2 (2013), 296-337; and Alexander Knysh, "Contextualizing the Salafi-Sufi Conflict (from the Northern Caucasus to Hadramawt)," *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 4 (2007): 503-530.

⁹¹ Rogelio Alonso, "Individual Motivations for Joining Terrorist Organizations: A Comparative Qualitative Study on Members of ETA and IRA," in *Tangled Roots: Social and Psychological Factors in the Genesis of Terrorism*, ed. Jeffrey Ivan Victoroff (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2006) and Klaus Wasmund, "The Political Socialization of West German Terrorists," in *Political Violence and Terror: Motifs and Motivations*, ed., Peter H. Merkl (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 208.

⁹² Wasmund, "The Political Socialization of West German Terrorists", 203-204 and 207.

⁹³ Relevant studies include: Randy Blazak, "White Boys to Terrorist Men: Target Recruitment of Nazi Skinheads," *American Behavioral Scientist* 44, (2001), 987-990; Wasmund, "The Political Socialization of West German Terrorists;" Bernadette C. Hayes and Ian McAllister, "Sowing Dragon's Teeth: Public Support for Political Violence and Paramilitarism in Northern Ireland," *Political Studies* 49, no. 5 (2001), 901-922; Robert W. White, "From Peaceful Protest to Guerilla War: Micromobilization of the Provisional Irish Republican Army," *American Journal of Sociology* 94, no. 6 (1989), 1277-1302; Steve Bruce, "The Problems of 'Pro-State' Terrorism: Loyalist Paramilitaries in Northern Ireland," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 4, no. 1 (1992), 67-88; Andrew Silke, "Ragged Justice: Loyalist Vigilantism in Northern Ireland," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 11, no. 3 (1999), 1-31; David Cunningham, *Klanville, U.S.A.: The Rise and Fall of the Civil Rights-era Ku Klux*

held sense of security and belonging and these groups seek to preserve their communities at all costs.⁹⁴

Indeed, there is much to be gleaned analytically from studies of other social movement organizations and clandestine militant groups for which theology and identity politics have also played a central role, from historical incarnations of the Ku Klux Klan to the various factions within the Irish Republican Army and Loyalist paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland. The tendency to assume that all “terrorists” share the same dispositions and use violence as merely a wanton form of aggression is analytically problematic and not particularly useful, from a research perspective.⁹⁵ In contrast to the “ideology thesis” favored by many terrorism studies scholars, Tilly proposes a more useful alternative, the “variety thesis,” which sees in the use of violence and terrorism “a common strategy” but also “multiple motives” and “complex social processes.”⁹⁶ Militant Islamists are not unique in their methods of mobilization, framing, or use of violence. Rather, they, like similar non-Muslim actors, use violence as a tool with which to carry out *symbolic direct actions*, hitting symbolically important targets with the aim to create a mass media event.⁹⁷ The use of violence and terrorism (defined herein as anti-civilian violence regardless of whether the perpetrator is a state or non-state actor) is strategic and part of a relational process between

Klan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); and Rory McVeigh, *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan: Right-Wing Movements and National Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

⁹⁴ Catarina Kinnvall, “Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security,” *Political Psychology* 25, no. 5 (2004), 742 and Robert Wuthnow, *The Left Behind: Decline and Rage in Rural America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

⁹⁵ Charles Tilly, “Terror as Strategy and Relational Process,” *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 46, no. 1-2 (2005), 21-27.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁹⁷ Philip W. Sutton and Stephen Vertigans, “Islamic “New Social Movements”? Radical Islam, Al-Qa’ida and Social Movement Theory,” *Mobilization: An International Journal* 11, no. 1 (2006), 103 and 108, and Donatella della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3-4.

the group utilizing the violence and its interlocutors (the state, rival groups, local populations).

Violence is presented by clandestine militant groups—Islamic or non-Islamic—as a solution to perceived problems and threats, often in stark Manichean terms.⁹⁸ Militant groups of all types frequently create black-and-white categories in which they place people; there are those who are “for them” and those who are “against them.” This is not unique to *jihadi* groups. The 1960s Ku Klux Klan, for example, also had a dualistic view that divided “whites” from “niggers.” Race, however, was not the only basis for this dualism, as the former category was based not only on skin color but also on “adherence to segregationist principles”; whites who worked for the civil rights movement or opposed segregation were thus termed “white niggers” and were seen, in many ways, as being a greater threat.⁹⁹ This is similar to the justification of violence by *jihadi* actors against fellow Muslims who are seen by them as being in league with non-Muslim enemies; they are labeled “apostates” and even “*kuffār*.” The latter are seen as being even more dangerous than non-Muslim foes because they outwardly share many of the same characteristics as the militants and should side with their fellow Muslims but instead have betrayed Islam and the *Umma*. Finally, violence by militant organizations is a political *performance* and symbolic,¹⁰⁰ as well as strategic and ideological, a fact often neglected or downplayed in analyses of militant Islamist actors. There is not a straight, monocausal connection between *jihadi* ideology and action, and an organization’s decision-making process and actions are rather undertaken as part of a multifaceted social process in which ideology is but one factor.

⁹⁸ Blazak, 994 and Peter H. Merkl, “Approaches to the Study of Political Violence,” in *Political Violence and Terror: Motifs and Motivations*, ed., Peter H. Merkl (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 50.

⁹⁹ David Cunningham, *Klansville, U.S.A.: The Rise and Fall of the Civil Rights-era Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 141.

¹⁰⁰ Peter H. Merkl, “Approaches to the Study of Political Violence,” in *Political Violence and Terror: Motifs and Motivations*, ed., Peter H. Merkl (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 47-48 and Shapiro, *The Terrorist’s Dilemma*, 124-133.

Historical studies of radical social movement organizations demonstrate that appeals to religion are hardly unique to Islamic movements. Baker has shown, for example, the key role that Protestant Christianity played in the “Second” Ku Klux Klan (KKK) between 1915 and 1930 in the United States when the movement was representative of American culture more broadly and not peripheral or fringe.¹⁰¹ Religion occupied a prominent place in the KKK’s print culture, fraternal rituals, and “theatrical displays,” and was an integral component of members’ and the movement’s self-identity.¹⁰² It was the organization’s twin messages of faith and patriotism and love of the nation that gained it widespread support and a huge following, numbering in the millions by the early 1920s. These appeals were successful because of the political and social environments (opportunity structures) of the time period, which was marked by large waves of immigration from predominantly Catholic countries and Jewish populations in parts of Eastern Europe as well as the migration of Southern blacks from the rural, agrarian areas to urban industrial centers, increasing the competition for jobs and alarming white Americans.¹⁰³

In many ways, the second wave KKK was a “religious order.”¹⁰⁴ Baker convincingly argues that understanding the central role of religion in movements such as the Klan helps scholars move beyond “simplistic presentations of frustration and anger, which remain popular excuses for membership in such movements.”¹⁰⁵ A serious analysis of the role of religion can also help scholars understand “the ways that religion can inform ideologies of intolerance, violence, and terror, as well as bolster the commitment of members by relying on

¹⁰¹ Kelly J. Baker, *Gospel According to the Klan: The KKK’s Appeal to Protestant America, 1915-1930* (Topeka: University of Kansas Press, 2011), 1-10.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

a more ultimate cause for such insidious agendas.”¹⁰⁶ Frustration does not explain why men and women chose to express their discontent and anxieties in “extraordinary ways,” such as the lighting of crosses with fire and dressing in robes and practicing ritualized ceremonies.¹⁰⁷

There is a disagreement about whether the “religion” of movements such as the Klan or Al-Qaeda and Islamic State, which most mainstream religious people view with loathing and distaste, is “true religion.”¹⁰⁸ Baker argues that this debate is not useful from a scholarly perspective, a sentiment with which I strongly agree. It is worth quoting her argument here at length:

The desire to set up boundaries between “true” and “false” religion marks the religion of the hate movement as somehow not religion, which proves problematic for several reasons. First, this allows for the lack of attention to Klansmen and Klanswomen’s religious leanings. If they are not authentically religious, then their motivations are not impacted by religion at all. Second and more important, presenting the religion of the Klan as false religion allows an assumption that religion is somehow not associated with movements and people who might be unsavory, disreputable, or dangerous. Religion is at best ambiguous, which means that it can be associated with movements we label “good” or “bad”, but limiting the place of religion does not mean that religion, specifically Christianity, cannot be associated with the Klan or white supremacist movements more generally. A proper examination would explore how the religion of the Klan impacted its members, practices, and politics without engaging the so-called falsity of the order’s religion. This association with false religion means that what Klansmen and Klanswomen wrote and said about their religious backgrounds becomes disingenuous and less credible than other people’s writings and declarations.¹⁰⁹

Ignoring the importance of religion, which is key to self-identity of many members, neglects a “crucial self-identification.” The Klan not only emphasized its Protestant identity to mean “non-Catholic” in a contemporary sense, but also presented a “recoded narration of Christian history” in which it represented the “successors of the Reformation” and the “saviors” and the “knights” of “true” Christianity.¹¹⁰ The movement also sought to connect itself not to Martin

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 26-28.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 38-40 and Chapter 3.

Luther but to Jesus Christ in its re-visioning of Christian history.¹¹¹ The applicability of Baker's arguments to the study of Islamist militants is clear.

Studies on the movement cultures created by the major drug cartels in Mexico are also useful parallels to the study of *jihadi* culture. Many of the cartels operate not only as organized criminal entities but also as organizations that have created their own sub-cultures which include a radical reinterpretation of theology and popular religion into a "narco-culture." This in turn has interacted with other new sub-cultures formed by subaltern classes, leading to the formation of new forms of spiritualism and religiosity represented in popular holy figures such as "La Santa Muerte" (Holy/Saint Death), a skeletal, hooded and robed figure based on the Catholic Virgin Mary but rejected by orthodox Catholicism and the Church.¹¹² The cartels, which, like *jihadi* organizations, have been profoundly shaped by globalization and the emergence of new media and communications technology and political and economic systems, have engaged with states through their use of extreme violence and invocation of new forms of cultural expression and spirituality through the form of unique "narco-cultures" (*narcocultura*).¹¹³ In narco-culture, what can generally be termed "mainstream" or "orthodox" Roman Catholicism has been reinterpreted by different social

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 44-50.

¹¹² On La Santa Muerte, see Andrew R. Chesnut, *Devoted to Death: Santa Muerte, the Skeleton Saint* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Alberto Hernández, ed., *La Santa Muerte: Espacios, Cultos, y Devociones* (Tijuana: El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 2016); and Pilar Castells Ballarín, "La Santa Muerte Y La Cultura de los Derechos Humanos," *Revista Liminar. Estudios sociales y humanísticos* 6, no. 1 (2008): 13-25.

¹¹³ On narco-culture, see: John P. Sullivan and Robert J. Bunker, "Rethinking Insurgency: Criminality, Spirituality, and Societal Welfare in the Americas," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 22, no. 5 (2011): 742-763 and "Extreme Barbarism, a Death Cult, and Holy Warriors in Mexico: Societal Warfare South of the Border?," *Small Wars Journal*, 22 May 2011, at <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/societal-warfare-south-of-the-border>, last accessed 21 December 2017; Miguel A. Cabañas, "Imagined Narcoscapes: Narcoculture and the Politics of Representation," *Latin American Perspectives* 41, no. 2, issue 195 (2014): 3-17; Martín Meráz García, "'Narcoballads': The Psychology and Recruitment Process of the 'Narco,'" *Global Crime* 7, no. 2 (2006): 200-213; Paul K. Eiss, "The Narcomedia: A Reader's Guide," *Latin American Perspectives* 41, no. 2, issue 195 (2014): 78-98; Gerardo Gómez Michel and Jungwon Park, "The Cult of Jesús Malverde: Crime and Sanctity as Elements of a Heterogeneous Modernity," *Latin American Perspectives* 41, no. 2, issue 195 (2014): 202-214; and James H. Creechan and Jorge de la Herrán García, "Without God or Law: Narcoculture and Belief in Jesús Malverde," *Religious Studies and Theology* 24, no. 2 (2005), 5-57..

groups including the subaltern poor and criminal classes to fit a unique set of spiritual/religious, sub-group, and sub-cultural needs.¹¹⁴

Similar social processes are also used by social movements that have come to control nation-states. Under Mussolini, Italian fascism created its own reading of Roman (“Italian”) history and framed violence as necessary for national and societal renewal and regeneration.¹¹⁵ The dynamic heroism and action of fascism was juxtaposed with the alleged “domesticity, cowardice, and pacifism” of its opponents in official speeches and violence was presented as an agent of change, struggle as “the fascist movement’s life warranty.”¹¹⁶ Italian fascist readings of history privileged a predetermined narrative centered on political grandeur and military power and later Italian historical contributions were swept aside in favor of this narrative in which Mussolini’s regime was compared favorably to the might of a mythologized, imperial Rome.¹¹⁷ Likewise for *jihadis*, Islam as a religious tradition and historical and civilizational experience is simplified and recast in an almost solely militaristic light, with the Prophet Muhammad being seen primarily as a warrior. The idealized “golden age” is privileged over later instances of Islamic science, philosophy, and theological discussion and debate so as to link contemporary *jihadi* projects with the activist, militarized and mythical sacred past. Violence is a symbolic and performative act that is composed of a

¹¹⁴ Notable studies on the symbolism of narco violence include Howard Campbell, “Narco-Propaganda in the Mexican ‘Drug War’: An Anthropological Perspective,” *Latin American Perspectives*, 41, no. 2, issue 195 (2014): 60-77; Graham H. Turbiville, Jr., “Firefights, Raids, and Assassinations: Tactical Forms of Cartel Violence and Their Underpinnings,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 21, no. 1 (2010): 123-144; Natalia Mendoza Rockwell, “Boots, Belt Buckles, and Sombreros: Narco-Culture in the Altar Desert,” *NACLA Report on the Americas* 44, no. 3 (2011): 27-30; Jeff Garmany, “Drugs, Violence, Fear, and Death: The Necro- and Narco-Geographies of Contemporary Urban Space,” *Urban Geography* 32, no. 8 (2011): 1148-1166; Robert J. Bunker, “Introduction: The Mexican Cartels—Organized Crime vs. Criminal Insurgency,” *Trends in Organized Crime* 16 (2013): 129-137; Howard Campbell and Tobin Hansen, “Is Narco-Violence in Mexico Terrorism?,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 33, no. 2 (2014): 158-173; America Y. Guevara, “Propaganda in Mexico’s Drug War,” *Journal of Strategic Security* 6, no. 5 (2013): 131-151; and Pamela L. Bunker, Lisa J. Campbell, and Robert J. Bunker, “Torture, Beheadings, and Narcocultos,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 21, no. 1 (2010): 145-178.

¹¹⁵ Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini’s Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 31.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 89-93.

set of specific ritual motions and a defined symbolic vocabulary designed to frame a militant organization's actions as being historically authentic, legitimate, and necessary to both protect the in-group community and, in the case of Islamist non-state rebel actors with governance ambitions, the proto-state.

Understanding Insurgent Violence

Why do insurgents intentionally carry out violence against civilian populations during civil wars?¹¹⁸ In his landmark study of civil war violence toward non-combatants, Kalyvas identifies three levels of interactions that impact the scope and utilization of violence: (1) interactions at the elite (macro) level of organizations and states (unitary political actors) or “grand politics”; (2) the interactions between unitary political actors and the populations living under their control; (3) interactions within small groups and between their individual members.¹¹⁹ Rather than focus primarily or even solely on elites with the assumption that organizations and states are unitary rather than multi-faceted entities, he argues that it is necessary to disaggregate the different levels at which political decision-making, including that regarding the use of violence, is undertaken.¹²⁰ “The assumption is that elites determine automatically and unilaterally the course of group actions and that groups are monolithic and behave as such,” he says.¹²¹ Insurgent organizations and state governments and the populations that they seek to rule over and receive support from are not unitary but are composed instead of different entities and individuals pursuing their own interests, interests which are not necessarily singular and may instead be divergent.¹²² To understand how

¹¹⁸ I draw here upon the study of civil war violence against non-combatants by parties engaged in civil wars in Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 5. Unlike him, I focus in this chapter solely on insurgent violence and coercion directed at civilian/non-combatant populations.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*, 11.

elites/organizations interact with the population thus requires knowledge about the internal dynamics within the latter such as how family, ethnic, religious, political, economic, or tribal and clan ties impact the decision-making and behavior of civilians.¹²³

Violence takes a multitude of forms including its physical and nonphysical and structural manifestations.¹²⁴ The focus here, however, is limited to the physical utilization of violence by *jihadi*-insurgent organizations as a tool of territorial rule and acts of coercion and the strategic threat of violence that are aimed at maintaining insurgent control of the civilian population. Collectively, I refer to this type of strategically implemented selective violence as the *violence of control*, that is, violence that is utilized by insurgent organizations to maintain control and governance over territory as a kind of statelet, even if rudimentary when compared with the ideal example of the modern nation-state. The violence of control is differentiated thusly from the violence of the frontline battlefields between insurgents and their opponents, whether the state government or rival non-state armed groups. Unlike the latter type of violence, which is aimed at additional territorial conquest or contestation, the violence of control seeks to implement insurgent rule over already-captured/controlled territories as part of a broader civil administration campaign.¹²⁵

Understanding Rebel Governance and Symbolic Violence

The growing literature on rebel governance provides a theoretical framework with which to analyze territorial Islamist/*jihadi* rebel organizations—defined here as, Islamist rebel insurgent groups that control territory and are engaged in establishing a proto-state political entity through civil as well as military means. The rebel governance literature, which builds upon studies on social movements and political violence, also augments the

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹²⁵ On the different types of violence in civil war scenarios and the variations between battlefield and other forms of violence, see *Ibid.*, 21.

theoretical and empirical insights from studies of clandestine, violent political and terrorist organizations that do not exercise governing control over territory and whose leaderships may have little interest in running a civil, bureaucratic state.

Despite similarities between what can be loosely classified as “non-state” and “(proto) state” *jihadi* organizations—defined here as being organizations whose leaderships do not control significant territory with civilian populations or do not attempt to establish a civil bureaucracy distinguishable from its military forces and those who, conversely, do—and non-Muslim territorial rebel groups, much of the rebel governance literature up to this point has focused primarily on non-Muslim organizations. In addition, those studies of Islamist insurgent groups that do use the lens of rebellion and insurgency have largely not been situated theoretically within the rebel governance literature but have rather used the “rebel” and “insurgent” labels primarily as adjectival descriptions. This dissertation seeks to bring together the theoretical grounding provided by the literatures on social movements, political violence, rebellion/insurgency, and a central empirical grounding from Islamic history and Islamic studies to analyze Islamist rebel organizations as social movement organizations embedded in broader sociohistorical and social movement currents.

Weinstein, Mampilly, Arjona, Kasfir, and other scholars of rebel governance in South America, the Middle East and North Africa, Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa have outlined the organizational characteristics, economic and social endowments and aims, and symbolic cultures that rebel organizations create and draw upon as they transition from solely military organizations into broader proto-state political projects.¹²⁶ They have elucidated the

¹²⁶ Notable examples include: Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Ana Arjona, Nelson Kasfir, and Zachariah Chierian Mampilly, eds., *Rebel Governance in Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Zachariah Chierian Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life during War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011); and Shane Joshua Barter, “The Rebel State in Society: Governance and Accommodation in Aceh, Indonesia,” in Arjona, Kasfir, and Mampilly, *Rebel Governance in Civil War*. Notable studies on the role of identity and identity formation on rebellion and insurgency include Malet, *Foreign Fighters*; Jeffrey T. Checkel, ed., *Transnational Dynamics of Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Idean Salehyan, *Rebels without Borders: Transnational Insurgencies in World Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009); David

influence of economic interests and the creation and strategic deployment of symbolic power and repertoires by territorial rebel groups as part of their political projects to establish control and regulate relations with local populations, processes analyzed at length in Chapters Three and Four.

The framing of performative violence is at the core of a *jihadi* proto-state group's state-building tools. As a means for social control, violence is effective and useful when implemented strategically and framed in a way that both legitimates its use and identifies why it is being applied in specific situations. In analyzing violence it is important to move beyond simplistic explanations for it that stress "primitive cultures" as being the main cause while obscuring the social, political, and economic dynamics at play.

In *jihadi* rebel proto-states, violence is performative and implemented in a symbolically ritualized way. This is particularly the case with the violence of control. Corporal punishment, when instituted and implemented by the state, is not random but rather follows its own set logic. "There is a legal code of pain," wrote Foucault.

When it involves torture, punishment does not fall upon the body indiscriminately or equally; it is calculated according to detailed rules: the number of lashes of the whip, the positioning of the branding iron, the duration of the death agony on the stake or the wheel (the court decided whether criminal is to be strangled at once or allowed to die slowly, and the points at which this gesture of pity must occur), the type of mutilation to be used (hand cut off, lips or tongue pierced). [...] Furthermore, torture forms part of a ritual. It is an element in the liturgy of punishment and meets two demands. It must mark the victim: it is intended, either by the scar it leaves on the body, or by the spectacle that accompanies it, to brand the victim with infamy; even if its function is to 'purge' the crime, torture does not reconcile; it traces around or, rather, on the very body of the condemned man signs that must not be effaced; in any case, men will remember public exhibition, the pillory, torture and pain duly observed."¹²⁷

Violence is a type of demonstrative frame through which the implementing organization advances claims about its individual and group identity, organizational goals, ideological beliefs, and coercive capabilities. Violent practices and actions are meaningful, rule-

Malet and Miriam J. Anderson, eds., *Transnational Actors in War and Peace: Militants, Activists, and Corporations in World Politics* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2017); Yvan Guichaoua, ed., *Understanding Collective Political Violence* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); and Hegghammer, "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters."

¹²⁷ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 2012), 34.

governed, and poetical.¹²⁸ Violence is, in short, symbolically constructed and implemented by *jihadi* rebel proto-states as a part of the ritual of governance and territorial control.

Violence delineates acceptable behavior by the subject population as well as the rebel organization's members, ideally establishes an environment of law and order, and projects an image of power and authority which is linked historically to the Islamic sacred past and is cemented through alliances and working relationships with key segments of the local population.

Violent actions, no less than any other kind of behavioral expression, are deeply infused with cultural meaning and are the moment for individual agency within historically embedded patterns of behavior. Individual agency, utilizing extant cultural forms, symbols, and icons, may thus be considered "poetic" for the rule-governed substrate that underlies it, and for how this substrate is deployed, through which new meanings and forms of cultural expression emerge. At the same time, the poesis of violence can also lead to its broader legitimization, by linking violent acts to prevalent cultural values [...] The performance of violence cannot thus be amputated from that wider body of cultural performance, whose study has done so much to advance our interpretations of other aspects of human existence. [...] by refusing to critically engage with the fleshy detail of violent acts, we remove them from that very context that makes them meaningful to others, if not ourselves. This temptation to abstract violent acts from their wider field of meaning and significance suggests that it is precisely the cultural contextualization of violent acts that is the theoretical prerequisite for their interpretation.¹²⁹

Understanding the sociocultural processes through which violence is legitimized is particularly important in the study of *jihadi* rebel organizations because of the centrality of ritualized violence to their programs of governance, discursive framing, and symbolic repertoires. Violent acts, as symbolic performances, are imbued with meaning and the social, political, and ideological claims of the perpetrators and the placement of the participants and victims in the broader narrative—the performance and ritualization of a violent act—is, in essence, a framing process.

The "cultural poetics of violent practice" contain information vital to understanding the symbols within a violent act and the way in which violence works as a symbolic practice, herein with relation to its strategic and performative utilization as a tool of *jihadi* rebel

¹²⁸ Neil L. Whitehead, "Introduction: Cultures, Conflicts, and the Poetics of Violent Practice," in *Violence*, ed. Neil L. Whitehead (Sante Fe: School of American Research, 2004), 8.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 9-11.

governance.¹³⁰ It is through considering the framing, performative symbolism, and cultural poetics of violence that acts of brutality such as torture, mutilation, and other grisly acts can be de-exoticized and considered instead as being symbolic, ritualized performances that draw on local, regional, transnational, or hybridized dynamics and contexts.¹³¹

In cases of *jihadi*-insurgent proto-state implementation of the “violence of control”—that is, strategic violence utilized as a form of social control and part of a framing process through which *jihadi* rebel rulers both project power and proclaim their adherence to an idealized version of Islamic law and jurisprudence as a state-building tool—the body of the criminal serves as a canvas on which the ruling power demonstrates its power and claim to legitimate authority. The body of the criminal, who is deemed to have violated the social order, is, as Foucault said, a political object and is used as a prop in the field of power relations and politics.¹³² The criminal’s body and the “legitimate” punishment on it which is enacted by the *jihadi* rulers is imbued with both religio-ideological meaning through the lens of the *shari’a* and political meaning as the place where the *jihadi* rebel proto-state inscribes its claims to legitimate authority.

Jihadi-Insurgent Proto-States and Rebel Governance

Weinstein defines rebel governance as when and wherever “(1) a rebel group exercises control over territory, (2) it establishes institutions within or outside of its military to manage relations with the civilian population, and (3) these institutions set in place a series of formal or informal rules that define a hierarchy of decision making and a system of

¹³⁰ Alex Hinton, “The Poetics of Genocidal Practice: Violence under the Khmer Rouge,” in *Violence*, ed. Neil L. Whitehead, 158-159. Culture and patterns of cultural practice here refer to Ellis’ argument that defines them as a “grammar” and not a “cookie-cutter” notion of culture that produced the same shape each time.” See Stephen Ellis, “Interpreting Violence: Reflections on West African Wars,” in *Violence*, ed. Neil L. Whitehead, 109, which quotes Marshall Sahlins, *Culture in Practice: Selected Essays* (New York: Zone Books, 2000).

¹³¹ I draw here on Hinton, “The Poetics of Genocidal Practice,” 182.

¹³² Foucault, 66.

taxation.”¹³³ The main variation in rebel governance, he argues, comes with regard to their “character, and particularly in the extent to which structures of civilian control exhibit the characteristics of democracy,” meaning the group’s “responsiveness ...to the preferences of its citizens” and the freedom of locals to “formulate their preferences, signal them to fellow citizens and the government, and have them weighed equally by the government without reference to their source or content.”¹³⁴ Rebel groups vary with regard to the extent of power sharing with the civilian population or its local institutions such as civic and political councils as well as with regard to the inclusiveness of the rebel government in terms of the extent to which local civilians are allowed to deliberate on and even contest the conduct of rebel rulers.¹³⁵

The relationship between a rebel governing regime and the local population parallels, Weinstein argues, that between the modern state and its citizens in that in both systems the rulers allow civilians to participate in some contexts but not in others and to varying degrees in different cases.¹³⁶ Rebel rulers must decide how much to constrain their behavior today in the interest of reaping greater rewards in the longer term by encouraging the local population to be productive by providing them with incentives and security.¹³⁷ Some rebel groups strike a bargain with locals while others do not. The reasons that a group may not seek to establish

¹³³ Weinstein, 164. A similar definition of “rebel governance” is sketched out in Nelson Kasfir, “Rebel Governance—Constructing a Field of Inquiry: Definitions, Scope, Patterns, Order, Causes,” in *Rebel Governance in Civil War*, eds. Ana Arjona, Nelson Kasfir, and Zachariah Cherian Mampilly (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), Chapter 2.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 164-165.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 165-167. Some *jihadi* rebel actors make more of an attempt to develop working relationships with local communities and civic organizations, though most still seek to maintain overall territorial control. An example of such an actor is the Hay’at Taḥrīr al-Shām (HTS) coalition in northern Syria, which allowed local councils and civic organizations to exert some control over services provision and civil project administration in 2017 while still maintaining oversight control. On this, see “Taḥrīr al-Shām tasallamu mu’assasatahā al-khidmīya li-Ḥukūmat al-Inqādh” (HTS hands over its services administration to the ‘Salvation Government’), *Enab Baladi*, 7 November 2017, at <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/182737>, last accessed 7 November 2017.

¹³⁶ Weinstein, 167.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 168-171.

an inclusive governing regime with the active participation of local civilians include not being able or wanting to bear the costs of such a political project and constraints to the rebel group's operational and logistical decision-making.¹³⁸ According to Weinstein's theory, though, it is not only a question of flexibility that may lead a rebel group to disregard local civilians but, more importantly, is something that emerges from its "DNA," that is, the original conditions at its inception. Those groups with rich financial resources independent of the local people can afford to disregard the latter's wishes without endangering the group's survival while rebels who rely on social endowments, that is local support, have a greater stake in maintaining a positive relationship with civilians in its territory.¹³⁹ Rebel leaders of resource-rich groups also have a harder time convincing members to sacrifice short-term gains for potential longer-term ones since the membership is much more likely to be made up of *consumer* recruits who joined primarily for self-aggrandizement rather than the achievement of longer-term goals.¹⁴⁰

Examining the question of why some rebel organizations set up sophisticated civil administrations that provide sometimes considerable social services and goods to the local population in areas under their control, Mampilly provides a framework for understanding how and why rebel rulers go about setting up governing institutions and choose to interact with civilian populations and why civilians embrace or reject these institutions' authority in different situations.¹⁴¹ Focusing on rebel groups that have moved beyond the looting of local resources to setting up governing structures, he defines rebel governance as "not only the structures that provide certain public goods but also the practices of rule insurgents adopt,"

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 171.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 171-172.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 172.

¹⁴¹ Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers*.

both ad hoc (informal) and bureaucratic (formal).¹⁴² A rebel civil administration is formed when the insurgents set up a civil affairs apparatus that is “distinct from its military organization,” despite the “often dense” overlaps between the two that, he argues, are important factors in analysis of these organizations.¹⁴³

Governance is more broadly defined as encompassing the different ways in which insurgents and civilians interact with one another, which can vary significantly in terms of their stratification and formalization or lack thereof.¹⁴⁴ Insurgent governance includes a wide range of activities including the provision of food and other material aid to those civilians in need, implementation of law and order, the resolution of civil disputes, and agricultural activities as well as assertions of power through “symbolic actions that complement other ruling practices and structures.”¹⁴⁵ Though he recognizes that insurgencies and rebel governance are highly context-specific, Mampilly makes a number of key theoretical observations about the sociopolitical processes and challenges faced by all insurgent groups attempting to transition from being solely underground military organizations to multifaceted civil as well as military authorities, that is, those rebel groups that understand that the projection of power and authority cannot be achieved solely through violence.¹⁴⁶ Civilian collaboration is considered by some rebel groups as essential to their longer-term governing strategies because it invests the local population, or at least segments of it, in the rebels’ project or otherwise convinces them to not actively resist continued rebel control.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 8 and 53.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 53-55. While only a tiny percentage of the population will become activist participants, it is vital for rebel leaders to prevent the “passive majority” from turning on the rebel group because of its excessive reliance on violence and other coercive measures or the attractiveness of other alternatives offered by the government or rival non-state armed groups (55).

The ability of a rebel group to set up governing structures does not necessarily mean that it is capable of exercising “effective governance,” which Mampilly defines as demonstrating capacity in three areas: (1) developing an effective policing force to provide a degree of security and stability that enables other civil governance to occur, (2) developing a dispute resolution process, either formal or ad hoc, that is used regularly by civilians, and (3) providing locals with public goods beyond security such as education, health care, and food aid.¹⁴⁸ Rebel groups differ also in how they approach the group-civilian relationship, with some ruling unilaterally and others adopting a more interactive communicative approach with the local population or specific groups of notables and non-state actors.¹⁴⁹ An autocratic rebel civil administration, however, is still capable of developing an effective process for providing public goods.¹⁵⁰

Jihadi proto-state projects all share four general characteristics.¹⁵¹ Firstly, they are first “intensely *ideological projects* that are justified solely by the ideological imperative to establish Shari‘ah” (emphasis in the original) and to wage *jihad*.¹⁵² Because of their ideological orientation, Lia argues that their attachment to a particular territory is “relatively low” and certainly much less than that of nationalist and ethno-separatist rebel groups.¹⁵³ *Jihadi* proto-states advertise their ideological commitments by the public performance of certain actions that demonstrate their devotion to the *shari‘a*, media operations campaigns, iconoclasm, and other bids for Islamic legitimacy.¹⁵⁴ Secondly, all *jihadi* proto-states are “internationalist projects” defined by their pan-Islamism, as demonstrated by their desire to

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 17 and 62-65.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Brynjar Lia, “Understanding Jihadi Proto-States,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 4 (2015), at <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/441/html>, last accessed 1 September 2017.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

recruit foreign fighters and gain external support.¹⁵⁵ This, however, does not mean that all *jihadi*-insurgent proto-state projects adopt transnational or global identities and framing in the same way as part of their political, state-building projects and strategies. Thirdly, all *jihadi* proto-states are aggressive in terms of their behavior vis-à-vis their neighbors and the international community, seeking to upend the existing world order in accordance with their revolutionary ideological commitments.¹⁵⁶ Fourthly, *jihadi* proto-states are committed to achieving “effective governance” in the territories that they control by establishing “*comparatively* effective” governing structures (emphasis in the original) and devoting significant organizational time and resources to maintaining civil administrations.¹⁵⁷

A Typology of Jihadi-Insurgent Proto-State Violence

The violence, aside from that associated with traditional battlefield modes of insurgency, performed by *jihadi*-insurgent organizations engaged in proto-state-building projects can be classified into two main types: (1) the *violence of control*, that is, acts of public violence aimed primarily at a domestic, on-the-ground audience as a means of demonstrating insurgent power and bringing about social regulation and order, and (2) violence aimed primarily, though not always exclusively, at external audiences including potential supporters and recruits and the governments and citizenry of enemy states or rival militant, social, political, or religious groups. Both types of violence are performative and, to varying degrees, theatrical in that their enactment is carried out to meet specific strategic as well as symbolic goals, so the typology offered here may intersect and is malleable rather than rigid. However, whereas the *violence of control* primarily serves to advance the *jihadi*-insurgent proto-state’s claim to governing legitimacy and capacity to enact violence as a tool for social regulation and control, performative violence, including the execution of Western

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

and other hostages, is framed and deployed as part of the militant organization's media and information warfare vis-à-vis its domestic and foreign opponents and rivals. In brief, the primary target audiences for the two types of performative violence differ from the perspective of the *jihadi*-insurgent proto-state, though the two typologies are, as noted previously, not necessarily rigid or mutually exclusive. Rather, the typology suggested here attempts to argue that different *performances*/acts of violence can be classified according to their primary intended strategic utility and target audience. The level and nature of violence used by Islamic State and other *jihadi*-insurgent organizations has also evolved and shifted over time in relation to changes in its social and political as well as its military goals and levels of success or failure on the ground.

Case Studies: Selection, Context, and Historical Background

The dissertation examines the strategies and experiences of two territorial Islamist insurgent organizations, the Somali group *Ḥarakāt al-Shabāb al-Mujāhidīn* (Somali: Xarakada Mujaahidiinta Alshabaab; hereafter referred to as “Al-Shabaab”) and Islamic State (*al-Dawla al-Islāmīya*, hereafter referred to as “Islamic State”). Both Islamic State and Al-Shabaab are non-state Islamist armed/rebel groups which have actively sought to monopolize control of territory and construct viable, if limited governing institutions and civil administrations which are distinct from their military wings. As part of their insurgencies and governance projects, both organizations have highly publicized their efforts through discursive framing and well-constructed propaganda in an attempt to generate commitment from existing members and supporters as well as local populations and external supporters. The discursive frames of both groups also draw heavily on Sunni jihadism's sanctification of battlefield martyrdom and call for revolutionary Islamism, an ideology that seeks to take over existing Muslim-majority states and reconstruct them based on an idealized image of the

sacred past. Organizationally, both groups have also been tied to Al-Qaeda, though to different degrees and for different periods of time.

Al-Shabaab and Islamic State first rose to prominence in the contexts of different forms of state collapse—the precursor organizations that later evolved into Islamic State in the aftermath of the collapse of the Iraqi Ba‘th Party’s authoritarian state in the Spring of 2003 following external military intervention and invasion by the United States and United Kingdom and Al-Shabaab during a civil war environment following the 1991 overthrow of General Siyaad Barre’s authoritarian “MOD” regime, which was built around his and his immediate family’s clans, the Mareehan, Ogaden, and Dhulbahante (all three of which are sub-clans of the larger Darod clan family) and the resulting outbreak of clan-based civil war and warlordism in Somalia.

Despite significant similarities, there are also a number of important differences between Islamic State and Al-Shabaab. The two groups emerged and operate in different sociocultural and political contexts, have differing relations to both internal domestic and external actors, have implemented violence as a strategic tool of governance at different levels and for varying periods of time, hold different political goals—Islamic State’s being grander in terms of geography and revolutionary ideology and Al-Shabaab’s, in contrast, being more limited territorially—and have, in the main, enjoyed varying outcomes and trajectories, particularly in regard to the longevity of their governance projects and institutions. In terms of alliances, Al-Shabaab has continued to remain within the fold of Al-Qaeda while Islamic State had a bitter breakup with Al-Qaeda in 2014 following a struggle for power in Syria and has, in contrast to Al-Shabaab, accused Al-Qaeda and its regional affiliates and allies of being “apostates” and allies and pawns of Islam’s enemies.

There are also significant differences in the military and governance strategies of both organizations. Al-Shabaab has sought to forge closer working relationships and alliances

with local notables and key segments of society while Islamic State, though it also has formed alliances with local tribes and clans, has been driven by the much more grandiose utopian political vision of actively forming a new “caliphate” in the present rather than continuing to defer it. Because of its claim to be the new “caliphate,” Islamic State has also pursued a military strategy that often works against it by attempting to expand across multiple geographical regions by attacking and making new enemies of essentially every other group, for example, operating in Syria. In contrast, Al-Shabaab, though not shy of using violence, tends to use violence more strategically and less wantonly while also favoring tactical withdrawals in the face of numerically and technologically superior enemy forces rather than to fight pitched battles to the death, like the one Islamic State fought for the Syrian town of Kobane (‘Ayn al-‘Arab) in 2014-2015 and Mosul in 2016-2017. In summation, the two organizations differ in a number of significant ways regarding their approach to territorial governance, utilization of ethnic, nationalist, and pan-Islamic identities, and utilization and framing of violence as part of their insurgencies and governance projects.

Given these similarities and differences between two seemingly very similar Sunni non-state armed groups, the dissertation maps how Islamist insurgent organizations develop and deploy discursive framing and symbols and symbolic repertoires as an integral part of their governance projects in order to legitimate and rationalize their use of different types of violence. This research argues that the strategic utilization of Islamist discursive framing and symbolic repertoires which takes into account local sociocultural beliefs and practices is more likely to achieve a greater degree of resonance with important segments of local communities—among the laity, specific classes such as businesspeople and merchants, and local notables such as tribal and clan elders—and thus helps explain the varying levels of success and longevity of governing institutions that these rebel insurgent organizations have experienced.

The precursor organization to Islamic State, the Jordanian militant Abu Muṣ‘ab al-Zarqāwī’s Jamā‘at al-Tawḥīd wa-l-Jihad, was first set up in Iraqi Kurdistan in 2002 but was really forged during the months following the United States-led invasion of Iraq and toppling of Saddam Hussein’s Ba‘th Party regime. In October 2004, following negotiations with Al-Qaeda Central, al-Zarqāwī officially joined the Al-Qaeda umbrella as a regional affiliate and renamed his group “Al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers” (Al-Qaeda fī Bilād al-Rafidayn, AQI), focusing its efforts on waging a deadly insurgency against Iraqi government, U.S., British, and other Coalition forces as well as Iraqis whom he deemed to be “apostates” due to their alleged or real connections to the government. In January 2006, AQI merged with several smaller *jihadi*-insurgent groups and formed the Majlis Shūra al-Mujāhidīn (MSM). Later, in October 2006, it took the first step toward presenting its proto-state ambitions, if at the time largely rhetorical rather than operational, renaming itself the “Islamic State of Iraq” (*Dawlat al-Iraq al-Islāmīya*, ISI). In June 2014, after it conquered Iraq’s second-largest city, Mosul, the organization’s leadership, under self-proclaimed “caliph” Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, claimed to have “re-formed the caliphate,” renaming the “Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham” (ISIS/ISIL) as “*the* Islamic State” and claiming in one of their official slogans to be the “*khilāfa ‘alā minhāj al-nubūwa*” (caliphate upon the Prophet [Muhammad]’s methodology).

Islamic State represents the most extreme and pan-Islamic/globalist incarnation of militant Islamism the world has seen as of this writing and it is thusly an important case in which to examine the interaction of local, regional, and transnational and globalist dynamics with regard to framing and operationalized administrative governing processes. Islamic State managed to establish governing administrations in a number of different countries and regions and thus faced the actual problem of moving beyond governance and state-building as a theoretical exercise to figuring out how to implement a functioning infrastructure of

control over territory and civilian populations. This in turn presented the organization's leadership with the need to pursue both localized as well as transnational/globalized framing processes in a way that appealed to both dedicated pan-Islamists and local supporters and audiences.

Al-Shabaab's origins are rooted much more deeply in a specific sociocultural, geographic, and political milieu, that of Somalia since the 1970s and particularly since the start of the country's destructive civil war in 1991. The specific dynamics at play in the country have posed significant challenges to Somali Islamists and specifically groups such as Al-Shabaab that express transnational, pan-Islamist interests as well as domestic aims. The organization did not emerge in a vacuum but rather grew out of the foundation and gradual spread of organized Somali Islamism in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Many of its founding members cut their teeth in Islamist activism in organizations such as Al-Ittiḥād al-Islāmī (the Islamic Union; hereafter "Al-Ittihad"), Waḥdat al-Shabāb al-Islāmīya (Community of Islamic Youth), and Somali Muslim Brotherhood (al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn)/Al-Islah (Arabic: Al-Iṣlāḥ; Somali: Al-Islaax).¹⁵⁸

Al-Ittihad challenged the country's dominant Sufi orders and sought to undermine their social bases of support, alleging that they practiced a form of religious innovation (*bid'a*) and foreshadowing the later conflict between Al-Shabaab and clan-based Somali Sufi militias. Following the overthrow of Somalia's authoritarian ruler, Siyaad Barre, Al-Ittihad briefly experimented with governance by setting up a short-lived state in Luuq that was governed by *shari'a* instead of customary clan law (*xeer*). Beset by continuing clannism and clan divisions and suffering from over-ambitious leaders, Al-Ittihad's Luuq "emirate" suffered military setbacks in 1991 at the hands of powerful warlord Mohamed Farah Aidiid

¹⁵⁸ On the origins of Somali Islamism, see: International Crisis Group, *Somalia's Islamists*, Africa Report no. 100 (Brussels, 2005), 3-12; Cedric Barnes and Harun Hassan, "The Rise and Fall of Mogadishu's Islamic Courts," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 1, no. 2 (2007), 152; and Abdullahi, *The Islamic Movement in Somalia*.

and, after launching attacks inside Ethiopia, it was driven out of power in Luuq in 1996 by Ethiopian troops.¹⁵⁹ By then, however, Al-Ittihad had successfully established diaspora networks for fundraising and recruitment including a particularly strong network in Kenya.¹⁶⁰ It was also during the 1990s that Al-Qaeda and Somali Islamists came into sustained, direct contact and began to forge ties that would later come in to play as Al-Shabaab expanded territorially.¹⁶¹

The 1990s marked the emergence of a new Somali social movement centered on the establishment of law and order through local *shari‘a* courts, many of them backed by clans. The exact origins and precise date of the first “Islamic courts” experiment remains debated. Barnes and Hassan and Menkhaus locate the beginning of the courts movement or “phenomenon” to northern Mogadishu in August 1994 when local *‘ulamā* from the Abgaal/Hawiye clan founded a *shari‘a* court to re-establish a semblance of order in its territory.¹⁶² Marchal places the movement’s beginning several years earlier in April 1991, though he also notes that this first attempt only lasted for a month.¹⁶³ More courts were established between 1992 and 1994 in Mogadishu with different courts being supported either by local Sufi orders or Islamists, including one of Somalia’s Islamist elder statesmen, Hasan Dahir Aweys.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ Ken Menkhaus, “Political Islam in Somalia,” *Middle East Policy* 9, no. 1 (2002), 112-113.

¹⁶⁰ International Crisis Group, *Somalia’s Islamists*, 7.

¹⁶¹ The exact nature of Al-Qaeda’s ties with Al-Ittihad remain debated, though it is clear that there were some communications between Somali Islamists and the *jihadi* organization. For an argument that Al-Ittihad had close ties to *Al-Qā’ida*, see Gregory A. Pirio, *The African Jihad: Bin Laden’s Quest for the Horn of Africa* (Trenton: The Red Sea Press, 2007), 49 and 52-53. Pirio relies partly on the unsourced account of Yossef Bodansky. Although Pirio claims to have only used information “where corroboration could be obtained” (pg. 72, footnote 21), the sources that list this corroboration of Bodansky’s claims are not provided. Pirio also writes that Bodansky’s account is “presumably based on U.S. intelligence sources,” but he does not further identify them (pg. 53). The unclear nature of ties between the two groups is mentioned in Roland Marchal, “A Tentative Assessment of the Somali Harakat al-Shabaab,” *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 3, no. 3 (2009), 387 and Ken Menkhaus, “Political Islam in Somalia,” 114.

¹⁶² Barnes and Hassan, “The Rise and Fall of Mogadishu’s Islamic Courts,” 152 and Menkhaus, “Political Islam in Somalia,” 116.

¹⁶³ Marchal, “A Tentative Assessment of the Somali Harakat al-Shabaab,” 384.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 384-385.

Identifying three phases when local *shari'a* courts were established—1994-1997, 1997-2000, and 2004-2006, all of them in Mogadishu—Marchal notes that later experiments with establishing courts enjoyed significant support from Somali businessmen as well as local Muslim religious leaders and Islamist activists.¹⁶⁵ However, they were unable to transcend the limits of the country's clan-based political system, which ultimately limited their success. The last phase of the Islamic courts experiment started in 2003 when Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, a school teacher from the Abgaal sub-clan of the Hawiye, began working to re-establish the *shari'a* courts movement in Mogadishu that culminated in the establishment of the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC), which was the most successful attempt. The courts brought a new sense of law and order, leading to stability in parts of the country that had not enjoyed it since the beginning of the civil war. As a result, the UIC enjoyed support from Somali diaspora communities and many Somalis in the diaspora began to return to the country in the hopes that its fortunes were being revived.¹⁶⁶

This period of economic and social revival and renewed optimism in 2006 on the part of Somalis both inside and outside of the country did not last. The UIC's main strength, its diverse composition, was, ironically, also its major weakness. Bringing together Somalis of different religious and political persuasions, from Salafi-influenced Islamists such as Aweys to Sufis like Sheikh Sharif, led to internal discord and inconsistencies within the UIC umbrella. Different factions within the UIC's "big tent" competed with one another for influence and political power. Aweys, who served as chairman of the UIC's consultative council, was initially tied to the founding cadre of Al-Shabaab fronted by the charismatic

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 385-386. On relations between the Union of Islamic Courts movement of the mid-2000s and Somali businesspeople, see Aisha Ahmad, *Jihad Co.*, Chapters Five and Six.

¹⁶⁶ Ken Menkhaus, "The Crisis in Somalia: Tragedy in Five Acts," *African Affairs* 106, no. 204 (2007), 370 and the Current TV documentary *Mogadishu Madness*, which features interviews with UIC leaders Hasan Dahir Aweys and Ibrahim Addow in 2006 during the UIC's heyday, at http://current.com/tags/76217732_behind-the-scenes-mogadishu-madness/, last accessed 10 October 2010.

Adan Hashi Farah ‘Ayro, which was the most radical faction within the organization’s military wing.¹⁶⁷

‘Ayro, who had previously received military training in Afghanistan where he met Al-Qaeda founder Usama bin Laden, initially served as Aweys’ deputy and was given control over a segment of the UIC’s military wing, the *Mu‘askar Mahkamad* (literally the “military camps of the courts”). ‘Ayro brought in other Somali militant Islamists who had also previously traveled to Afghanistan, where they were influenced by Al-Qaeda’s globalist ideology.¹⁶⁸ He later broke with his mentor, Aweys, and criticized the Islamist elder in public for his continued adherence to clan-based politics instead of an idealized “Islamic” identity that ‘Ayro and other pan-Islamists believe should transcend national, ethnic, and class identities as the basis for Muslim unity and political action.

The UIC, after enjoying a brief period of success following its defeat between February and June 2006 of the U.S.-backed Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-terrorism (ARPC), a fractious coalition of Somali warlords and businessmen, allowed its relations with neighboring Ethiopia to continue to deteriorate.¹⁶⁹ Ethiopia’s president, Meles Zenawi and his government, which backed the TFG, were already alarmed by the rise and expansion of the UIC and belligerent rhetoric from more radical voices within it such as Mukhtar Robow and the head of the UIC’s military wing, Yusuf Mohamed “Indha‘adde” Siyaad did little to assuage their fears.

On December 24, 2006, aided by U.S. military intelligence data, Ethiopia launched a pre-emptive invasion of Somalia with the goal of toppling the UIC and reasserting the TFG’s

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 373-375.

¹⁶⁸ Marchal, “A Tentative Assessment of the Somali Harakat al-Shabaab,” 388 and Al-Shabaab’s official posthumous biography of ‘Ayro, “Nūr wa Nār: Sīrat al-Shahīd al-Shaykh Ādam Ḥāshī ‘Ayro (Abā Muḥsin al-Anṣārī)” (Light and Fire: Biograph of the Martyr-Shaykh Adan Hashi ‘Ayro (Abu Muhsin al-Ansari),” in the group’s e-magazine *Millat Ibrāhīm*, issue 1 (2008), 13-14.

¹⁶⁹ Menkhaus, “The Crisis in Somalia: Tragedy in Five Acts,” 369 and 390-391 and Barnes and Hassan, “The Rise and Fall of Mogadishu’s Islamic Courts,” 156.

authority, pouring 10,000 soldiers across the border to prop up the TFG's ragtag collection of militias that made up its "army." Ethiopian offensives in Hiraan, Galguduud, and Mudug quickly overwhelmed the UIC's military forces and the coalition's leaders soon abandoned Mogadishu and fled for refuge in Kenya or other neighboring countries.¹⁷⁰ The subsequent Ethiopian occupation of southern and parts of central Somalia created the environment in which Al-Shabaab, along with other anti-Ethiopia and anti-TFG Somali Islamist militant groups, would launch a potent insurgency the following year. They were aided by unpopular attempts by the TFG and Ethiopia to fight the insurgency, including the commitment of a number of war crimes against civilians and members of the Somali media and the banning of the Islamic face veil (*niqāb*) to prevent insurgents from wearing it as a disguise.¹⁷¹

The precise origins of Al-Shabaab are murky. Though the group's founders, including 'Ayro and Mukhtar Robow, were longtime Islamists who had been profoundly impacted by their experiences in Afghanistan, the group does not seem to have begun to coalesce as a defined organization until the second half of the 1990s.¹⁷² The rise of the UIC, coupled with 'Ayro's ties to Aweys, allowed Al-Shabaab to rise to prominence and it began in 2006 to actively recruit fighters from amongst the country's disaffected youth.¹⁷³ The

¹⁷⁰ David Ignatius, "Ethiopia's Iraq," *The Washington Post*, 13 May 2007, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/05/11/AR2007051102114.html>, last accessed 23 August 2013 and Menkhaus, "The Crisis in Somalia," 381.

¹⁷¹ No author, "Ethiopian Soldiers Accused of War Crimes in Somalia," *The New York Times*, 6 May 2008 at http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/06/world/africa/06iht-somalia.1.12610349.html?_r=0, last accessed 17 August 2013; Human Rights Watch, "'So Much to Fear': War Crimes and the Devastation of Somalia," 8 December 2008, at <https://www.hrw.org/report/2008/12/08/so-much-fear/war-crimes-and-devastation-somalia>, last accessed 1 December 2017; Human Rights Watch, *Shell Shocked: Civilians under Siege in Mogadishu* (New York, 2007), at <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2007/somalia0807/>, last accessed 1 December 2017; Human Rights Watch, "Somalia: Killings, Arrests Shatter Independent Media," 22 October 2007, at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2007/10/22/somalia-killings-arrests-shatter-independent-media>, last accessed 1 December 2017; Menkhaus, "The Crisis in Somalia," 386, Barnes and Hassan, "The Rise and Fall of Mogadishu's Islamic Courts," 157-158; Al-Jazeera English, "Somali Forces Ban Women's Veils," 10 May 2007, at <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/africa/2007/05/2008525142425207946.html>, last accessed 1 December 2017; and Reuters, "Somali Forces Ban, Burn Muslim Women's Veils," 9 May 2007, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2007/05/09/us-somalia-conflict-idUSL0972796920070509>, last accessed 1 December 2017.

¹⁷² Stig Jarle Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 19-22 and 27-28.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 28-29.

group reportedly began targeted assassinations of critics, rivals, and others in 2004 and 2005.¹⁷⁴ The earliest international news media mention of ‘Ayro as a player among the UIC’s extremist fringe was in June 2006 after the UIC captured Mogadishu from the ARPC.¹⁷⁵ In his official posthumous biography in the first issue of Al-Shabaab’s magazine *Millat Ibrāhīm* (Community of Abraham) he is identified as one of the group’s founders.¹⁷⁶ The group’s founding members—who included ‘Ayro, Robow, and Ibrahim al-Afghani (Ibrahim Haji Jama Mee’aad), who is also known as Abū Bakr al-Zayla‘ī after his hometown in northern Somalia/Somaliland—came from different Somali clans and sub-clans including the Rahanweyn, Isaaq, and Hawiye. Despite this relative diversity, the group has continued to engage with the country’s clans and play the clan political game, particularly at the local level.

Proving itself to be militarily capable during the fighting between the UIC and the ARPC in the spring and summer of 2006, Al-Shabaab established its own supply and support structure and outperformed other units within the UIC’s military wing.¹⁷⁷ Its battlefield success led to the rise in the group’s political fortunes within the courts coalition, with three of its leaders, including the group’s *amīr* until his assassination in a U.S. air strike in September 2014, Ahmed Godane (also known by the *nom de guerre* Mukhtar Abu al-Zubayr), being named to the UIC’s executive council and Robow becoming a deputy military commander of the military wing.¹⁷⁸ Al-Shabaab’s first attempts to implement its interpretation of *shari‘a* over territories it controlled began during this period and included the banning or heavy regulation of the natural stimulant *qāt* and the implementation of

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 27-29

¹⁷⁵ Xan Rice, “Fall of Mogadishu Leaves US Policy in Ruins,” *The Guardian*, 10 June 2006, at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/jun/10/rorycarroll.oliverburkeman>, last accessed 1 December 2017. See also: International Crisis Group, *Somalia’s Islamists*, 11.

¹⁷⁶ Al-Shabaab magazine article, “Nūr wa Nār: Sīrat al-Shahīd al-Shaykh Ādam Ḥāshī ‘Ayro,” 14.

¹⁷⁷ Marchal, “A Tentative Assessment of the Somali Harakat al-Shabaab,” 390.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

regulations on social interactions between men and women as well as a strict dress code for both, though these edicts varied by locale in terms of their enforcement.¹⁷⁹ These attempts, however, were often localized rather than imposed from above by the group's senior leadership, whose members differed in their views about such regulations and restrictions.¹⁸⁰

Al-Shabaab, though initially damaged during the early days of the Ethiopian invasion in December 2006, emerged by the end of 2007 as a powerful player in Somalia's "complex insurgency," which brought together Somali Islamists of different types, clan-based militias, and self-aggrandizement-seeking warlords, against Ethiopia and the TFG.¹⁸¹ The election in 2009 of the former head of the UIC, the moderate Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, did not temper the *jihadi*-insurgent organization's militancy. The group rejected his election as well as the TFG's authority and labeled Sheikh Sharif and other members of the transitional government as apostates (*murtaddūn*).¹⁸² Al-Shabaab's rapid territorial expansion in 2008 set the stage for its establishment of governing administrative organs and the implementation, through the strategic use of violence, of its interpretation of *shari'a* to establish a semblance of law and order, however harsh.

Sources and Methodology

This dissertation is interdisciplinary and draws primarily on the literatures on social movements in political science and sociology in tandem with historical and area studies of Islam, Muslim communities, and Islamic civilization. It adopts a historical sociological and social movement process approach to the analysis of the evolution of territorial Islamist rebel organizations. The case studies are analyzed as social movement organizations, specifically

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.* and Menkhaus, "The Crisis in Somalia," 377.

¹⁸⁰ Marchal, 391.

¹⁸¹ Menkhaus, "The Crisis in Somalia," 385-386.

¹⁸² Al-Shabaab communiqué, "Istiqbāl al-murtadd Shaykh Sharīf Aḥmad bi-qaḍā'if al-hāwun fī maṭār Mogadishu al-duwalī" (Greeting the apostate, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed with mortar fire at the Mogadishu International Airport), 8 August 2009.

rebel groups, whose founding and evolution are steered by specific movement processes and social, political, economic, ideological, interpersonal, domestic, and transnational dynamics.

The sources used herein are primarily textual in nature and are analyzed using the historical method with regard to their production, usage, and relation to the social processes being examined as well as the comparison of sources in order to try and determine the contexts in which they were produced and deployed. Primary documents and other sources—which include audiovisual, audio, and visual sources as well as print and textual sources—are also subjected to source triangulation using local and international news media sources and secondary studies to verify information contained within them. I also make extensive use of visual primary sources including insurgent photographs, videos, and audio recordings and radio broadcasts. There are limitations to this approach—particularly regarding the absence of extensive fieldwork—and, in certain instances, I have also consulted generally with academic and journalist colleagues who conduct field work or otherwise work on the ground. The analytical judgments and any errors, however, are mine alone. I hope in future incarnations of this project to conduct fieldwork in order to test some of the hypotheses and findings I present herein.

The primary sources used in this project have largely been produced by the movements, organizations, and individuals being analyzed and have been verified in different ways including through the process of internal citation, reference, and use by the organizations or individuals themselves.¹⁸³ A number of the primary sources analyzed in this study have not been used in previous studies. These include Al-Shabaab documents on the

¹⁸³ There is, of course, a reasonable concern regarding the potential biases contained within documents and other primary sources produced as part of framing and media operation or propaganda processes. While taking this concern seriously and using source triangulation where possible to provide additional verification, I argue that the primary sources used herein are not necessarily unreliable or any more prone to personal or organization biases than other primary sources used in more traditional studies, such as diaries and memoirs, official government communications and proclamations, and primary sources produced by state governments, governmental bodies, and officials. I also argue that these sources are important to understanding how these organizations seek to frame themselves—their identity, behavior/actions and operational framework, and goals.

organization's education system and curricula, internal education program for recruits, and communiqués on their judicial and other governance projects and activities as well as new analysis of audiovisual sources produced by Islamic State and its predecessor organizations regarding the strategic utilization and framing of different types of organizational and individual level violence.

Outline of the Chapters

Chapter One is divided into two parts. The first part, drawing on theoretical studies on religious “fundamentalism,” secularism, and religious and secular violence, argues that militant Islamism (jihadism), even in its most transnational and globalist form, is still largely a reactionary movement, defining itself in terms of statecraft more by what it is against than what it is for, specifically the geographically-bound nation-state. Global *jihadi* political theology attempts to subsume local conflicts into a larger, inter-civilizational campaign to establish a transnational Muslim super-state, a neo-caliphate. This neo-caliphate, however, is thoroughly modern and bears much more in common with contemporary notions of the powers of the secular nation-state than any actual historical caliphate or other Muslim state. I look at how theoretical (and actual) *jihadi* states mimic the secular nation-state that they claim to reject as well as how Sunni militant Islamist (and even non-violent Islamist, such as the Hizb ut-Tahrir movement) visions of “*the* caliphate” are based on modern understandings of state power and construction and ignore the historical reality that political and religious authority came to be largely separated in the Sunni-majority world after the first few centuries of Islam, illustrated by the gradual separation of powers between the heads of state, who historically came from political or military elites, and the religious scholarly class of the ‘*ulamā*—that is, the division between *sīyāsa* and *shari’a*. The second part examines how different global and regional Sunni *jihadi* groups reacted to the “Arab Spring” and the subsequent return of the “Arab Winter,” particularly with regard to political opportunities

regarding the implementation of governing structures in places such as northern Mali, southern Yemen, Syria and Iraq, Libya, and Somalia.

Chapter Two first traces the historical evolution of *jihadi* media from the 1980s to the present day, providing a detailed historical overview of the establishment of the first sustained militant Islamist media operations campaigns during the 1980s insurgency against the Afghan Communist regime and its Soviet backers and continuing into the 1990s with domestic irredentist-turned-pan-Islamic conflicts in the Balkans and Chechnya. Secondly, the chapter then examines the specific history and evolution of the media campaigns and internal and external framing processes of Al-Shabaab and Islamic State from their founding until today. The vast new potential and reach provided by new technologies, the emergence of social media platforms such as Twitter, and easier-to-obtain and easier-to-use production software and technology is juxtaposed with the new challenges to organizational leadership and the maintenance of a single, official message and narrative posed by the same.

Chapter Three situates the study of territorial *jihadi* rebel organizations within the framework provided by the growing literature on rebel governance and civil war violence. Particular attention is paid here to the political economy of *jihadi* rebel proto-states and how governing violence, which I term the *violence of control*, is shaped by an organization's economic aims as well as its ideology and also on the deployment of symbolic power and performance by *jihadi* rebel rulers. Islamic law and jurisprudence is examined here not only as an ideological interest for *jihadi* rebel rulers but also as a "ready-made" symbolic and economic tool with which to advance specific historical, social, political, and economic claims. The chapter explains how economic as well as ideological interests and commitments shape *jihadi*-insurgent proto-state use of violence and how violence is used to structure *jihadi* rebel war economies in order to tie together ideological elements with more temporal, worldly interests. In doing so, I hope to (1) situate the study of *jihadi* rebel movement

organizations more solidly within the broader frameworks of rebellion/insurgency and rebel governance and (2) move beyond the often heavy or even sole emphasis on ideology—specifically religion—in the study of *jihadi* groups without denying its analytical importance. Further, the chapter looks at political violence as a form of performative framing and political ritual and spectacle, specifically regarding the utilization of the “set” *ḥudūd* and *ta‘zīr* (discretionary) punishments from Islamic penal law, drawing on other empirical studies of public violence and execution as well as the landmark theoretical contributions by Foucault on the body of the criminal as a “canvas” on which the governing authority inscribes its claim to legitimacy and demonstrates its coercive and repressive power to “discipline and punish” in acts of public atonement.¹⁸⁴

Finally, Chapter Four examines the symbolic claims to sovereignty and the structuring and framing of governance practices by territorial *jihadi* rebel organizations. These organizations’ use of referential and condensation symbols to frame their claims-making regarding social, political, historical, and ideological and religious legitimacy receives particularly close attention. The chapter begins by historically contextualizing the ways in which public gatherings such as political rallies, social events, and communal religious celebrations and ritual performances have both been deployed historically in Islamic societies and are today enacted by *jihadi* rebel rulers as a means through which to advance both claims as well as harness and deploy symbolic power. These symbolic processes attempt to shape the way in which local populations see and interact with new *jihadi* rebel civil administrations. Specific types and examples of multivocal symbols such as public events, flags, public signage and artwork, and language are also considered.

¹⁸⁴ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 2012).

Chapter One

Global Jihadi Ideology, the Threat of the Secular Nation-State, and the Struggle over Religious and Political Authority

The rise to political prominence of Islamist parties in Egypt, Tunisia, and other Arab countries following the beginning in December 2010 of the “Arab Spring”¹⁸⁵ alarmed many Western politicians and pundits who saw in groups such as the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*) and Ennahda in Tunisia the emergence of “electoral bin Ladenism.”¹⁸⁶ These parties, they argued, are but a few steps away from the religio-political militancy, radicalism, and extremism of militant Islamist (*jihadi*) organizations such as Al-Qaeda, Islamic State, and their regional affiliates and allies. However, leading *jihadi* ideologues, political theorists, and theologians including the current *amīr* of Al-Qaeda Central,¹⁸⁷ Ayman al-Zawahiri, and that organization’s founder, Usama bin Laden, have long rejected the legitimacy of any form of democracy and republicanism, which they see as being akin to a religion because, they argue, the nation-state and the “will of the people” is elevated to being on par with God’s commandments as set down in the Qur’an, *aḥādīth* and *sunna* of the Prophet Muhammad, and Islamic law (*shari‘a*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Thus, democracy, they allege, is nothing more than polytheism (*shirk*) and unbelief (*kufr*) because it violates the core principle of Islamic faith, belief and adherence to absolute monotheism (*tawḥīd*). Democracy, in theory, they argue, allows human beings to disregard God’s

¹⁸⁵ This name was strongly debated even during the heyday of the so-called “Arab Awakening” but, in the interest of simplicity and clarity, I will refer to the series of mass popular protests that began in the winter of 2010 in some Middle Eastern and North African countries as the “Arab Spring” because of its wide usage in both academic and journalistic writing.

¹⁸⁶ David Ignatius, “How Osama bin Laden is Winning, Even in Death,” *The Washington Post*, 27 April 2012, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/how-osama-bin-laden-is-winning-even-in-death/2012/04/27/gIQAfTMFmT_story.html?utm_term=.9b69bfl324e3.

¹⁸⁷ This is the name that will be used here to refer to the original Al-Qaeda organization founded by Usama bin Laden in 1980s Afghanistan. Regional affiliates such as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) will be referred to by their acronyms after being initially introduced with their full name. The use of “Al-Qaeda” alone refers either generally to the original organization or to it and several or all of its regional affiliates.

injunctions on His creation in the interest of the modern nation-state and the desires of the public even if these desires are licentious and have been forbidden by God and His messenger, the Prophet Muhammad. Under a democratic system it is possible for even an apostate (*murtadd*) or a sinner (*fāsiq*) to be elected as the leader of the community.¹⁸⁸ These criticisms of democracy, and specifically certain forms of it espoused by Western intellectuals and state governments, have their roots in the thought of both Ḥasan al-Bannā and Sayyid Quṭb, the founder and most revolutionary ideologue respectively of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Contemporary global *jihadis*, however, do not simply take the writings and speeches of al-Bannā and Quṭb directly but rather use them as the basis for constructing an even more radical approach and criticism of what they see as Western-style democracy being imposed on Muslims worldwide.¹⁸⁹ Global *jihadis* are particularly enamored with Quṭb's concept of *ḥākīmīya*, which they translate loosely as referring to "God's rule" and sovereignty on Earth, which they in turn equate to their own particular interpretation of Islamic law and jurisprudence. Their interpretation of *ḥākīmīya*, though, is, according to Khatab, taken out of context and based on the *jihadis*' own pre-existing ideology and conceptualizations of Islam as both a religion and a political creed.¹⁹⁰

Understanding *jihadi* political and religious thought and its relation to the formation and regulation of militant communities, organizations, and social movements is key to developing a fuller understanding of the major political shifts in many parts of the Muslim

¹⁸⁸ Adam Gadahn, *Ilā Ikhwatī fī Shām al-Malāḥim wa Futūḥāt* (To My Brothers in Al-Sham/Syria of Epic Battles and Conquests), Mu'assasat Al-Saḥāb li-l-Intāj al-I'lāmī (Al-Qaeda Central), 9 July 2013.

¹⁸⁹ Both al-Bannā and Quṭb criticized what they saw as imperialist forms of democracy and democratization that they believed were being forced upon Muslim counties and populations. Quṭb, for example, was not opposed to the concept of democracy in its entirety and even argued that democracy and democratic processes, though not in the Western liberal sense, were a part of Islam alongside the pursuit of justice. This position was a natural extension of his interest and theorization of social justice and criticisms of the negative aspects of capitalism. See Sayed Khatab, "The Voice of Democratism in Sayyid Quṭb's Response to Violence and Terrorism," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 20, no. 3 (2009), 318.

¹⁹⁰ Khatab, 318-319. Khatab argues that modern day militants' restriction of a "legitimate" political system to a caliphate and rigid rejection of democracy and power-sharing stands in stark contrast to Quṭb's expressed belief in Islam's universal applicability and focus primarily on the reform of Muslim societies rather than proposing a specific form of political order and system of governance.

majority world as well as to the complex set of dynamics at play in major international and regional conflicts such as the ongoing civil war in Syria and strong *jihadi* insurgencies in Somalia, Yemen, and Afghanistan and Pakistan. Global *jihadi* political theory can be distinguished from other Islamist ideologies in terms of its reinterpretation of Islamic sacred history and its political and strategic objectives, the latter of which include the belief that the only “legitimate,” in a *shari‘a* sense, form of statehood is in the form of a “caliphate.”

Whereas mainstream Islamist movements and political activists, such as the Ennahda Party in Tunisia and the Egyptian and Jordanian Muslim Brotherhoods, accept and operate within the existing borders and boundaries of the nation-state, global *jihadis* reject them as artificial divisions set by human beings and not God. A distinction must be made here between the belief, held by all Islamists and many, if not the majority, of the world’s Muslims, that there are bonds of faith and community that link Muslims across borders and the position of global *jihadis* that holds that cross-border solidarity and shared religious faith is not enough and that Muslims must actively work toward political as well as spiritual unification across the world. Though mainstream Islamism and global jihadism share an aversion toward the “Western, secular” nation-state model, mainstream Islamists seek to reinterpret nationalism within existing borders in a way that is compatible with Islam whereas global *jihadis* reject outright the Westphalian state which is defined by territorial boundaries.

Global *jihadis* instead argue for a return to what they see as the correct historical understanding of territoriality based on their reading and interpretation of Islamic sacred history and a reinterpretation of military *jihad* as the primary way to achieve this objective. As a result of these differences, global *jihadis* pursue a radically different form of narrative framing and messaging from mainstream Islamist movements like Ennahda, one in which military *jihad* and political violence is seen as the primary mechanism to bring about social, economic, and political change. Global *jihadi* violence can be explained in part by the

application and attempts to institutionalize their own interpretations and understandings of Islamic law, including the *hudūd* punishments, and their ideological and theoretical rejection of a form of nationalism or communal political order that allows for a pluralist understanding of citizenship.

Islamism, Global Jihadism, and the Question of Nationalism and the Nation-State

Global *jihadi* Islamism departs significantly from other forms of Islamist politics. Asad argues that while Islamism “takes for granted and seeks to work through” the nation-state in pursuit of a statist project, it is not akin to nationalism. He specifically references Arab nationalism, which he sees as espousing a “Western-derived discourse.”¹⁹¹ In contrast, Hegghammer argues that the type of pan-Islamism that rose to prominence in the 1970s “shares a number of structural similarities with nationalist-type ideologies” and can be seen as a form of “micro-nationalism centered on the imagined community of the umma, which is defined by religion and to some extent by language.”¹⁹² Asad disagrees that the *Umma* can be considered a nationalist “imagined community” in line with Anderson’s theory, arguing that nationalism requires the concept of secularism in order to make sense because it requires the loyalty of people directly to the state.¹⁹³ I argue, however, that the political discourse and practices of many Islamist movements including the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, the Palestinian HAMAS, and the Tunisian Ennahda, though certainly containing some pan-Islamist sentiments, are embedded within a nation-centered discourse and represent a form of religious or “Islamized” nationalism bound geographically to a specific country or

¹⁹¹ Talal Asad, “Religion, Nation-State, Secularism,” in *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia*, ed. Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 190-191.

¹⁹² Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia*, 8.

¹⁹³ Asad, “Religion, Nation-State, Secularism,” 186-187 and 189, and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2016).

territory.¹⁹⁴ HAMAS, for example, stated in article twelve of its founding charter that “nationalism (*al-waṭanīya*), from the point of view of the Islamic Resistance Movement [HAMAS], is part of religious creed (*al-‘aqīda al-dīnīya*)” and reiterated its national aspirations in its revised charter that was released in May 2017.¹⁹⁵ On its official web site, HAMAS also identifies itself as a “Palestinian national movement” (“Ḥamās ḥarakat waṭanīya Filasṭīnīya”) resisting Zionist occupation and seeking to liberate all of historic Palestine, including the Islamic and Christian holy places in Jerusalem.¹⁹⁶ The map of the occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel, which HAMAS defines as the historic Palestine in which it seeks to build a national state, is a prominent part of the movement’s iconography including in its official emblem. Even the Afghan Taliban movement, which is frequently described as being akin to Al-Qaeda and Islamic State in its “transnationalism,” has always focused its political and military activities within the nation-state, from the 1990s when it ruled much of the country as the “Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan” and sought recognition on the international diplomatic stage as the legitimate government of that country up to the present day.¹⁹⁷ The outline of the modern Afghan nation-state is also a prominent feature on the banners of its official web sites.

Unlike other forms of Islamism such as that of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and HAMAS, which represent an “Islamized” form of nationalism and a statist project shaped by

¹⁹⁴ Roshanak Shaery-Eisenlohr argues that this re-envisioning of a national identity along communal and “religious” lines is also what has happened among Lebanese Shi‘is in *Shi‘ite Lebanon: Transnational Religion and the Making of National Identities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

¹⁹⁵ The text of HAMAS’ original 1988 founding charter is available at https://ar.wikisource.org/wiki/%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%AB%D8%A7%D9%82_%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%83%D8%A9_%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B3 and the 2017 revision at <http://hamas.ps/en/post/678/a-document-of-general-principles-and-policies>, both last accessed 11 July 2017.

¹⁹⁶ HAMAS, “Man naḥnu” (Who We Are),” official web site, at <http://hamas.ps/ar/page/19/%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%83%D8%A9-%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B3>, last accessed 11 July 2017.

¹⁹⁷ Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn, *An Enemy We Created*, and Anand Gopal and Alex Strick van Linschoten, *Ideology in the Afghan Taliban*, Afghanistan Analysts Network (2017), 39-43, at <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/201705-AGopal-ASvLinschoten-TB-Ideology.pdf>, last accessed 13 July 2017.

the acceptance of the nation-state system and the need to work through it, global jihadism rejects the nation-state model completely, seeing it as an illegitimate political framework, and seeks to replace it.¹⁹⁸ Instead, global *jihadis* refuse to accept or operate within, in theory, the Westphalian nation-state framework and instead agitate to usher in, through the liberal use of political violence, revolutionary change to the existing global political and economic order. They propose a neo-caliphate as the alternative, deploying carefully selected Islamic historical motifs and theological and juridical vocabulary to imbue their project with the aura of Islamic historical, theological, creedal, and legal legitimacy.¹⁹⁹ This new state, which Lahoud terms a “jihadocracy,” claims its legitimacy, at least in its formative stage, through waging constant warfare (*jihad*) against aggressive non-Muslim invaders of Muslim lands and their apostate allies and clients.²⁰⁰ It is only such a state as this, they argue, that will be capable of engaging modern non-Muslim states and international organizations on an equal footing politically, economically, and, most importantly, militarily.²⁰¹ Though global *jihadis* claim to reject and have abandoned the secular nation-state system, the reality differs from

¹⁹⁸ The impact of the emergence of global jihadism on Islamist political activism is covered with nuance and analytical depth in François Burgat, *Islamism in the Shadow of al-Qaeda*, trans. Patrick Hutchison (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008).

¹⁹⁹ Global *jihadi* written and spoken language is rife with Islamized vocabulary and textual references particularly heavy on Qur’anic verses and selections from the corpus of *aḥādīth*. Visual symbols and props are also a key part of both global and “classical”/localized *jihadi* communications, for example the use of black or white (or both) flags emblazoned with the Islamic declaration of faith (*shahāda*): “There is no God but [the One] God and Muhammad is His Messenger.” Al-Qaeda and its regional affiliates, Islamic State and its regional affiliates, and the Afghanistan and Pakistan Taliban groups, for example, all use different versions of this style of flag.

²⁰⁰ Lahoud, *The Jihadis’ Path to Self-destruction*, 148. Al-Qaeda groups frame their campaign, at least in its current stage, as primarily defensive in nature. They see themselves as responding to non-Muslim aggression, and, by extension, that of apostate Muslim clients they back, rather than actively seeking territorial expansion. Some global *jihadis* argue that once Muslim lands have been freed from occupation and the neo-caliphate established, human and material resources can then be expended on spreading their interpretation of Islam territorially. In this way, global jihadism, at least according to some of its theorists, is a type of alternative imperial political ideology to the dominance of the United States, Western European states, India, Russia, China and their allies and clients. Islamic State, in contrast, describes its violence as defensive and retaliatory as well as offensive, the latter because it aims to not only liberate occupied Muslim territories but also to conquer non-Muslim lands as well. While Al-Qaeda leaders also speak of the eventual dominion of Islam across the entire world, their actions suggest that they remain bound in practice to Muslim countries and disputed regions such as the Balkans, Rakhine state in Myanmar, southern Thailand, and the southern Philippines.

²⁰¹ Appleby, “Rethinking Fundamentalism in a Secular Age,” in *Rethinking Secularism*, 230-231.

their idealized theoretical models and they essentially continue to be bound within the same paradigms that they in theory reject but operationally find difficult to overcome.

The global *jihadi* political program, culminating in the formation of a Muslim super state, the neo-caliphate, is, in effect, an extreme response to the imposition of the Western secular state. It is the product of a thoroughly modern engagement with contemporary political, economic, and military predicaments facing Muslim communities around the world.²⁰² Citizenship in the neo-caliphate, as postulated by global *jihadi* theorists, stands in stark contrast to the modern Western conception of citizenship, which is by definition secular.²⁰³ In the *jihadi* caliphate citizenship is based first on religious (Muslim) identity and, second, on levels of faith (*īmān*) as represented by the adherence to proper theology and ‘*aqīda*, the public performance of religious rituals and duties such as the daily and, ideally, the recommended supplicatory prayers, and abidance by the *jihadis*’ philistine interpretation of *shari‘a* and *fiqh* with regard to a range of daily activities from dressing in a “*sunna*-appropriate” manner, which for some *jihadis* includes wearing pants of a certain length for men and the wearing of *hijab* and *niqab* by women, to economic activities and inter-personal relations. Even *mujāhidīn* must adhere to these moral, ethical, and legal codes. Their participation in *jihad*, though the most emphasized example of faith for *jihadis* of all types, is not alone sufficient to demonstrate exemplary piety and God-consciousness (*taqwā*).²⁰⁴

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 243, and Mark Juergensmeyer, “Rethinking the Secular and Religious Aspects of Violence,” in *Rethinking Secularism*, 185 and *Global Rebellion: Religious Challenges to the Secular State, from Christian Militias to Al Qaeda* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

²⁰³ Craig Calhoun, “Secularism, Citizenship, and the Public Sphere,” in *Rethinking Secularism*, 75-91.

²⁰⁴ Influential *jihadi* leaders and theoreticians reject the idea that the *mujāhidīn* are exempted from fulfilling other religious duties such as marriage simply because they are engaged in *jihad*. It is even more important for them, these theorists argue, to live exemplary lifestyles so that other Muslims whose *īmān* is weaker may clearly see the superiority of the *mujāhidīn* in all areas of life, from their active participation in *jihad* to family life. See Abu Yahyā al-Lībī, “Balancing between Jihad and Seeking Knowledge,” *Dar al-Tibyan Publications*, 7 November 2007, and Abu Zar ‘Azzām, *What’s Happening in the Tribal Regions: Part 8*, Jundullah Studio (Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, IMU), 2011. Abu Zar was the longtime *mufti* of the IMU and was and continues to be affiliated with different factions of the Pakistani Taliban (Tehrik-i Taliban Pakistan) movement. He is also known as Abu Zar al-Pakistani and Abu Zar al-Burmi, denoting his Rohingya Burmese roots.

Global *jihadi* political theory and operational strategy seeks to supplant democracy in Muslim-majority countries with an alternate state model, a neo-caliphate (*khilāfa*), a transnational Muslim superstate based on and legitimized through an ahistorical reading of Islamic history in which the conceptions and definitions of “caliphate” and the ruler, the caliph (*khalīfa*), are idealized, romanticized, and detached from the messy historical realities of actual Muslim dynasties and premodern and early modern states.²⁰⁵ *Jihadis* fail to accept the existence of different opinions about the caliphate and the responsibilities and limitations on the caliph or recognize the historical transformation and evolution of views about the legitimate Muslim state from the death of the Prophet Muhammad through the “rightly-guided caliphs” (*al-khulafāʾ al-rāshidūn*), the Umayyads, ‘Abbasids, and up to the dissolution of Ottoman imperial claims to caliphal authority in 1924 following the empire’s defeat in the First World War.²⁰⁶ Instead, *jihadi* intellectuals and some non-violent pan-Islamists claim that it is possible to implement their grand political vision of “re-establishing” “the caliphate,” as if there was ever a single historical model agreed upon by all Muslims or even all Sunnis, in the modern world.²⁰⁷ Nor do Sunni *jihadis* even agree as to which historical dynasty constituted the last caliphate, with some arguing it was the Ottoman Empire while others, including some Saudi Salafi scholars popular with *jihadis* reject Ottoman legitimacy

²⁰⁵ Detailed histories of the different caliphal dynasties in early and medieval Islamic civilization can be found in Hugh Kennedy, *Caliphate: The History of an Idea* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates: The Islamic Near East from the Sixth to the Eleventh Century: 2nd Edition* (New York: Routledge, 2004), Hugh Kennedy, *The Caliphate* (Gretna, LA: Pelican, 2016), G.R. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate, AD 661-750* (New York: Routledge, 2000), Wilferd Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God’s Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), Madawi Al-Rasheed, Carool Kersten, and Marat Shterin, eds., *Demystifying the Caliphate: Historical Memory and Contemporary Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), and Carool Kersten, ed., *The Caliphate and Islamic Statehood: Formation, Fragmentation and Modern Interpretation* (Berlin: Gerlach Press, 2015), 3 volumes.

²⁰⁶ For a comprehensive discussion of the crisis caused in some Muslim circles following the official end of the Ottoman Empire and the last “caliphate,” see Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005), Chapter Two.

²⁰⁷ Mona Hassan, *Longing for the Lost Caliphate: A Transregional History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), Chapter Five and Chapter Six, and Jan-Peter Hartung, “Who Speaks of What Caliphate?: The Indian *Khilafat* Movement and its Aftermath,” in *Demystifying the Caliphate*, 81-94.

and accuse it of corrupting Islam by sponsoring and spreading *shirk*.²⁰⁸ Furthermore, they argue that this vision is not only possible but also religiously and historically endorsed by God's divine commands, the Prophet Muhammad's *sunna*, and a romanticized and highly selective interpretation of the sacred past. Whereas most mainstream Islamists, though they may hold to an idealized vision of the past, recognize the caliphal model is unsuited to modern politics, *jihadis* and caliphacist pan-Islamists such as Hizb ut-Tahrir cling to the belief that a new "caliphate" will redress all the ills of Muslim populations globally.²⁰⁹

Ironically, despite their complete rejection of Western secularism, modernity, and political thought, *jihadi* theorists are thoroughly the products of the modern world and, to a significant degree, reactionary in their political counter-theorizing, relying heavily on defining themselves through what they claim to reject. Their conception of a neo-caliphate/Muslim superstate, for example, is primarily concerned with a strictly codified interpretation of *shari'a* that has essentially been reduced to a series of "set" punishments (*hadd*; plural: *hudūd*) for certain crimes, an understanding of sacred law that is thoroughly modern and post-Enlightenment with regard to its understanding of religion and the law.²¹⁰ Similarly, the general *jihadi* conception of military *jihad* is primarily a reaction to encroachments by non-Muslim majority nation-states, chief among them the United States, and "apostate" client Muslim regimes in countries such as Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Turkey, and Pakistan. It is simultaneously both obsessed with specific "Islamic" territory and de-territorialized in its call for a continuous struggle until Islam encompasses the entire world and not only current and past Muslim-ruled lands. The neo-caliphate sought by *jihadis* is

²⁰⁸ Madawi Al-Rasheed, "The Wahhabis and the Ottoman Caliphate: The Memory of Historical Antagonism," in *Demystifying the Caliphate*, 117-134.

²⁰⁹ Fareed B. Sabri, "The Caliphate as Nostalgia: The Case of the Iraqi Muslim Brotherhood," in *Demystifying the Caliphate*, 135-146, and Claudia Nef, "Promoting the Caliphate on Campus: Debates and Advocacies of Hizbut Tahrir Student Activists in Indonesia," in *Demystifying the Caliphate*, 185-206.

²¹⁰ Wael B. Hallaq, "What is Shari'a," *Yearbook of Islamic & Middle Eastern Law* 12 (2005): 151-180 and *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

essentially defined almost solely against the Western, secular nation-state system that militant ideologues such as al-Zawahiri and Bin Laden feel has been forcibly imposed on Muslim societies through colonialism, occupation, and neo-imperialism. The global *jihadi* view of religion is also thoroughly post-Enlightenment and modern, seeing it primarily as a competitor to secularism.

Jihadi political theorizing with regard to the modern secular state, the dominant political order and capitalist global economic system, and post-“Arab Spring” shifts with the advent of the “Arab Winter,” is, in essence, dialogic and in constant competition with the “Western, secular” theories that it claims to reject outright.

Organization of the Chapter

The chapter is divided into two parts that together examine the particular character of Sunni *jihadi* ideology as it pertains to its most central components, and the causes underlying variations in the manner in which jihadi organizations have managed to achieve their objective of territorial control and governance structures within their domain. The first examines the main contours of Sunni *jihadi* criticisms of democracy and the secular state. This examination must necessarily include an analysis of global *jihadi* counter political theorizing of an alternate state model, that of a neo-caliphate—a unified Muslim superstate that transcends the existing borders and boundaries of the modern nation-states that divide, as *jihadis* see it, the global Muslim community (*Umma*). The second considers how the trajectory of the “Arab Spring” to an “Arab Winter,” defined by the re-entrenchment of authoritarian regimes, has impacted *jihadi* thinking with regard to political participation and the strategizing about the possibilities of territorial control and operational, as opposed to solely theoretical, governance. It also examines *jihadi*-insurgent experiments with territorial governance before and during the “Arab Spring” in Yemen, northern Mali and parts of the Sahel, Syria and Iraq, and Somalia. The primary aim of this analysis is to compare and

contrast how the discourses and strategies of Islamic State and Al-Shabaab, as well as other Sunni *jihadi* organizations have been critically shaped by political, social, and geographical circumstances. More specifically, I demonstrate the ways in which extremist organizations deftly alter their strategies and ideational positions in accordance to varying levels of social unrest and political conflicts in areas outside of the territorial control of formal governing authorities and institutions.

PART I

Electoral ‘Bin Ladenism’?

The initial stages of the “Arab Spring” profoundly impacted not only the social and political environments across the Middle East and North Africa but also the political thinking, narrative construction, and operations of Al-Qaeda Central and other *jihadi* organizations. The ripples of the mass demonstrations in Tunisia and Egypt and the armed rebellion in Libya against longstanding authoritarian regimes, their eventual toppling (albeit temporarily in the latter two countries) and the electoral successes of mainstream Islamist parties such as Ennahda and the Egyptian *Ikhwān* at first alarmed many veteran *jihadi* leaders and ideologues who feared the potential damaging impact of what at first seemed to be increasing democratization and the decline of authoritarianism. For example, in a running series of audiovisual releases issued between February 2011 and October 2012, Al-Qaeda Central’s deputy *amīr* and later *amīr*, Ayman al-Zawahiri, warned Muslims against abandoning *jihad* in the euphoria following the seeming fall of authoritarian rulers such as Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak and instead continued to criticize mainstream Islamist movements and organizations, including the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and Ennahda, for their acceptance of the Westphalian state and embrace of “secular” and “atheistic” nationalism in the image of

“the West.”²¹¹ Al-Zawahiri’s sentiments were reiterated by many other Sunni *jihadi* ideologues including other Al-Qaeda leaders, as will be further discussed and analyzed in Part II of this chapter. Like many Arab autocrats in countries such as Saudi Arabia and the other Persian Gulf monarchies, al-Zawahiri and other *jihadis* were caught up in the tumult of the protests and believed that they would result in a growing “wave” of democratization and replacement of existing authoritarian regimes. The uncertainty of what would come after concerned both the *jihadis* and the authoritarian regimes they sought to overthrow and replace as well as the foreign powers supporting many of the region’s autocrats. Muslims, said Sunni global *jihadi* leaders and ideologues including al-Zawahiri, should not fool themselves into believing that the United States, Great Britain, France, Israel, and other Western states would allow for a truly “Islamic” state to flourish in the Middle East or elsewhere in the Islamic world. Instead, they would try to “create a new Iraq,” a country in which they would try to install their own puppet regime dependent and loyal to the whims of the West.²¹²

On the one hand, some *jihadi* theorists saw the uprisings as having potential for the emergence of a new, Islamized or “jihadized” current in countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Iraq, one that would establish “true” Islamic regimes in preparation for the establishment, or, as *jihadis* see it the “re-establishment,” of a caliphate.²¹³ However, many of them were also concerned that popular ecstasy in places such as Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya would lead those countries’ Muslims to embrace “Western-style” democracy instead of the

²¹¹ Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Risālat al-amal wa-l-bishr li-ahlinā fī Miṣr* (A Message of Hope and Glad Tidings to Our People in Egypt): Parts 1 to 11, Mu’assasat al-Sahāb li-l-Intāj al-I’lāmī, released between February 2011 and October 2012.

²¹² Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Risālat al-amal wa-l-bishr li-ahlinā fī Miṣr* (A Message of Hope and Glad Tidings to Our People in Egypt): Part 6, Mu’assasat al-Sahāb li-l-Intāj al-I’lāmī, released on 21 May 2011.

²¹³ Anwār al-‘Awlaqī, “The Tsunami of Change,” *Inspire*, issue 5 (Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula), 29 March 2011, 50-53 and ‘Aṭīyatullah Abī ‘Abd al-Raḥman (‘Aṭīyatullah al-Lībī), *Thawrat al-Shu‘ūb wa suqūt al-niẓām al-‘arabī al-fāsīd: Kasr ṣanam al-istiqrār wa-l-intalāqa al-jadīda* (The People’s Revolution and the Fall of the Corrupt Arab Regime: The Breaking of the Idol of Stability and the New Beginning), Markaz al-Fajr li-l-I’lām, 23 February 2011.

Islamization of their newly-liberated societies. Even Bin Laden, while endorsing the uprisings generally as being part of the new “revolution lit in Tunisia” (aḍā’at al-thawra min Tūnis) adopted and embraced by the *Umma* (*fa-anisat bi-hā al-Umma*) in a display of courage in the face of the “winds of change” (*rīyāḥ al-taghayīr*), advised Muslims in those countries to establish advisory councils to guide the new governments in establishing true Islamic states.²¹⁴ Noting the “historic” (*furṣat tārikhīya ‘aẓīma*) yet “dangerous” (*ṭuruq khaṭīr*) opportunity and crossroads that the popular uprisings represented, he urged Muslims not to squander the chance to “shatter the idols” and establish a new political order based on “Islamic” justice and faith (*khaṭṭamū al-aṣnām wa-l-awthān wa aqīmū al-‘adl wa-l-īmān*).²¹⁵

Early results of the “Arab Spring,” such as the electoral victories of the Egyptian *Ikhwān* and Tunisian Ennahda, initially seemed to further damage the call of veteran *jihadis* that true change is only possible through the embrace of military struggle and armed force. Mainstream Islamist parties and establishment religious scholars (‘*ulamā*) and jurists (*fuqahā*) were seen by *jihadis* as being particularly harmful to their message because they embraced and utilized much of the same religious vocabulary but still advocated for and participated in democratic elections and the permanence, in practice, of the modern nation-state. This was true not only with regard to national legislation, such as the 2012 revision of the Egyptian constitution following the electoral successes of the *Ikhwān* and Salafī political

²¹⁴ Usama bin Laden, *Kalimat al-shahīd al-Islām li-Ummatihi al-Muslima* (Remarks of the Martyr of Islam to His Muslim *Umma*), Mu’assasat al-Saḥāb li-l-Intāj al-I’lāmī, 18 May 2011.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

parties such as Hizb al-Nūr,²¹⁶ but also in mainstream Sunni and Salafi statements about the mass protests and eventual civil war in Syria.²¹⁷

Mainstream Islamist electoral successes coupled with the embrace of “religious” rhetoric by many Sunni Muslim preachers, *‘ulamā*, and Islamists did not just worry *jihadis* but also concerned many Western politicians, analysts, and pundits who feared the rise of “radical Islam” with a false democratic face through the rise to prominence of parties that they alleged were only a hair’s breadth away from Al-Qaeda.²¹⁸ This alarmist analysis is belied by the longstanding *jihadi* rejection of participation in democratic systems and allegations that embracing representative democracy in any form is akin to *shirk*.²¹⁹ *Jihadi*

²¹⁶ Discussions of the Egyptian *Ikhwān*’s and Salafi parties decisions to participate in the post-Hosni Mubarak political system are provided in Jonathan Brown, *Salafis and Sufis in Egypt* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2011), at http://carnegieendowment.org/files/salafis_sufis.pdf, last accessed 17 July 2017; Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013); and Beverley Milton-Edwards, *The Muslim Brotherhood: The Arab Spring and Its Future Face* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

²¹⁷ For example, a number of mainstream Saudi Salafi *‘ulamā* referred to the Syrian conflict as a legitimate *jihad*, from a *shari‘a* perspective, against an atheistic Ba‘th Party regime of “Nuṣayrī” (‘Alawī) “disbelievers” (*kuffar*) or apostates (*murtadūn*). One of the most vocal has been the popular preacher and jurist Muhammad al-‘Arīfī, a former student of the kingdom’s former grand *muftī*, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz bin Bāz, who holds a Ph.D. in Islamic religious sciences (*usūl al-dīn*) from Imam Muhammad bin Sa‘ud University in Riyadh where he wrote his dissertation on the medieval Hanbali jurist Ibn Taymiyya’s views on Sufism. He is currently a member of the teaching faculty at King Sa‘ud University. See his autobiography, accessed on his web site at <http://arefe.com/PCV.aspx>. Vocal support and fundraising for *jihad* against the Syrian government pitted some influential Saudi preachers against the more cautious approach of the Saudi monarchy. See Haifa Za‘yter, “al-azma al-Sūrīyya tathīr ṣadaman bayna al-malik al-Sa‘ūdī wa rijāl al-dīn (The Syrian Crisis Raises a Clash between the Saudi King and the ‘Ulamā),” *Al-Safir*, 16 June 2012, accessed at <http://www.assafir.com/Article.aspx?EditionId=2177&ChannelId=52140&ArticleId=1617&Author>. See a representative sample of al-‘Arīfī’s rhetoric on ‘Alawīs and Shi‘is, for example his comments on the ‘Alawīs and Shi‘i Muslims, in his February 19, 2012 Friday prayer (*ṣalāt al-jum‘a*) sermon on the Syrian conflict, at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XglXxqhcHwE>, last accessed 11 July 2017.

²¹⁸ Ignatius, “How Osama bin Laden is Winning, Even in Death.” Commentators from the right and far right in the United States and Europe produced even more alarmist analysis, for example Andrew C. McCarthy, “From Democracy to Sharia,” *National Review Online*, 19 May 2012, <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/300507/democracy-sharia-andrew-c-mccarthy>, last accessed 11 July 2017, and Mark Steyn, “The Facebook Caliphate,” *National Review Online*, 26 May 2012, at <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/301075/facebook-caliphate-mark-steyn>, last accessed 11 July 2017.

²¹⁹ For a detailed discussion of *jihadi* criticisms of democracy see Nelly Lahoud, *The Jihadis’ Path to Self-destruction* (London: Hurst & Company, 2011), Chapter Four. Key *jihadi* writings on the impermissibility of democracy in Islam include *The Doubts Regarding the Ruling of Democracy in Islam: 2nd Edition* (n.p., Dar al-Tibyan, Rajab 1425/August-September 2004) and Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisī, *Al-Dīmuqrāfiya, hadhā dīn* (Democracy is a Religion) (n.p., n.d.), at <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=mo5o2fpb>, last accessed 19 April 2012. Al-Maqdisī is particularly influential in Sunni *jihadi* circles and has written a number of influential treatises on *jihadi* thought concerning legitimate systems of governance and creedal belief according to his interpretations of *tawhīd*. His thought and career is discussed at length in Joas Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihadi: The Ideology and Influence of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), Joas Wagemakers, “A

ideologues allege that the appearance of “democracy” in Muslim countries can be traced to the establishment of authoritarian and often militaristic regimes following the end of European colonialism. Claims that the electoral participation and successes of mainstream Islamist parties and movements were a form of “electoral Bin Ladenism” is a contradiction in terms since *jihadi* political thought sees electoral democracy as a form of *kufr* and *shirk* and rejects it outright.²²⁰ Global *jihadi* ideologues and leaders also have a long history of harshly criticizing those Islamist movements and parties who participate in elections including the Egyptian *Ikhwān* and the Palestinian *Ḥarakat al-Muqāwama al-Islāmiyya* (HAMAS).²²¹

Al-Zawahiri and other *jihadis* uniformly condemned HAMAS for militarily suppressing small and more globally-minded *jihadi* groups in the Gaza Strip in 2009 following a widespread crackdown by its security forces and military wing, the Brigades of the Martyr ‘Izz al-Dīn al-Qassām (*Katā’ib al-Shahīd ‘Izz al-Dīn al-Qassām*) following an August 2009 gun battle with members of the group Jund Anṣār Allah fī Aknāf Bayt al-Maqdis in the city of Rafah in southern Gaza. Jund Anṣār Allah, Jaysh al-Umma, Jamā‘at al-Tawḥīd wa-l-Jihad Bayt al-Maqdis, Jamā‘at Anṣār al-Sunna Aknāf Bayt al-Maqdis, and Jamā‘at Anṣār Bayt al-Maqdis emerged publicly in Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula beginning

Purist Jihadi-Salafi: The Ideology of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no. 2 (2009): 281-297, and Nelly Lahoud, *The Jihadis’ Path to Self-destruction*, 171-178.

²²⁰ *Jihadi* argumentation is in some ways self-contradictory in that it vehemently attacks and rejects the legitimacy of democracy while also arguing that “true democracy” has never existed in Muslim countries due to authoritarian regimes. Al-Zawahiri, for example, has even claimed that he and other *jihadis* simply want Muslims to be able to choose their own rulers through the Prophetic and *Rāshidūn* model (caliphate) via consultation (*shūrā*), which will establish justice (‘*adl*) and unite the world’s Muslims for the liberation of occupied Muslim lands, chief among them Jerusalem and Al-Aqsā Mosque. Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Sitta arba ‘ūn ‘āmmān ‘alā ‘āmm al-naksa* (Forty-six Years after the Year of the Setback), Mu’assasat al-Saḥāb li-l-Intāj al-I‘lāmī, 1 August 2013.

²²¹ Joas Wagemakers, “A Jihadi-Salafi Case against Hamas,” *Jihadica*, 23 March 2010, at <http://www.jihadica.com/a-jihadi-salafi-case-against-hamas/>, last accessed 11 July 2017, Lahoud, *The Jihadis’ Path*, 163-170, and Meir Hatina, “Redeeming Sunni Islam: Al-Qa‘ida’s Polemic against the Muslim Brethren,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 39, no. 1 (2012): 101-113.

in 2009 through 2012 and challenged HAMAS' sole claim to the mantle of "Islamic" militant action, if not formal politics, in the occupied Palestinian Territories.²²²

The conflict came to a head on 14 August 2009 when HAMAS security forces attempted to arrest members of Jund Anṣār Allah at the Ibn Taymiyya Mosque in Rafah and a standoff developed followed by an hours-long gun battle that ended with the deaths of multiple HAMAS security forces and thirteen members of the small *jihadi* group. Among those killed in the battle was *Shaykh* Abu al-Nūr al-Maqdisī ('Abd al-Laṭīf Mūsā), the spiritual guide of the group, who until then had been little known outside of Gaza. He and the other members of the group slain during the standoff were widely eulogized posthumously by global *jihadis* including Al-Qaeda Central, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), and Al-Shabaab in Somalia.²²³ Similarly, al-Zawahiri excoriated the Egyptian *Ikhwān* and other branches of the Brotherhood for colluding with secular and apostate rulers over the decades and accepting the primacy of the nation-state system.²²⁴ He followed suit with HAMAS following the movement's decision to participate in the Palestinian legislative

²²² Are Hovdenak, *Al-Qaida—a Challenge for Hamas?* (Kjeller: Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, 2009), International Crisis Group, *Radical Islam in Gaza* (New York, 2011), Christopher Anzalone, "Black Banners over Gaza: The Rise of Palestinian Jihadi-Takfiri Groups—a Challenge for Hamas?," conference paper presented at Jihadism in the Internet and the New Media—the State of Play at Stifung Wissenschaft und Politik (German Institute for International and Security Affairs), 18 February 2011, and Reuven Paz, "Jihadists and Nationalist Islamists," in *Fault Lines in Global Jihad: Organizational, Strategic and Ideological Fissures*, ed. Assaf Moghadam and Brian Fishman (New York: Routledge, 2011), 203-219.

²²³ Islamic State of Iraq communiqué, "Bayān li-l-mujāhidīn fī aknāf Bayt al-Maqdis ba'd al-jarīma fī Masjid Ibn Taymiyya," (Statement to the Mujāhidīn in Palestine after the Crime in the Mosque of Ibn Taymiyya), Markaz al-Fajr li-l-I'lām, 5 September 2009; AQIM communiqué, "Bayān bi-khuṣūs aḥdāth jarīma Rafāh bi-Filastīn" (Statement concerning the criminal events of Rafah in Palestine), Markaz al-Fajr li-l-I'lām, 22 August 2009; Al-Qaeda Central film, *Al-Gharb wa-l-naḥaq al-muḥlim* (The West and the Dark Tunnel), Mu'assasat al-Sahāb li-l-Intāj al-I'lāmī, 22 September 2009; and Al-Shabaab film, *Iqāmat ḥukm Allah 'alā jāṣūsayn* (Implementing God's Punishment on Two Spies), Wilāyat Banaadir al-Islāmīyya-Mogadishu, *Al-Qism al-I'lāmī*, 18 October 2009.

²²⁴ Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Al-ḥisad al-murr: Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn fī Sittīn 'amman* (The Bitter Harvest: The Muslim Brotherhood over Sixty Years), at <http://tawhed.ws/r?i=2gxseb4t>, last accessed 23 April 2012; Meir Hatina, "Redeeming Sunni Islam: Al-Qa'ida's Polemic against the Muslim, Brethren," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 39, no. 1 (2012): 101-113; and Marc Lynch, "Islam Divided between Jihad and the Muslim Brotherhood," in *Fault Lines in Global Jihad*, 161-183, his earlier article, "Islam Divided between Salafi-Jihad and the Ikhwan," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33, no. 6 (2010): 467-487.

elections in January 2006.²²⁵ HAMAS, al-Zawahiri alleged, has enslaved itself to the “modern idol” of nationalism by contesting parliamentary elections and seeking to rule the Palestinian Territories together with or, more often, in opposition to the Fatah-dominated Palestinian National Authority.²²⁶ Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi similarly rejected HAMAS’ claim to religious legitimacy, accusing its leaders of misleading Palestinian youth by disingenuous sloganeering using Islam as merely a tool to implement “blasphemous laws” and “polytheistic democracy.”²²⁷

Democracy, according to Abu Yaḥyā al-Lībī, a senior Al-Qaeda Central *shari‘a* official and the organization’s unofficial chief jurist (*mufti*) until his death in a U.S. drone missile strike in June 2012, stands in absolute opposition to Islamic tenets, which provide the believers (*mu’minūn*) with a complete (*kāmil*) worldview and system of laws and methods of governance through which to lead their lives.²²⁸ States, even if ruled by individuals who self-identify as Muslims, can only be properly governed through *shari‘a* according to al-Maqdisi, al-Lībī, and other *jihadi* ideologues. Partial implementation of Islamic law is not sufficient and nor is “drawing upon” it as “one of the sources” of national law, as the constitutions of

²²⁵ CNN, “Al Qaeda’s No. 2 Opposes Palestinian Elections,” 20 December 2006, at <http://www.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/meast/12/20/al.zawahiri.tape/>, last accessed 11 July 2017 and Zaki Chehab, *Inside HAMAS: The Untold Story of Militants, Martyrs and Spies* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 190.

²²⁶ Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Ṣanam al-waḥida al-waṭaniya* (The Idol of National Unity), Mu’assasat al-Saḥāb li-l-Intāḡ al-I’lāmī, 14 December 2009.

²²⁷ Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, “Al-radd al-amthāl ‘alā muftī HAMAS, [Yunis] al-Aṣṭāl” (The Excellent Refutation of the HAMAS Mufti, [Yunis] al-Aṣṭāl), 19 August 2009.

²²⁸ Abu Yaḥyā al-Lībī, *Al-Dīmuqrāṭīya: Al-ṣanam al-aṣrī* (Democracy: The Modern Idol), Mu’assasat al-Saḥāb li-l-Intāḡ al-I’lāmī, 6 August 2009. A prolific writer and skilled orator whose work covered a wide range of juridical issues, from justifying war against the Pakistani state to extolling the virtues of martyrdom and laying out the *shari‘a* stipulations for punishing Muslim spies, whose real name was Muhammad ‘Abd al-Majīd Ḥasan Qā’id, he was killed in a U.S. drone missile strike in the town of Mir Ali in the North Waziristan region of Pakistan. For biographical information and analysis of his role in Al-Qaeda, see Christopher Anzalone, “Al-Qaeda Loses its Chief Juridical Voice,” *Foreign Policy*, 14 June 2012, at http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/06/14/al_qaeda_loses_its_chief_juridical_voice, last accessed 11 July 2017, Michael Moss and Souad Mekhennet, “Rising Leader for Next Phase of Al Qaeda’s War,” *The New York Times*, 4 April 2008, at http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/04/world/asia/04qaeda.html?_r=1&oref=slogin.last, accessed 11 July 2017, and Jarret Brachman, *Global Jihadism: Theory and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 89-92 and “A Unifying Force Lost,” *Foreign Policy*, 8 June 2012, at http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/06/08/a_unifying_force_lost, last accessed 11 July 2017.

many Muslim majority countries claim to do.²²⁹ Failure to rule solely by “the *shari‘a*” legitimizes the use of violent force to overthrow existing Muslim governments and implement a “true” Islamic government.²³⁰ The constitutions of states such as Pakistan, though disguised in a seemingly Islamic veneer, are in reality bastions of secular polytheism with no religious legitimacy.²³¹ Furthermore, the existence of participatory democracy in Western countries such as the U.S., United Kingdom, and France makes the citizens of those countries complicit in the actions of their governments against Muslims in places such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Somalia, and Yemen.²³²

Global Jihadi Political Activism

If global *jihadis* are vehemently opposed to and threatened by democracy, they are perhaps even more distinguished by their insistence on establishing a new form of territoriality. However, as I outline below, the relative success of this second objective has been generally undermined by sustained and deeply-rooted contestation over the concept of *jihad* and conceptualization of legitimate authority along with grave differences between global and local *jihadis*. Indeed, the general political ideology and vision of global *jihadi* leaders and ideologues represents a revolutionary and militant pan-Islamism that seeks to overthrow and then replace existing “apostate” governments and political systems in Muslim majority countries with a transnational, unitary, and highly romanticized alternative, a “re-

²²⁹ Abu Yahyā al-Lībī, *Swat [Valley]: Naṣr aw shahada* (Swat: Victory or Martyrdom), Mu’assasat al-Saḥāb li-l-Intāj al-I’lāmī, 23 July 2009, and Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Ikhwānī wa akawātīl-muslimīn fī Pakistan* (My Muslim Brothers and Sisters in Pakistan), Mu’assasat al-Saḥāb li-l-Intāj al-I’lāmī, 14 July 2009.

²³⁰ Abu Yahyā al-Lībī, *Ḥaddu al-sinān li-qitāl ḥukuma wa jaysh Pakistan* (Sharpening the Spearheads to Fight the Government and Army of Pakistan), Markaz al-Fajr li-I’lām, 2009.

²³¹ A book by Ayman al-Zawahiri attacking the Pakistani constitution as a thoroughly secular document dressed up to look Islamic, *Al-ṣubḥ wa-l-qandīl* (The Morning and the Lantern), was published online at global *jihadi* Internet forums in December 2009 by Markaz al-Fajr li-I’lām, the online distributor for Al-Qaeda Central and affiliate media materials.

²³² Abu Yahyā al-Lībī, *Qurayza wa Amrikā: marta ‘ghadr wa manba ‘sharr* (Qurayza and America: A Breeding Ground of Treason and Fountainhead of Evil), Markaz al-Fajr li-I’lām, 25 April 2010 and Abu Yahya al-Libi, *Al-ṣūmāl: La salām bi-lā Islām* (Somalia: No Peace without Islam), Mu’assasat al-Saḥāb li-l-Intāj al-I’lāmī, 23 June 2008.

formed” caliphate. This conception of the neo-caliphate, however, is based on ahistorical reinterpretation and, though it draws upon a selective reading of the Islamic sacred past, is thoroughly modern in that the role of the idealized state is defined almost entirely in opposition to the current global political order and the modern machinations of international politics and state-to-state relations, thereby accepting the very parameters that global *jihadis* claim to reject.²³³ The neo-caliphate will act as an ever-expanding Muslim superstate capable of protecting “Muslim” interests from the existing diplomatic and inter-governmental and military coalitions such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union (EU), and the United Nations (UN).

Jihadism can be classified, based in part on its conception of military struggle (*jihad*) and geographical focus, into two categories: “classical jihadism” and “global jihadism.”²³⁴ Both classical and global jihadism represent extreme forms of *Umma*-centered radical activism and political violence that often utilize similar mobilization frames to move potential supporters and future members to action while also maintaining in-group solidarity among existing members. Classical and global jihadism differ, however, with regard to their geographical focus and scope. Classical jihadism, which is much closer, though not identical, to orthodox views of military and particularly defensive *jihad*, is primarily focused on fighting and expelling non-Muslim or authoritarian “apostate” oppressors and invaders from specific Muslim majority countries or territories, with the 1980s war in Afghanistan against the country’s Communist government and Soviet military forces and the 1990s anti-Russian separatist conflicts in Chechnya and the North Caucasus and Balkan Wars being the prime examples of a “classical jihad.”²³⁵

²³³ John Gray, *Al Qaeda and What It Means to Be Modern: New Edition* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007).

²³⁴ See Thomas Hegghammer’s rationale-based typology of different forms of Islamist activism in *Jihad in Saudi Arabia*, 5-8.

²³⁵ For a classic study of Afghan *mujāhidīn* groups in 1970s and 1980s Afghanistan, see Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*; David B. Edwards, *Before Taliban: Genealogies of the Afghan Jihad* (Berkeley:

In contrast, global jihadism as envisioned and pioneered by Usama bin Laden and other Al-Qaeda theoreticians including Ayman al-Zawahiri (who in turn reinterpreted and retooled concepts or aspects of concepts developed by previous Islamist intellectuals and leaders such as al-Bannā, Sayyid and Muhammad Quṭb, Egyptian militant theorist ‘Abd al-Salām Faraj, and ‘Abdullah ‘Azzām) ultimately seeks to bring about global revolutionary political change across the Muslim majority world through what they see as religiously-justified and commanded political violence. Local country and territory-specific conflicts such as ongoing separatism in places such as Indian-controlled Kashmir, the North Caucasus, the southern Philippines, Rakhine state in Myanmar, Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan, and Nigeria are seen by global *jihadis* as being only parts of a larger inter-civilizational struggle pitting “Islam” against “*Kufr*.”²³⁶ Global *jihadis* thus seek to amalgamate local conflicts involving Muslim populations into their transnational and global campaign to “re-form” a caliphate and carry out defensive, offensive, and retaliatory violence against those state and group actors occupying or otherwise oppressing Muslims.

University of California Press, 2002); Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn, *An Enemy We Created: The Myth of the Taliban-al Qaeda Merger in Afghanistan*, Chapter Two and Chapter Three; and Gilles Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending: Afghanistan, 1979 to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

²³⁶ Abu Yaḥyā al-Lībī, *Turkistān al-sharqīya: Al-Jurḥ al-mansī* (East Turkestan: The Forgotten Wound), Mu’assasat al-Sahāb li-l-Intāj al-I’lāmī, 6 October 2009; AQIM film, *Bi-munāsibat Ramadān wa tahrīdan li-l-mu’minīn: Nadwa jihādīya bi- ‘unwān kutib ‘alaykum al-qitāl* (On the Occasion of Ramadan and Inspiring/Rousing the Believers: A Jihadi Seminar on the Subject of Fighting being Prescribed upon You), Mu’assasat al-Andalus li-l-Intāj al-I’lāmī, 21 August 2010, Abu Muṣ‘ab ‘Abd al-Wadūd, “Ibādat al-muslimīn fī Nijīriya: Halaqat jadīda fī al-ḥarb al-ṣalībīya al-mustamirra” (Extermination of the Muslims in Nigeria: A New Part of the Ongoing Crusader War), Mu’assasat al-Andalus li-l-Intāj al-I’lāmī, 1 February 2010; Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF), “The Genocide against the Muslims in Burma has Spread to Other Cities and the Current Situation of Arakan,” 3 July 2013 [This statement was also released in Arabic, German, and Indonesian]; GIMF, “The Genocide against the Muslims in Burma,” 16 July 2012 [This statement was also released in Bangla and Arabic]; Jamā‘at Anṣār al-Islam (Iraq), Statement, 13 September 2012; Afghanistan Taliban communiqué, “Statement of Islamic Emirate regarding the Bloody Tragedy of the Muslims of Burma,” 20 July 2012, at http://alemaral.org/english/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=20774:statement-of-islamic-emirate-regarding-the-bloody-tragedy-of-the-muslims-of-burma&catid=4:statements&Itemid=4, last accessed 20 July 2012; Andrew Lebovich, “The Black Flag Flies in Mali,” *Al-Wasat*, 6 April 2012, at <http://thewasat.wordpress.com/2012/04/06/the-black-flag-flies-in-mali/>, last accessed 11 July 2017; and Jean-Pierre Filiu, *Could Al-Qaeda Turn African in the Sahel?* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2010).

While the intellectual originators of “classical jihadism” in the 1980s, the Palestinian, Al-Azhar-educated religious scholar ‘Abdullah ‘Azzām and the Pashtun Deobandi *mujāhidīn* commander Jalaluddin Haqqānī, advocated military operations targeting enemy combatants in defined geographically-bounded conflict zones, Usama bin Laden and other global *jihadis* endorsed out-of-zone, mass casualty attacks including terrorism, defined herein as the deliberate targeting of civilian non-combatants, as legitimate forms of political action and violence.²³⁷ Global jihadism is not interested simply in localized, “classical” *jihadi* and country-specific revolutionary struggles against ostensibly Muslim regimes or irredentist conflicts that seek to drive out non-Muslim aggressors on their own merits but rather seeks to subsume and aggregate local grievances and conflicts into a broader narrative of religio-political struggle and war.²³⁸ Global *jihadi* theorists and early organizers including Bin Laden and Yūsuf al-‘Uyayrī (sometimes transliterated as “al-‘Ayīrī”), one of the late founders of the original AQAP based in Saudi Arabia, , drew upon classical jihadism as part of the process of channeling local expressions of violent Islamism toward a more globalized form of militancy.²³⁹

The shift from local/regional to transnational and eventually global Sunni jihadism also owes much to the historical experiences of several instances of mass Muslim foreign fighter mobilizations in 1980s Afghanistan, the Balkans in the 1990s, and, to a lesser extent,

²³⁷ Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia*, 7-8, Vahid Brown and Don Rassler, *Fountainhead of Jihad*, 60-63, and Thomas Hegghammer, “Abdallah Azzam, The Imam of Jihad,” in *Al Qaeda in Its Own Words*, ed. Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 97-101.

²³⁸ Here I use Hegghammer’s definition of irredentist Islamism as a “struggle for a specific territory against a local non-Muslim occupier.” *Jihad in Saudi Arabia*, 6. See also his chapter “Jihadi-Salafis or Revolutionaries?” in *Global Salafism*, 244-265, and Vahid Brown, “Classical and Global Jihad: Al-Qa’ida’s Franchising Frustrations,” in *Fault Lines in Global Jihad: Organizational, Strategic and Ideological Fissures*, ed. Assaf Moghadam and Brian Fishman (New York: Routledge, 2011), 88-89.

²³⁹ Roel Meijer, “Yusuf al-Uyairi and the Transnationalisation of Saudi Jihadism,” in *Kingdom without Borders: Saudi Arabia’s Political, Religious and Media Frontiers*, ed. Madawi al-Rasheed (London: Hurst & Company, 2008), 221-241, Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia*, 133-138, and Madawi al-Rasheed, “The Local and the Global in Saudi Salafi Discourse,” in *Global Salafism*, 301-320 and “The Minaret and the Palace: Obedience at Home and Rebellion Abroad,” in *Kingdom without Borders*, 199-217.

Chechnya and the North Caucasus from the 1990s into the early 2000s.²⁴⁰ From the global *jihadi* perspective, the continuing tribalism, clannism, and segmentation of the *Umma* according to identities other than Islam, as Al-Qaeda members witnessed first-hand in countries such as Afghanistan and Somalia during the 1990s, also reified their thinking with regard to the necessity to place “Islam” at the center of individual and organizational identity in their idealized society and state. It is also likely that key global *jihadi* ideological architects such as Bin Laden were also profoundly affected by key personal, individualized experiences such as, for example, the Al-Qaeda *amīr*’s heavy financial, labor, and ideological and mental investment in self-styled “Islamic” states such Sudan, which eventually expelled the Saudi exile while keeping his investment, properties, and a significant amount of his money, leaving him feeling disheartened, misused, and betrayed. There were, he concluded, no truly “Islamic” states in existence and one, spearheaded by a heavily politicized interpretation of *jihad*, needed to be built.²⁴¹

Inter-Jihadi Tensions: The Limits of Globalization and Unity

Usama bin Laden, who originally operated in Pakistan’s Pashtun tribal agencies and across the border in Afghanistan under the mentorship of ‘Azzām and his Services Bureau for the Arab *Mujāhidīn* (*Maktab al-Khidamāt li-l-Mujāhidīn al-‘Arab*), established his own *mujāhidīn* training camps in Afghanistan by late 1986.²⁴² The war against the Afghan Communist government and its Soviet backers during the 1980s was a key period in the development of both classical jihadism and, toward the end of the war, global jihadism through Bin Laden’s branching off from ‘Azzām and founding of Al-Qaeda as well as the

²⁴⁰ For details on how these foreign fighter mobilizations directly contributed to the intellectual and ideological formation of a globalist Sunni jihadism and militant Islamism, see Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia*, Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

²⁴¹ Al-Jazeera English, *I Knew bin Laden* (documentary), 2 parts, 27 December 2011, at <https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/general/2011/05/201151014338715787.html>, last accessed 17 May 2018.

²⁴² Vahid Brown, “Classical and Global Jihad,” 90.

Muslim foreign fighter phenomenon that continued through the 1990s in the Balkans and North Caucasus and the 2000s in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, and the Sahel region of Africa.²⁴³

In addition to differences over tactics and geographical focus, some *jihadi* ideologues adopted a more virulent religious puritanism and sectarianism than ‘Azzām and other “classical” *jihadi* leaders by placing a greater emphasis on “proper” theology (*kalām*), creed (*‘aqīda*), and practice of Islam within a militant Islamist activist framework. Proper action was not sufficient if the *mujāhid* did not also adhere to the “correct” beliefs. Whereas ‘Azzām warned Arab and other non-Afghan Muslim foreign fighters to respect local Ḥanafī-dominated beliefs, some of which they would find “un-Islamic,” even if they did not like them,²⁴⁴ *jihadi* puritans such as Abu Qatāda al-Filastīnī, Abu Muṣ‘ab al-Zarqāwī, and Abu Muhammad al-Maḥdī espoused a more rigid creedal puritanism, though not always without flexibility, with regard to inter-Muslim religious and ritual differences, leading to clashes with global *jihadi* strategists such as Abu Muṣ‘ab al-Sūrī.²⁴⁵

²⁴³ The literature on the Afghan *jihad* against the Soviets and their local communist allies is vast and of varying quality. For detailed analytical discussions of Arab foreign fighter recruitment and local (Afghan) *mujahideen* factions see Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia*, 38-48, Hegghammer, “The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters,” Vahid Brown, “Classical and Global Jihad,” 89-93, Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, Gilles Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending*, Mohammed M. Hafez, “Jihad after Iraq: Lessons from the Arab Afghans,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no. 2 (2009): 73-94, Brian Glyn Williams, “On the Trail of the ‘Lions of Islam’: Foreign Fighters in Afghanistan and Pakistan, 1980-2010,” *Orbis* 55, no. 2 (2011): 216-239, Barnett Rubin, “Arab Islamists in Afghanistan,” in *Political Islam: Revolution, Radicalism, or Reform?*, ed. John L. Esposito (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1997), 179-206, and Camille Tawil, *Brothers in Arms: The Story of Al-Qa’ida and the Arab Jihadists*, translated by Robin Bray (London: Saqi, 2010), 15-42.

²⁴⁴ ‘Abdullah ‘Azzām, *Ilḥaq bi-l-qāfila* (Join the Caravan), 11; I have used the page number of the digital version of this text accessed, downloaded, and archived at <https://www.paldf.net/forum/showthread.php?t=1049905> as “Maktab al-Shaykh ‘Abdullah ‘Azzām,” last accessed 12 July 2017. ‘Azzām writes that the Afghan people, while brave and dedicated to maintaining their honor, have never encountered another jurisprudential school of thought except for the Hanafī school, which has made them zealous in their dedication to it (*ta’ṣṣab li-l-madhhab al-ḥanafī fī qulūb al-Afghān*).

²⁴⁵ Brynjar Lia, “‘Destructive Doctrinarians’: Abu Muṣ‘ab al-Sūrī’s Critique of the Salafis in the Jihadi Current,” in *Global Salafism*, 281-300, *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of Al-Qaida Strategist Abu Mus‘ab al-Sūrī* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 234-245, and “Jihadis Divided between Strategists and Doctrinarians,” in *Fault Lines in Global Jihad*, 69-87; Anne Stenersen, “Arab and Non-Arab Jihadis,” in *Fault Lines in Global Jihad*, 116-137; Jarret Brachman, *Global Jihadism*, Part One; Mohammed M. Hafez, “Takfir and Violence against Muslims,” in *Fault Lines in Global Jihad*, 25-46; Daniel Lav, *Radical Islam and the Revival of Medieval Theology*, 172-182; Nelly Lahoud, *The Jihadis’ Path to Self-destruction*, Chapter Five; and

In addition to ideational differences, tensions also emerged with regard to strategy. Indeed, from an operational perspective, most of Al-Qaeda's regional affiliates have historically focused primarily on local and regional conflicts within their specific geographical home areas. AQIM and its regional North and West African and Sahelian affiliates, such as the Al-Murābiṭūn group led by Mokhtar Belmokhtar and the umbrella Jamā'at Nuṣrat al-Islām wa-l-Muslimīn, has rarely tried to launch attacks in Europe, specifically in France, even after forming in 2007 and following the public pledge of allegiance (*bay'a*) of its leadership under Abu Muṣ'ab 'Abd al-Wadūd ('Abd al-Malik Drūkdāl) to Usama bin Laden and AQIM's formal affiliation with Al-Qaeda.²⁴⁶ Al-Shabaab, despite its transnationalist rhetoric and pan-Islamic aspects of its core ideology, is operationally rooted in Somalia and East Africa, with its interests in the latter being largely rooted in the "Greater Somalia" geographical region that includes Kenya's North Eastern Province, parts of the Swahili Coast, and the Ogaden region of western Ethiopia.²⁴⁷ Even when it has conducted attacks outside of these areas, such as the July 2010 twin suicide bombings in Kampala, Uganda and the siege of the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, Al-Shabaab leaders have cited domestic issues as the reasons for these attacks, chiefly the presence of thousands of Ugandan and Kenyan soldiers in Somalia as part of the multinational, U.S.-backed African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) peacekeeping

Joas Wagemakers, "The Transformation of a Radical Concept: al-wala' wa-l-bara' in the Ideology of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi," in *Global Salafism*, pgs. 81-106.

²⁴⁶ Jean-Pierre Filiu, "The Local and Global Jihad of Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghrib," 213-226.

²⁴⁷ Stig Jarle Hansen, "Somalia—Grievance, Religion, Clan, and Profit," in *The Borders of Islam: Exploring Huntington's Faultlines, from Al-Andalus to the Virtual Ummah*, ed. Stig Jarle Hansen, Atle Mesøy, and Tuncay Kardas (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 127-138, and *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 139-142, and Christopher Anzalone, "Insurgency, Governance, & Legitimacy in Somalia: A Reassessment of Harakat al-Shabab al-Mujahideen, its Rhetoric & Divisions," *Al-Wasat*, 6 December 2010, at <http://thewasat.wordpress.com/2010/12/06/insurgency-governance-legitimacy-in-somalia-a-reassessment-of-harakat-al-shabab-al-mujahideen-its-rhetoric-its-divisions/>, last accessed 11 July 2017, and "The Rise and Decline of al-Shabab in Somalia," *Turkish Review* 4, no. 4 (2014), 390.

force.²⁴⁸ AQAP is the only major Al-Qaeda regional affiliate organization that has a history of sustained attempts to carry out attacks far outside of its home base, attacks which include the Christmas Day 2009 targeting of Northwest Airlines Flight 253 by Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab and two attempts in October 2010 to send package bombs from Yemen to the United States on cargo planes.²⁴⁹ Despite these attempts, AQAP and its local domestic front organization and affiliate, Anṣār al-Shari‘a, remain primarily engaged in local and regional targeting in Yemen and Saudi Arabia and are currently militarily focused on the weak Yemeni government of ‘Abd al-Rabbuh Maṣṣūr Hadī, the Saudi Arabian and United Arab Emirates-led Arab intervention force propping it up, and the Hūthī Movement, which refers to itself as Anṣār Allah and Al-Shabāb al-Mu’mīnīn. The operational behavior of these groups, despite globalist elements, is rarely transregional, let alone global, with the possible exception of AQAP. They represent, rather, a glocalized and ideologically hybridized jihadism that incorporates both global and local rhetoric, mobilization framing, and narrative construction that taps into transnational or globalist themes and symbols in order to strengthen calls for localized or regionalized action.²⁵⁰ Foreign fighter recruitment and external fundraising, such as that carried out by Al-Shabab in Somalia, Kenya, and from Somali diaspora communities in North America, Europe, the Middle East, and East Africa, is

²⁴⁸ Al-Shabaab communiqué, “Bayān min al-qiyādat al-‘āma fī Harakat al-Shabāb al-Mujāhidīn bi-shā’n tafjīrāt Kampala fī Uganda” (Statement from the General Leadership of Al-Shabaab concerning the Kampala, Uganda Bombings), Al-Katā’ib, 24 July 2010. As of August 2010, Al-Shabaab’s official external media department is called both the Al-Katā’ib Foundation (Mu’assasat Al-Katā’ib) and the Al-Katā’ib News Channel (Qinā al-Katā’ib al-Akhbārīya). It had previously been known simply as its “media department” (*al-qism al-i‘lāmī*) and was identified as being a part of its frontline military force, the Jaysh al-‘Usra (Army of Difficulty).

²⁴⁹ Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, *Inspire*, issue 3, 20 November 2010; “*Ghawzat ‘Umar al-Farūq tafāṣīl wa natā’ij*,” (Expedition of Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab: Details and Results) in *Ṣadā al-Malāḥim*, issue 12, 14 February 2010, 40-41; and communiqué, “*Al-amaliya al-akh al-mujāhid ‘Umar al-Farūq al-Nijrī fī radd al-‘udwān al-Amrīkī ‘alā al-Yemen*” (The Operation of the Mujāhid-Brother Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab in Response to American Aggression in Yemen), 28 December 2009.

²⁵⁰ “Transnational” and “global” are not necessarily synonymous. On ideological hybridity in Sunni *jihadi* groups, see Thomas Hegghammer, “The Ideological Hybridization of Jihadi Groups,” *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 9 (2009): 26-45.

primarily used to support operations in specific geographical zones, enabling the groups to make up for local economic and recruitment deficits.²⁵¹

Al-Qaeda, despite over a decade of attempting to manipulate, maneuver, and cajole local irredentist militant Islamist actors to adopt their globalist vision and steer them toward a broad inter-civilizational conflict against “Crusaders” and “apostates,” largely failed to do so, belying its claims to represent the “vanguard of jihad” (*ṭalī‘a al-jihād*) in the world.²⁵² This failure lies in part on the failure of Al-Qaeda Central to convince local and regional irredentist militants to fully embrace a global program of violence and political activism, a program that should, in the eyes of Al-Qaeda Central, include military and terrorist attacks abroad and outside of regional affiliates’ own home bases of operation. Instead, many local and regional irredentist Islamist militant groups either rejected Al-Qaeda’s overtures outright or else embraced them to varying, limited degrees as determined by their own local/regional and organizational self-interests. Many of the latter groups represent a hybridized form of Sunni jihadism, one that includes both transnational, “global” aspects while retaining an organizational focus on local/regional irredentism and issues as well as operations. These two ideological aspects are often expressed either as a kind of “glocal” form of militant Islamism or strategically, and perhaps also inconsistently, based on the specific organization’s objectives during a specific period of time or in a specific set of messaging and narrative framing.

²⁵¹ Christopher Anzalone, “Globalizing Insurgency in Somalia,” in Bayan Chanda and Susan Froetschel, ed., *A World Connected: Globalization in the 21st Century* (New Haven: Yale Center for the Study of Globalization, 2012), 129-132, and “Who are Somalia’s ‘Al-Shabab?’,” *African Arguments*, 27 July 2011, at <http://africanarguments.org/2011/07/27/who-are-somalia%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%98al-shabab%E2%80%99/>, last accessed 14 July 2017, Roland Marchal, *The Rise of a Jihadi Movement in a Country at War: Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujaheddin in Somalia* (Paris: Centre d’études et de recherches internationales, SciencePo, 2011), David Shinn, “Al Shabaab’s Foreign Threat to Somalia,” *Orbis* 55, no. 2 (2011): 203-215, and David M. Anderson and Jacob McKnight, “Understanding al-Shabaab: Clan, Islam and Insurgency in Kenya,” *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 9, no. 3 (2015): 536-557.

²⁵² Vahid Brown, “Classical and Global Jihad,” 105-106. The accepting of new regional affiliates has, if anything, led to a shift in the Al-Qaeda “brand,” he argues, making the original organizational increasingly “vulnerable to losses in its appeal by the strategic and ideological aberrations of its new partners.”

Local and regional *jihadi* groups, including some of Al-Qaeda Central's own affiliates, continue to devote the lion's share of their time and resources to pursuing their own localized insurgencies and campaigns of political violence.²⁵³ Similarly, Islamic State has been successful at winning local affiliates but with mixed results with regard to the depth of their dedication to the caliphal dreams of the core organization in Syria and Iraq as opposed to joining the Islamic State "brand" so as to extract benefits for their own local insurgencies.²⁵⁴ Regional Islamic State affiliates such as Wilāyat Khurasān (Khurasān Province, ISWK) and Wilāyat Sinai (Saynā'), which was formerly known as Jamā'at Anṣār Bayt al-Maqdis, are both fully connected into the official Islamic State media operations network and adhere to different degree to the core leadership's goals of running a new "caliphate." Operationally, whereas Wilāyat Sinai is more centrally connected in terms of operations to Islamic State "Core," ISWK emerged largely due to local/regional factors and dynamics, including pre-existing schisms within the Afghan and Pakistan Taliban movements, and is focused on waging a locally and regionally-based insurgency while benefiting from the "brand name" of Islamic State and some investment on the part of the core organization. ISWK is also deeply engaged in violent competition for primacy with other local/regional Islamist movements and *jihadi* organizations active in the same geographical area.

Global *jihadis*, in effect, base their political and strategic thinking on convincing local irredentist and revolutionary militant Islamists to set aside their territorially-limited grievances and goals in favor of a globalized conflict narrative in which local conflicts are seen as only parts of a broader campaign of revolutionary violence.²⁵⁵ Global *jihadi* ideology

²⁵³ Vahid Brown, "Classical and Global Jihad," 99-107, and Jean-Pierre Filiu, "The Local and Global Jihad of Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghrib," 225-226.

²⁵⁴ On Islamic State's conception of *bay'a*, see Joas Wagemakers, "The Concept of *Bay'a* in the Islamic State's Ideology," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 4 (2015), 98-106.

²⁵⁵ Vahid Brown, "Classical and Global Jihad," 89, 95, 97-98.

and objectives, however, frequently lose out to local, regional, and national motivations that prove to be more influential in spurring on organizational and social movement mobilization and adoption of risky and potentially costly political actions. For example, in the 1990s in Somalia and Yemen, Al-Qaeda's attempts to convince local Islamists to embrace its call for "global *jihad*" against the United States and other "Crusader" Western powers, including outside of the local militants' own countries, failed to recruit many of them to Bin Laden's and al-Zawahiri's cause and instead local Islamists simply took Al-Qaeda's aid while ignoring its ideological and political platform.²⁵⁶ In Afghanistan, Al-Qaeda in the 1990s was forced to operate and ally with a much larger local/regional Islamist movement, the Afghan Taliban, which was focused on a specific nation-state and even though the two organizations remain allies, the Afghan Taliban continues to largely endorse and adhere to the Westphalian state model in terms of its political messaging and military operations. This creates a dichotomy between "global" and "local" conceptions of *jihad*.²⁵⁷ Al-Qaeda and other global *jihadi* figures also suffer a deficit in religious authority in comparison to "religiously more authoritative exponents of classical jihad," whose interpretations and calls for armed mobilization under the banner of *jihad* are closer to the more widely-accepted, orthodox views espoused by the majority of Sunni '*ulamā* and *fuqahā*. Global *jihadi* political theology, in other words, is exclusionary and, at least in principle, rejects any other Islamist actors whose conceptions of identity and politics is bound to specific countries or regions rather than to the former's idealized, ahistorical, and *Umma*-centered "ideological citizenship."²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ For details on Al-Qaeda's difficulty in Somalia, Yemen, and other countries, see *Ibid.*, 94-102.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.* and Adam Gadahn, *Liqā' ma' al-qā'id al-mujāhid 'Azzām al-Amrīkī*, Mu'assasat al-Saḥāb li-l-Intāj al-I'lāmī, 2004. Gadahn denies that Al-Qaeda's war with the United States is an ethnic or nationalist war or that Americans are simply targeted because they are Americans and insists that the war instead is the resistance of oppressed Muslims against an arrogant, hegemonic, neo-imperial superpower.

Differences between “classical” and “global” *jihad* first emerged in Afghanistan during the later stages of the anti-Soviet *Jihad*. ‘Azzām and his deputy, Tamīm al-‘Adnānī, believed that the Services Bureau should focus on training *mujāhidīn* in ‘*aqīda* and theology together with providing military training in order to prepare them to fight alongside and under the direction of local, Afghan armed groups.²⁵⁹ ‘Azzām’s one-time protégé, Bin Laden, however began to espouse a more globalist message by 1986 and established the fledgling Al-Qaeda organization’s first military training camp that year in the Afghan province of Paktia. Ultimately, Bin Laden sought to found an “Islamic army” that would be trained in both conventional and “terrorist” tactics for warfare that would not be limited to traditional Muslim majority territories but instead be expanded to include others areas where Muslims were suffering from persecution and occupation and, eventually, to attacks on non-Muslim countries whose forces were active participants in the subjugation of Muslims anywhere in the world.²⁶⁰ His ideological shift, in part, was due to the influence of his own personal experiences, here specifically regarding the Saudi monarchy’s reliance on the United States to defend it and the other Arab Gulf states from Iraq’s expansionism under Saddam Hussein after ignoring Bin Laden’s proposal for his fighters to return to the kingdom to defend it.²⁶¹ Bin Laden and other Al-Qaeda leaders also saw an opportunity to expand their ranks by embracing popular foreign fighter mobilizations to defend Muslim populations in the war-torn Balkans and the North Caucasus in the 1990s.²⁶²

Bin Laden’s shift away from the Services Bureau and ‘Azzām continued as he moved closer to the Egyptian militant and medical doctor Ayman al-Zawahiri and his Egyptian

²⁵⁹ Vahid Brown, “Classical and Global Jihad,” 108, footnote 10.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 90.

²⁶¹ Al-Jazeera English, *I Knew bin Laden*, Parts 1 and 2.

²⁶² Vahid Brown, “Classical and Global Jihad,” 93-94 and 101-102.

Islamic Jihad group.²⁶³ Al-Zawahiri, though he was the grandson of a former rector of the famous Al-Azhar seminary, was a harsh critic of establishment clerics and the *Ikhwān*, which ‘Azzām belonged to in Jordan, and he challenged ‘Azzām’s concept of “classical *jihad*” and argued instead that it was necessary to overthrow apostate Muslim regimes in Muslim majority countries.²⁶⁴ Unlike ‘Azzām, who had received religious support from prominent Sunni Muslim religious scholars and jurists including the Saudi Salafī ‘*ulamā* Muhammad bin Ṣāleḥ al-‘Uthaymīn and ‘Abd al-‘Azīz bin Bāz and the Yemeni ‘*ālim* ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Zindānī, al-Zawahiri’s conception of *jihad* was revolutionary, not centrist, and rested not on a strong *fiqh* or *shari‘a*-based foundation but instead on violent activism.²⁶⁵

Global *Jihadi* Political Theology: Challenging Secular Nationalism and Democracy

As noted above, at the heart of global *jihadi* political ideology is the goal of replacing the existing nation-state system in Muslim majority countries and territories with a unified alternative state model, a neo-caliphate, which will serve as the base for a worldwide challenge to the perceived dominance of secular nationalism and relegation of religion and religious identity to the private sphere. The caliphate, according to global *jihadis*, is defined as a single, unitary state system on par with secular nation-states and international bodies such as NATO, the EU, and the UN. The caliphate will not only serve as the “country” for the world’s Muslims (or rather those who meet the *jihadis*’ criteria for who is an acceptable Muslim) but also be capable of defending Muslims militarily from non-Muslim enemies. This new, re-formed caliphate, however, is not a resurrected form of one of the historical caliphates or the Prophetic state governed by Muhammad but rather a theoretical state model developed primarily in response to secular nationalism and capitalism and the globally dominant political order that they have produced. Global jihadism, though revolutionary in

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 97.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 91.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 90-92.

that it seeks to replace the existing nation-state system in the Muslim majority world, is also profoundly selective in its reading of history in an attempt by *jihadis* to support their proposed political program. Global *jihadi* political ideology, which is infused with a particularly militant view of Islamic history and theology, completely rejects what Casanova terms the “statecraft” of secularism, that is, the separation, in principle, of religious and political authority and the devaluing of public religion.²⁶⁶ Ironically, in this the *jihadis* blur the lines by selectively interpreting Islamic history and ignoring or significantly downplaying the gradual historical separation of political (*sīyāsa*) and religious (*shari‘a*) authority by the tenth century in Sunnism and instead insist on an ahistorical and complete merging of the two.²⁶⁷

Global *jihadi* political thinking and attempts at statecraft developed through a critical engagement and often virulent and violent contestation with secularism.²⁶⁸ *Jihadi* political theorists define their imagined caliphate primarily against the existing secular nation-state system, drawing selectively upon a slanted reading and interpretation of Islamic history in which the “golden age” of Islam is seen as existing during the periods from, approximately, the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad, and particularly his Medinan state, up to the ‘Abbasid

²⁶⁶ José Casanova, “The Secular, Secularizations, Secularism,” in *Rethinking Secularism*, ed. Craig J. Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 66 and 69, and Charles Taylor, “Western Secularity,” in *Rethinking Secularism*, 37.

²⁶⁷ On the evolution of Sunni thought on the caliphate as a concept as well as a political institution and the division of political and religious authority, see Ovamir Anjum, *Politics, Law and Community in Islamic Thought: The Taymiyyan Moment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), Part 1; Han Hsein Liew, “The Caliphate of Adam: Theological Politics of the Qur’anic Term Halifa,” *Arabica* 63 (2016), 1-29; Bawar Bammarny, “The Caliphate State in Theory and Practice,” *Arab Law Quarterly* 31 (2017), 163-186; Hugh Kennedy, *Caliphate*; Ira M. Lapidus, “The Separation of State and Religion in the Development of Early Islamic Society,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 6, no. 4 (1975), 363-385; and Nimrod Hurvitz, “State and Religion in the Formative Stage of Islam (7th-11th Centuries C.E.),” *History Compass* 13, no. 7 (2015), 311-320.

²⁶⁸ R. Scott Appleby, “Rethinking Fundamentalism in a Secular Age,” in *Rethinking Secularism*, 235, and Gabriel A. Almond, R. Scott Appleby, and Emmanuel Sivan, *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalisms around the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

Caliphate and, for some *jihadis* and non-violent pan-Islamist movements such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, extending to the dissolution of the Ottoman sultanate in the early twentieth century.²⁶⁹

Global *jihadis* envision the caliphate as a highly centralized state of a type that did not exist, historically, for long once the ‘Abbasids expanded their empires over vast amounts of territory and were forced to allow for the rise of localized and regionalized dynasties which, at most, ruled ostensibly in the name of the ‘Abbasid caliph in Baghdad or Samarra.²⁷⁰

Taking into account new realities, such as the existing division of the Muslim *Umma* among dozens of different nation-states, some global *jihadis* believe that individual geographical regions may be ruled for a time in the form of local “emirates” but that the *Umma* should ultimately unite to form a single superstate that is on par with the power and reach of non-Muslim nations like the U.S. and international bodies such as NATO and the UN. There are also differences between Al-Qaeda Central’s and Islamic State’s visions of the new “caliphate.” While on the surface both organizations seek to multiply their organization’s geographical reach and influence by forming alliances and partnerships with locally and regionally-based militant Islamists, Islamic State’s senior leadership argues that all Sunni Muslims have not only a strategic but also an Islamic theological and legal duty to immediately pledge allegiance to (*bay‘a*) and obey its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who claims to be the new “caliph” for all of the world’s Sunnis, a role that the organization’s leadership and religious and legal councils define in absolute rather than nominal terms.²⁷¹

Those who do not pledge allegiance and instead “abandon” or “desert” the legitimate caliph

²⁶⁹ Al-Rasheed, Kersten, and Shterin, *Demystifying the Caliphate*, 1-30 and Kennedy, *Caliphate*, 267-275.

²⁷⁰ Michael Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History: Doctrines and Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 122, and Khalid Yahya Blankinship, *The End of the Jihad State: The Reign of Hisham ibn ‘Abd al-Malik and the Collapse of the Umayyads* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), particularly chapters five through nine.

²⁷¹ Islamic State, “Ahkam Bay‘a al-Khilāfa” (Rulings on Pledges of Allegiance to the Caliphate), 29 November 2015.

must be fought.²⁷² This marks a dramatic shift from more mainstream Sunni positions after the collapse of the last unified caliphate during the ‘Abbasid period.²⁷³ Similarly, the global *jihadi* view of the caliph, though he is in theory bound by the necessity for consultation (*shūrā*) and Islamic law as it relates to politics and governorship (*sīyāsāt al-sharī‘a*), sees the office’s role primarily through a narrow political and military lens, ignoring the broader meanings of “*khalīfa*” and “*khilāfa*” as a “stewardship” in the Qur’an, the Islamic theological tradition, and Islamic thought.²⁷⁴ The global *jihadi* view of the caliph as a kind of supreme ruler and the caliphate as a centralized superstate whose ruler and institutions will exercise immense power represents the *étatisation* of public religion and Islamic law and jurisprudence, a process that began with the advent of modernity and the emergence of the nation-state.²⁷⁵

In the case of Al-Qaeda, the establishment of the new caliphate is still theoretical despite the organization’s theoretical recognition of the leader of the Afghanistan Taliban as the “*amīr al-mu‘minīn*” (commander of the faithful), with al-Zawahiri stating that the organization seeks for its caliphate to proceed in the footsteps of the Prophet Muhammad and the *Rāshidūn* caliphs (*hadhahi khilāfa allatī nurīduhā tasīru ‘alā minhāj al-nubūwwa wa ‘alā naqd al-khulafā al-rāshidīn*).²⁷⁶ The new “caliph” will do this by implementing justice in support of oppressed Muslims, liberating occupied Muslim lands including Jerusalem, and

²⁷² *Ibid.*

²⁷³ On differences between classical, medieval, and modern Sunni views on the institution of the caliphate and *bay‘a*, see Joas Wagemaker, “The Concept of Bay‘a in the Islamic State’s Ideology,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 4 (2015), at <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/448>, last accessed 17 May 2018.

²⁷⁴ Wadad al-Qadi, “The Term ‘Khalifa’ in Early Exegetical Literature,” *Die Welt des Islams* 28, no. 1 (1988): 392-411, and Asma Afsaruddin, “Theologizing about Democracy: A Critical Appraisal of Mawdudi’s Thought,” in *Islam, the State, and Political Authority: Medieval Issues and Modern Concerns*, ed. Asma Afsaruddin (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 142-143.

²⁷⁵ Sami Zubaida, *Law and Power in the Islamic World* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2003) and Wael B. Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories: An Introduction to Sunni Usul al-Fiqh* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Chapter 6.

²⁷⁶ Al-Zawahiri, *Sitta arba ‘ūn ‘āmma al-‘alā ‘āmm al-naksa*.

ushering in a leadership that follows and fulfills the *shari‘a* and he will be chosen by the *Umma* in accordance with the Qur’an and Prophetic *sunna*.²⁷⁷ Al-Zawahiri’s early endorsement of the Islamic State of Iraq’s proto-caliphate in 2007 and call for Muslims to pledge allegiance to it eventually backfired when Al-Qaeda and Islamic State violently and very publicly split in 2014.²⁷⁸

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the *amīr* of Islamic State when it declared itself a “caliphate” in June 2014, called for Muslims to advise and correct him if he erred as head of the *Umma*, invoking a sermon by the first *Rāshidūn* caliph, Abu Bakr.²⁷⁹ In a July 2014 Friday prayer sermon in Mosul’s Al-Nūrī Mosque, founded by the medieval Muslim ruler Nūr al-Dīn Zengī, al-Baghdadi presented himself as a first among equals who was not better than any other Muslim but who, after much “contemplation,” had accepted the “weighty responsibility” of leading the *Umma*.²⁸⁰ In spite of his seemingly humble acceptance of the “great burden” of caliphal leadership and call for counsel and correction from the *Umma*, al-Baghdadi and other Islamic State leaders in practice implemented a hierarchical command-and-control organizational structure and imposed the group’s rule and will on local populations through the threat and strategic utilization of violence including the mass arrest and execution of dissenters and opponents.²⁸¹ While both Al-Qaeda and Islamic State

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁸ Al-Zawahiri, *Al-liqā‘ al-rābi‘a ma‘ al-shaykh Ayman al-Zawahiri*, Mu’assasat al-Saḥāb li-l-Intāj al-I‘lāmī, 16 December 2007 and Al-Zawahiri, *Ḥaqā‘iq al-ṣirā‘ bayna al-Islam wa al-kufr* (Realities of the Conflict between Islam and Unbelief), Mu’assasat al-Saḥāb li-l-Intāj al-I‘lāmī, 22 December 2006.

²⁷⁹ Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, *Khuṭba wa ṣalāt al-jum‘a fi-l-jāmi‘a al-kabīr bi-madīnat al-Mosul li-mawlānā amīr al-mu‘minīn* (Friday Sermon and Prayer in the Great Mosque of Mosul by Our Leader, the Commander of the Faithful), Mu’assasat al-Furqān, 5 July 2014.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ Oliver Holmes and Suleiman Al-Khalidi, “Islamic State Executed 700 People from Syrian Tribe: Monitoring Group,” *Reuters*, 16 August 2014, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-execution-idUSKBN0GG0H120140816>, last accessed 14 July 2017, Martin Chulov, “ISIS Kills Hundreds of Iraqi Sunnis from Albu Nimr Tribe in Anbar Province,” *The Guardian*, 30 October 2014, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/30/mass-graves-hundreds-iraqi-sunnis-killed-isis-albu-nimr>, last accessed 14 July 2017, and Agence France-Presse, “ISIS Executed 70 Sunni Tribesmen in Iraq’s Anbar,” 7

actively attempt to forge new affiliations with locally and regionally-based Islamist insurgent groups, the latter continues to follow a more gradual franchise model in which its leadership attempts to convince local Islamist insurgents that they will benefit through affiliation. In contrast, Islamic State, unlike Al-Qaeda, condemns those Islamists and Sunni Muslims generally who reject its claims and refuse to join it as being not simply misguided but active sinners to outright apostates, which in turn legitimizes violence against them by the organization. Global *jihadis*, both Al-Qaeda and Islamic State, differ from local/regional militant Islamist organizations in that the latter continue to adhere to localized, irredentist territorial and political claims as opposed to seeing local conflicts as being only a small part of a broader, global conflict.

Contesting and Redefining Islamic “Orthodoxy”: Theorizing Global *Jihadi* Violence

Global *jihadis* reject the imposition of a global, secular social and political order that seeks to marginalize, often forcibly, religious identity, practices, and values by relegating them to the periphery of an individual’s private, or non-public, life. Their utilization of violence against the secular state system, which they view as the origin of the autocratic regimes that govern much of the Arab and Muslim majority world, is a form of symbolic empowerment and an attempt to forcibly insert their interpretation of religion back into the public sphere.²⁸² They match the zeal of secular democracy, which Juergensmeyer and Casanova argue represents and invokes a kind of religiosity with regard to its fervor to replicate and spread itself complete with its own demagogues and “slavish devotion” to particular core principles and beliefs.²⁸³ Just as secular nationalism served as an “ideological

October 2015, at <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/10/07/ISIS-executed-70-Sunni-tribesmen-in-Iraq-s-Anbar.html>, last accessed 14 July 2017.

²⁸² Juergensmeyer, “Rethinking the Secular and Religious Aspects of Violence,” 185-186, and Faisal Devji, *The Terrorist in Search of Humanity: Militant Islam and Global Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 188 and Casanova, 70-71. Casanova argues that, “There is a significant level of dissonance between European self-conceptions of their societies’ ‘secularism’ and the reality” and that “existing European democracies are not as secular as secularist theories of democracy seem to imply,” pointing to the privileged

partner” for European colonialism and imperialism in the guise of “nation-building,” global jihadism, as it is theorized, seeks to serve as an alternative to the secular nationalist idea and the global political order that it created.²⁸⁴

In contesting and combating their feared “loss of the sacred,” global *jihadis* have been forced to adopt many of the institutional models, processes, and practices put in place by the dominant global secular order.²⁸⁵ They adhere to, for example, the more restrictive Enlightenment view of religion in which it is seen as a direct competitor with the secularism of the modern world and particularly the modern West rather than in the more traditional understanding of religion as a comprehensive, lived framework of social values, thought, and behavior.²⁸⁶ Their program of “reintroducing” Islam to the global political order and public sphere is reduced to the forcible implementation of certain aspects of *shari‘a*, primarily the *ḥudūd* penal codes, and the construction of an alternative state, the neo-caliphate, designed to rival the secular nation-state and whose primary role will be to establish an anemic version of Islamic legal, ethical, and moral codes.²⁸⁷

Islam, as envisioned by global *jihadis*, is reduced, first, to a set of philistine legalisms, which are thoroughly modern and detached from classical notions of the divine law and its rich juridical (*fiqh*) heritage and are implemented by the state through force and, second, a reactionary politics defined, ironically, in large measure vis-à-vis the secular nationalism that

position of particular branches of Christianity that are not only symbolic, in European democracies. John Gray argues that in Western secular societies, “repressed religion returns in secular cults,” espousing a kind of “political religion,” and sees the conflict between global jihadism, represented by Al-Qaeda, and the West as a religious one because the Enlightenment concept of a universal society, he argues, “is an offspring of Christianity.” See John Gray, 116-117.

²⁸⁴ Juergensmeyer, 188-189 and Casanova, 61.

²⁸⁵ Appleby, “Rethinking Fundamentalism in a Secular Age,” in *Rethinking Secularism*, 237-238 and 244.

²⁸⁶ Juergensmeyer, 193.

²⁸⁷ Wael B. Hallaq argues that modern conceptions of *shari‘a* lack the essence of the classical view of the law. See his “Can the Shari‘a Be Restored?,” in *Islamic Law and the Challenges of Modernity*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Barbara Freyer Stowasser (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2004), 21-53.

global *jihadis* claim to reject and want to replace, even, in the case of Islamic State,²⁸⁸ mimicking, as demonstrated in their organizational structure with “ministers” with portfolios such as natural resources, finance, and war and military affairs, the political and organizational system followed by many secular nation-states.²⁸⁹ Global *jihadis* are also engaged in a bitter process of contestation with other Muslims over what constitutes Islamic “orthodoxy,”²⁹⁰ with the majority of the world’s Muslims rejecting global *jihadi* political theology and vision of the state.²⁹¹

Even more galling to global *jihadis* is the rejection of their political views by other Islamists and Islamist organizations including the Palestinian HAMAS movement and the various Muslim Brotherhood groups, which al-Zawahiri and other global *jihadi* leaders have condemned for their endorsement of the nation-state and participation in national elections. Al-Zawahiri has a deep enmity for the Muslim Brotherhood and, in an August 2016 message

²⁸⁸ For background on the Islamic State and its precursor organizations, the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (2013-2014), the Islamic State of Iraq (2006-2013), the Majlis al-Shūrā al-Mujāhidīn (2006), Al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers/Iraq (2004-2006), and Jamā‘at al-Tawhīd wa-l-Jihād (2003-2004), see Brian Fishman, “Redefining the Islamic State,” *Dysfunction and Decline: Lessons Learned from Inside Al-Qa‘ida in Iraq* (West Point: Combating Terrorism Center, 2009), and *The Master Plan*; Brian Fishman, Jacob Shapiro, Joseph Felter, Peter Bergen, and Vahid Brown, *Bombers, Bank Accounts and Bleedout: Al-Qa‘ida’s Road In and Out of Iraq* (West Point: Combating Terrorism Center, 2008); Cole Bunzel, *From Paper State to Caliphate*; and Aaron Zelin, “The Islamic State’s Territorial Methodology,”; Truls H. Tønnessen, “Heirs of Zaqawi or Saddam? The Relationship between al-Qaida in Iraq and the Islamic State,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 4 (2015), at <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/443>, last accessed 14 July 2017, and William McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse*.

²⁸⁹ Juergensmeyer argues that, “If secularism, as an imagined concept of social order, is capable of providing the ideological legitimacy to modern political communities, this same legitimizing function can be extended to secularism’s twin concept, the idea of religion.” See Rethinking the Secular and Religious Aspects of Violence,” 198-199. Talal Asad argues that both secularists and Islamists share a “strongly statist” conception of *shari‘a* in that it is viewed as “sacred law” that is presently circumscribed but should in any case be properly administered or further reformed by state institutions” in *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2003), 253.

²⁹⁰ Islamic State *da‘wa* pamphlets, “Hadhahi ‘aqīdatunā wa hadhā manhajunā” (This is our Creed and This is Our Methodology), Maktab al-Himma, October 2015, “‘Ashar masā’il fi-l-‘aqīda” (Ten Questions about Creed), Maktab al-Himma, September 2015, “Masā’il muhimma fi-l-‘aqīda” (Important Questions on Creed), Maktab al-Himma, July 2015.

²⁹¹ Using the example of competing Muslim discourses in Saudi Arabia, Talal Asad notes that the determination of what is “orthodox” Islam is hotly contested among different groups and the process includes attempts at achieving “discursive coherence” and “representing the present within an authoritative narrative that includes positive evaluations of past events and persons.” This process involves both the “narrator” and “audience” because the authority of conceptualizing orthodoxy is a “collaborative achievement.” See *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 210.

about the “failure” of the “Arab Spring,” said that the Islamist movement, despite the claim of its founder, al-Bannā, to adhere to the Qur’an and *Sunna*, had in effect sought to reach an accommodation with the Egyptian monarchy, which itself was subject to British colonial rule, and a secular national constitution, a tradition followed by all subsequent leaders of the Brotherhood in their *modus vivendi* with the country’s “secular” rulers continuing into the Mubarak era.²⁹² The Muslim Brotherhood, said al-Zawahiri, even tried to win the support of Gamal ‘Abd al-Nasir only to find themselves outlawed and persecuted, an experience repeated under Anwar Sadat.²⁹³ Following Mubarak’s ouster, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, alleged al-Zawahiri, endorsed and utilized the language of secular nationalism instead of Islam, despite their window dressing of “Islamic” adherence, and their hypocrisy reached its pinnacle under the presidency of Muhammad Morsi when the Brotherhood in effect endorsed the U.S.-led international order, including Egypt’s peace treaty with Israel, which continues to occupy Muslim (Palestinian) land.²⁹⁴ The Brotherhood in effect, the Al-Qaeda Central leader said, abandoned *jihad* in the interest of maintaining the secular international political order.²⁹⁵ Because of the failure of mainstream and established Islamist organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood to abide by “Islamic” principles and theological and legal dictates, al-Zawahiri and other global *jihadi* political theorists see the establishment of an idealized neo-caliphate as a key doctrinal principle and the only way for the world’s Sunni Muslims to establish justice and “true” Islam on Earth. It is this transformation of the issue of political leadership and idea of the absolute necessity of military *jihad* in bringing about sociopolitical change into doctrinal religious principles which separates global *jihadis* from most medieval Sunni jurists who saw political leadership as a

²⁹² Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Risā’il Mukhtaṣira li-Ummat Muntaṣira: Part I* (Brief Messages to the Victorious Umma), Mu’assasat al-Sahāb li-l-Intāḥ al-I’lāmī, 13 August 2016.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

social utility rather than a doctrinal issue, and further alienates global *jihadis* from not only the majority of Sunni Muslims but also most Islamists and even many irredentist militants.²⁹⁶

PART II

Challenges and Opportunities: The Arab Spring and Evolving Global *Jihadi* Discourses and Strategies

As the wave of mass popular protests that began in Tunisia quickly spread to neighboring Libya and Egypt, many analysts of the Middle East and North African (MENA) region and Arab politics predicted that the “Arab Spring,” as it spread democracy across the region and overthrew its decrepit, longstanding authoritarian regimes, signaled the death knell for Al-Qaeda and the global *jihadi* brand of revolutionary militancy. The early successes of the popular protests in the Arab world, they argued, would fundamentally disprove the claims made by global *jihadi* leaders that the only way to bring about fundamental political and social change was through violence.²⁹⁷ The shift to electoral democracy, these analysts argued, would prove to be the antidote to the violent revolutionary pan-Islamism of the global *jihadis* while enhancing the prestige of mainstream Islamist parties and movements willing to participate in the democratic process.²⁹⁸ The initial success of mass demonstrations instead of *jihad*, coupled with the killings of a large number of key global *jihadi* leaders including Bin Laden (May 2011), Al-Qaeda Central operational director

²⁹⁶ Hayrettin Yücesoy, “Justification of Political Authority in Medieval Sunni Islam,” in *Islam, the State, and Political Authority*, 28, and Vahid Brown, “Classical and Global Jihad,” 107.

²⁹⁷ See, for example, Fawaz Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) and “Fawaz A. Gerges on How the Arab Spring Beat Al Qaeda,” *The Daily Beast*, 13 May 2012, at <http://www.thedailybeast.com/fawaz-a-gerges-on-how-the-arab-spring-beat-al-qaeda>, last accessed 14 July 2017.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.* and Fareed Zakaria, “Fareed’s Take: Al Qaeda is Irrelevant,” *CNN Online*, 7 March 2011, at <http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2011/03/07/al-qaeda-is-irrelevant/>, last accessed 14 July 2016, Fareed Zakaria, “Al Qaeda is Over,” 2 May 2011, at <http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2011/05/02/al-qaeda-is-dead/>, last accessed 14 July 2017, and Rania Abouzeid, “How the Arab Spring Made Bin Laden an Afterthought,” *Time*, 2 May 2011, at <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2068931,00.html>, last accessed 14 July 2017.

Mustafa Abu al-Yazīd (May 2010), Islamic State of Iraq heads Abu ‘Umar al-Baghdadi and Abu Hamza al-Muhājir (April 2010), and Al-Qaeda Central *shari‘a* officials and senior ideologues Abu Yaḥyā al-Lībī (June 2012) and ‘Aṭīyatullah al-Lībī (August 2011), fundamentally weakened the ability of many of the most prominent global *jihadi* organizations to immediately respond to the challenges posed by the “Arab Spring.”²⁹⁹ However, the narrow conceptualization of global jihadism too closely with the original Al-Qaeda organization, which at that time was in decline, and the failure to recognize the ability of that organization and other global *jihadi* groups to shift their focus in order to take advantage of new regional opportunities, chiefly in Syria but also in South Asia and East Africa, led to a failure to understand these organizations’ ability to adapt.

The “Arab Spring” was a watershed moment in history for global *jihadi* organizations and presented them with both challenges and opportunities. The threat of the weakening or even dismantlement of longstanding authoritarian systems and the chance for democratization ushered in by popular demand seriously undermined global *jihadis*’ long-held argument that military struggle in the form of *jihad* was the only way to bring about change in Muslim countries and societies because of the entrenched, Western-backed nature of the existing regimes.

The initial moves toward democratization and representative democratic governments following the ouster of Tunisia’s Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak, and Libya’s Mu‘ammar al-Qadhafi went against global *jihadis*’ aversion to the modern secular nation-state and its Western-style understandings of pluralist citizenship and relegation of religion to the private rather than the public sphere. The “Arab Spring” protests also revealed differences in the approaches and views within global *jihadi* organizations, which were most

²⁹⁹ Andrew Exum, “Special Tenth Anniversary of 9/11 Q&A with Thomas Hegghammer,” interview by Andrew Exum, *Abu Muqawama* blog, 11 September 2011, at <https://www.cnas.org/publications/blog/special-tenth-anniversary-of-9-11-q-a-with-thomas-hegghammer>, last accessed 14 July 2017.

often along generational lines, with regard to how they responded to these perceived threats. Whereas old guard global *jihadis* such as Ayman al-Zawahiri continued to dismiss the Islamic credentials and legitimacy of those Islamists who participated in the democratic elections that followed in the wake of the uprisings, the younger new guard composed of *jihadi* leaders and ideologues, such as the Libyan ‘Aṭīyatullah al-Lībī, tended to demonstrate a far more nuanced and pragmatic understanding of the continually changing events on the ground. The latter group announced their support of the popular uprisings, emphasizing the promise within them of bringing about increased support for the *jihadi* message within a grassroots context, and sought to counsel and advise the demonstrators rather than dictate and command.

Casting doubt onto predictions of the Arab Spring’s sounding of the death knell to global *jihadi* organizations, however, was the subsequent reversal in the momentum of the region’s popular social mobilizations and seeming march toward democracy and a loosening of the grip of authoritarian regimes. The reversal of democratic and human rights gains in Egypt and the descent of Libya, Yemen, and Syria into bloody civil wars and humanitarian disasters provided global *jihadis* with the opportunity structures with which to adapt to changing sociopolitical realities by evolving their ideological positions and, in some cases, strategies and tactics in order to take advantage of the return of the “Arab Winter.”

Additionally, *jihadi* organizations outside of the Middle East and North Africa, though impacted to some degree, were far less affected by the Arab Spring and *jihadi* conflict hotspots in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia, Nigeria, and Indian-controlled Kashmir remained largely unaffected.

The re-entrenchment of authoritarian regimes in Egypt and Syria and the outbreak of civil wars in the latter as well as in Libya and Yemen presented global *jihadis* with a far more unequivocal opportunity to expand their influence and geographical presence among the

disillusioned mainstream demonstrators and particularly Islamists who found their forays into democratic politics cut short by governments and ruling elites bent on retaining and monopolizing the reins of power. The civil conflicts that broke out in the region and the increasing inability of states to adequately secure and maintain central authority and hegemony over all of their territories opened the door for global *jihadi* activists to step into the gaps and push forward territorial insurgencies and governance projects ranging from the rudimentary to the fairly bureaucratized and complex. In more specific terms, *jihadi* organizations proved adept at quickly adapting both their ideological framing and strategic use of violence in ways that assured that they would enjoy an initial advantage against local ideational, military, and political rivals. By taking advantage of local grievances and shifts in the state's capacity to project its authority and military strength in countries such as Yemen, Mali, and Somalia, *jihadi* actors succeeded in turning the "Arab Spring" from a seeming defeat into a new opportunity for organizational and ideological expansion.³⁰⁰ Variations between different *jihadi* organizations' ability to adjust and even thrive in this new environment can be explained by the relative success with which they were able to adapt to these post-Arab Spring changes within differing sociopolitical and geographic contexts.

Global *jihadis* are highly adaptable and have demonstrated that they are capable of adjusting their military and political strategies according to shifting opportunities and constraints on the ground. For example, Al-Qaeda leaders quickly latched on to the increasing levels of violence in Libya and, later, Syria, recognizing it as a potential avenue to spur recruitment and fundraising thanks to the worldwide news coverage of both conflicts.

³⁰⁰ Useful overviews of Al-Qaeda Central's and its affiliates' setbacks, successes, and potential opportunities are discussed in William McCants, "Al Qaeda's Challenge: The Jihadists' War with Islamist Democrats," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 5 (September/October 2011), 20-32, Brian Fishman and Phil Mudd, "Al Qaeda on the Ropes," *Foreign Policy*, 24 February 2012, at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/02/23/al_qaeda_on_the_ropes, last accessed on 14 July 2017, and Kal, "Opportunities Taken in Mali: Ethnic Dimensions & Additional Explanations on the Emergence of MUJWA," *The Moor Next Door* blog, 10 April 2012, at <http://themoornextdoor.wordpress.com/2012/04/10/ethnic-dimensions-additional-explanations-on-the-emergence-of-mujwa/>, last accessed 13 June 2012.

Bin Laden himself embraced the “Arab Spring” as an opportunity for his organization and *jihadis* generally to serve in an advisory and steering capacity to shape the ongoing revolutions in the Arab world, not a defeat, in a posthumously released audio message.³⁰¹ This view was also espoused by a number of younger *jihadi* ideologues including ‘Aṭīyatullah al-Lībī, Adam Gadahn, Abu Yaḥyā al-Lībī, Anwār al-‘Awlaqī, and Abu Muṣ‘ab ‘Abd al-Wadūd.³⁰²

The Threat of Democracy: Jihadi Discourses on the “Arab Spring”

The initial success of the “Arab Spring” in forcing out long-standing autocratic rulers and shaking the once steady foundations of authoritarian regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya alarmed global *jihadis* because it posed a grave threat to their ideological campaigns and primary arguments that only military means could bring about political change and that only an Islamic state that unifies the entire *Umma* can safeguard the lives, rights, and properties of Muslims. As a result of the mass popular demonstrations, the question of Islam’s interaction with democracy and proper role in society and notions of citizenship and identity as well as legitimate religious authority over the *Umma* as a global, transnational community became central and hotly contested issues. Interestingly, even within the global

³⁰¹ Usama bin Laden, *Kalimat al-shahīd al-Islām li-ummatihi al-muslima*, and a letter dated 25 April 2011, SOCOM-2012-0000010, the latter of which was one of the declassified documents captured by the United States in the 2 May 2011 raid on his Abbottabad compound in Pakistan, at <https://ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Letter-from-UBL-to-Atiyatullah-Al-Libi-2-Original.pdf>, last accessed 14 July 2017. See also Nelly Lahoud, Stuart Caudill, Liam Collins, Gabriel Koehler-Derrick, Don Rassler, and Muhammad al-‘Ubaydi, *Letters from Abbottabad: Bin Ladin Sidelined?* (West Point: Combating Terrorism Center, 2012), 48.

³⁰² Anwār al-‘Awlaqī, “The Tsunami of Change,” ‘Aṭīyatullah al-Lībī (Jamāl Ibrahim Ishtaywī al-Miṣrātī), *Taḥīyya li-ahlinā fī Libya* (Salutations to Our People in Libya), Mu’assasat al-Saḥāb li-l-Intāj al-I‘lāmī, 17 March 2011 and *Thawrat al-Shu‘ūb wa suqūt al-niẓām al-‘arabī al-fāsīd*; Adam Gadahn, *Ilā Ikhwatī fī Shām al-malāḥim wa futūḥāt*; and Abu Muṣ‘ab ‘Abd al-Wadūd, *Nuṣra li-l-aḥrār, aḥfād ‘Umar al-Mukhtār* (Support for the Freeborn, the Descendants of ‘Umar al-Mukhtār), Mu’assasat al-Andalus li-l-Intāj al-I‘lāmī, 17 March 2011. For background on ‘Aṭīyatullah al-Lībī and his views on the Libyan and Arab uprisings, see Christopher Anzalone, “Revisiting Shaykh Atiyatullah’s Works on Takfir and Mass Violence,” *CTC Sentinel*, 23 April 2012, at <https://ctc.usma.edu/posts/revisiting-shaykh-atiyyatullahs-works-on-takfir-and-mass-violence>, last accessed 27 July 2017, and “Al-Qaeda Loses its ‘Renaissance Man,’” *Foreign Policy*, 9 September 2011, at http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/09/09/al_qaeda_loses_its_renaissance_man, last accessed 14 July 2017, and Christopher Anzalone and Bruno-Olivier Bureau, “Death of an Ideologue,” *Foreign Policy*, 21 October 2011, at http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/10/21/death_of_an_ideologue, last accessed 14 July 2017.

jihadi current itself deep differences emerged between *jihadi* leaders and ideologues, often along generational lines, regarding their position towards Islamist political parties and movements endorsing democracy and participating in electoral competition as the most promising path towards constructing an Islamic state.

For its part, Al-Qaeda Central's response to the "Arab Spring" was initially primarily reactive, seeking to keep abreast of and address the fast-changing situations on the ground in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, the Sahel, and Syria. Despite their early failure to fully grasp the enormity of the mass demonstrations against decades-long authoritarian rule, the organization's younger ideologues and leadership cadre adopted a malleable strategy that sought to adapt to the shifting fortunes of the different uprisings. Despite the early lethargy of older veterans such as al-Zawahiri, the younger generation of Al-Qaeda leaders, including commanders in its local affiliates, ultimately recognized that the "Arab Spring" brought with it both challenges and potential opportunities. They zeroed in specifically on the recruitment and expansion opportunities of the increasing violence in Libya and, later, Syria, using regime mass violence against the population in general, including civilians, to counter the claim that violence was not necessary to bringing about revolutionary change. The implementation of *shari'a*, which they argued was a requirement for a truly just Islamic society, would not automatically come from the uprisings themselves. Instead it was the religious duty of all Muslim peoples to strive for the establishment of such a society within the context of localized Islamic states ("emirates") and eventually a neo-caliphate.³⁰³

Mainstream Islamist movements and parties that did not advocate primarily a military revolution, such as Tunisia's Ennahda and the Egyptian *Ikhwān*, were accused of perpetrating

³⁰³ Ahmad Bawādī, "Al-thawrāt laysat badīlan 'an al-jihad" (The Revolutions are No Alternative to *Jihad*), *Al-Samūd*, issue 62 (August 2011), 26-27, Adam Gadahn, *Ilā Ikhwatī fī Shām al-malāḥim wa futūḥāt*, Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Ilā al-amām yā usūd al-Shām* (To the Front, O' Lions of Syria), Mu'assasat al-Sahāb li-l-Intāj al-I'lāmī, 12 February 2012 and *Izz al-Sharq...Awwalahu Dimashq* (Glory of the East Begins First in Damascus), Mu'assasat al-Sahāb li-l-Intāj al-I'lāmī, 27 July 2011.

a fraud by claiming an Islamic identity while “abandoning” the goal of implementing *shari‘a*, something as ridiculous, al-Zawahiri mocked, as a hospital that offers no medical treatments.³⁰⁴

By the time of his death on 2 May 2012 in a U.S. Navy SEAL nighttime raid on his compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, Bin Laden had become an increasingly remote, though still revered, figure in the global *jihadi* milieu, the banner of which he had largely established and carried since Al-Qaeda’s founding and expansion in the late 1980s to 2001. The mantle of global jihadism had instead been taken up by Al-Qaeda’s regional affiliates and allies such as AQAP, Al-Shabaab, AQIM, the Islamic State of Iraq, and the Tehrīk-i Taliban Pakistan (TTP).³⁰⁵ Despite setbacks faced by Al-Qaeda Central and Bin Laden’s increasing remoteness, or perhaps because of this, the organization’s founder heralded the “Arab Spring” as a God-sent opportunity, and one badly needed at that, for global *jihadis* to retake the initiative in the Arab world by serving as “advisors” and “guides” to the peoples in the region so as to help shape the uprisings to the “benefit” of Islam and the *jihadi* movement.³⁰⁶ Bin Laden rejected claims that the region’s uprisings were caused by economic grievances such as poverty, high unemployment, and weak national economies and neo-liberalization, arguing instead that the wave of mass mobilization and protests were “not a revolution of [for] food and clothing but a revolution of glory, pride, and defiance” (*wa lam takun hadhahi al-thawrat ṭa‘ām wa kisā’ wa innamā thawrat ‘izz wa ibā’*) against un-Islamic, Western-

³⁰⁴ Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Yā Ahl al-Tūnis Ansirū shari‘atukum* (O’ People of Tunisia, Support Your *Shari‘a*), Mu’assasat al-Sahāb li-l-Intāḡ al-I‘lāmī, 11 June 2012; Al-Shabaab, *Labbayka Yā Usama* (We Are at Your Service, O’ Usama), Al-Qism al-I‘lāmī, 20 September 2009; and Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Risā’il mukhtaṣira li-Ummat muntaṣṣira (Part 1): Man yaḥmī al-Muṣṣḥaf* (Short Messages to the Victorious *Umma*: Who Will Protect the Qur’an?), Mu’assasat al-Sahāb li-l-Intāḡ al-I‘lāmī, 13 August 2016.

³⁰⁵ Nelly Lahoud, Stuart Caudill, Liam Collins, Gabriel Koehler-Derrick, Don Ressler, and Muhammad al-‘Ubaydi, *Letters from Abbottabad*.

³⁰⁶ Usama bin Laden, *Kalīmat al-shahīd al-Islām li-ummatihi al-muslima*.

backed authoritarian regimes.³⁰⁷ The revolutions were, in effect, rare historic opportunities for the *Umma* to liberate itself from its subjugation and subservience to the secular order and its laws, which were imposed upon Muslims by apostate regimes and their Western patrons, but success depended on the sacrifice of the *Umma* and its willingness to undergo hardship.³⁰⁸

After Bin Laden's killing, al-Zawahiri became Al-Qaeda Central's new *amīr* and since 2011 has continued to be regularly featured in the organization's media operations campaign speaking about the transition from the "Arab Spring" to the "Arab Winter" and the resulting political failures of mainstream Islamist movements and parties including Ennahda and the various Muslim Brotherhood organizations. In the first couple of years following the outbreak of demonstrations, his focus was primarily on his home country of Egypt, though, wary of being accused of harboring Arab chauvinistic or nationalistic sentiments, he also addressed events in Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, Syria, and the Arab Gulf states as well as South Asia and Somalia.³⁰⁹ His decision to focus first and primarily on Egypt and the protests against the Mubarak regime, he explained, was because of the importance of that country's position and history in the wider Arab world and because he viewed Egypt as a model for the region and the wider Muslim world in terms of taking advantage of the political and social

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*: "Fayā abnā' Ummatī al-muslima, amāmakum muftaraq ṭuruq khaṭīr wa furṣat tārīkhīya 'aẓīma nādirat li-l-nuhūd bi-l-Umma, wa-l-taharur min al-'ubudīyat li-ahwā' al-hukkām wa-l-qawānīn al-waḍ'īya wa-l-hamīmanat al-gharbīya."

³⁰⁹ Al-Zawahiri is sensitive to coming across as an Egyptian or Arab nationalist and has attempted to explain his focus on Egypt in a series of audio and video messages that began in February 2011 and ended in October 2012 (11 parts), *Risālat al-amal wa-l-bishr li-ahlinā fī Miṣr* (A Message of Hope and Glad Tidings to Our People in Egypt), Mu'assasat al-Saḥāb li-l-Intāḡ al-I'lāmī. In a 2008 audiovisual message addressed to the Pakistani people and particularly members of the government, military and police, and intelligence services, al-Zawahiri began with a careful explanation of why he had decided to speak to them in English, despite his disdain for it as the "colonial" language. His explanation largely rested on the fact that most of them do not understand Arabic, which he encouraged them to learn, and because he does not know Urdu. His use of Arabic, he assured them, was not due to Arab chauvinism or Egyptian nationalism. See al-Zawahiri, *A Message from Shaykh Aiman al-Zawahiri to Pakistan Army and the People of Pakistan* (sic), Mu'assasat al-Saḥāb li-l-Intāḡ al-I'lāmī, 2008.

upheavals and steering it to an Islamic system of governance.³¹⁰ His pronounced disdain for nationalism, however, conflicted at times with his arguments that Egypt should play a leading role in the newly re-Islamized *Umma* in the campaign to establish a new caliphate.³¹¹

Egypt's decline from the pinnacle of the Arab Islamic world, al-Zawahiri argued, was caused by the deviation of successive ruling regimes and the people generally from Islam and its tenets in favor of secular nationalism and pan-Arabism, the latter which is, in essence, atheistic and thus without an ethical compass or moral code, leading the country, its rulers, and its people to descend into an un-Islamic morass.³¹² The only way for Egypt to recover from decades of misrule and "ignorance" (*jāhiliyya*) is to fully implement *shari'a* and rededicate society to an Islamic path, which in turn will prohibit, prevent, and punish widespread societal and governmental ills including corruption, nepotism, embezzlement, and regime persecution as practiced under Mubarak and his predecessors, Anwar Sadat and the hero of pan-Arabism, Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir.³¹³ The establishment of an Islamic state that is guided by the "justice" (*'adl*) of *shari'a* will safeguard, he argued, society from all of the damaging social, political, and economic ills that have beset it since the end of European colonialism and will strengthen society and allow it to resist foreign meddling and control by external powers.

Al-Zawahiri and other global *jihadi* ideologues present two arguments against democracy generally, which they see as being synonymous with secularism and atheism. First, a democratic nation-state must be secular no matter what its politicians and people

³¹⁰ Al-Zawahiri, *Risālat al-amal wa-l-bishr li-ahlinā fī Miṣr: Part One*, Mu'assasat al-Saḥāb li-l-Intāḡ al-I'lāmī, 18 February 2011.

³¹¹ Al-Zawahiri, *Risālat al-amal wa-l-bishr li-ahlinā fī Miṣr: Part Five*, Mu'assasat al-Saḥāb li-l-Intāḡ al-I'lāmī, 14 April 2011.

³¹² Al-Zawahiri, *Risālat al-amal wa-l-bishr li-ahlinā fī Miṣr: Part Two*, Mu'assasat al-Saḥāb li-l-Intāḡ al-I'lāmī, 24 February 2011.

³¹³ *Ibid.* This theme runs throughout all of al-Zawahiri's messages in *Risālat al-amal wa-l-bishr li-ahlinā fī Miṣr*. See also al-Zawahiri, *Yā Ahl al-Tūnis Ansirū shari'atukum*.

claim because it ultimately derives its legitimacy from its citizens who possess ultimate sovereignty. The majority of these citizens, then, have the legal, state-sanctioned right to enact legislation that challenges or even overturns God's commands (*aḥkām Allah*).³¹⁴ This is tantamount to unbelief (*kufr*) or, at the very least, apostasy (*ridda*), because it creates, in effect, an alternate religion, that of democracy.³¹⁵ Further, al-Zawahiri said, Western secularism and the state system it extols was imposed by military force through European imperialism and is not areligious but rather developed in tandem with the evolution of European Christian and Enlightenment thought as exemplified by the military colonial adventurism of non-Muslims such as Napoleon Bonaparte in Egypt and the Levant.³¹⁶

Second, a truly democratic system has never, in fact, existed in Egypt or any of the other Arab or Muslim countries. Instead they have been ruled since the end of European colonialism by secular, Western-backed authoritarian regimes under “apostates” such as Mubarak, Bashar al-Asad, and Ben ‘Ali. These regimes falsely claim to be protecting the sovereignty of their nations’ citizenry when in fact they are monopolizing political power while imposing social control through force and ruining the economy, acting as modern day pharaohs in the Qur’anic sense of the ultimate despotic ruler.³¹⁷ These local autocrats and their minions, however, are merely clients and appendages of the new imperial power, the U.S., whose ambassador in Egypt acts as a new colonial governor like the Lord Cromer of

³¹⁴ Al-Zawahiri, *Risālat al-amal wa-l-bishr li-ahlinā fī Miṣr: Part One*.

³¹⁵ Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisī, *Al-Dīmuqrāṭīya, hadhā dīn* and Nelly Lahoud, *The Jihadis’ Path to Self-destruction*, Chapter Four.

³¹⁶ Al-Zawahiri, *Risālat al-amal wa-l-bishr li-ahlinā fī Miṣr: Part Four*, Mu’assasat al-Saḥāb li-l-Intāj al-I’lāmī, 4 March 2011.

³¹⁷ Al-Zawahiri, *Risālat al-amal wa-l-bishr li-ahlinā fī Miṣr: Part One*. On the image of “Pharaoh” in the Qur’an, see Qasim Tawfiq Qasim Khader, *Shakhṣīyat fir’awn fī-l-Qur’an* (MA thesis, An-Najah University-Nabluṣ, 2003) at <https://scholar.najah.edu/content/pharaohs-character-holy-quran>, last accessed 15 July 2017, and Hamada Hassanein, “A Semiotic Analysis of Moses and Pharaoh Narrative in the Qur’an,” *American Journal of Semiotics* 25, no. 1 (2009), 25-52. On the use of the image of “Pharaoh” by militant Islamists in Egypt, see Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt*.

old in the nineteenth century.³¹⁸ The first proto “caliph” and *amir al-mu’minīn* of the Islamic State of Iraq, which later morphed into Islamic State, Abu ‘Umar al-Baghdadi, similarly argued that democratic elections in post-Ba‘thist Iraq were an un-Islamic (*kufr*) practice and little more than a sham during the continued dominance of the U.S., Iran, and their local Shi‘i and Sunni clients, as he referred to Iraqi political and military officials.³¹⁹ He was particularly dismissive and venomous toward Iraqi Sunni politicians such as the then vice president Tariq al-Hāshimī (2006-2012), whom he accused of betraying Sunnis and abandoning them to the evils of the country’s Iran-aligned Shi‘i Islamists in the interest of pursuing personal political power.³²⁰

Mainstream Islamist groups such as the Egyptian and Iraqi Muslim Brotherhoods, Tunisia’s Ennahda, and governments of countries such as Somalia, which accept the tenets of the secular nation-state system are guilty of abandoning Islam and God’s law while attempting to pull the wool over the eyes of their people by paying lip service and meaningless platitudes to Islam and *shari‘a* only to give their “apostate” social, political, and economic programs and military and security hegemony a thin veneer of Islamic legitimacy.³²¹ Corrupt, apostate governments such as Mubarak’s and al-Asad’s have been

³¹⁸ Al-Zawahiri, *Risālat al-amal wa-l-bishr li-ahlinā fī Miṣr: Part Two*. He is referring to Evelyn Baring, the first Earl of Cromer, who served as the British controller-general in colonial Egypt and then consul-general between 1879 and 1907.

³¹⁹ Abu ‘Umar al-Baghdadi, “Jarīmat al-intikhabāt al-shar‘īya wa-l-sīyāsīya wa wājibnā naḥwahā” (The *Shari‘a* and Political Crime of Elections and Our Duty Towards Them), Mu’assasat al-Furqān li-l-Intāj al-I‘lāmī, 12 February 2010 and “‘Umalā’ kādhībūn” (Lying Agents), Mu’assasat al-Furqān li-l-Intāj al-I‘lāmī, May 2009; Anṣār al-Sunna (Shari‘a Council), “Mawqifnā min al-intikhabāt” (Our Position on the Elections), 2 March 2010; and Muhammad bin Zayd al-Muhājir, *Dawlat al-Rāfida fī-l-Iraq...Khaṭar dāhum wa ḥulm lan yataḥaqq* (The Rejectionists’/Shi‘i State in Iraq...An Imminent Danger and a Dream that Will Never Be Realized), Dār al-Jabha, 2010.

³²⁰ Abu ‘Umar al-Baghdadi, “Jarīmat al-intikhabāt al-shar‘īya wa-l-sīyāsīya wa wājibnā naḥwahā.”

³²¹ *Ibid.* and Al-Zawahiri, *Risālat al-amal wa-l-bishr li-ahlinā fī Miṣr: Part Five*.

aided by their client *'ulamā* who are nothing but “court” and “palace” scholars (*'ulamā al-balāṭ*) for hire who fall over themselves to betray Islam for personal aggrandizement.³²²

Nationalism cannot be Islamic, global *jihadis* like al-Zawahiri, al-Maqqdisī, and Islamic State ideologues argue. Al-Zawahiri, similar to Asad, argues that nationalism is based upon the concepts of the nation-state and citizenship and not, like the Islamic neo-caliphal system he and other global *jihadis* propose, upon *'aqīda* and *shari'a*. In the idealized Islamic system all Muslims, regardless of their geographical origins or places of residence, are treated equally up to and including the caliph himself whereas in a secular nation-state non-citizens do not possess the same rights as citizens.³²³ The *jihadi* Islamic system is one that opposes the dominant accepted parameters and values of modern, Western secular nationalism.³²⁴ Conduct in the neo-caliphate will be regulated not by devotion to a particular geographical state or false identity but on adherence to a purified creed and Islamic law instead of secular legal codes and understandings of citizenship. Global *jihadis* are, in effect, proposing an alternative citizenship, or in-group state (neo-caliphate) identity for Muslims based upon each individual's level and demonstration of faith (*īmān*), piety and God-consciousness (*taqwā*), and fulfillment of religious obligations (*'ibādāt*), including *jihad*, and complete adherence to the *jihadis'* *shari'a*. The construction of a new Muslim neo-caliphate “citizen” is the only way for the *Umma* to counter the evil plots of the U.S. and other Western and hostile non-Muslim states.³²⁵

³²² Al-Zawahiri, *Risālat al-amal wa-l-bishr li-ahlinā fī Miṣr: Part Five*; Ibrahim al-Rubaysh, *Ibn 'Alī wa Ibn Sa'ud*, Mu'assasat al-Malāḥim li-l-Intāj al-I'lāmī, 26 February 2011 and *Yukharibūn buyūtahum bi-ayadīhim* (Demolishing Their Own Homes with Their Own Hands), Mu'assasat al-Malāḥim li-l-Intāj al-I'lāmī, 25 September 2011; and Islamic State, “Who are the True Fuqahā' & Scholars? And Who are the Evil 'Scholars'?” *Dabiq*, issue 11 (September 2015), Al-Hayat Media Center, 36-37.

³²³ Al-Zawahiri, *Risālat al-amal wa-l-bishr li-ahlinā fī Maṣr (Miṣr): Part One*.

³²⁴ Talal Asad, “Religion, Nation-State, Secularism,” 189.

³²⁵ Al-Zawahiri, *Risālat al-amal wa-l-bishr li-ahlinā fī Miṣr: Part Seven*, Mu'assasat al-Saḥāb li-l-Intāj al-I'lāmī, 8 August 2011.

The Islamic superstate's system of government, al-Zawahiri argued, will “fulfill the Muslims’ hopes” by implementing a new political order that will enable the reformation of society which, in turn, will have a positive impact on the economy and fields of learning in Egypt and from there the wider Muslim majority world.³²⁶ Couching his dense analysis and remarks as “advice” (*naṣīḥa*), albeit in his usual imperious style, al-Zawahiri repeatedly hit upon themes that have long been standard to the ideological repertoire and messaging of Al-Qaeda and the wider global *jihadi* movement, including the argument that true justice and a resurrection of the *Umma* to a new “golden age” of Islam is only possible through the “full implementation of *shari‘a* and a rededication of Muslims to their religion and, most importantly, to the *‘ibāda* of *jihad*. Despite his attempts to re-insert Al-Qaeda into the “Arab Spring,” his messages were at first largely reactionary rather than revolutionary, reactive rather than proactive.

A more pragmatic and nuanced approach was taken by a younger Al-Qaeda theorist, ‘Aṭīyatullah al-Lībī, before he was killed in a targeted U.S. drone missile strike in Pakistan in August 2011. Also delivering his remarks as *naṣīḥa* rather than as commands, he first congratulated the Tunisian and Egyptian people on successfully overthrowing their authoritarian rulers and encouraged them to “remember God” and the primacy of *shari‘a* during the tumultuous societal shifts then underway throughout the Arab world.³²⁷ The popular uprisings, he said, were a significant challenge to the “idol of stability” (*ṣanam al-istiqrār*) long worshipped by the region’s tyrannical rulers (*ṭawāghūt*, singular: *tāghūt*) who seek to make themselves like gods over their subjects rather than rulers bound in a social contract with their fellow Muslims, an idol that has been shaken by their unpredicted and unexpected downturn in fortunes despite powerful political, economic, and military backing

³²⁶ Al-Zawahiri, *Risālat al-amal wa-l-bishr li-ahlinā fī Miṣr: Part Two*.

³²⁷ ‘Aṭīyatullah al-Lībī, *Thawrat al-Shu‘ūb wa suqūt al-niẓām al-‘arabī al-fāsid*.

from non-Muslim superpowers.³²⁸ The initial successes of the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings were God’s example of how powerful the Arab Muslim youth really are, he argued, despite the adversity they face in the form of brutal regimes willing to murder their own people to stay in power.³²⁹

The “Arab Spring,” in ‘Aṭīyatullah’s view, provided the “*mujāhidīn*” and Islamic (*jihadi*) missionary activists (*du‘at*, singular: *dā‘ī*) with a valuable opportunity to build and expand grassroots support through advising, preaching, education, and other missionary propagation (*da‘wa*) work aimed at “reforming” Muslim societies and otherwise paving the way for the establishment of a transnational Islamic state, the neo-caliphate.³³⁰ This project requires the broadest possible coalition and the support of the Muslim masses and he urged the revolutionaries, and specifically the Arab Muslim youth, to avoid internecine strife and infighting and instead focus on working together for the common good of the *Umma*. They can and should still adhere to and promote the correct ‘*aqīda* and serve as the propagators of Islamic revivalism and reformism (according to the *jihadis*’ view) while still maintaining public order and proper etiquette (*adab*) and moral behavior (*akhlāq*). The needless spilling of Muslim blood must be avoided, he argued, and urged the revolutionaries to instead practice tolerance and forgiveness (*al-rifq wa kamāl al-adab wa taghlīb al-shafaqa wa-l-raḥma wa-l-iḥsān fī-l-ta‘āmul ma‘ kul al-muslimīn*) vis-à-vis former members of the ruling regimes, such as al-Qadhafi’s in Libya, who repent for their past wrongs.³³¹

‘Aṭīyatullah recognized that Al-Qaeda and other *jihadi* groups had limited abilities to affect the uprisings and he instead wrote that they relied on the “*mujāhid Umma*” to see them

³²⁸ *Ibid.*

³²⁹ *Ibid.*

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

³³¹ *Ibid.* and ‘Aṭīyatullah al-Lībī, *Ta‘zīm ḥurmat dimā’ al-muslimīn* (Maximizing/Protecting the Sanctity of the Muslims’ Blood), Mu’assasat al-Sahāb li-l-Intāj al-I‘lāmī, 13 March 2011, and *Taḥīya li-ahlinā fī Lībya*.

through and strive together with the small band of *mujāhidīn* to build a new Islamic society and eventually a state.³³² Unlike other global *jihadi* ideologues like al-Zawahiri, who remained bitter about the “betrayal” of mainstream Islamist groups like Ennahda and the Muslim Brotherhood, he instead argued that differences among the different Islamic movements (*al-ḥarakāt al-Islāmīya*) should be set aside in favor of building a solid foundation on which to build a new society and state.³³³ Instead of revenge, the revolutionary youth should strive to follow and spread a “clear and correct methodology” (*wuḍūḥ al-manhaj*) upon which a reformed *Umma* can be established and from which it can expand from Tunisia and Egypt to Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Libya, and Algeria.³³⁴

In a March 2011 audio message to his fellow Libyans, Aṭīyatullah, a native of the then-besieged rebel-held city of Misrata west of the capital city of Tripoli, urged them to strive for a truly Islamic post-Qadhafi national constitution (*dustūr al-bilād*) in which *shari‘a* was the only source of legislation.³³⁵ His adoption of the terminology of the existing nation-state system in choosing to use the term “constitution” within the specific context of Libya illustrates how global *jihadi* theorists, despite their stated rejection of the existing global system, still find themselves bound within its confines, including of its terminology. Similarly, he appealed to Libyans’ national pride in having had the courage to rise up against the al-Qadhafi regime, pointing specifically to the “righteous officers and soldiers” (*man fi-l-Jaysh al-Lībī min ḡubbāt wa junūd al-ṣāliḥīn*) of the Libyan military and the youth of the country who had thrown of the dictator’s decades-long yoke.³³⁶ Anwār al-‘Awlaqī also took a pragmatic approach toward the uprisings, writing that there was no immediate need to

³³² ‘Aṭīyatullah al-Lībī, *Thawrat al-Shu‘ūb wa suqūt al-nizām al-‘arabī al-fāsīd*.

³³³ *Ibid.*

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

³³⁵ ‘Aṭīyatullah al-Lībī, *Taḥīya li-ahlinā fī Lībīya*.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

establish an Islamic state despite that being the ultimate end goal. Incremental change, particularly of such great a magnitude as in Tunisia and Egypt, was good and certainly preferable to the realities of the previous regimes, he wrote, singling out, like Aṭīyatullah, “the lunatic” al-Qadhafi for special ridicule and scorn.³³⁷

The transformation of the “Arab Spring” into the “Arab Winter” as political progress slowed and eventually fully halted in countries such as Libya, Yemen, and Syria, was a boon to global *jihadis* and their claim that it would only be through violence (*jihad*) that real change could be achieved. Political setbacks in Tunisia for Ennahda, the descent of Libya and Syria into brutal and predatory civil wars, and the military coup against Egyptian president Muhammad Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood in July 2013 proved the folly of mainstream Islamists trying to appease the U.S. and other non-Muslim states by playing within the bounds of the secular global system.³³⁸ Aided by their Gulf Arab client states and Egyptian Christians, the U.S. had engineered the coup because it could not accept any Islamist movement holding political power, even a treacherous and false one like the *Ikhwān*, al-Zawahiri alleged.³³⁹ Mainstream Islamists are like chickens reared to be content with their lot and to never complain or attempt to change their situation, which is tantamount to surrendering to the disbelievers.³⁴⁰ The increasingly bleak fortunes for Arab democrats between 2012 and 2014, continuing through July 2017, has been a boon for the fortunes of Al-Qaeda and other global *jihadis* because it has shown that no Islamists will never be

³³⁷ Anwār al-‘Awlaqī, “The Tsunami of Change” and ‘Aṭīyatullah al-Lībī, *Thawrat al-Shu‘ūb wa suqūt al-niẓām al-‘arabī al-fāsid*, in which al-Qadhafi is called an “evil and insane tyrant” (*al-tāghūt al-mukhbūl al-masha‘ūm*)

³³⁸ Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Ṣanam al-‘ajwa al-dīmuqrāṭīya* (The Compressed Democratic Idol), Mu’assasat al-Saḥāb li-l-Intāj al-I‘lāmī, 3 August 2013.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁰ Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Risā’il mukhtaṣira li-Ummat muntaṣṣira* (Part 1).

allowed to maintain political power even if democratically elected and thus that violence is the only way to bring about lasting change in their countries and the *Umma* at large.³⁴¹

Abu Muhammad al-‘Adnānī, the official spokesman of the Islamic State of Iraq and Islamic State between 2012 until his death in a U.S. airstrike in August 2016, excoriated mainstream Islamist groups such as Ennahda and the Muslim Brotherhood for endorsing democracy and accused them of leading Muslims astray with their “unbelief.”³⁴² He accused them, as well as Syrian rebel groups, of being the new “*murji’a*,” referring to an early Islamic school of thought that argued for deferred judgment on the religiosity of Muslims regarding certain sins, a group that is used by many contemporary *jihadis* to refer to lapsed or “apostate” Muslims.³⁴³ There is no difference, he said, between Morsi, Rached Ghannouchi, and other mainstream Islamists and dictators like Mubarak, al-Qadhafi, and Ben ‘Ali because they all rule by the same human laws and do not abide by *shari’a*.³⁴⁴ The old regimes’ use of violence to remain in power despite the brief revolutionary veneer of social and political change is proof of the indispensability of violence and its necessity to truly bring about

³⁴¹ The end of the “Arab Spring” has had a profound impact on mainstream Islamist movements like the Muslim Brotherhood. See Ammar Fayed, “Is the Crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood Pushing the Group Toward Violence?,” Brookings Institution report, 23 March 2016, at <https://www.brookings.edu/research/is-the-crackdown-on-the-muslim-brotherhood-pushing-the-group-toward-violence/>, last accessed 15 July 2017; Eric Trager and Marina Shalabi, “Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood Gets a Facelift: The Movement’s Young Leaders Turn Revolutionary to Stay Relevant,” *Foreign Affairs*, 20 May 2015, at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/egypt/2015-05-20/egypts-muslim-brotherhood-gets-facelift>, last accessed 15 July 2017; and David D. Kirkpatrick and Mayy El Sheikh, “Push for Retribution in Egypt Frays Muslim Brotherhood,” *The New York Times*, 5 August 2015, at https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/06/world/middleeast/younger-muslim-brotherhood-members-in-egypt-bridle-at-nonviolent-stance.html?_r=0, last accessed 15 July 2017.

³⁴² Abu Muhammad al-‘Adnānī, *Silmīya dīn man?* (Pacifism is the Religion of Whom?), Mu’assasat al-Furqān li-l-Intāḡ al-I‘lāmī, 31 August 2013.

³⁴³ Joas Wagemakers, “‘Seceders and Postponers’? An Analysis of the ‘Khawarij’ and ‘Murji’a’ Labels in Polemical Debates between Quietist and Jihadi-Salafis,” in *Contextualising Jihadi Thought*, ed. Jeevan Deol and Zaheer Kazmi (London: Hurst & Co., 2012), 145-164 and “An Inquiry into Ignorance: A Jihadi-Salafi Debate on *Jahl* as an Obstacle to *Takfir*,” in *The Transmission and Dynamics of the Textual Sources of Islam: Essays in Honour of Harald Motzki*, edited by Nicolet Boekhoff-van der Voort, C.H.M. Versteegh, and Joas Wagemakers (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 301-327, and Islamic State, “Irja’: The Most Dangerous Bid’ah (and its Effect on the Jihad in Sham),” *Dabiq*, issue 8 (March 2015), 39-56.

³⁴⁴ Abu Muhammad al-‘Adnānī, *Silmīya dīn man?*

change and a return to Islam.³⁴⁵ Peaceful belief cannot by itself stand against the apostates' violent assaults and attempts to claw their way back to power, he said, pointing to the life of the Prophet Muhammad as proof that violence and not naïve pacifism is a prerequisite for major societal change.³⁴⁶ Mirroring the arguments of al-Zawahiri and AQAP ideologue Ibrahim al-Rubaysh, al-‘Adnānī dismissed the “‘*ulamā* of the palace” who refuse to honestly acknowledge the corresponding realities of how far the ruling regimes have fallen into the depths of *kufṛ*, and that fighting is not only legitimate but Qur’anically commanded.³⁴⁷ The Muslim Brotherhood, Ennahda, and the Egyptian Salafi Al-Nūr party have cast away God’s and the Prophet Muhammad’s commandments in the interest of pursuing political power and do not recognize that it is a game that they will never be permitted to fully benefit from, he said, pointing to the Algerian military regime’s canceling of the country’s 1990 elections after the electoral victory of the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) and the 2013 Egyptian military coup.³⁴⁸ His message was echoed by Egyptian foreign fighters in an Islamic State film released in February 2016 which began with graphic news footage of Egyptian military and security forces brutally assaulting and killing protestors, spilling their blood and ravaging their bodies (*ashlā*’) despite their participation in democratic elections.³⁴⁹

The Boon of Civil Conflict and Weak States: Opportunities and Ungoverned Spaces

The “Arab Spring,” in addition to ultimately rejuvenating the *jihadi* current within both Sunni and Shi‘i Islamism, provided territorial openings in a number of regions for *jihadi* actors to step into and experiment with forms of governance and population control ranging from the rudimentary to more bureaucratized and complex models. The weakening of the

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.* al-‘Adnānī cites Qur’an 8:39 in which the believers are commanded to “fight them until there is no more *fitna* and all religion is for God.”

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁹ Islamic State film, *Silmīyatukum dīn man?* (Your Pacifism is the Religion of Whom?), Mu’assasat al-Furqān li-l-Intāḡ al-I‘lāmī, 7 February 2016.

central governments in Syria, Yemen, Libya, and Mali and the continued weak power projection in countries such as Somalia and Afghanistan allowed *jihadi* groups to make operational and territorial inroads, as did the outbreak of ethno-nationalist conflict in Mali and parts of the Sahel as well as post-Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) Somalia from 2007 onward. In some cases, such as Somalia and parts of Syria and northern Mali, these groups took advantage of local dynamics and grievances to win over, even if grudgingly or temporarily, the support or acquiescence of local populations to their rule.³⁵⁰ The absence or inability of the central government to both project its authority beyond certain territorial limits and deliver aid, services, or justice and judicial remedies to local groups leads some of them to engage with *jihadi*-insurgent actors who are able to fulfill some or all of these, even if only to a basic level.³⁵¹ These experiments were most successful, in a relative sense, in places where the *jihadi*-insurgents were more embedded into local society, for example in Somalia where Al-Shabaab, despite its transnationalism and globalist rhetoric and aspects of its ideology, is solidly connected to indigenous local power structures, such as the clan and sub-clan system, and cognizant of the strategic need to develop relationships and even partnerships with local actors including merchants and businessmen.³⁵² It was in the crucibles of civil war-torn Somalia and Syria that *jihadi*-insurgent groups pioneered forms of embedded governing regimes designed to extract economic sustenance through taxation,

³⁵⁰ Ferdaous Bouhlel, Yvan Guichaoua, Jean-Hervé Jézéquel, “Mali: The Stoning That Didn’t Happen, and Why It Matters,” *African Arguments*, 21 June 2017, at <http://africanarguments.org/2017/06/21/mali-the-stoning-that-didnt-happen-and-why-it-matters/>, last accessed 1 July 2017.

³⁵¹ Azam Ahmed, “Taliban Justice Gains Favor as Official Afghan Courts Fail,” *The New York Times*, 31 January 2015, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/01/world/asia/taliban-justice-gains-favor-as-official-afghan-courts-fail.html>, last accessed 11 July 2017; Jami Forbes, “The Significance of Taliban Shari’a Courts in Afghanistan,” *CTC Sentinel* 6, no. 5 (2013), 13-16; Christopher Anzalone, “The Resilience of al-Shabaab,” *CTC Sentinel* 9, no. 4 (2016), 13-20 and “Al-Shabab’s Tactical and Media Strategies in the Wake of its Battlefield Setbacks,” *CTC Sentinel* 6, no. 3 (2013), 12-16; Adam Nossiter, “Islamists’ Harsh Justice is on the Rise in North Mali,” *The New York Times*, 27 December 2012, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/28/world/africa/islamists-harsh-justice-on-rise-in-northern-mali.html>, last accessed 12 July 2017; and Stig Jarle Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 73-92.

³⁵² On the key economic and business dynamics of Islamist governance, see Aisha Ahmad, *Jihad & Co.: Black and “The Security Bazaar.”*

extortion, property seizure, and local partnerships and implement a *hudūd*-centered form of *shari‘a* and strategic and highly performative, symbolic, and ritualized forms of violence as a strategic means for social control. It was in places such as Somalia, said charismatic AQAP preacher al-‘Awlaqī, that the global *jihadi* current should look to in order to see how to implement an Islamic government in preparation for a neo- caliphate.³⁵³

Civil Wars and New Weak States in the Wake of the “Arab Spring”: Opportunity Structures for Territorial Jihadism

The outbreak of civil war in Yemen and Syria led to a weakening not only in the state’s ability to exercise full control over its boundaries but also to a bitter and, in both cases, continuing struggle for control of the state itself. As government forces were either forced out of territory by rebel groups or divided along communal-sectarian or political lines among rival politicians and claimants to state power, territorial *jihadi* insurgent organizations stepped in to the gap and began to construct civil administrations and implement governance programs in areas they captured. The withdrawal and weakening of the state’s institutions and the reach of its military and security forces, brought on in part by internal divisions or waves of defections, presented *jihadi* strategists with the ideal opportunity and freedom to experiment with territorial governance and realize their long-held ambitions of constructing a *jihadi* “Islamic” state as part of the inexorable march to ultimately forming a new “caliphate.”

In Yemen, the government and military split in 2011 along factional lines as mass demonstrations calling for the ouster of the country’s long-seated authoritarian president, ‘Ali ‘Abdullah Saleh erupted. Following Saleh’s reneging on a Saudi-backed agreement to transfer power to ‘Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, the country descended into civil war with pro and anti-Saleh forces facing off and a Houthi rebellion and insurgency still smoldering in parts of northern Yemen. In 2014, the conflict became even more entrenched and

³⁵³ Anwar al-‘Awlaqī, *Al-liqā’ al-awwal wa-l-ḥaṣrī ma’ al-shaykh al-dā‘iyya Anwar al-‘Awlaqī* (The First Exclusive Interview with the Propagating *Shaykh*, Anwar al-‘Awlaqī), Mu’assasat al-Malāḥim li-l-Intāj al-I‘lāmī, 22 May 2010.

complicated when Saleh allied with his onetime rivals, the Houthi Movement, to take over the country's capital, Sana'a, the Red Sea port city of Hudayda, and large swaths of the central, western, and southern parts of Yemen.

In the midst of this civil conflict, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) established a new affiliate organization, Anṣār al-Shari'a, to take advantage of the new opportunities presented by the mass demonstrations against Saleh in 2011 and the continuing tensions followed by civil war between 2012 and the present day³⁵⁴ Under the banner of Anṣār al-Shari'a, whose leadership was nearly identical to its own, AQAP had, by the spring of 2012, successfully captured territory equivalent to the size of Austria.³⁵⁵ After capturing the city of Ja'ār in southern Yemen's Abyan governorate in March 2011 and the port city of Zinjibar in May, defending them and inflicting a series of military defeats on Yemeni government forces weakened by internal divisions and political infighting in June and July, AQAP began to implement its strategy for building a *jihadi*-insurgent state. Naming its new state the "Islamic Emirate of Waqār" (IEW), AQAP through Anṣār al-Shari'a established a rudimentary form of governance based on its interpretation of Islamic law and jurisprudence

³⁵⁴ See NPR's interview with Gregory Johnsen, "Al-Qaida: Now Vying for Hearts, Minds and Land," 13 July 2012, at <http://www.npr.org/2012/07/13/156691199/al-qaida-now-vying-for-hearts-minds-and-land>, last accessed 11 July 2017; Murad Batal al-Shishani, "Bringing Shari'a Rule to Yemen and Saudi Arabia: Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's Post-Revolution Strategies," *Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Monitor* 9, issue 37 (October 2011), at [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=38534](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=38534), last accessed 11 July 2017; Casey L. Coombs, "The Ansar al-Shari'a Insurgency in Southern Yemen: The View from the Ground," Jamestown Foundation, 9 May 2012, at [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=39348&cHash=525ae2fd02d76749fb77a30e958ffdd0](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=39348&cHash=525ae2fd02d76749fb77a30e958ffdd0), last accessed 11 July 2017; *In the Hands of Al-Qaeda*, Clover Films, 2012; Christopher Swift, "Arc of Convergence: AQAP, Ansar al-Shari'a and the Struggle for Yemen," *CTC Sentinel* 5, no. 6 (2012), 1-6; Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, "Al-Qaida's Wretched Utopia and the Battle for Hearts and Minds," *The Guardian*, 30 April 2012, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/apr/30/alqaida-yemen-jihadis-sharia-law>, last accessed 11 July 2017 and "Yemeni Implosion Pushes Southern Sunnis into Arms of al-Qaida and Isis," *The Guardian*, 22 March 2015, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/22/yemen-sunnis-al-qaida-isis-islamic-state-shia-houthis-sanaa>, last accessed 11 July 2017.

³⁵⁵ *In the Hands of Al-Qaeda*, Clover Films; Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, "Yemenis Chose Jihad over Iranian Support," *The Guardian*, 10 May 2012, accessed at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/may/10/yemen-jihad-iran-saudi-interference?newsfeed=true>; Murad Batal al-Shishani, "A Post-Mortem Analysis of AQAP Tribal Implementer Tariq al-Dhahab," *Jamestown Foundation Militant Leadership Monitor* 3, issue 2 (2012); Gregory Johnsen, "Rada'a, AQAP, Ansar al-Shariah, and the al-Dhahab Family," *Waq al-Waq*, 23 January 2012, accessed at <http://waqalwaq2.blogspot.ca/2012/01/radaa-aqap-ansar-al-shariah-and-al.html>; Gabriel Koehler-Derrick, *A False Foundation? AQAP, Tribes, and Ungoverned Spaces in Yemen* (West Point: Combating Terrorism Center, 2011), and Christopher Swift, "Arc of Convergence."

backed by the liberal utilization of violence, including public floggings and executions, to enforce the new social and political order. AQAP's interest in expanding through southern Yemen had begun before the "Arab Spring" reached the country and the group's leadership had attempted to win support in the south, particularly in Abyan and Aden governorates, through media releases in 2009 and 2010 that built on continuing southern resentment at the Saleh regime's behavior in the country's 1994 civil war and detailed attacks on government forces and AQAP's meetings with local tribes and southern separatists to build up public support.³⁵⁶

Anṣār al-Shari'a implemented a harsh form of justice in Waqār through the strategic use of the *violence of control*, a ritualized and highly symbolic and ideological form of political violence designed to establish *jihadi*-insurgent authority, which will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Three.³⁵⁷ Despite the harshness of the group's interpretation and implementation of *shari'a*, locals reported that there was a significant decrease in crime and corruption, though it came at the cost of severe restrictions on behavior and dress.³⁵⁸ Anṣār al-Shari'a established *shari'a* courts, its *ḥisba* (literally "verification") police cracked down on theft and regulated market trade, and it oversaw and carried out public works projects such as repairing broken electrical stations and lines and undertaking local agricultural projects. The media departments of Anṣār al-Shari'a and AQAP, the Wikālat al-Madad al-Ikḥbārīya (Al-Madad News Agency) and the Al-Malāḥim Media Foundation, documented these activities and projects through a series of video reports, '*Ayn 'alā al-Ḥadath* (Viewing an

³⁵⁶ AQAP films, *Radd al-'Udwān* (Repelling Aggression), Mu'assasat al-Malāḥim li-l-Intāj al-I'lāmī, 11 November 2010; *Naḥwa hayyat karīma* (Toward a Life of Dignity), Mu'assasat al-Malāḥim li-l-Intāj al-I'lāmī, 23 February 2010; and *Amrikā wa-l-fakh al-akhīr* (America and the Final Trap), Mu'assasat al-Malāḥim li-l-Intāj al-I'lāmī, 26 May 2010; and communiqué, "Bayān bi-shā'n majzarat al-muslimīn bi-Wilāyat Abyan" (Statement on the Massacre of Muslims in Abyan Governorate), 27 December 2009.

³⁵⁷ Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, "Al-Qaida's Wretched Utopia and the Battle for Hearts and Minds."

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Event), and news bulletins (*Taqrīr Ikhhbārī*, “News Report” series).³⁵⁹ The videos and written news bulletins, which were distributed digitally online and to news media outlets as well as in local communities on the ground, included reports on the group’s military operations and social services, governance activities, ideological religious content, and interviews with key leaders and commanders as well as locals.

Although Anṣār al-Shari‘a/AQAP was pushed back into the mountains and rural areas after governing the “Emirate of Waqār” for over a year by a renewed and U.S.-backed Yemeni government and tribal militia offensive in the summer of 2012, the *jihadi*-insurgent group remained a potent force capable of capitalizing on the continuing unrest in the country. As it withdrew from urban areas, the group promised to return to power there despite the government’s efforts in an open letter addressed to locals and its enemies and supporters.³⁶⁰ Anṣār al-Shari‘a/AQAP quickly demonstrated its continued military capabilities by carrying out a series of deadly suicide bombings in the Yemeni capital city of San‘a, assassinating General Sālim ‘Ali Quṭan, the top military commander in the south, and attacks on pro-government tribal militias despite its territorial setbacks.³⁶¹ Anṣār al-Shari‘a/AQAP claimed these attacks and said that it would continue to target the government and its allies.³⁶² It

³⁵⁹ AQAP and Anṣār al-Shari‘a films, *‘Ayn ‘alā al-Ḥadath*, Parts 1-16, Wikālat al-Madad al-Ikhhbārīya, 2012, and newsletter *Taqrīr Ikhhbārī*, issues 1-23, Wikālat al-Madad al-Ikhhbārīya, 2011-2012.

³⁶⁰ Anṣār al-Shari‘a communiqué, “Risālat Anṣār al-Shari‘a ilā al-ahālī fī Imārat Waqār” (Anṣār al-Shari‘a’s Message to Our People in Waqār), 13 June 2012.

³⁶¹ Sam Kimball, “Yemen: What an Al-Qaeda Assassination has Exposed,” *Time*, 20 June 2012, at <http://world.time.com/2012/06/20/yemen-what-an-al-qaeda-assassination-has-exposed/>, last accessed 11 July 2017; Mohammed Ghobari, “Al Qaeda Suicide Bomber Attacks Yemen Police Academy,” *Reuters*, 11 July 2012, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/07/11/us-yemen-explosion-idUSBRE86A0H120120711>, last accessed 11 July 2017; Hakim Almasmari, Mohammed Jamjoom, and Saad Abedine, “Yemen: Al Qaeda Affiliate Behind Blast that Killed 101 Soldiers,” CNN, 22 May 2012, at http://edition.cnn.com/2012/05/22/world/meast/yemen-violence/index.html?hpt=hp_t3, last accessed 11 July 2017; and Reuters, “Twelve Pro-Army Militiamen Killed in Yemen—Commander,” 4 March 2013, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/04/us-yemen-attack-idUSBRE9230UF20130304>, last accessed 11 July 2017.

³⁶² AQAP and Anṣār al-Shari‘a communiqués, “Bayān bi-shā’n qatl al-qā’id al-‘askarī li-l-mantiqa al-janūbiya, Sālim Quṭan” (Statement regarding the killing of the military commander in the southern region, Sālim Quṭan), 22 June 2012 and “Bayān bi-shā’n al-‘amaliya al-istishhadiya ‘alā wazīr al-difā’ wa qādat ḥarb Abyan bi-sāhat al-sab‘īn bi-Ṣan‘ā” (Statement regarding the martyrdom operation on the defense minister and leaders of the Abyan war in ‘70 Square’), 23 May 2012.

regained significant territorial control for a second time in April 2015 when it entered the coastal city of Mukalla in Hadramawt governorate, stormed the central prison to release captured AQAP leaders and members along with hundreds of other prisoners, and re-establish a local “emirate.” *Jihadi*-insurgent forces withdrew from the city in late April 2016 ahead of a major Yemeni government and United Arab Emirates (UAE) military offensive but continued to actively target them and Houthi Movement forces as of July 2017.

In Mali and parts of the Sahel, the collapse of the al-Qadhafi regime in Libya and that country’s division into regions controlled by competing rebel and Islamist militias in the fall of 2011 had a profound impact on domestic and regional politics as hundreds of Tuareg fighters and significant amounts of military hardware began to flow from Libya to Mali.³⁶³ In Mali, many of these Tuareg fighters joined the ranks of the *Mouvement National pour la Libération de l’Azawad* (MNLA; National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad), a Malian Tuareg ethno-nationalist organization seeking to establish an independent Tuareg state, “Azawad,” in parts of northern Mali and Niger, which in January 2012 had launched a rebellion against the Malian state after the stalling of political negotiations.³⁶⁴

Following a string of military defeats at the hands of the MNLA, mutinous Malian soldiers launched a coup d’état in late March 2012, toppling President Amadou Toumani Touré, whom they alleged was not providing the military with the supplies and other support necessary to defeat the separatists. The MNLA and opportunistic militant Islamist groups

³⁶³ Thomas Fessy, “Gaddafi’s Influence in Mali’s Coup,” BBC News, 22 March 2012, at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-17481114>, last accessed 11 July 2017; Reuters, “Tuareg Fighters Urged to Drop Gaddafi, Stay in Libya,” 4 September 2011, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/09/04/us-libya-tuaregs-idUSTRE7831T720110904>, last accessed 11 July 2017; and Rose Skelton, “Return of Gaddafi Army Triggers Coup in Mali,” *The Independent*, 23 March 2012, at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/return-of-gaddafi-army-triggers-coup-in-mali-7582485.html>, last accessed 11 July 2017.

³⁶⁴ The MNLA’s web site is <http://www.mnlamov.net/>, last accessed 11 July 2017. On the start of the rebellion, see the MNLA communiqué, “The Renewal of Armed Struggle in Azawad,” 17 January 2012, at <http://www.mnlamov.net/english/93-the-renewal-of-armed-struggle-in-azawad.html>, last accessed 7 June 2012. The statement’s text can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/touareglibya/photos/a.113387265409133.21231.104174909663702/227192134028645/?type=3&theater>, last accessed 11 July 2017.

such as Ansar Dine took advantage of divisions within the Malian state and seized control of more and more territory in the north. By early April, the city of Timbuktu, one of the most important historic centers of Islamic religious learning and architecture, and the strategic towns of Kidal and Gao were captured by the MNLA and other armed Tuareg and mixed-ethnic Islamist factions.

Regional militant Islamist rebel and *jihadi* organizations, including Ansar Dine (Anṣār al-Dīn), a group under the command of Iyad Ag Ghaly, a prominent Malian Tuareg politician and former diplomat-turned-rebel commander, initially joined with the MNLA in its ethno-nationalist push against the Malian state, with Ansar Dine claiming in March 2012 that it had captured and controlled vast swaths of territory in the country's northeast.³⁶⁵ Ansar Dine, which established ties with AQIM, rejected the 6 April 2012 declaration of independence by the MNLA and stated that its ultimate goal was not ethnic regional separatism but the implementation of *shari'a* across all of Mali.³⁶⁶ In an interview held in Kidal on June 15, Ag Ghaly, despite his group's affiliation with the transnational Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) organization, still limited his territorial ambitions to the nation-state, saying, "We are Malians and we are against the division of Mali," and continued on to declare that he sought the countrywide implementation of Islamic law.³⁶⁷ In mid-April his group announced the beginning of the application of *shari'a* in Kidal.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁵ Agence France-Presse, "Armed Islamist Group Claims Control in Northeast Mali," 20 March 2012, at <http://www.webcitation.org/66Whh6knP>, last accessed 11 July 2017, and Andrew Lebovich, "The Black Flag Flies in Mali."

³⁶⁶ Agence France-Presse, "Confusion in Mali after Tuareg Independence Claim," 6 April 2012, accessed at <http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/afp/confusion-in-mali-after-tuareg-independence-claim/509662>, last accessed 3 June 2012; Agence France-Presse, "Islamist Fighters call for Sharia Law in Mali," 13 March 2012, at <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5it6uaNq2Rlg0TWfZ9eDufiqpGgA?docId=CNG.1917c4fef3978cd3368f40fb9f61aca9.5a1>, last accessed 1 June 2012 and available at <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2012/03/islamist-fighters-call-for-sharia-law-in-mali/>, last accessed 11 July 2017.

³⁶⁷ Adama Diarra, "Mali Islamist Leader Rejects Independence," *Reuters*, 16 June 2012, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/16/us-mali-crisis-ansardine-idUSBRE85F0MD20120616>, last accessed 13 July 2017.

³⁶⁸ Ansar Dine communiqué, 15 April 2012.

Ansar Dine and the MNLA formed a short-lived alliance in late May 2012, announcing initially that they would establish an “Islamic republic” in Azawad, though disagreements soon emerged between the two groups as to what extent *shari‘a* would be implemented.³⁶⁹ Within days, MNLA leaders called off the agreement and said that they opposed the implementation of Islamic law, which in turn led Ansar Dine, through spokesman Sanda Ould Bouamama, to accuse the MNLA of breaking the agreement.³⁷⁰ By early June clashes had broken out between the two groups, with Ansar Dine receiving assistance from other *jihadi*-insurgent groups, chief among them the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA/MUJAO, Jamā‘at al-Tawhīd wa-l-Jihād fī Gharb ‘Ifriqqīyā). The MNLA was soon overwhelmed militarily by the combined forces of Ansar Dine and MUJWA, aided by AQIM, and was forced to retreat, which enabled the *jihadis* to seize full control of the rich prizes of Timbuktu, Kidal, and Gao.³⁷¹ Ansar Dine heralded its victories in northern Mali in a celebratory video, *Fath Azawād* (Conquest of Azawad), released on global *jihadi* Internet fora and other web sites in July 2012.³⁷² Other *jihadi*-insurgent media releases were issued by L’agence le Grand Sahara and the Azawad News Agency (Wikālat Azawād al-Ikhhārīya) throughout 2012.

The MNLA, after its defeat by Ansar Dine and MUJWA, announced in mid-July that it was dropping its demands for independence and instead would seek an autonomous

³⁶⁹ Ansar Dine communiqué, “Marsūm al-ittifāq bayna al-Ḥarakat al-Waṭanīya li-Tahrīr Azawād wa Jamā‘at Anṣār al-Dīn” (Declaration of the agreement between the MNLA and Ansar Dine), 27 May 2012, and BBC News, “Mali Tuareg and Islamist Rebels Agree on Islamist State,” 27 May 2012, at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-18224004>, last accessed 11 July 2017.

³⁷⁰ Adama Diarra and Laurent Prieur, “Mali Tuareg Leaders Call Off Islamist Pact,” *Reuters*, 1 June 2012, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/01/mali-rebels-idUSL5E8H1CXZ20120601>, last accessed 11 July 2017.

³⁷¹ Tlemoko Diallo and Adama Diarra, “Islamists Declare Full Control of Mali’s North,” *Reuters*, 28 June 2012, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/28/us-mali-crisis-idUSBRE85R15720120628>, last accessed 11 July 2017 and Kal, “More on MUJWA: The Battle at Gao and Even More Questions,” *The Moor Next Door*, 1 July 2012, accessed at <http://themoornextdoor.wordpress.com/2012/07/01/more-on-mujwa-the-battle-at-gao-and-even-more-questions/>, last accessed 7 July 2012.

³⁷² Ansar Dine film, *Fath Azawād*, July 2012.

political status and, in June 2015, signed a peace deal with the Malian government.³⁷³

Despite Ag Ghaly's claim that his group only wanted to implement *shari'a* in Mali and calls from the African Union for the group to break with AQIM, his group joined a *jihadi* umbrella organization, Jamā'at Nuṣrat al-Islam wa-l-Muslimīn (JNIM), in March 2017 that affiliated itself to Al-Qaeda Central and AQIM.³⁷⁴

Security concerns over the possible threats posed by continued control over northern Mali by militant Islamist groups such as Ansar Dine, MUJWA, Mokhtar Belmokhtar's Al-Murābiṭūn, and AQIM were heightened in early January 2013 when *jihadi*-insurgent forces captured the strategic town of Konna, driving out the Malian army, which lies less than 380 miles from the country's capital, Bamako.³⁷⁵ In response, France intervened militarily within a few days of the town's capture, sending over 4,500 troops to Mali.³⁷⁶ French forces were aided by the Malian military and a nearly 7,500-strong military mission, the African-led International Support Mission to Mali, organized by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

³⁷³ Reuters, "Mali Rebels Drop Claim for Independent State," 15 July 2012, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jul/15/mali-rebels-drop-independence-claim>, last accessed 17 July 2012, and Adama Diarra and Tiemoko Diallo, "Malian Rebel Alliance Signs Peace Deal with Government," *Reuters*, 20 June 2015, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mali-rebels-deal-idUSKBN0P00PI20150621>, last accessed 11 July 2017.

³⁷⁴ Derek Henry Flood, "Between Islamization and Secession: The Contest for Northern Mali," *CTC Sentinel* 5, issue 7 (July 2012), 1-6; Héní Nsaibia, "Jihadist Groups in the Sahel Region Formalize Merger," *Jihadology*, 27 March 2017, at <http://jihadology.net/2017/03/27/guest-post-jihadist-groups-in-the-sahel-region-formalize-merger/>, last accessed 11 July 2017; Pascal Fletcher, "AU Urges Mali Ansar Dine Rebels to Break with Qaeda," *Reuters*, 16 July 2012, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-au-mali-ansardine-idUSBRE86F11U20120716>, last accessed 11 July 2017; Jamā'at Nuṣrat al-Islam wa-l-Muslimīn (JNIM) film, Video remarks on founding by Iyad Ag Ghaly (No Title), Mu'assasat al-Zāliqat li-l-Intāḡ al-I'lāmī, 2 March 2017; and Al-Qaeda Central communiqué, "Ta'yīd wa mubāraka li-Jamā'at Nuṣrat al-Islam wa-l-Muslimīn" (Support and blessings to JNIM), 9 March 2017.

³⁷⁵ Tiemoko Diallo, "Mali Islamists Capture Strategic Town, Residents Flee," *Reuters*, 10 January, 2013, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/10/us-mali-rebels-idUSBRE90912Q20130110>, last accessed 11 July 2017.

³⁷⁶ *Le Dauphine*, "4600 soldats français mobilisés," 31 January, 2013, at <http://www.ledauphine.com/actualite/2013/01/31/4600-soldats-francais-mobilises>, last accessed 15 July 2017.

In the face of French airpower and superior military technology, Ansar Dine, MUJWA, and other *jihadi*-insurgent forces rapidly withdrew from northern Mali's major urban centers including Gao, Timbuktu, and Kidal.³⁷⁷ However, *jihadis* quickly began launching and have continued to conduct guerilla attacks, including suicide bombings, on Malian, secular Tuareg, French, and ECOWAS forces, since March 2012 in northern and central Mali and neighboring countries, largely through the JNIM umbrella.³⁷⁸ AQIM as a whole continues to prove itself a resilient insurgent actor capable of flexibility in its strategy and operations.³⁷⁹

Despite rebels' continued ability to wage an anti-government insurgency, they were also beset with a number of significant setbacks. In late January 2013, a senior Ansar Dine commander, Alghabass Ag Intallah, broke away from the group and formed a new faction which he called the Islamic Movement of Azawad. He immediately indicated his willingness to enter into negotiations with the Malian government.³⁸⁰ On February 26, Iyad Ag Ghali, who had adopted a more transnational if not fully global *jihadi* ideological bent since Ansar Dine and MUJWA were swept from power in northern Mali, was named a "Specially Designated Global Terrorist," by the U.S. Department of State.³⁸¹ A day prior he had been

³⁷⁷ Reuters, "French Troops Deploy to Last of Mali Rebel Strongholds," 30 January 2013, accessed at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/30/us-mali-rebels-kidal-idUSBRE90T09120130130>.

³⁷⁸ Madjiasra Nako and Joe Penney, "Ten Chadian Soldiers Killed Fighting Islamists in Mali," *Reuters*, 24 February 2013, accessed at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/02/24/us-mali-rebels-chad-idUSBRE91N09A20130224>; Jamey Keaten, "Officials: France in Mali Until July or Later," *Associated Press*, 28 February 2013, at <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2013/02/28/officials-france-in-mali-until-at-least-july>, last accessed 13 July 2017.

³⁷⁹ Andrew Lebovich, "AQIM's Formalized Flexibility," in *How Al-Qaeda Survived Drones, Uprisings, and the Islamic State: The Nature of the Current Threat*, ed. Aaron Zelin (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2017), 56-66.

³⁸⁰ David Lewis, "Mali Islamist Group Splits, Faction Leader Wants Talks," *Reuters*, 24 January 2013, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/24/mali-rebels-split-idUSL6N0AT6GU20130124>, last accessed 13 July 2017.

³⁸¹ United States Department of State, "Terrorist Designations of Iyad ag Ghali," 26 February 2013, at <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/266576.htm>, last accessed 13 July 2017.

added to the United Nations' sanctions list "concerning Al-Qaeda and associated individuals and entities.

Mali's combination of internal unrest within the government, embers of long-held ethno-nationalist separatism, and descent into a regional insurgency in the north provided transnational and global *jihadis* with a prime opportunity to ally temporarily and opportunistically with non-Islamist ethno-nationalist rebels to quickly take over large amounts of territory and build up their organizational strength. Once secure, Ansar Dine, MUJWA, and other *jihadi* groups cast aside the MNLA and began to implement a *shari'a*-based form of governance and law and order in northern Mali. Through leaders such as Ag Ghaly and Mokhtar Belmokhtar, the *jihadis* combined domestic, regional, and global ideological persuasions and political goals in an attempt to build local support bases and expand their influence and political and military reach.

Syria provided *jihadi* rebel organizations with their largest and most attractive operating space in the wake of the faltering of the Arab uprisings. Located at the center of the Levant close to the holy city of Jerusalem and with central importance in many Islamic theological writings and beliefs about the end of days and coming of the Day of Judgment, Syria was also much closer to other countries of keen interest, such as Egypt, Iraq, Israel and Palestine, and Libya, to Al-Qaeda and other global *jihadi* leaders than the more remote Yemen or the deserts of Mali and the Sahel.

Syria's civil war and the growing mass demonstrations among Sunni Arabs in western and northern Iraq just across the border provided Al-Qaeda and the soon-to-be Islamic State with a golden opportunity to co-opt local and regional conflicts and grievances and push forward their own ideological and territorial, political agenda. Following the Syrian Ba'ath state's violent, mass crackdown on popular mass demonstrations and protests in 2011 and 2012, the country descended into a bloody and, as of May 2018, continuing civil war that

soon became an arena for regional and international powers—among them the U.S., Russia, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, and Iran—to engage in their own political and military competitions and bids for primacy. Defections from the Syrian government’s military and security forces and the emergence of armed rebel groups in many regions of the country, some of them under the loose “Free Syrian Army” (*Jaysh al-Sūrī al-Ḥurr*, FSA) and others grouped among Islamist rebel organizations, provided Al-Qaeda and Islamic State with fertile ground in which to expand their recruitment and reach.³⁸²

Global *jihadi* activists and organizations took advantage of popular sentiments and the emotional reactions of many of the world’s Sunnis—including non-Islamists and those generally opposed to armed action and political violence—to woo Muslim foreign fighters from around the globe to leave their home countries for Syria, where many of them joined Al-Qaeda or Islamic State. Syria’s Islamist rebel organizations, such as Ahrar al-Sham and Jaysh al-Islam, and global *jihadi* organizations in the country, chiefly Al-Qaeda in the form of Jabhat al-Nusra and Islamic State, both took advantage of the multiple divisions and mistakes among non- and less Islamist rebel groups, such as many among the FSA in 2012 and 2013, to increase their own memberships and power on the ground. Fueled by foreign fighters who brought resources including new skillsets and bolstered by their organizational

³⁸² Brian Fishman, “The Evidence of Jihadist Activity in Syria,” *CTC Sentinel* 5, no. 5 (May 2012), 4-10; Kathy Gilsinan, “How Syria’s Uprising Spawned a Jihad,” *The Atlantic*, 16 March 2016, at <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/03/syria-civil-war-five-years/474006/>, last accessed 15 July 2017; Maria Abi-Habib, “Assad Policies Aided Rise of Islamic State Militant Group,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 22 August 2015, at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/assad-policies-aided-rise-of-islamic-state-militant-group-1408739733>, last accessed 15 July 2017; and BBC News, “Does al-Qaeda Have a Foothold in Syria?”, 24 May 2012, at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-18193504>, last accessed 15 July 2017.

For background on Syrian domestic and transnational rebel organizations and the Free Syrian Army as a rebel “brand,” see Charles Lister, *The Free Syrian Army: A Decentralized Insurgent Brand* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2016), Analysis Paper no. 26, at https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/iwr_20161123_free_syrian_army.pdf, last accessed 15 July 2017 and “Assessing Syria’s Jihad,” *Adelphi Series*, issue 447-228 (2014), 71-98; Jeffrey White, Andrew J. Tabler, and Aaron Y. Zelin, *Syria’s Military Opposition: How Effective, United, or Extremist?* (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2013), Policy Focus 128, at https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PF128_Syria_WEB.pdf; last accessed 15 July 2017; and BBC News, “Guide to the Syrian Rebels,” 13 December 2013, at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24403003>, last accessed 15 July 2017.

attempts to implement territorial governance, Islamist and *jihadi* organizations in Syria ensured that they would be better placed to take advantage of the weakening of the state and the absence of governance in larger swaths of the country.

In 2011 and 2012, Al-Qaeda's narrative of the Syrian conflict began to increasingly paint it as a new legitimate arena for activist defensive *jihad* (*al-jihad al-difā'i*) against an apostate, *ṭāghūt* regime dominated by Sunni traitors and 'Alawis (*'Alawīya*) under the al-Asad family and its retainers.³⁸³ Calls by multiple Sunni actors for mass mobilization to aid Syrian political and armed opposition groups mounted throughout 2012 and 2013, aided by the sermons and speeches of a growing number of the region's Sunni '*ulamā* and *fuqahā* including both mainstream Salafis and non-Salafis such as the Saudi Salafi Muhammad al-'Arīfī, Syrian Sunni Usama al-Rifā'ī, Syrian Sunni Sufi Muhammad al-Yaqoubi, and Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī. They were joined in the early stages of the civil war by overtly militant preachers and ideologues such as the Jordanian Salafis Abu Muhammad al-Ṭaḥāwī and Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisī as well as *jihadi* organization leaders. Open advocacy for defensive *jihad*, however, was not universally supported by all Salafī or Sunni preachers and led to splits among them in countries such as Saudi Arabia and Jordan.³⁸⁴ The Syrian government also managed to retain the loyalty of segments of the country's '*ulamā* including the government-employed grand *mufti*, Ahmad Badr al-Dīn Hassoun, and the late Muhammad Sa'īd Ramadan al-Būṭī.³⁸⁵

³⁸³ Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Ilā al-amam ya usud al-Sham* and '*Izz al-Sharq...Awwalahu Dimashq*'; Abu Yaḥyā al-Lībī, *Ma'sī' al-Shām bayna Iḥrām al-Nuṣayrīya wa makā'id al-Gharb* (The Tragedy of Syria between Nusayri Criminality and the Machinations of the West), Mu'assasat al-Sahāb li-l-Intāḥ al-I'lāmī, 13 June 2012; and Abu Muhammad al-'Adnānī, *Al-Iraq al-Iraq, yā Ahl al-Sunna* (Iraq, Iraq, O' Sunnis!), Mu'assasat al-Furqān li-l-Intāḥ al-I'lāmī, 25 February 2012.

³⁸⁴ Mona Alami, "Calls for Jihad Split Salafist Movement," *IPS*, 3 June 2012, at <http://www.ipsnews.net/2012/06/109352/>, last accessed 15 July 2017, and Haifa Za'yter, "al-azma al-sūriyya tathīr ṣadaman bayna al-malik al-sa'ūdī wa rijāl al-dīn.

³⁸⁵ On the Syrian Ba'ṭh government's patronage of clerics and the political and ideological trajectories of key Syrian Sunni religious scholars, see Thomas Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria: The Sunni Ulama from Coup to Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), particularly Chapter Five and Chapter Six.

Jihadi groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda and Islamic State began to emerge in Syria in late 2011 but did not rise to public prominence until January 2012 when Jabhat al-Nusra (Jabhat al-Nuṣra li-Ahl al-Shām) announced its formation in a video message.³⁸⁶ The group quickly emerged as one of the most militarily successful armed rebel groups in carrying out major attacks on key government installations and nodes of power including bombings targeting Syrian security forces in Damascus in January 2012, the feared Syrian Air Force Intelligence headquarters in March 2012, an Aleppo air defense base in October 2012, and the Iranian cultural center in Damascus in April 2014.³⁸⁷ Alarmed at the rising fortunes of Jabhat al-Nusra, the U.S. Department of State added the group to its list of designated “Foreign Terrorist Organizations” on December 11, 2012, alleging that it was a front for the Islamic State of Iraq.³⁸⁸ The move was widely criticized at the time by Syrian opposition groups including the Syrian National Council and other rebel factions, including militias within the FSA umbrella. The internationally-recognized Syrian National Coalition also criticized the U.S. government’s designation and its leader, Ahmad Moaz al-Khatib, asked the U.S. to reconsider its decision.³⁸⁹ Jabhat al-Nusra, though its popularity with local populations was never steady, began to implement elements of governing authority including running local *shari’a* courts and social services programs, sometimes in tandem with other groups and local councils, in 2013.³⁹⁰ Other powerful Syrian Islamist rebel groups such as Ahrar al-Sham and the Jaysh al-Fatḥ umbrella also began establishing governing bodies by 2013 including *shari’a* courts and offices of political affairs, taxation, tribal relations, and

³⁸⁶ Jabhat al-Nusra film, *Li-Ahl al-Shām min mujāhidī al-Shām fī sāḥāt al-jihad* (To the People of Syria from the *Mujāhidīn* of Syria in the Fields of *Jihad*), Mu’assasat al-Manārat al-Bayḍa, January 2012.

³⁸⁷ For a detailed history of the formation and rise of Jabhat al-Nusra, see Charles Lister, *The Syrian Jihad*, Part II (Chapters 4-6).

³⁸⁸ United States Department of State, “Terrorist Designations of the al-Nusrah Front as an Alias for al-Qa’ida in Iraq,” 11 December 2012, at <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/266590.htm>, last accessed 17 July 2017.

³⁸⁹ Howard LaFranchi, “For Newly Recognized Syrian Rebel Coalition, a First Dispute with US,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 12 December 2012, at <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Foreign-Policy/2012/1212/For-newly-recognized-Syrian-rebel-coalition-a-first-dispute-with-US-video>, last accessed 17 July 2017.

³⁹⁰ Jabhat al-Nusra, News reports (numbers 1-94), Wikālat Hammam al-Ikḥbārīya, July 2013-August 2014.

da'wa and Islamic guidance (*irshād*).³⁹¹ Islamic State's establishment of governing institutions, primarily in Syria and Iraq but also to some extent in Libya and southeastern Afghanistan, will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

Early questions about the organization's ties to Al-Qaeda Central ended in the early months of 2014 during bitter fighting between Syrian rebel groups including the Islamist Ahrar al-Sham and Jabhat al-Nusra as well as FSA militias with Islamic State, which had started to target them in an effort to expand its territorial holdings in preparation for its declaration of a "caliphate."³⁹² Al-Qaeda Central's leadership publicly disowned Islamic State and endorsed Jabhat al-Nusra in early February following the refusal of the former organization's leaders to agree to *shari'a* mediation.³⁹³

Tensions had been rising between Jabhat al-Nusra and the Islamic State of Iraq since April 2013 when Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi unilaterally declared that his organization was subsuming the former and renaming the Islamic State of Iraq as the new "Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham" (ISIS/ISIL), a decision rejected by Jabhat al-Nusra's leadership under Abu

³⁹¹ See Figures 1 to 3 at an online page for visual primary sources used in this dissertation, <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/07/19/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation/>, showing and Ahrar al-Sham symposium on media development and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham opening a new *da'wa* office as well as a joint prayer timetable for Shawwal 1438 in Idlib governorate issued by several Syrian rebel groups.

³⁹² *Ibid.* and Charles Lister, *Profiling Jabhat al-Nusra* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2016), Analysis Paper no. 24, at https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Brookings-Analysis-Paper_Charles-Lister_Web.pdf, last accessed 15 July 2017;

³⁹³ Al-Qaeda Central communiqué, "Bayān bi-shā'n 'alāqat Jamā'at Qā'idat al-Jihād bi-Jamā'at (al-Dawlat al-Islāmīya fī al-'Iraq wa-l-Shām)" [Statement concerning the relationship of Al-Qaeda with the 'Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham' Organization], Markaz al-Fajr li-l-'Ilām, 2 February 2014; Abu Sulayman al-Muhājir, *Liqā ma' al-Shaykh Abī Sulayman al-Muhājir, 'udw al-lajnat al-sharī'a al-'āma* (Meeting with Shaykh Abu Sulayman al-Muhājir, a member of the general *Shari'a* Committee), Mu'assasat al-Baṣīra, 12 April 2014 and *Shahādat al-Shaykh Abī Sulayman al-Muhājir qabīl Intihā Muhlat al-Mubāhala* (Testimony of Shaykh Abu Sulayman al-Muhājir before the end of the Curse), Mu'assasat al-Baṣīra, 17 March 2014; Abu Humām al-Sūrī, *Shahādat al-Qā'id Abī Humām al-Sūrī qabīl Intihā Muhlat al-Mubāhala* (Testimony of the Commander Abu Humām al-Sūrī before the end of the Curse), Mu'assasat al-Baṣīra, 23 March 2014; Abu Firās al-Sūrī, *Shahādat al-Shaykh Abī Firās al-Sūrī qabīl Intihā Muhlat al-Mubāhala* (Testimony of Shaykh Abu Firās al-Sūrī before the end of the Curse), Mu'assasat al-Baṣīra, 19 March 2014; Abu Ḥafṣ al-Binnishī, *Shahādat al-Shaykh Abī Ḥafṣ al-Binnishī wa akharūn qabīl Intihā Muhlat al-Mubāhala* (Testimony of Shaykh Ḥafṣ al-Binnishī and others before the end of the Curse), Mu'assasat al-Baṣīra, 21 March 2014; and Jabhat al-Nusra, *Bal Hadhā Manhajuhum* (But This is Their Methodology): Parts One and Two, Mu'assasat al-Baṣīra, April-May 2014.

Muhammad al-Jawlānī.³⁹⁴ Fighting between Islamic State and nearly every other armed faction in Syria has continued unabated since 2014, particularly with Jabhat al-Nusra and its later incarnations, despite its rebranding in July 2016 as Jabhat Fath al-Shām (JFS) and joining with other groups in January 2017 to form the Hay’at Tahrir al-Shām (HTS) umbrella group.³⁹⁵ In June and July 2017, HTS and other Syrian rebel factions, chief among them the powerful Ahrar al-Sham Islamist rebel organization, began fighting for control of territory in rebel-run Idlib governorate with the latter accusing HTS and its military commander, al-Jawlānī, of illegitimate and unjust rebellion and violence (*baghi*) and calling its members pejoratively “followers of al-Jawlānī” (al-Jawlānīyūn).³⁹⁶ Ahrar al-Sham was quickly overwhelmed in Idlib governorate and saw its influence there shrink dramatically as HTS and its allies seized control of towns, villages, Idlib city, and many of its local institutions and service councils. HTS, Ahrar al-Sham, and other Syrian rebel groups simultaneously continued to face threats from underground Islamic State cells in Idlib, regularly suffered casualties in attacks including suicide bombings, and conducted periodic security operations targeting alleged Islamic State cells.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁴ Islamic State of Iraq, Audio message [No Title], Mu’assasat al-

Furqān, 9 April 2013, and Cole Bunzel, “Introducing the ‘Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria’,” *Jihadica*, 9 April 2013, at <http://www.jihadica.com/introducing-the-islamic-state-of-iraq-and-greater-syria%E2%80%9D/>, last accessed 15 July 2017.

³⁹⁵ A number of former senior Jabhat al-Nusra members including leading *shari’a* official Samī al-‘Arīdī (sometimes transliterated as ‘Uraydī) chose to leave the group rather than join HTS. Al-‘Arīdī subsequently moved into the official Al-Qaeda Central media operations orbit in addition to running his own social media accounts on Telegram and Twitter.

³⁹⁶ Ibrahim al-Assil, “Al-Qaeda Affiliate and Ahrar al-Sham Compete for Control in Idlib,” *The Middle East Institute*, 29 June 2017, at <http://www.mei.edu/content/article/al-qaeda-affiliate-and-ahrar-al-sham-compete-control-idlib>, last accessed 17 July 2017; Bassem Mroue, “Rival Groups Clash in Syria’s Rebel-packed Idlib,” *Associated Press*, 15 July 2017, at <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/rival-groups-clash-syrias-rebel-packed-idlib-48657161>, last accessed 15 July 2017; and Reuters, “Islamist Insurgents Clash Across Syria’s Idlib,” 19 July 2017, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-idlib-idUSKBN1A40VN>, last accessed 19 July 2017.

³⁹⁷ Hay’at Tahrir al-Shām communiqué, “Al-qīssa al-kāmila li-ḍabt khalīya tābi’a li-Tanzīm al-Dawla gharb Idlib” (The full story of the apprehension of a cell of the ‘State Organization’/IS), Wikālat Ibā’ al-Ikhbārīya), 7 July 2017. See also HTS photographs of seized IS weaponry, equipment, explosives, and a car bomb in Figures 4 and 5 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/07/19/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation/>.

In Somalia, like in Mali, local Islamists and more transnational and global militant Islamists/*jihadis* tapped into ethno-nationalism in the context of civil war and conflict in order to expand their geographical reach and influence as well as outmaneuver competing groups. Following the overthrow of the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) coalition in Somalia by a U.S.-backed Ethiopian invasion in December 2006, Al-Shabaab invoked an Islamized form of Somali ethno-nationalism together with transnational and global jihadism to recruit Somalis from the diaspora and non-Somali Muslims to its ranks, outcompeting both the Somali government and its African Union backers and other Somali Islamist factions such as the clan-based Hizbul Islam umbrella organization. Though not as directly impacted by the “Arab Spring,” Somali irredentist, “glocal,” and global *jihadis* had begun to experiment with direct Islamist-insurgent rule by mid-2008 when Al-Shabaab began rapidly expanding territorially against the weak Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and the African Union. It was in Somalia, before Iraq, Syria, Yemen, or Mali, that a *jihadi*-insurgent organization that was closely, and later officially, linked to Al-Qaeda was able to first implement and experiment with an array of governing institutions including *shari‘a* and *maẓālim* (grievances) courts, a political affairs bureau, and local and regional offices for a variety of activities including *zakāt* collection, taxation, and traffic and *ḥisba* police forces.

During Al-Shabaab’s “golden age” between 2009 and 2011, it controlled most of southern and large parts of central Somalia to the south of the autonomous region of Puntland. In 2007 and the first half of 2008, Al-Shabaab operated primarily as an insurgent movement, targeting Somali TFG, African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), and allied clan militia forces. Once it gained control of significant amounts of territory and major towns and cities, such as the key port city of Kismaayo in August 2008, however, it began to implement a form of Islamist rebel governance that was in line with its rigid political theology. Al-Shabaab built relationships with local power brokers, chiefly powerful clan and

sub-clan elders as well as businessmen, and has continued to play off of local dynamics through the first half of 2017, even mediating clan disputes.

Dividing its territory into “provinces” (*wilāyāt*), Al-Shabaab also continued, as of May 2018, to maintain two armed forces, a front line fighting force, the Jaysh al-‘Usra (Army of Hardship), which is named after the reported name given to the early Muslim army by the Prophet Muhammad following difficulties he faced assembling it for an expedition to Tabuk in 630 CE, and the Jaysh al-Ḥisba (Army of Verification), which serves as both an Islamic “moral” regulation force as well as a domestic police force in insurgent-run areas. The group’s *amīr* also controls a capable security apparatus, the *Amniyat*, which is tasked with monitoring and quashing internal dissent and tracking down and neutralizing defectors.³⁹⁸

There have always been multiple aspects, a globalist one and local and regionalist ones, to Al-Shabaab’s organizational character. On the one hand, Al-Qaeda operatives in East Africa were instrumental in supporting the organization in its early days after the overthrow of the UIC by the Ethiopians and Al-Shabaab’s senior leadership has long maintained a public respect and endorsement, as well as differing levels of personal ties, with Al-Qaeda Central and AQAP leaders including al-Zawahiri. On the other hand, Al-Shabaab, despite the transnational nature of its mobilization framing and some of its rhetoric, has remained focused on the domestic conflict and competition for power inside Somalia and in neighboring regions of East Africa, chief among them parts of Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Zanzibar. Even its attacks outside of the Somali battlefield—Kampala, Uganda in July 2010 and numerous attacks in parts of Kenya since October 2011—are closely tied even in insurgent reasoning, rhetoric, and messaging to the situation inside Somalia, namely the presence of thousands of Ugandan and Kenyan soldiers as part of AMISOM. As of

³⁹⁸ Christopher Anzalone, “Black Bannera in Somalia: The State of al-Shabaab’s Territorial Insurgency and the Specter of the Islamic State,” *CTC Sentinel* 11, no. 3 (March 2018), at <https://ctc.usma.edu/black-banners-somalia-state-al-shabaabs-territorial-insurgency-specter-islamic-state/>, last accessed on 19 May 2018.

November 2018, the long-predicted full globalization of Al-Shabaab has yet to occur in part because insurgent leaders know that they must maintain ties to local populations and rely on local powerbrokers to, if not outright support them, then to acquiesce to and not resist continued insurgent rule. The insurgent organization, despite its regional and international recruitment, remains strongly focused on the domestic conflict in Somalia and continues to invoke an Islamized form of Somali identity and ethno-nationalism, including appeals for the formation of a Islamized “Greater Somalia,” alongside its more global *jihadi* ideology and rhetoric.

Conclusion

Though it espouses a complete rejection of the secular nation-state system, global *jihadi* political theology is unable to fully escape its dominance and, instead of offering completely original alternatives, is forced to define itself more by what it is against rather than what it is for. Rather than being solidly original or convincing, the global *jihadi* political vision is a thoroughly ahistorical, reactionary, and modern interpretation of the Islamic sacred past and of historical Islamic states including the caliphates of old. The *jihadis*’ ideal state model, the neo-caliphate, though Islamized in terms of some of the terminology used to describe its constituent parts (for example, calling departments and offices a “*dīwān*,” plural: *dawāwīn*), largely mirrors the existing ministries/departments of the nation-states the *jihadis* abhor such as the U.S., U.K., and France. The Islamic State of Iraq, for example, included in its “cabinet” ministers who were tasked with overseeing a variety of portfolios including oil, war, and media.³⁹⁹ The neo-caliphate is presented as a panacea for all that has gone wrong for the world’s Muslims in the eyes of the *jihadis*. The Western secular order has, despite the

³⁹⁹ Majlis Shūrā al-Mujāhidīn film, *Al-I’lān ‘an qiyām Dawlat al-Iraq al-Islāmīya* (The Announcement of the Establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq), October 2006, and Islamic State of Iraq film, *I’lān al-tashkīl al-wuzārīya al-thānīya li-Dawlat al-Iraq al-Islāmīya* (Announcement of the Formation of the Second Ministerial Cabinet of the Islamic State of Iraq), Mu’assasat al-Furqān li-l-Intāj al-I’lāmī, September 2009.

most vigorous efforts of *jihadi* ideologues and theorists, profoundly shaped the development and evolution of *jihadi* political thought and religious ideology.

In an added level of failure, global *jihadi* leaders have not only failed to convince the majority of Muslims or even Islamists to back their prescription for the Muslim majority world but have also failed to fully globalize the majority of militant Islamists or convince them to abandon their locally-focused goals in favor of a single inter-civilizational conflict. To be clear, Al-Qaeda and Islamic State have succeeded, of course, in winning over new regional affiliate organizations but in most cases, as I argue in Chapter Five, many if not most of these local and regional militant Islamist actors often affiliate as much for their own local/regional goals than to join a fully globalized operational conflict.

The mass popular uprisings of the “Arab Spring” that washed over the Middle East and North Africa beginning in 2011 presented a major challenge to Al-Qaeda and other global and localized *jihadis* because it seemed, in its initial stages, to prove that democratic mobilization could succeed in bringing about major societal and political changes in societies long yoked to authoritarian regimes. However, the re-establishment of the authoritarian, military-backed regime in Egypt under General ‘Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and the descent of Libya and Syria into seemingly endless cycles of civil war and warlordism soured many of the region’s once optimistic people and particularly segments of the youth and provided militant Islamist organizations like Al-Qaeda and Islamic State a prime opportunity to step in and take advantage of the new realities on the ground. *Jihadis* latched on to these conflicts and cases of regime repression, arguing that they proved that change will only come about through violence and the establishment of an Islamic political order helmed by the implementation of a philistine vision of *shari‘a*. They also pointed to the failure of mainstream Islamist parties such as Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood and Tunisia’s Ennahda to achieve their goals, which they argued was because of these apostate groups’ endorsement of

the Western secular nation-state system and political order. True, lasting change can only come through *jihad*.

The collapse of the central government in Yemen and northern Mali and the continued weakness and inability of the Syrian and Somali governments to establish full control over large parts of their respective countries allowed *jihadi* groups to capture large amounts of territory and begin to experiment with governance. Though these experiments in governance have largely been rudimentary at best and reliant primarily on the threat or use of violence to maintain social order, they were the first major instances where *jihadis* were able to construct relatively significant governing bodies as part of proto-state projects. Despite their failure to build the utopian paradises they frequently promise, *jihadi* leaders, officials, and theorists will likely incorporate their experiences into future territorial projects should they have the opportunity.

Al-Qaeda and Islamic State are highly adaptable and have proven to be adept at adopting strategic and tactical shifts in the interest of longevity based on changing realities on the ground in their zones of operation. Of the two, Al-Qaeda and its regional affiliates are the most adept at reading shifting situations whereas Islamic State has more frequently engaged in bitter contests for territory of little strategic value, such as the Syrian border town of Kobane in 2014 and 2015. The latter, however, began to shift tactically in 2017 in certain regions of Iraq and Syria after losing major urban centers, and returned to its guerilla roots by adopting asymmetric warfare rather than costly mass confrontations with numerically and technologically superior enemy military and security forces. Global jihadism, though many predicted its death in 2011 and 2012 during the height of euphoria for the “Arab Spring,” has survived by utilizing both globalized transnational rhetoric and framing that also takes into account, sometimes to the chagrin of leaders such as al-Zawahiri, pressing local and regional dynamics and on the ground realities. “Global” jihadism, thusly, has been profoundly shaped

by the interaction of global geopolitics and local and regional conflicts, ceding some ground to irredentist militant Islamists in the interest of expanding its sphere of influence in name if not fully in operational practice.

Chapter Two

Broadcasting *Jihad*, Delivering the Message: Media Operations and the Framing of *Jihadi* Insurgencies

Jihadi organizations, lacking the financial and human resources of their nation-state opponents, instead rely on the production and dissemination of their own media materials—press releases and written communiqués, books, pamphlets, and monographs, ideological treatises and essays, radio broadcasts and recorded audio messages, and films of different types from frontline battlefield footage to elaborate documentary-style narrative productions—to deliver their messaging and set their narrative and collective action frames. This messaging includes mobilization and recruitment calls, communications with their enemies, and other narrative messaging that is directed at as wide a set of audiences as possible on the Internet as well as terrestrially inside territories they control. Much as the advent of the printing press heralded a new age of public communication and discourse in early modern Europe, the expansion of the Internet, new technologies such as user-friendly production and image design and video editing software, and the launch of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, the encrypted Telegram messaging service, and the Blogger and WordPress blogging platforms revolutionized individual and group communication, permitting for wider access to knowledge and media production that allowed users to circumvent official channels of information, such as those run by governments and large media conglomerates.⁴⁰⁰

Using Internet discussion fora, video file-sharing sites such as YouTube, Vimeo, and Dailymotion, blogs, Twitter, Telegram, Facebook, and free file-sharing and posting sites such

⁴⁰⁰ Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe: 2nd Edition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), and *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), and David Harvey, *The Law Emprynted and Englysshed: The Printing Press as an Agent of Change in Law and Legal Culture, 1475-1642* (Portland, OR: Hart Publishing, 2015). For examples of jihadi organizations' use of social media platforms, see Figure 6 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/07/19/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation/>.

as JustPaste.it, Megaupload, Internet Archive, and Google Drive, the media departments of *jihadi* organizations including Al-Qaeda Central and its regional affiliates, Islamic State, and the factions of the Tehrik-i Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Afghan Taliban disseminate thousands of pieces of carefully framed narrative messaging on a daily basis, ranging from audio and audiovisual to written to photographic and graphic design products. Much of this material can be classified as a form of *da'wa* material, that is, media releases designed to accomplish two major goals: (1) convince (achieve frame resonance) potential new supporters and recruits to shift from passive to active support of an organization and (2) to solidify the cohesion and boost or maintain the morale, discipline, and dedication of current supporters and members.⁴⁰¹ Other materials are used to deliver messages to the producing organization's enemies and even other *jihadi* rivals.

The central goal of *jihadi* media, regardless of the intended audience of a particular release, is to contest legitimacy and the organizations' media and information operations claim to represent justice and morality with regard to the use of political violence and other means.⁴⁰² *Jihadi* media is the central mechanism through which narratives of oppression, invasion, and occupation are presented and pushed upon the wider Muslim world in addition to *jihadi* true-believers.⁴⁰³ This is done through a variety of mediums including, visual, print, and aural but is clearest in the often elaborate and highly graphic and emotionally-charged films and other videos produced by *jihadi* organizations, all of which recognize the importance of media operations and dedicate resources to maintaining a media production

⁴⁰¹ Christopher Anzalone, "Propaganda," in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*, ed. Gerhard Bowering, Patricia Crone, Wadad Kadi, Devin J. Stewart, Muhammad Qasim Zaman, and Mahan Mirza (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 431-433.

⁴⁰² Akil N. Awan, "Jihadi Ideology in the New Media Environment," in *Contextualising Jihadi Thought*, ed. Jeevan Deol and Zaheer Kazmi (London: Hurst & Co., 2012), 99, Alia Brahimi, "Al-Qaeda as Just Warriors: Osama Bin Laden's Case for War," in *Contextualising Jihadi Thought*, 51-70, and Faisal Devji, *The Terrorist in Search of Humanity and Landscapes of the Jihad: Militancy, Morality, Modernity* (London: Hurst & Co., 2005).

⁴⁰³ Awan, "Jihadi Ideology in the New Media Environment," 106-108.

unit or even a multi-tiered department.⁴⁰⁴ Technological advances such as the invention and increasing ease of use and availability of hardware and software, for example GoPro sports cameras and commercial drones, has enabled *jihadi* media to make rapid advances in production quality, editing, and narrative, allowing for high definition audiovisual productions and more intimate footage and photography than was possible a decade ago in the immediate aftermath of the U.S. and U.K.-led invasion of Iraq.⁴⁰⁵ *Jihadi* media operatives are able to produce a larger number of higher quality releases while using fewer resources. New media platforms such as Twitter, Telegram, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat, in turn, have allowed individual *jihadis* to circumvent official organizational channels and reach a broader audience than used to be possible when the *jihadi* media landscape was dominated by a set number of official online fora and other web sites. The synergy between media and the organizational cultures and trajectories of militant social movement organizations has historically been profound and can be seen both within Islamic and non-Islamic contexts,⁴⁰⁶ but is particularly important to analysis of militant Islamist, non-state actors like Islamic State and Al-Shabaab.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 108-110.

⁴⁰⁵ For a discussion on how technological advances and the increasing ease of accessibility and use has impacted social movement organizational processes, see Sidney G. Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, 137-138.

⁴⁰⁶ Despite obvious differences in historical context, the “Second Wave” Ku Klux Klan is illustrative in a non-Islamic context of how the emergence of new media technology and its increasing public accessibility can shape a radical social movement as well as an organization’s group culture and framing strategies. Emerging in 1915 after being reshaped by William Joseph Simmons and growing to a numerical strength of millions by the mid-1920s, the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan as a social movement and array of specific chapters was profoundly influenced by the emergence of the motion picture and public cinemas in shaping its self and public image. Adopting the costumes made famous in film director D.W. Griffith’s landmark *The Birth of a Nation*, the Klan both harnessed and was shaped by the power of the new media of the day in broadcasting a romanticized, chivalric and, most importantly, visual and performative image of the organization and the broader social movement in a way that was not possible in 1905 when the book Griffith’s film was based on, Thomas F. Dixon’s *The Clansmen: A History Romance of the Ku Klux Klan*, was first released. The Second Klan, unlike the Reconstruction-era Klan, drew upon the power of the new and more accessible visual media to adopt an organizational culture—complete with uniforms, unlike their predecessors—and semblance of uniformity of message and image that was previously impossible. On the Second Wave Klan and how it was shaped by the “new media” of its day, see William Rawlings, *The Second Coming of the Invisible Empire: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2016), 68. For visual examples from the film and actual Second Wave Klan media and self-depictions, see Figure 22 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/07/19/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation/>. On how the Second Wave Klan drew upon American Protestantism, see Kelly J. Baker, *Gospel According to the*

There has been, in brief summation, a democratization of sorts over the past decade in terms of access to new and social media platforms and production technologies and software, changes which, in turn, have further opened up media and narrative messaging space for the production and dissemination of and access to *jihadi* media to an ever-growing set of actors, both organizational and individual. In the early years of the public Internet during the 1990s into the early 2000s, as individual and institutional access to the world wide web steadily spread globally, the *jihadi* web centered on a group of web sites and Internet discussion fora and message boards that gradually developed institutional ties between web site administrators and actual militant organizations. The birth of the *jihadi* Internet and particularly a changing set of web-based fora allowed *jihadi* organizations to bypass traditional media networks and organizations such as Al-Jazeera and other international news networks and directly reach their own members and supporters as well as potential new members and supporters without third party interference or editorializing. In branching out to the Internet, *jihadis* built on earlier experiments with the web by mainstream Islamist organizations including the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood but also developed a less hierarchical and more discussion-based approach through the web fora, a digital media space where *jihadi* organizations, their leaders and members, and officially unaffiliated supporters were able to interact. Unlike more hierarchical and regimented media networks run by mainstream Islamist groups, the *jihadi* web fora were not only places where official organizational media releases could be accessed but also spaces where *jihadis*—real ones, wannabes, and those in between—could gather to discuss, debate, and share their thoughts,

Klan. On William J. Simmons, see Charles O. Jackson, “William J. Simmons: A Career in Ku Kluxism,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (1966), 351-365.

A digitized copy of Thomas F. Dixon’s novel is accessible via the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s Documenting the American South archival project at <http://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/dixonclan/summary.html>, last accessed 28 September 2017. *The Birth of a Nation* is viewable and downloadable at https://archive.org/details/dw_griffith_birth_of_a_nation and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3kmVgQHIEY&t=22s>, both last accessed 28 September 2017.

writings, and media designs and productions. These advances in the Internet and digital and social media have brought both positives, such as the ability to reach larger and more diverse audiences, to *jihadi* organizations but also new challenges and potential negatives, such as allowing individual and organizationally affiliated and unaffiliated *jihadi* dissidents to express their complaints publicly outside of the official architecture of *jihadi* organizational media and communications.

The new communicative and organizational dynamics introduced by the new media was not limited to the *jihadi* sphere but significantly impacted Muslim communities around the world. New media and the subsequent weakening of the monopoly of traditional media outlets and organizations—and also of state control in authoritarian settings—resulted in the advent of the emergence of a new public space and “sense of public” where contests over Islamic symbols, symbolic language, and authority took center stage, pitting traditionally-educated scholars against a wider and more diverse group of interlocutors and critics.⁴⁰⁷ New media and technologies have allowed messages rooted in “specific local contexts” to also be shaped to address transnational/globalized (or translocal) issues.⁴⁰⁸ New media emerged at a time when mass education and specifically higher education began to expand in much of the Muslim-majority world, thus substantially expanding the audience/consumers of new media and the diversification of communication networks.⁴⁰⁹ One of the main features of this new public sphere is what Eickelman and Anderson term the “reintellectualization” of Islamic discourse—that is, the presentation of “Islamic doctrine and discourse in accessible, vernacular terms, even if this contributes to basic reconfigurations of doctrine and practice. [...] Islamic discourse has not only moved to the vernacular and become accessible to

⁴⁰⁷ Dale F. Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson, *New Media in the Muslim World: Second Edition* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 1-3.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 5 and 10.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

significantly wider publics, it has also become framed in styles of reasoning and forms of argument that draw on wider, less exclusive or erudite bodies of knowledge, including those of applied science and engineering.”⁴¹⁰ Islamists generally—particularly “lay” Islamist intellectuals—and *jihadis* specifically have made use of this reintellectualization to put forward their own interpretations of Islamic religious and political doctrines which are based on their attempt to shape and reshape Islamic sacred history and religious scripture, other texts, and guiding tenets to meet the challenges of the modern world.

Organization of the Chapter

This chapter builds on the analysis of physical *jihadi* sociocultural environments and the communal nature of jihadism and participation in violent acts and ritual performances in Chapter Three and the implementation of *jihadi*-insurgent rule and the political economy of *jihadi*-insurgent violence in Chapter Three by augmenting the discussion to include the geography and architecture of *jihadi* cyber environments, narrative construction, movement building and cohesion maintenance, and mobilization framing. The chapter is divided into two main sections. Part One provides a historical overview of *jihadi* media and the geography of *jihadi* activism online, looking at the methods of information production and distribution, as well as the main contours of *jihadi* messaging on the Internet and both the positives and negatives to the organizations in utilizing the Internet, particularly in the age of social media. It begins first, though, with a brief overview and consideration of the ways that new media platforms and technologies have affected the possibilities of collective and connective organization and action.

Part Two, which is divided into two sub-parts, examines the history and evolution of the media apparatuses and strategies of Al-Shabaab and Islamic State (and its precursor organizations), paying particular attention to selected types of media productions that

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

predominate in their media operations campaigns such as recruitment and fundraising pitches, harnessing local grievances and taking advantage of local dynamics, and justifying their exhortations to militancy through a selective presentation of the Islamic sacred and, often, imagined past.

Understanding the evolution and importance of technological advances and new and social media is integral to an in-depth analysis of *jihadi* and Islamist insurgent organizations for several reasons. First, the move to a more open and “democratic” media playing field that began with the global, public expansion of the Internet and digital media platforms during the 1990s into the early 2000s has played an undeniable role in the ability of *jihadi* organizations and militant Islamist movements to bypass more traditional “old media” platforms from which they are usually shut out. Second, it sheds light and allows for a critical examination of the processes in which global, regional, and local *jihadis* attempt to secure legitimation for their narrative mobilization frames, strategic objectives, and political and ideological discourses and goals by generating support internally from existing members and externally from new supporters and potential new recruits as well as engaging in media warfare and information operations against their rivals and enemies. Third, tracing the history and development of new media networks and platforms clearly elucidates how clandestine militant Islamist organizations seek to bypass formal regulatory, media and propaganda, and security institutions controlled by the state or international corporations. Fourth, it is necessary to first understand the processes through which *jihadis* have enthusiastically adopted the new capabilities and opportunities presented by new and social media platforms and technologies in order to then analyze how these advances have also proven to be a double-edged sword and, at times, further deepened internal divisions within the organizational structure and rank-and-file of militant Islamist organizations. Taken together,

these factors and dynamics help to explain variations in the success of different organizations in meeting their overall objectives.

PART I

Collective & Connective Action: Are Organizations Necessary?

New media platforms and technologies—specifically the Internet—allow individuals to organize around issues of common interest in a much easier and streamlined way than was possible in previous historical periods. The ability to “e-mobilize” through online fora, petitions, and dissemination of a variety of multimedia in seconds and minutes rather than days, weeks, months, or even years makes it possible not only for activists to organize with greater ease using new “e-tactics” but also for less-committed individuals to temporarily or transiently take on the mantle of “activist” during certain periods of time without having to formally join or affiliate with an existing social movement organization (SMO).⁴¹¹ By leveraging the affordances of new media and new technologies, collective mobilization for protest was possible at sharply reduced costs and it is now possible to aggregate individual actions into “broader collective actions without requiring participants to be copresent in time and space (and sometimes also allowing solo organizers to create and run movements).”⁴¹² This opened an entirely new door for collective action and introduced a new “digital repertoire of contention” permitted by the availability of a new set of tactical forms for mobilization.⁴¹³ *Jihadis* harnessed the new capabilities provided by new media and new technology, taking advantage of what they afforded—it was the ways in which they leveraged the affordances these new technologies and platforms provided that impacted social processes

⁴¹¹ Jennifer Earl and Katrina Kimport, *Digitally Enabled Social Change: Activism in the Internet Age* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2011), 5-9.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*, 10-11.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, 16 and 32-33.

rather than simply the technologies in and of themselves.⁴¹⁴ Beginning with the digitization of *jihadi* media in the 1990s and 2000s, it became easier for *jihadi* organizations to supersize participation by leveraging new media technologies to allow individuals who could not or did not want to travel to the battlefield to still contribute in other ways to “the cause.”⁴¹⁵ While this was possible in previous decades, the expansion of the Internet and easier to access and use media software and communications technology allowed “armchair *jihadis*” to fulfill, through virtual participation, a range of activities valuable to militant organizations without necessarily ever formally joining or even affiliating officially with those SMOs (which also lowered the potential costs and dangers they would have to incur)—these activities included the production of graphic designs and other artwork, unique unofficial ideological texts and other writings, video montages and narratives, and translations of official *jihadi* SMO materials and their dissemination on- and offline.⁴¹⁶

Virtual participation also allows individual online *jihadis* to develop and follow their own *personalized action frames* in ways that could both align and diverge from the collective action frames developed and propagated by *jihadi* organizations.⁴¹⁷ In some cases, technology-enabled *jihadi* networks and online communities became “dynamic organizations in their own right,” embodying what Bennett and Segerberg term “communication as organization”—examples of this include online *jihadi* fora, discussion boards, and other web sites and *jihadi* media collectives that, while they may have an administrative framework to some degree, are fueled by the aggregated contributions of individuals.⁴¹⁸ At the

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 14 and 33.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 77-78.

⁴¹⁷ On the personalization of political engagement and activism, see W. Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg, *The Logic of Connective Action: Digital Media and the Personalization of Contentious Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 5-8.

⁴¹⁸ This in turn can allow for wider experimentation than is possible through official organizations which have to be more concerned about incurred management and employee costs. On this, see Clay Shirky, *Here Comes*

organizational level, *jihadi* groups and particularly *jihadi*-insurgent organizations with proto-state ambitions seek to use digital media in a hybridized way between (a) organizationally brokered collective action—the primary use of digital media to reduce communication and coordination costs in ways that do not change the logic of participation or organization of action in a fundamental way, (b) organizationally-enabled connective action—using digital media to harness the power of individuals and their contributions while also encouraging them to create (c) crowd-enabled connective action, forming their own networks that may have no clear ties to established SMOs and which are, as a result, able to shift tactics and meet transitional challenges more easily than established organizations.⁴¹⁹ Virtual participation and the “logic of connective action” allows individuals to organize more quickly and with drastically lower start-up and maintenance costs than SMOs, which is both a strength—in that this action may prove to be more capable of being quickly organized than SMO campaigns which seek to instill a sense of collective identity into their members and supporters—as well as a potential weakness because of the often more transient nature of connective action.⁴²⁰

Online collective networks and organization processes have their own distinct logic and are shaped by structural features determined by their origins and evolution; they also do not always simply facilitate the work of offline social movements and SMOs.⁴²¹ The organizations which are the focus of this study are not primarily online entities, though they encourage, to varying degrees, the idea of an individually-driven Islam—albeit, and somewhat contrarily, one which is ultimately guided by a “legitimate” Islamic

Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations (New York: The Penguin Press, 2008), 18-45 and 243-253.

⁴¹⁹ Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg, 12-13.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, 27-33.

⁴²¹ Jessica L. Beyer, *Expect Us: Online Communities and Political Mobilization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 3-4 and 19.

authority/SMO, namely the group itself—and it is important to thus note the ways in which new and digital media and new technologies affect social and organizational processes. The Internet, and digital media specifically, ushers *jihadi* organizations and other radical and militant groups both inside and outside of Islam—including racist, ethnic nationalist, and other groups—onto a “new plain of public access” that far transcends the reach and speed of dissemination of earlier print media such as the hard copies of books, magazines, pamphlets, and leaflets.⁴²²

A Brief History of Jihadi Media

The origins of modern *jihadi* media can be traced to the 1980s during the civil war in Afghanistan pitting the country’s Communist government and its Soviet backers against an array of rebel *mujāhidīn* groups and their foreign supporters including the Palestinian-Jordanian, Al-Azhar-educated religious scholar and Muslim Brotherhood member ‘Abdullah ‘Azzām and his Services Bureau for the Arab *Mujāhidīn* (*Maktab al-Khidamāt li-l-Mujāhidīn al-‘Arab*). ‘Azzām, a prolific writer and speaker, traveled around the world fundraising and recruiting foreign fighters to support his Afghan allies throughout the 1980s until his assassination by unknown perpetrators in November 1989 in Peshawar. His Services Bureau pioneered Arabic language *jihadi* media with the production and publication of its flagship print magazine, *Al-Jihad*, which was published in 115 issues between 1984 and 1995. The magazine evolved from a 20-page black-and-white, newsletter-type publication in its first issue to a glossy, color magazine twice as long by its twelfth issue after one year of publication.⁴²³ The magazine was an extension of ‘Azzām’s campaign to build a global consciousness among the world’s Muslims and tie together, in their minds, once seemingly

⁴²² Adam Klein, *Fanaticism, Racism, and Rage Online: Corrupting the Digital Sphere* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 22; see also Chapter 2 and Chapter 3.

⁴²³ *Al-Jihad*, issue 1 (December 28, 1984) and issue 12 (October 1985).

disparate conflicts in far flung areas of the world and frame them collectively as concerns for the entire *Umma*.

Utilizing a team of *mujāhid* reporters, *Al-Jihad* provided frontline in-depth coverage of the Afghan war and promoted images of heroism, piety, dedication, and self-sacrifice, tapping into readers' notions of honor, anger, and masculinity in order to convince them to contribute to the fight either financially or by traveling to Pakistan's Pashtun tribal regions as foreign fighters, medical personnel, or aid workers. It played an influential role in the mass mobilization of foreign fighters during the war, which represented a private—that is not state organized—mobilization of fighters that ultimately set in motion the establishment of Al-Qaeda by 'Azzām's protégé, Usama bin Laden.⁴²⁴ Issues of *Al-Jihad* were not only distributed by the Services Bureau on the ground inside Pakistan and Afghanistan but were also taken on foreign trips by 'Azzām and his deputy, Tamīm al-'Adnānī, and the latter's son, Yāsir, when they visited the Arab Gulf states, Europe, and North America. Cassette and video tapes of 'Azzām's lectures and of the fighting in Afghanistan were also distributed on these trips and 'Azzām and other Services Bureau members frequently organized symposia and lectures about the Afghan war as well.⁴²⁵

Al-Jihad was not the only *jihadi* magazine published in the 1980s and early 1990s. Others, such as *Al-Bunyān al-Marṣūṣ*, *Manba' al-Jihad*, and *Al-Mujāhidūn*, were also published in Arabic, Urdu, or Pashto during this period. After the withdrawal of Soviet military forces from Afghanistan between May 1988 and February 1989, inter-factional feuds, which had been simmering for years, broke out and pitted a myriad of Islamist groups with competing ideologies—from the Muslim Brotherhood-influenced activism of 'Azzām and his supporters to the bitterly anti-*Ikhwān* vitriol of Ayman al-Zawahiri—against each

⁴²⁴ Thomas Hegghammer, "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fightersm" 62.

⁴²⁵ Jarret Brachman, *Global Jihadism*, 112-113. See also Hanna Rogan, *Al-Qaeda's Online Media Strategies: From Abu Reuter to Irhabi 007* (Oslo: Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, 2007), at <http://rapporteur.ffi.no/rapporteur/2007/02729.pdf>, last accessed 27 July 2017.

other.⁴²⁶ Many of these groups, along with international Islamic non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and quasi-state supported organizations such as the Muslim World League published their own magazines and newsletters in order to fundraise, attract workers and recruits, and disseminate their views of ongoing events in Afghanistan and the wider Muslim majority world.⁴²⁷

Irredentist and revolutionary Islamist groups operating in other countries, including Algeria and Libya, or their supporters also began to publish newsletters and magazines in order to promote their own causes in the 1990s. These groups included the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) and its *Al-Fajr* magazine and the pro-Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA, Groupe Islamique Armé, Jama‘at al-Islāmīya al-Musallaḥa) and the *Al-Ansar* newsletter produced, edited, and published by U.K.-based supporters including the militant Jordanian Salafī cleric Abū Qatāda al-Filasṭīnī and future Al-Qaeda Central strategist Abū Muṣ‘ab al-Sūrī.⁴²⁸ The latter also published a number of other newsletters and print publications through his own media organization, *Markaz al-Ghurabā*.⁴²⁹

The advent and expansion of the Internet and widespread public access to it, at least in parts of the world, during the 1990s led to the next step in the evolution of *jihadi* media.⁴³⁰ Babar Ahmad, a British university student living in London, together with several of his friends and other collaborators founded Azzam Publications and Azzam.com to disseminate news and other media about *mujāhidīn* fighters in the Balkans, which was wracked by an increasingly brutal and internationalized civil war pitting longtime neighbors of different

⁴²⁶ Vahid Brown, “Classical and Global Jihad,” 91-92.

⁴²⁷ Brachman, 114-117.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.* 118-120.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.* 120-122.

⁴³⁰ For an in-depth overview of the *jihadi* and Islamist Internet, see Gary Bunt, *iMuslims: Rewiring the House of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), Chapters 5 and 6, and *Islam in the Digital Age: E-Jihad, Online Fatwas and Cyber Islamic Environments* (Sterling: Pluto Press, 2003); and Rüdiger Lohker, *New Approaches to the Analysis of Jihadism: Online and Offline* (Vienna: Vienna University Press, 2012).

ethnic groups—Christian Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats, and Muslim Bosnians, Kosovars, and Albanians—against each other in sectarian violence.⁴³¹ Early *jihadi* films and shorter videos from 1980s Afghanistan and from the Balkans wars and other arenas of conflict in the early to mid-1990s, though often of grainy visual quality by today’s high definition standards, were nonetheless milestones in the continued evolution of militant Islamist media operations both from a technical as well as a narrative perspective. These early films included video martyrologies eulogizing local and foreign fighters killed in these arenas.⁴³²

Global *jihadi* media was pushed forward once again in the mid-1990s with the founding of the Saudi Arabia-based and Al-Qaeda-connected *Markaz al-Dirāsāt wa-l-Buḥūth al-Islāmīya* (Center for Islamic Studies and Research) run by the first incarnation of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), which was based there. The Center, which was directed by AQAP/AQ in Saudi Arabia founder Yūsuf al-‘Uyayrī, also ran a web site, al-Neda.com, and established ties to Saudi Islamist dissidents living in exile in the United Kingdom and the United States.⁴³³ AQAP during this period also began publishing two online print magazines, *Ṣawt al-Jihād* (2003-2007) and *Mu‘askar al-Battār* (2004), the former serving as a vehicle for analytical essays, interviews with AQAP members, and ideological tracts while the latter provided military and strategic information and

⁴³¹ *Ibid.* 122-123. On the Balkans wars, see R. Craig Nation, *War in the Balkans: Comprehensive History of Wars Provoked by Yugoslav Collapse* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2003); Darryl Li, “Jihad in a World of Sovereigns: Law, Violence, and Islam in the Bosnia Crisis,” *Law & Social Inquiry* 41, no. 2 (2016), 371-401; Peter Maass, *Love Thy Neighbor: A Story of War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997); Misha Glenny, *The Balkans: Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers, 1804-2011* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012); and Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History: Updated Edition* (New York: New York University Press, 1996).

⁴³² Prominent examples include a three-part series, *Shuhadā al-Būsna* (The Martyrs of Bosnia) and a 90-minute audio martyrology for Muslim fighters killed in Bosnia entitled *In the Hearts of Green Birds: Stories of Foreign Mujahideen Killed in Bosnia*.

⁴³³ Brachman, 125.

instruction.⁴³⁴ The Center/AQAP also published one issue of a women's magazine, *Al-Khansā'* (2004), during this period.

In August 2004, a new *jihadi* collaborative media outlet, the Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF) was founded, subsuming two earlier militant Islamist media outlets, the Global Islamic Media Center and the Abu Banan Global Islamic Media Group. In its founding statement the GIMF called for Muslims with knowledge of the news media and production to assist it in creating and distributing online content to promote the ideologies and goals of Al-Qaeda and other global *jihadi* groups, counter U.S. military incursions through “media *jihad*,” and serve as translators for a variety of *jihadi* primary sources so they could be read by a larger group of Muslims and particularly Western Muslims.⁴³⁵ The GIMF eventually came to be known primarily as a producer of translations produced by a network of loosely-connected operatives around the globe, though it also served as an online distribution facilitator for a number of *jihadi* groups including Al-Shabaab and the TTP.⁴³⁶

The translation of *jihadi* media productions and ideological tracts is a key component of the dissemination process and the GIMF has long served as the primary, though not the only, translation network for Al-Qaeda and, before 2014, Islamic State of Iraq, releases. Earlier and now defunct translation networks of Arabic language *jihadi* materials into primarily European languages, chief among them English, included Al-Tibyan Publications, Dar al-Murabiteen, and the Ansar al-Mujahideen forum's translation team. South Asian *jihadi* media networks that translate materials into regional languages have included, in

⁴³⁴ AQAP, *Ṣawt al-Jihād*, issues 1-30 (2003-2007), *Mu'askar al-Battār*, issues 1-22 (2004), and *Al-Khansā'*, issue 1 (2004). For analysis of the AQAP e-magazine, see Nico Prucha, *Die Stimme des Dschihad: al-Qa'idas erstes Online-Magazin* (The Voice of Jihad: Al-Qa'ida's First Online Magazine), (Hamburg: Verlag, 2010).

⁴³⁵ Brachman, 126-129.

⁴³⁶ Sarah Harman, “Islamist Propaganda Trial Throws Spotlight on Internet Extremists,” *Deutsche Welle*, 12 April 2011, at <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,14983646,00.html>, last accessed 27 July 2017, and Les Perreux, “Quebec Man Guilty of Terror Charges,” *The Globe and Mail*, 1 October 2009, at <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/quebec-man-guilty-of-terror-charges/article1202982/>, last accessed 27 July 2017.

addition to GIMF Subcontinent, Al-Muwahideen, the Ribat Media Center,⁴³⁷ and the now-defunct Jamiah Hafsa web forum, which was named after the women's *madrassa* of Islamabad's Lal (Red) Masjid, which was severely damaged during a siege by Pakistani security forces in July 2007. The Ribat Media Center, in addition to producing translations, also archived Urdu language *jihadi* e-magazines including the monthly *Nawa-i Afghan Jihad*, *Al-Furqan*, and *Hittin*. The Ansar al-Mujahideen forum included sub-forums in Arabic, English, and other European languages and produced translations of primarily Arabic language *jihadi* sources into English, French, German, Russian, Persian, and Kurdish. The sub-forum tasked with producing translations was the Shabakat Anṣār al-Mujāhidīn: Qism al-Lughāt wa-l-Tarjama.⁴³⁸ Other *jihadi* web fora also produced their own in-house translations including the Somali and English language Shabakat al-Qimma al-Islāmīya and the French Ansar al-Haqq.⁴³⁹

In January 2011, the GIMF launched a new sub-unit, the Al-Qadisiyyah Media Foundation, later renamed GIMF Subcontinent, tasked with producing translations of *jihadi* primary sources into South Asian languages including Urdu, Persian, Pashto, Bangla, Dhivehi, and Tamil. The outlet was named after the Battle of Qādisīya, a great victory of the early Muslim army over the much larger Sasanian imperial army in what is today southern Iraq in November 636, and the new sub-unit's founding statement also invoked the memory of the teenage Umayyad general Muhammad bin al-Qāsim, who conquered the region of Sindh and is much heralded in popular South Asian Islam, including by South Asian Islamists and *jihadis*.⁴⁴⁰ The GIMF's main unit, as of July 2017, continues to produce translations

⁴³⁷ <http://www.ribatmedia.co.cc/> (now defunct; last accessed in April 2011).

⁴³⁸ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb/forumdisplay.php?f=87> (now defunct; last accessed in April 2011).

⁴³⁹ <http://alqimmah.net/> and <http://www.ansar-alhaqq.net/> (both now defunct; last accessed in April 2011). On the Ansar al-Haqq forum, see Benjamin Ducol, "Uncovering the French-speaking Jihadisphere: An Exploratory Analysis," *Media, War and Conflict* 5, no. 1 (2012), 51-70.

⁴⁴⁰ Christopher Anzalone, "The Pakistan Taliban's Media Jihad," *Foreign Policy*, 17 June 2011, at <http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/06/17/the-pakistani-talibans-media-jihad/>, last accessed 27 July 2017.

primarily in European languages including English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish of *jihadi* primary sources originally produced in Arabic, Urdu, and other Islamicate languages. The GIMF and GIMF Subcontinent fluctuate between maintaining active Twitter accounts, which are usually quickly suspended, and multiple accounts on Telegram, which also face regular suspension. The establishment of early *jihadi* web sites and print media and the founding of the GIMF in 2004 set the stage for the next stage of the evolution of *jihadi* media production and dissemination, the age of the *jihadi* web fora.

The Cyber Geography and Architecture of Jihadism: Organizing & Disseminating the Message

Al-Qaeda, which initially secured airtime for its video and audio messages by delivering physical copies to Arabic satellite news channels such as (and primarily) Al-Jazeera, was quick to take advantage of the increasing penetration and ease of access to the Internet during the mid to late 2000s and shifted to disseminating its media releases via *jihadi* Internet web fora, most of which included public and password-protected spaces on a variety of topics including general discussions, artwork and photography, and official releases from organizations such as Al-Qaeda Central, AQAP, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Al-Shabaab, and the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI).

The typical *jihadi* web forum was organized and divided into different sub-fora by subject including, for example, “general news and events,” “photographs and designs,” geographically-focused sub-fora, and sub-fora dedicated to the official releases of specific *jihadi* organizations such as Al-Qaeda Central and Al-Shabaab. Other sub-fora included those for technological advice, bootleg software, and military and other training lessons and manuals.⁴⁴¹ Registered users and unregistered visitors were able to, at least on fora that allowed the latter limited access to some sections, to view and participate in the sections of

⁴⁴¹ Anne Stenersen, “The Internet: A Virtual Training Camp?,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20, no. 2 (2008), 215-233.

the forum of interest to them. Similarly, researchers were also able to decide which sections to focus on in their research; I, for example, primarily focused on the photography and graphic design and official releases sections from the time I began researching *jihadi* organizations and their use of “old” and new media, and particularly visual mediums, in 2007 and 2008.

These fora brought together registered members and unregistered viewers—who were all participants—and forum administrators, some of whom had ties to the official militant organizations. Registered members were active participants while unregistered viewers, in contrast, were passive observers since they were usually unable to post in threads but could later opt-in by registering. As the fora came under increasing law enforcement and hacker attention and take-down attacks, many began to close off many of their features, restricting access to only registered members. Some fora also began to only accept new members who had been recommended by already-registered, trusted members and run new enrollment periods for only limited blocs of time before once again closing registration.

Participants of all types on the *jihadi* fora represented a wide array of nationalities, ethnicities, and languages, though the primary language of the main Al-Qaeda-connected fora was Arabic. New fora were established in other languages including English, Somali, French, Urdu, and Pashto to cater to *jihadis* and their supporters, as well as inadvertently to researchers, in different regions of the world. Some Arabic fora, chief among them Ansar al-Mujahideen and the Global Jihad forum (Shabakat al-Jihād al-‘Ālamīya), also established English language forums or sub-forums. In April 2011 until 2013/2014 the main *jihadi* web fora included Ansar al-Mujahideen (Arabic and English),⁴⁴² Shumūkh al-Islāmīya,⁴⁴³ Taḥadī

⁴⁴² <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb/> and <http://ansar1.info/> (both now defunct; last accessed in April 2011).

⁴⁴³ <http://www.shamikh1.net/vb/> (now defunct; last accessed in April 2011) and <http://shamukh.net/vb/> (last accessed on 27 July 2017).

al-Islāmīya,⁴⁴⁴ Fidā' al-Islāmīya,⁴⁴⁵ Jamiah Hafsa (Urdu and English),⁴⁴⁶ Shabakat al-Mujāhidīn al-Elektrūnīya,⁴⁴⁷ Forum Islam al-Busyiro (Indonesian),⁴⁴⁸ Hanein,⁴⁴⁹ Muslm.org,⁴⁵⁰ Bab al-Islam (Urdu),⁴⁵¹ and Qimma al-Islāmīya (Somali and English).⁴⁵² An earlier major forum was Falluja al-Islāmīya.⁴⁵³ A newer forum is *Al- 'Izza* (Pashto).⁴⁵⁴ The Afghanistan Taliban and Caucasus-based *jihadi* separatist rebels, some of whom later affiliated with Islamic State in 2014 and after, ran and, in the case of the Afghan Taliban, continue to run their own web sites.⁴⁵⁵ Islamic State and its affiliated semi-official news service, Wikālat al-A'māq, and radio service have also continuously tried to maintain official web sites but these are normally quickly shut down by Internet service providers due to government and public pressure.⁴⁵⁶

Forum participants were generally fairly well informed about current events, if also highly ideological in their outlooks, and particularly about news in the Muslim majority world and affecting Muslim minority communities in other parts of the world. They were

⁴⁴⁴ <http://atahadi.com/> (now defunct; last accessed in April 2011).

⁴⁴⁵ <http://www.alfidaforum.net/vb/> (last accessed 27 July 2017).

⁴⁴⁶ <http://www.jhuf.net/> (now defunct; last accessed in April 2011).

⁴⁴⁷ www.majahden.com/vb, www.majahdenar.com, www.mojahden.net, and www.majahden1.com (all now defunct; last accessed in April 2011).

⁴⁴⁸ <http://www.al-busyiro.com/> (now defunct; last accessed in April 2011).

⁴⁴⁹ <http://www.hanein.info/vb/> (now defunct; last accessed in April 2011).

⁴⁵⁰ <http://www.muslm.org/vb/> (last accessed 27 July 2017).

⁴⁵¹ <http://bab-ul-islam.net/> (now defunct; last accessed in April 2011).

⁴⁵² <http://alqimmah.net/> (now defunct; last accessed in April 2011).

⁴⁵³ www.alfalojaweb.info (now defunct; last accessed in 2009).

⁴⁵⁴ <http://www.alizaa.com/> (last accessed 27 July 2017).

⁴⁵⁵ Caucasus-focused web sites included <http://imamtv.com/> (now defunct; last accessed in April 2011), <http://kavkaz-jihad.blogspot.com/> (now closed to only invited readers; last accessed when open in April 2011), <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/> (last accessed 27 July 2017), and <http://vdagestan.com/> (last accessed 27 July 2017). The Afghan Taliban web sites include <https://alemarah-english.com>, <http://shahamat.info/alemarah/>, <http://alemarah-dari.com/>, <http://alemarahurdu.com/>, and <http://alemaral.net/> (all last accessed 27 July 2017).

⁴⁵⁶ A few of these, all now defunct, included in 2016 and 2017 <https://jkikki.de>, <https://jkikki.at>, <https://aamaq.at>, <https://jqiqqi.at>, <https://aamaq.info>, <https://jkiki.at>, <https://jkikkia.at>, <https://amqnews.gq>, <http://bayanradio.ml>, <https://jikokol.xyz>, and <http://bayan-radio.gq>.

located, based on their IP addresses, in countries around the world from the Middle East and North Africa to Western Europe, North America, and South Asia. In addition to consuming the official media produced by *jihadi* organizations and engaging in discussion threads with other registered users, some forum denizens also produced their own media materials, most frequently, first, written comments and treatises that are posted as or in conversation threads or, second, graphic design artwork.

The *jihadi* web fora, few of which are still active, provided Al-Qaeda Central, its affiliates, and other *jihadi* organizations with a great deal of control over the timing and access to their official media productions. This was in part because the fora's administrators were often connected to the organizations and could thus be trusted to authenticate the media releases.⁴⁵⁷ Forum administrators could also exercise control over discussion threads, closing those deemed to be causing inter-*jihadi* discord (*fitna*) before they could further damage *jihadi* morale online.⁴⁵⁸ This enabled official *jihadi* organizational narratives to predominate and left little room for internal dissidents to air their complaints and allegations against established *jihadi* leaders and commanders. In many ways, this presented a false sense that global jihadism was a single, unified movement and adhered to a set of principles and strategic goals and methods of achieving them agreed to by all, which is not always the case.⁴⁵⁹ This illusion of unity began to unravel in the spring of 2012 with the public emergence of a set of bitter internal feuds within Al-Shabaab and continued in 2013 and 2014 as Islamic State (then the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, ISIS/ISIL) began to break away from Al-Qaeda.

⁴⁵⁷ Jessica Stern and J.M. Berger, *ISIS*, 65 and 128-130. They also highlight the popularity of online bulletin and messaging boards for white supremacist and other racist organizations beginning in the 1990s. See *Ibid.*, 128.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁹ Awan, "Jihadi Ideology in the New Media Environment," 99-100.

As the primacy of the *jihadi* web fora gradually declined in 2013 and 2014, the organizations began to make use of other types of web sites to disseminate their propaganda materials. The most frequently used since 2014 have been free file-sharing sites such as Sendvid.com, Openload.co, JustPaste.it, Google Drive (drive.google.com), My.pcloud.com, 1fichier.com, Usersfiles.com, and Uptobox.com that allow individuals to upload downloadable files. The URLs to these uploaded files are then listed according to file size, from high definition to medium definition and mobile-sized files.⁴⁶⁰ The use of file-sharing web sites is not itself new and *jihadi* organizations have used them as platforms to which to upload media files during the heyday of the *jihadi* Internet fora. But beginning in 2013 and 2014 an increasing number of organizations and independent *jihadi* media outlets began to make use of these file-sharing sites, JustPaste.it, and other similar sites as distribution nodes. JustPaste.it in particular became a favorite of Islamic State, which used the site as a platform to disseminate its photography and photographic essays, which number in the tens of thousands since May 2014. The site has also been used by other *jihadi* organizations from the nationalist-leaning Afghan Taliban to Al-Qaeda Central, Al-Shabaab, AQIM, AQAP, and the GIMF. The site eventually cracked down on *jihadi* use of its platform, removing pages created by Islamic State and other militant groups within a matter of hours, on average, by the second half of 2016.

Social media platforms such as Twitter and Telegram were also embraced by *jihadi* organizations, which recognized the potential for easily accessible and rapid, “live” dissemination of messages over user-friendly sites with rapidly expanding memberships. On 7 December 2011, Al-Shabaab’s media department and press office launched its first Twitter account, dubbing it “HSM Press” after the group’s full name in Arabic, “Ḥarakat al-Shabāb

⁴⁶⁰ See Figure 7 for an example of how *jihadi* organizations distribute media files on free file-sharing web sites such as JustPaste.it at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/07/19/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation/>.

al-Mujāhidīn.” The account was in English but was soon joined by semi-official Somali and Arabic language versions. The flagship English language account tweeted regular messages in fairly crisp, idiomatic English, suggesting that it was maintained by one or several native English speakers, possibly the group’s English language film and audio narrator since June 2010, who has never been officially identified even by a *nom de guerre* and speaks with a British accent.⁴⁶¹ A great deal of time, measured through a comparative analysis of the numbers of tweets on different subjects, was spent on pushing counter-narratives to those of its enemies, chiefly the Somali federal government, African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), and the United States and other international actors.⁴⁶² The account, which was eventually suspended by Twitter administrators, was quickly replaced on multiple occasions with new accounts using variations of the “HSM Press” name before Twitter banned its use, effectively ending the Somali *jihadi*-insurgent group’s active direct use of the platform. In addition to Al-Shabaab, the Afghan Taliban was also an early *jihadi* adopter of Twitter and the two organizations were eventually joined by all of the world’s major *jihadi* organizations and scores of lesser, independent *jihadi* media networks and armed groups.⁴⁶³

Al-Shabaab dramatically demonstrated the usefulness of Twitter and “live-tweeting” as part of its media operations efforts during the assault on the Westgate Mall complex in the Kenyan capital city of Nairobi by a small group of its fighters that began on 21 September

⁴⁶¹ Christopher Anzalone, “Harakat al-Shabab al-Mujahideen’s Press Office Opens Twitter Account,” *Al-Wasat*, 8 December 2011, at <https://thewasat.wordpress.com/2011/12/08/harakat-al-shabab-al-mujahideens-press-office-opens-twitter-account/>, last accessed 27 July 2017 and Hamza Mohamed, “Al-Shabab say They are Back on Twitter,” *Al-Jazeera English*, 16 December 2013, at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2013/12/al-shabab-claim-they-are-back-twitter-2013121610453327578.html>, last accessed 27 July 2017.

⁴⁶² Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens, Shiraz Maher, and James Sheehan, *Lights, Camera, Jihad: Al-Shabaab’s Western Media Strategy* (London: The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, 2012), 31-35.

⁴⁶³ The Afghan Taliban, an Islamist insurgent organization which combines both local/regional and global Islamist and Islamic messaging and narrative themes and frames, remained, as of November 2018, one of the most prolific militant Islamist groups in terms of its use of multiple social media platforms including Twitter and Telegram as well as in terms of its media productions, which are produced in at least five languages (Pashto, Dari, Urdu, Arabic, and English) and multiple media types (print, audio, audiovisual, and visual). Like Al-Shabaab, the Afghan Taliban also maintains different messaging streams and narrative frames geared toward different audiences including local, regional, and international as well as friendly and hostile audiences.

2013 and lasted until September 24, despite confused and competing claims by different parts of the Kenyan government that the siege had been quashed earlier. Through their Twitter account, Al-Shabaab fighters and operatives were able to publish a continuous stream of updates from inside the mall itself, possibly making use of a pre-parked motor vehicle nearby, and capture an increasing amount of media attention from the local and international press. These tweets, which used the hashtag “#Westgate,” sought to accomplish several goals: (1) the dissemination of Al-Shabaab’s counter-narrative in which the attack was framed as a retaliatory response to the greater suffering in Somalia caused by the Kenyan military intervention, Operation Linda Nchi (Protect the Country), which began in October 2011, (2) issuing new warnings to the Kenyan government and the general public that linked their personal security to military withdrawal from Somalia, and (3) a means through which to garner the maximum amount of international news media attention by providing updates to the information-obsessed press corps with a steady stream of tidbits amidst a stream of inaccurate and confused statements from the Kenyan government.⁴⁶⁴

Al-Shabaab’s media operatives took advantage of the mistakes and initial dishonesty of the Kenyan government and presented themselves as a more truthful and reliable source of news about the ongoing attack, rejecting government reports about the number and identity of the attackers and refuting claims that the fighting was over, the latter of which was demonstrated for the world’s news media gathered around the mall by the continued gunfire, smoke from fires in and around the mall, and sounds of explosions. Al-Shabaab’s media operatives also understood that they were trying to reach multiple target audiences and tailored their messaging, for example by addressing more domestic, Somalia-centered issues on their Somali language Twitter account and other media messaging.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶⁴ Christopher Anzalone, “The Nairobi Attack and Al-Shabab’s Media Strategy,” *CTC Sentinel*, 23 October 2013, at <https://ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-nairobi-attack-and-al-shababs-media-strategy>, last accessed 27 July 2017.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

After creating an international media buzz with their live tweeting of the Westgate attack, Al-Shabaab took further advantage of it by using its Twitter accounts to begin advertising a forthcoming message on the attack from the group's *amīr*, Ahmed 'Abdi Godane, (known in *jihadi* circles as Mukhtār Abū al-Zubayr), on the afternoon of September 24.⁴⁶⁶ His 10-minute recorded audio statement was released the following day and was distributed on *jihadi* Internet fora, pro-Shabaab Somali language news web sites such as SomaliMeMo, AmiirNuur, and Calamada, and via the group's Twitter accounts. Aware of the thirst for new information about the attack among journalists, Al-Shabaab's media department quickly produced and released, in addition to the original Somali language audio message, a voice-over translation (Somali and Arabic original followed by a spoken English translation) by their official English language narrator that was released within hours of the original.⁴⁶⁷ A print translation into English was also produced and distributed via Twitter and other web sites.

Referring to the Westgate attack as "Badr Nairobi" after the most famous battle fought by the Prophet Muhammad and the early Muslim community in 624 against the superior forces of the Quraysh, Godane both eulogized the "martyrdom-seeking" attackers and reiterated that the attack was launched in retaliation for Kenya's military invasion of southern Somalia two years before. The "power of faith," he said, was proven during the attack and the ineptness and inability of the Kenyan government to formulate a coherent response was displayed for the entire world.⁴⁶⁸ "You have entered into a war that is not yours and is against your national interests," he said. "You have voluntarily given up your security and economy and have lost many of your sons."⁴⁶⁹ The Kenyan public at large bore

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁷ Al-Shabaab audio recording from Ahmed 'Abdi Godane, 25 September 2013.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

responsibility for the actions of their government, Godane said, because they had elected the ruling politicians and thus were intimately involved in “the massacres that are being perpetrated in [the southern Somali port city of] Kismaayo and the neighboring regions.”⁴⁷⁰ In addition to humiliating the Kenyan administration of President Uhuru Kenyatta, the attack was also a media success and returned a beleaguered Al-Shabaab, which was reeling from a stream of territorial losses in Somalia, triumphantly to the international headlines and projected an image of the group as still powerful and with a long regional reach.⁴⁷¹ The group would continue to hone this image in the following years by beginning an increasingly deadly insurgency in parts of Kenya, chiefly in the Somali-majority North Eastern Province (formerly the Northern Frontier District) and the historically Muslim-majority (Swahili) Coast Province anchored by its capital, the port city of Mombasa.

During the autumn of 2013 into the first half of 2014, as the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (renamed simply “Islamic State” in June of that year and hereafter referred to primarily as such for the sake of clarity) made rapid territorial conquests in Syria and western Iraq, the organization’s increasingly sophisticated media apparatus harnessed the power of social media and particularly Twitter to publish and disseminate its media releases to millions of the platform’s users, some of whom, like with *jihadi* media published on other web sites, then re-uploaded it to other web sites so that even if the originals were taken down, new links would usually still be available for those willing to search for them. In taking advantage of the immediacy of Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and other social media platforms, Islamic State media operatives were not wholly original but instead adopted a social media-heavy strategy that had been used previously to significant success by demonstrators in Tunisia,

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷¹ Anzalone, “The Nairobi Attack and Al-Shabab’s Media Strategy.”

Libya, Egypt, Bahrain, and other countries during the heyday of the “Arab Spring” as well as in Syria as that country descended into civil war in 2011 and 2012.⁴⁷²

Islamic State’s official media apparatus set up its first Twitter account in October 2013, @e3tasimo, and ran it as an extension of one of its official media brands, Al-I‘tiṣām, which soon gained over 24,000 followers.⁴⁷³ During this same period, individual Islamic State members including rank-and-file fighters also set up unofficial, personal social media accounts on Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and other online sites and published a range of different material at varying intervals including brief diaries about their daily activities, ideological messages, photographs and graphic designs, and short videos.

Islamic State was not the only regional *jihadi* actor using social media and, indeed, nearly every Syrian rebel group, from numerically large groups such as Ahrar al-Sham and Jabhat al-Nusra to small local militias under the Free Syrian Army (FSA) umbrella, set up their own Twitter, YouTube, and other social media accounts to reach a worldwide audience. However, Islamic State, by the summer of 2014, stood out from the crowd because of the sheer number of social media accounts, both official and unofficial, that it and its followers set up, accounts which produced tens of thousands of individual pieces of *jihadi* media and propaganda on a daily and weekly basis. Using coordinated hashtag campaigns and other innovative tactics to attract viewers, Islamic State’s media operatives worked in tandem with online fellow travelers to reproduce released files so that they would still be available even if the originals were removed and the accounts that first distributed them were suspended.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷² Stern and Berger, 151-153; Francesca Comunello and Giuseppe Anzera, “Will the Revolution be Tweeted? A Conceptual Framework for Understanding the Social Media and the Arab Spring,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 23, no. 4 (2012), 453-470; Habibul Haque Khondker, “Role of the New Media in the Arab Spring,” *Globalizations* 8, no. 5 (2011), 675-679; and Axel Bruns, Tim Highfield, and Jean Burgess, “The Arab Spring and Social Media Audiences: English and Arabic Twitter Users and Their Networks,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 57, no. 7 (2013), 871-898.

⁴⁷³ Stern and Berger, 153-154.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 155-156. On the reaction of social media administrators, specifically on Twitter, to growing Islamic State use, see *Ibid.* 162-171.

This process was later continued on IS-affiliated Telegram accounts, which also re-released older media and propaganda. Between September and December 2014 alone Islamic State or its supporters were active on a total of a minimum of 46,000 Twitter accounts to a maximum of around 70,000 accounts with almost one-fifth of supporters primarily using English in their tweets and three-fourths using Arabic.⁴⁷⁵

In the spring and summer of 2014 continuing into 2015, when a significant number of the Islamic State primary sources were collected and archived for this research project, Islamic State maintained a number of official Twitter accounts that it used on a daily basis to disseminate copies of its media. In addition to accounts for official media brands such as Al-I'tisām, the organization's media operatives also established accounts focused on the media related to particular geographic divisions, the "provinces" (*wilāyāt*) its senior leadership declared as controlled territory expanded, with accounts dedicated to the media produced by the provincial media offices of, for example, Aleppo, Damascus, Homs/Hims, Dayr al-Zur (dubbed "Wilāyat al-Khayr"), Hasaka (dubbed "Wilāyat al-Baraka"), and Raqqa in Syria and Anbar, Falluja, Saladin, Babil and areas south of Baghdad (dubbed "Wilāyat al-Janūb"), and Nineveh/Nīnawā in Iraq. Though this province-centered social media strategy largely ended after repeated Twitter suspensions, the organization's video production process and branding of releases is still, as of July 2017, organized along provincial/ *wilāyat* lines including some according to Islamic State-created "provinces" that do not adhere to existing governorates in Syria or Iraq, for example "Wilāyat al-Furāt," which includes territory in both eastern Syria, including the town of Albū Kamāl in the official Dayr al-Zur governorate, as well as western Iraq including the adjacent town of Al-Qā'im in the country's Anbar governorate. The organization has also released films, audio messages, Qur'anic recitation recordings, *anāshīd*,

⁴⁷⁵ J.M. Berger and Jonathon Morgan, *The ISIS Twitter Census: Defining and Describing the Population of ISIS Supporters on Twitter* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2015), Analysis Paper no. 20, at https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/isis_twitter_census_berger_morgan.pdf, last accessed 27 July 2017.

and radio broadcasts through several general media outlets including Al-I'tisām, Mu'assasat al-Furqān (which was the primary outlet for the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham and its precursor organizations from the autumn of 2006 through 2013), the Al-Hayat Media Center (which produces videos and films in languages usually other than Arabic or in subtitled versions), Mu'assasat al-Ajnād (for Qur'anic recitations and *anāshīd*), Furat Media, Wikālat al-Ā'māq, the radio network Idhā'at al-Bayān, and the print publishing house Maktabat al-Himma.

By late 2015 and the winter of 2016, Islamic State, Al-Shabaab, and other *jihadi* organizations were facing an uphill battle to maintain active public accounts on Twitter and other social media platforms due to increased pressure from governments for their accounts to be shuttered.⁴⁷⁶ This was offset to some degree, but not entirely, by the creation of web sites whose administrators tried to collect on a daily or weekly basis official, semi-official, and unofficial Islamic State or pro-IS media, but these sites often only copied and pasted material from the original postings rather than hosting it themselves and the file size and quality of available media was often of spotty quality at best.⁴⁷⁷ Many of these sites and postings were themselves also routinely taken offline by Internet service providers or were not regularly updated.

The increasing difficulties of operating stable accounts on Twitter and the continuous need to release and disseminate new media materials to maintain a steady stream of

⁴⁷⁶ J.M. Berger and Heather Perez, *The Islamic State's Diminishing Returns on Twitter: How Suspensions are Limiting the Social Networks of English-speaking ISIS Supporters* (Washington, D.C.: The George Washington University Program on Extremism, 2016), occasional paper, at https://cchs.gwu.edu/sites/cchs.gwu.edu/files/downloads/Berger_Occasional%20Paper.pdf, last accessed 27 July 2017. This pressure was also felt by accounts in Arabic and other languages, not only accounts primarily using English. Throughout 2016 when making daily collection rounds for Islamic State primary source material, I often was able to find Arabic language accounts with links or copies of newly-released media but these accounts were usually suspended within a day or even in a matter of hours and thus were not steadily reliable locations to find and collect primary sources, necessitating new searches for active accounts every day.

⁴⁷⁷ Representative web sites included <https://dawaalhaq.com/> (still active as of 27 July 2017), <https://khilafasite.wordpress.com/>, <http://www.ctss.cf/>, <http://ou7zytv3h2yaosqq.1410.ml/>, <https://vijestiummeta.ga/>, and <https://nasherr.de/>.

propaganda led *jihadi* organizations to find alternative platforms to harness in their media operations campaigns. It was to this end that the encrypted messaging service Telegram, which was launched in August 2013 by Russian entrepreneurs Pavel and Nikolai Durov but became widely popular beginning in 2015, was chosen by an increasing number of individual *jihadis* as well as official *jihadi* organizations and media outlets as an alternative or supplementary social media platform. Telegram accounts are connected to telephone numbers and are verified either through an automated telephone call or an SMS message and it is now available on multiple operating systems including Microsoft Windows and macOS as well as in desktop and mobile versions. Unlike Twitter, Telegram allows users to upload files, including large audiovisual files, to a cloud and allow other individuals to download them on Telegram. Telegram also features encryption technology which makes it difficult for governments to openly monitor private chats, which has led to criticisms of the platform because of its utilization by militant organizations.⁴⁷⁸

Jihadi organizations with active Telegram accounts as of July 2017 included Al-Qaeda Central, AQAP, AQIM, Al-Shabaab, Islamic State, the Afghan Taliban, the TTP (Fazlullah faction), the TTP Jamā‘at al-Ahrār (TTP-JA), Hay’at Tahrīr al-Shām (HTS) in Syria, and the GIMF. Several organizations, such as the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban groups, maintained, as of mid-July 2017, accounts in multiple languages including Pashto, Urdu, Dari, Arabic, English, and Turkish as well as, in the case of Afghan Taliban, a separate account for its video releases and, by the two TTP groups, accounts for regional and district

⁴⁷⁸ Joby Warrick, “The ‘App of Choice’ for Jihadists: ISIS Seizes on Internet Tool to Promote Terror,” *The Washington Post*, 23 December 2016, at https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/the-app-of-choice-for-jihadists-isis-seizes-on-internet-tool-to-promote-terror/2016/12/23/a8c348c0-c861-11e6-85b5-76616a33048d_story.html?utm_term=.eb34c2364bf0, last accessed 27 July 2017; Rebecca Tan, “Terrorists’ Love for Telegram, Explained,” *Vox*, 30 June 2017, at <https://www.vox.com/world/2017/6/30/15886506/terrorism-isis-telegram-social-media-russia-pavel-durov-twitter>, last accessed 27 July 2017; Margot Haddad and Tim Hume, “Priest’s Killers Met on Messaging App 4 Days before Attack, Source Says,” *CNN*, 1 August 2016, at <http://www.cnn.com/2016/08/01/europe/france-church-attack-telegram/index.html>, last accessed 27 July 2017; and Natasha Lomas, “Telegram Now Seeing 12BN Daily Messages, Up from 1Bn in February,” *Tech Crunch*, 21 September 2015, at <https://techcrunch.com/2015/09/21/telegram-now-seeing-12bn-daily-messages-up-from-1m-in-february/>, last accessed 27 July 2017.

branches in Pakistan such as Khyber, Swat, Malakand, Lower Dir, Jammu and Kashmir, and Baluchistan. Like on Twitter, Islamic State, as of July 2017, maintained by far the largest number of accounts, upwards of hundreds of official and scores of subsidiary or supporters' accounts. Initially, Islamic State maintained open accounts accessible to the general public of registered Telegram users with "join" invitation links disseminated on other Islamic State or pro-IS accounts on other social media platforms such as Twitter or web sites, but in 2016 it switched to closed, more controlled accounts after its public Telegram accounts were suspended. As of July 2017, Islamic State's official Telegram accounts, chief among them the "Nashir News" (*Wikālat al-Nāshir*) accounts, are closed and often do not appear in searches or are not accessible or joinable without an invitation link. These links are rarely distributed on other social media platforms or web sites and members are warned against distributing links under pain of expulsion. Invitation links are posted throughout the day on established Islamic State or IS-affiliated accounts and are only active for a set amount of time before they are no longer active, typically for an hour or less.⁴⁷⁹ This limits, to some degree, access to these accounts and safeguards against rapid closure of accounts by Telegram's administrators. Islamic State media operatives also started to create large numbers, sometimes in the scores or even over 100, of accounts using variations of the same name so that if some are discovered and suspended there will still be many open and running, thus enabling the organization to maintain a steady flow of readily-available media materials.

The Downside of the Democratization of Communication Channels: Online and Media *Fitna* in the Social Media Age

The strong embrace by *jihadis* of new social media platforms and the media operations benefits they brought also carried with it significant potential negatives, at least at the official organizational level. Advances in production software and technology, and the

⁴⁷⁹ See Figure 8 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/07/19/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation/>.

opening and ease of use of new social media platforms not only enabled *jihadi* organizations and their official media departments to bypass traditional and state and corporate-controlled media, these same advances also opened the door to *jihadi* dissidents and critics to carve out their own media messaging space. Examining the content and use of new social media and production capabilities and platforms allows us to see clearly how and why *jihadis*, whether at the individual, SMO, or movement level, have failed to “unify” all of their own members, supporters, and sympathizers, let alone the majority of Muslims worldwide. Additionally, a detailed examination and analysis of *jihadi* use of new, old, and social media helps us analyze and understand variations in the use and effectiveness of violence by examining the framing and presentation, strategies of implementation, and targets of violence as well as the divisions that have emerged within and between different *jihadi* organizations including Al-Qaeda and Islamic State and their allies and affiliates. New media platforms, technologies, and production software have amplified not only the narratives, frames, and messaging of official *jihadi* organizations outside of traditional old media networks and independent, to a significant extent, of state control, but have also empowered *jihadi* dissidents and defectors by providing them with similar means to escape the confines of official organizational *jihadi* media and develop their own critiques and alternative narratives.

The increasing accessibility and ease of use of platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and Telegram allowed individual *jihadis* from the rank-and-file to produce and disseminate their own personalized and unofficial media and messaging. These individualized media streams were generally outside of the control or even knowledge of the centralized, official *jihadi* organizational media networks, allowing rank-and-file members to contribute and even contradict official communications.⁴⁸⁰ Whereas the leaderships of the

⁴⁸⁰ It should be noted here that not all individualized *jihadi* media produced and disseminated by rank-and-file *jihadis* is of a critical nature and indeed vast amounts of it have simply been personalized and “unbranded” by the official media outlets of the organizations. For examples, see Figure 9 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/07/19/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation/>.

jihadi organizations exercised significant control over the timing and methods of distribution for their official and carefully framed media releases during the heyday of the online *jihadi* fora, the advent and rapid adoption and spread of social media platforms provided disgruntled and dissident members or critics of specific organizations with access to a communications platform outside of the chain of “official” *jihadi* media through which to sow discord.⁴⁸¹ Unregulated social media use also began to pose security risks for the organizations, some of which, including Islamic State, eventually tried to ban members from maintaining individual accounts.⁴⁸²

In this sub-section, the last in Part 1 of this chapter, two cases of inter-*jihadi* discord (*fitna*) will be examined, the first in Somalia among segments of Al-Shabaab and the second between Islamic State and Al-Qaeda Central and its loyal affiliates, chief among them Jabhat al-Nusra and its successor organizations in Syria. Particular analytical attention will be paid to the democratizing, “gate-opening” role of social media platforms such as Twitter and Telegram and their impact on the contours of these cases of *fitna* and how they have changed the face of *jihadi* organizational relationships and behavior in the evolving media and communications sphere.

Somalia: Between Internal Schisms and the Rise of Islamic State

On March 16, 2012 an American foreign fighter and field commander in Al-Shabaab, Omar Shafik Hammami, uploaded a short video to YouTube, “urgentmessage,” under the account user name “somalimuhajirwarrior” in which he said that he feared his life was in danger from the group because of differences on “matters of the *shari‘a* and matters of

⁴⁸¹ Ken Menkhaus, “Al-Shabaab and Social Media: A Double-edged Sword,” *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 20, no. 11 (Spring/Summer 2014), 318-319, and Stern and Berger, 68-74.

⁴⁸² Walbert Castillo, “Air Force Intel Uses ISIS ‘Moron’ Post to Track Fighters,” CNN, 5 June 2015, at <http://www.cnn.com/2015/06/05/politics/air-force-isis-moron-twitter/index.html>, last accessed 27 July 2017; Bryan Price and Muhammad al-‘Ubaydi, “CTC Perspectives: The Islamic State’s Internal Rifts and Social Media Ban,” 21 June 2017, at <https://ctc.usma.edu/posts/ctc-perspectives-the-islamic-states-internal-rifts-and-social-media-ban>, last accessed 27 July 2017; and Islamic State, “Ilā junūd al-Dawlat al-Islāmīya kāfa,” at <http://www.aymennjawad.org/jawad/pics/large/1145.jpg>, last accessed 27 July 2017.

strategy.”⁴⁸³ Before his very public defection from Al-Shabaab, Hammami had been arguably the most prominent foreign fighter in its ranks after emerging as the youthful Western, English-speaking face in the group’s recruitment campaign. He was interviewed by Al-Jazeera Arabic in October 2007, though he was not identified by name, and secured a place in the international news media’s psyche in late March 2009 after appearing in a new *jihadi*-insurgent recruitment film, *Ambush at Bardale*, which documented a 2008 ambush on Ethiopian forces in the Bay region of western Somalia and showed him speaking to a group of foreign fighters alongside founding Al-Shabaab member Mukhtar “Abu Mansur” Robow accompanied by a soundtrack of not-very-good *jihadi* rap songs.⁴⁸⁴ Hammami’s defection and targeting of Al-Shabaab and particularly its *amīr*, Ahmed Godane, on social media and *jihadi* web fora would become one of Sunni global jihadism’s most public schisms of the Internet age.

A native of Alabama and the son of a Syrian Muslim father and a white American Southern Baptist Christian mother, Hammami originally traveled from the U.S. to Toronto, Canada with his best friend, Bernie Culveyhouse, where the two worked and married Canadian-Somali women. The four later moved to Egypt in order to pursue studies at Al-Azhar seminary in Cairo, though neither ever actually ended up studying there. After living in the coastal city of Alexandria for a while, where he had trouble earning enough money as a translator of Arabic Islamic texts into English, Hammami began to follow online the unfolding events in Somalia where the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC)—an umbrella movement of local *shari‘a* courts, clan militias, and Islamists—was implementing a

⁴⁸³ The original uploaded video is no longer on YouTube but has been downloaded and saved in my archive. A copy of the video can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vOnhEo_fMY8, last accessed 27 July 2017.

⁴⁸⁴ Al-Shabaab film, *Ambush at Bardale*, 30 March 2009.

semblance of law and order against a U.S.-backed coalition of warlords and businessman, the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counterterrorism.⁴⁸⁵

In November 2006, Hammami left Egypt under the pretext of searching for work in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates but instead traveled to Somalia where he joined one of the groups within the UIC. In the first part of his autobiography, *The Story of an American Jihaadi: Part One*, which he wrote under his nom de guerre, “Abu Mansuur al-Amriiki,” using Somali orthography, Hammami alleged that certain UIC leaders, chief among them Sharif Sheikh Ahmed and Hawiye clan elders, tribalized the UIC and used the organization to pursue parochial clan interests including the seizure of more land than they could realistically govern.⁴⁸⁶ In an earlier essay published following the collapse of the UIC when he was a member of Al-Shabaab, Hammami had also accused the UIC of dismissing the help of foreign fighters (*muhājirīn*) and trying to force them to go back to their countries of origin before they were stopped from doing so by UIC official and later Al-Shabaab preacher Fu’ad Mohamed Khalaf “Shongole” and Al-Qaeda Central East Africa operative Abu Ṭalḥa al-Sūdānī, who took the foreign fighters under their wing.⁴⁸⁷

Upon arriving in Somalia, Hammami and other foreign fighter trainees were originally attached to the militia of Hasan ‘Abdullahi Hirsi “al-Turki” but eventually moved over to Al-Shabaab, which at the time made up a part of the UIC’s military wing. In the coastal town of Baraawe in the Lower Shabelle region, they first met the group’s *amīr*, Godane, and several other senior leaders including Godane’s deputy, Adan Hashi Farah

⁴⁸⁵ Andrea Elliott, “The Jihadist Next Door,” *The New York Times Magazine*, 27 January 2010, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/31/magazine/31Jihadist-t.html?pagewanted=all>, last accessed 27 July 2017, and a Current TV, Vanguard documentary, *American Jihadi*, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QITVkc2ChL4>, last accessed 27 July 2017.

⁴⁸⁶ Omar Hammami (Abu Mansuur al-Amriiki), *The Story of an American Jihaadi: Part One*, 16 May 2012, 58.

⁴⁸⁷ Omar Hammami (Abu Mansoor al-Amriki), *A Message to the Mujaahideen in Particular and Muslims in General*, Global Islamic Media Front, January/February 2008 (Muharram 1429), 3.

‘Ayro, Robow, Shongole, and Ibrahim Haji Jama Mee’aad (Ibrahim al-Afghani).⁴⁸⁸ During his time in Al-Shabaab, Hammami appeared in several of the group’s propaganda films and was a featured speaker at a major conference it organized in May 2011 to eulogize Bin Laden, who had been killed in March of that year.⁴⁸⁹

In addition to the “somalimuhajirwarrior” YouTube account, Hammami also set up a Twitter account, “abuamerican,” where he at first pretended to be a third party “spokesman” for himself, Abu Muhammad al-Somali, but eventually dropped the pretense and engaged directly with journalists, analysts, and pro and anti-Al-Shabaab *jihadis* online, accusing Al-Shabaab’s leader, Godane, and his supporters of violent crackdowns on internal dissidents.⁴⁹⁰ Hammami dueled with Al-Shabaab members and supporters online throughout 2012 and into 2013, accusing the group of misusing funds gathered through taxation and other means to fund luxurious lifestyles for senior leaders.⁴⁹¹ Al-Shabaab supporters responded by accusing Hammami of sowing *fitna* within the *jihadi* community due to his arrogance and an exaggerated sense of his own importance. One member, Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, wrote sarcastically that Hammami “is often at the centre of his own universe—a brittle mental construct of his own making—and judging by the condescending attitude with which he treats the *Ansari* [local militants] brothers, who often generously go out of their way to help him, he, more often than not, is the only person competent enough to manage the affairs of the Muslim *Ummah*. [...] But behind the grandiose sense of self-importance and the overwhelming need to be admired lies a fragile self-esteem; an insecurity that hinders his

⁴⁸⁸ Hammami, *The Story of an American Jihaadi*, 99.

⁴⁸⁹ Christopher Anzalone, “The Evolution of an American Jihadi: The Case of Omar Hammami,” *CTC Sentinel*, 21 June 2012, at <https://ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-evolution-of-an-american-jihadi-the-case-of-omar-hammami>, last accessed 27 July 2017.

⁴⁹⁰ <https://twitter.com/#!/abumamerican>; Another user maintained it for a month after Hammami’s death in September 2013 but the last tweet is dated 4 October 2013. See also J.M. Berger, “Me Against the World,” *Foreign Policy*, 25 May 2012, at <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/05/25/me-against-the-world/>, last accessed 27 July 2017.

⁴⁹¹ Omar Hammami, “I’āda nazar jawāz ḍarā’ib fawq bilād al-mujāhidīn wa-l-katā’ib” (Reconsideration of the Permissibility of Taxation over the Mujāhidīn State and the Brigades), 12 January 2013.

progress and prevents him from establishing reciprocal relationships that complement rather than compete with each other. It is such a devastating sense of insecurity that it compels him to consider everyone who disagrees with his opinions as an archenemy.”⁴⁹² He also accused the American defector of arrogance toward his local *jihadi* hosts: “The *Ansari* brothers, according to him, are intellectually inferior and hence cannot be entrusted with the weighty responsibility of formulating rational plans for the establishment of the Islamic *Khilāfa*.”⁴⁹³

Al-Shabaab’s major official response to Hammami’s allegations came in mid-December 2012 in the form of a statement signed by its military affairs spokesman, Abu Mus‘ab ‘Abd al-‘Aziiz. Accusing Hammami of playing into the narrative of deep ideological divisions among the *jihadi* movement popular in the Western press, he denounced Hammami’s claim to represent foreign fighters in Somalia and his other allegations as “merely the results of personal grievances that stem purely from a narcissistic pursuit of fame and are far removed from the reality on the ground.”⁴⁹⁴ The group had initially not responded publicly to Hammami’s allegations, ‘Abd al-‘Aziiz said, because its leadership instead wanted to follow “the noble path of the Prophet” by seeking an equitable settlement through the provision of advice (*naṣīḥa*) in private.⁴⁹⁵ He went on to accuse the American of being involved in a coordinated plot with the “disbelievers” (*kuffār*) by releasing his video accusations at times when AMISOM and the Kenyan military were invading Somalia. “The timing of the releases and the convergence of the entire East African nations upon the Mujahideen were not entirely coincidental occurrences but a calculated attempt to draw attention to the alleged voices of dissent within the ranks of the Mujahideen at a time when

⁴⁹² Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, “Turning Away from the Truth Won’t Make It Disappear: Demystifying the Abu Mansur Saga,” 21 February 2013, 8.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁴ Al-Shabaab communiqué, “Abu Mansur al-Amriki: A Candid Clarification” and “Tawḍīḥ ṣarīḥ fī shā’n Abī Maṣṣūr al-Amrīkī,” 18 December 2012.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

they were most likely to be under pressure from their enemies so as to cultivate the destructive seeds of disunity,” he said.⁴⁹⁶

The dispute between Hammami and his supporters and Godane and Al-Shabaab, whose administrators, commanders, and rank-and-file members largely remained loyal to the *amīr*, grew increasingly bitter and in April 2013 Hammami tweeted that he had been shot escaping an Al-Shabaab hit squad and included a photo of himself bleeding from the neck. He asked jokingly if that meant his rap albums would now “be better sellers now,” alluding to the commercial successes of rappers like the late Tupac Shakur after being shot.⁴⁹⁷ He said that he and several of his fellow defectors had been forced to fight for their lives and managed to escape into the forest after killing three Al-Shabaab gunmen and wounding others without suffering any casualties themselves.⁴⁹⁸ Al-Shabaab, he said, accused them of unlawful rebellion and of being a renegade armed group (*bughāt*), allegations which he unsurprisingly denied.⁴⁹⁹

The dispute between the anti and pro-Godane factions not only affected *jihadis* on the ground in Somalia, it also trickled into *jihadi* cyberspace, which allowed the minority party, the dissidents, to greatly amplify their allegations against Godane and his loyalists. Supporters and detractors of Hammami and Godane sparred on Twitter and other web sites and the dispute even began to appear on the main *jihadi* Internet fora where alarmed administrators attempted to quash it by shuttering discussion threads deemed to be causing “*fitna*.” One open-access forum, however, the Global Jihad forum, which had launched in February 2011, adopted a pro-Hammami and anti-Al-Shabaab stance at the administrative level and began to serve as one of the primary bases for online criticism of Godane and his

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁷ <https://twitter.com/abumamerican/status/327548016749858816>, 25 April 2013.

⁴⁹⁸ <https://twitter.com/abumamerican/status/328944707394736128>, 29 April 2013.

⁴⁹⁹ <https://twitter.com/abumamerican/status/328946059000807424>, 29 April 2013.

loyalists. An online *jihadi* media imprint, the Islamic World Issues Study Center (*Markaz Dirāsāt Qadāyān al-‘Ālam al-Islāmī*), was founded to promote the media releases of Hammami and other Al-Shabaab dissidents, going as far as to establish its own web site in addition to distributing material on the Global Jihad Forum and social media sites.⁵⁰⁰

In the spring of 2013 a number of senior Al-Shabaab leaders, including several founding members, issued a series of public statements addressing the group’s internal schisms, relying on the Global Jihad forum and social media to spread them more widely amongst Sunni *jihadis*. On April 6 an open letter was published from Ibrahim al-Afghani, a founding member of Al-Shabaab and the group’s former governor of the port city of Kismaayo, addressed to Al-Qaeda Central’s *amīr*, Ayman al-Zawahiri. The letter took a part of its title from a reference found in the apocalyptic sections (Book of Tribulations, Kitāb al-Fitan) of the canonical Sunni *aḥādīth* collections Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim and Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī as well as, in a modified form, in Qur’an 51:50, in which the Prophet Muhammad invoked an ancient Arab tribal tradition and practice of delivering a dire warning.⁵⁰¹ The use of the reference denoted the vital nature, in al-Afghani’s eyes, of his warning to al-Zawahiri about the dangers posed by the schism in Al-Qaeda’s East African regional affiliate. The open letter was followed in late April by a *fatwa* signed by Al-Shabaab dissident leaders Robow, Hasan Dahir Aweys, al-Afghani, Zubayr al-Muhajir, and *Mu‘allim* Burhan (Abul Hamid Hashi Olhayi).⁵⁰² Hammami enthusiastically promoted the *fatwa* and, when asked about the lack of formal religious education and scholarly credentials by most of its signatories, said that their

⁵⁰⁰ www.iwisc.net (now defunct); last accessed in 2013.

⁵⁰¹ Ibrahim al-Afghani (Abu Bakr al-Zayla‘ī), “Innanī āna al-nadhīr al-‘uryān: Risālat maftūḥa ilā shaykhinā wa amīrinā al-shaykh Ayman al-Zawahiri” (Verily I am a Naked Warner: An Open Letter to Our Shaykh and Amīr, the Shaykh Ayman al-Zawahiri), 6 April 2013. The first part of the title is a reference to *aḥādīth* in which the Prophet Muhammad references a custom of the pre-Islamic Arabs. On this custom, see Joe Bradford, “The Life of the Prophet through the Eyes of the Companions,” 13 January 2017, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PdoRRFKWbqI&t=3021s>, last accessed 3 August 2017.

⁵⁰² “Fatwā ḥawl muḥāwalat iḡtīyāl Abī Maṣṣūr al-Amrīkī” (Juridical Opinion concerning the Attempted Assassination of Abu Mansur al-Amriki), 29 April 2013.

experience in the “fields of *jihad*” served as a kind of confirmation of their lived and acted-upon knowledge rather than bookish learning for its own sake.⁵⁰³

The letter and the *fatwa* accused Godane and his supporters in Al-Shabaab of abusing foreign fighters and their families and of targeting three leading foreigners specifically—Hammami, Briton Habib Ghani (alias Usama al-Britani), and Egyptian Khattab al-Masri.⁵⁰⁴ Citing Qur’anic verses, *aḥādīth*, and the statements of late Al-Qaeda Central leaders Bin Laden and ‘Aṭīyatullah al-Lībī, al-Afghani wrote that he was delivering an account of the *fitna* in Somalia that was based on firsthand testimonies and evidence he had gathered concerning Godane’s contraventions of the *shari‘a*. The anti-Godane faction within Al-Shabaab, al-Afghani claimed, made up the majority of the group’s membership but many were afraid to speak publicly for fear of being arrested or killed by the group’s internal security apparatus, the *Amniyat*, which was loyal to Godane and two of his deputies, Mahad “Karate” Warsame and Ahmed “Abu ‘Ubayda” ‘Umar.⁵⁰⁵

Al-Afghani said that before he decided to write an open appeal to al-Zawahiri urging him to remove Godane from power, he and other dissidents had pursued mediation through the organization’s *shari‘a* court system but Godane had ignored its verdict requiring him to step down in six months and instead replaced its members with his own loyalists.⁵⁰⁶ The court system of the group was then turned away from the pursuit of justice (*‘adl*) in favor of acting as an appendage to the senior leadership in order to solidify Godane’s hold over the organization and its levers of power.⁵⁰⁷ Godane, he alleged, had exacerbated relations between Al-Shabaab and local clan elders, ran secret security prisons with the *Amniyat* where

⁵⁰³ <https://twitter.com/abumamerican/status/329214155783536640>, 30 April 2013 and <https://twitter.com/abumamerican/status/335850810858696706>, 18 May 2013.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁵ Ibrahim al-Afghani, “Innanī āna al-nadhīr al-‘uryān.”

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

internal dissidents were kept in appalling conditions, and had abandoned the religiously mandated requirement of consultative (*shūrā*) rule in favor of increasing authoritarianism.⁵⁰⁸ Instead of ruling according to the *shari‘a*, Godane instead put his own personal whims ahead of God’s law, making him akin to the apostate Somali federal government, al-Afghani wrote.⁵⁰⁹ Further, Godane’s wanton use of “martyrdom operations” (*al-‘amalīyāt al-istishhādīya*) and failure to properly educate its executors in the Islamic rules governing warfare, specifically the jurisprudence concerning what constitutes a legitimate target, had contributed to alienating local notables and people from Al-Shabaab, al-Afghani said.⁵¹⁰ Dissidents were prevented from accessing the court system, specifically the grievances court (*maḥkamat radd al-maẓālīm*), the latter of which was in theory tasked with hearing complaints about the behavior of Al-Shabaab members including leaders.⁵¹¹

Godane used a combination of fear, violence, bribes, and character assassination to maintain his hold over Al-Shabaab, al-Afghani said. Instead of representing the downtrodden (*mustaḍ‘afīn*) and persecuted (*maẓlūmīn*) of the *Umma*, Godane had become their persecutor.⁵¹² Additionally, Godane had prevented the expansion of Al-Shabaab’s *jihad* in East Africa by preventing the establishment of new recruitment networks and cells in the Somali ethnic majority regions of Ogaden in eastern Ethiopia and Kenya’s North Eastern Province and parts of the Swahili Coast.⁵¹³ East African Muslims who traveled to Somalia to fight for Al-Shabaab, he claimed, were treated badly by Godane and eventually returned home.⁵¹⁴ Foreign fighters generally were also treated badly and their families were not

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁵¹² *Ibid.*

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*

properly looked after despite their sacrifices in coming to Somalia to fulfill their religious duty of *jihad*.⁵¹⁵

In late June 2013, after Godane ordered their arrests, al-Afghani and senior preacher and religious scholar *Mu'allim* Burhan (also known as Abu al-Hamid Hashi Olhayi) were killed by the *Amniyat* either trying to escape, which Al-Shabaab claimed, or summarily executed, as the two men's families alleged.⁵¹⁶ Several months later, Hammami and Usama al-Britani were killed in a shootout with the *Amniyat*, leaving Godane firmly in control of the group despite the decision of other internal dissidents including Robow, Aweys, and Zubayr al-Muhajir to separate from the group.⁵¹⁷

Divisions among segments of Al-Shabaab and criticisms of Godane and his successor as the group's *amīr*, Ahmed 'Umar, following the former's killing in a U.S. air strike in September 2014 did not stop, however, with the killings of al-Afghani, Burhan, Hammami, and al-Britani or the *de facto* or formal defections of Robow, Aweys, and Zubayr al-Muhajir. Anti-Shabaab sentiments continued to fester under the surface and reemerged in 2015 with the defection of several small groups of fighters to Islamic State. The most senior member to defect as of July 2017 was *Shaykh* 'Abdiqadir Mu'min, a senior Al-Shabaab preacher and religious scholar known for his sermons and oral exegesis (*tafsīr*) of the Qur'an, who commanded the group's contingent in the northern autonomous region of Puntland and announced his *bay'a* to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in an audio recording of poor quality released on 22 October 2015.⁵¹⁸ Mu'min was joined by several score of his fighters, estimated

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁶ Agence France-Presse, "Al Shabaab Extremists Kill Two of Their Chiefs," 30 June 2017, at <http://www.france24.com/en/20130630-somalia-al-shabaab-al-qaeda-islamist-extremists-kill-two-top-commanders>, last accessed 27 July 2017.

⁵¹⁷ Abdi Sheikh and Feisal Omar, "Al Qaeda-linked Somali Militants Kill U.S. Jihadist," *Reuters*, 12 September 2013, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-somalia-militants-idUSBRE98B0M320130912>, last accessed 27 July 2017.

⁵¹⁸ 'Abdiqadir Mu'min (audio recording), *Bay'a al-Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir Mu'min wa thulla min mujāhidī al-Ṣumūl li-khalīfat al-muslimīn Abī Bakr al-Baghdādī*, 22 October 2015.

roughly to number between 100 and 200 men, a group that included many but not all of Al-Shabaab's Puntland-based fighters. He had previously served in and around Mogadishu and was a featured speaker at Al-Shabaab's May 2011 memorial conference for Bin Laden and its official celebration of the formalization of its affiliation with Al-Qaeda Central held in Lafoole in the Lower Shabelle region in February 2012. Other pockets of defectors also left or attempted to leave the group and pledge allegiance to Islamic State but most were either preemptively arrested or killed by the *Amniyat*. Others, including field commander Abu Nu'man al-Yentari, were killed by Al-Shabaab's gunmen soon after defecting and were later eulogized by Mu'min and Islamic State.⁵¹⁹ Since Mu'min's *bay'a* there have been sporadic defections from small groups of fighters around Somalia including in the Bay and Bakool, Lower and Middle Shabelle, and Lower and Middle Juba regions as well as attempts to recruit fighters in neighboring Kenya.⁵²⁰

In the spring of 2017 a series of media releases with non-Islamic State-affiliated defectors appeared from a variety of sources. In mid-May, a two-part interview with two foreign fighter defectors was aired by the Internet-based On the Ground News (OGN) network founded by American filmmaker Bilal Abdul Kareem, who made a name for himself interviewing rebels and particularly Islamist rebels on the ground in Syria and is considered by some to be a citizen-journalist and others to be a *jihadi*. The defectors, Abdur Rahman, who spoke with a southern English accent, and his wife, Safiyya, who spoke with an American English accent, were identified as Europeans and their voices were altered by OGN.⁵²¹ In a disclaimer at the beginning of the first part of the interview Kareem claimed

⁵¹⁹ Islamic State film, *Mu'askar al-Shaykh Abī Nu'mān* (Military Training Camp of *Shaykh* Abu Nu'man) Furat Media, 15 April 2016.

⁵²⁰ Christopher Anzalone, "JTIC Brief: The Expansion of the Islamic State in East Africa," *Jane's*, 27 March 2017. See also Islamic State (unofficial films), *Bay'a majmu'at jadida min al-mujāhidīn fi-l-Šūmāl* (Pledge of a New Group of *Mujāhidīn* in Somalia), 7 December 2015 and *Bay'a thulla min mujāhidī al-Šūmāl li-khalīfat al-muslimīn* (Pledge of a Group of *Mujāhidīn* in Somalia to the Caliph of the Muslims), 8 November 2015.

⁵²¹ The interview's two parts, "Why My Wife and I Left Shabab in Somalia," are available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V4TM5n13rQs&t=1s> and

that OGN had tried to get a comment from Al-Shabaab but the group had not responded and then paradoxically stated that although “every minute detail” of their stories could not be verified by the network, OGN had, through their “contacts,” verified that “indeed much of what they say is real and true from their perspective.”⁵²² Though he tried to appear neutral, Kareem was clearly sympathetic to the two defectors, noting that sometimes those fighting to establish the *shari‘a* and defend Muslims “become the jailers,” alluding to Al-Shabaab.⁵²³

Abdur Rahman, whose face was covered with a scarf except for a narrow slit for his eyes, and Safiyya were particularly critical of Al-Shabaab’s leadership starting with Godane and continuing to Ahmed ‘Umar. Though they had both traveled to Somalia in order to help set up an Islamic state run according to Islamic law and were initially impressed with Al-Shabaab while following the news coverage of the group from afar, both were soon disappointed after arriving in the country at an unspecified date. On the surface, Al-Shabaab at first seemed to be implementing *shari‘a* and establishing a religious state. “I was very impressed by the way the women dressed and on the surface everything was phenomenal,” Safiyya said. “The *masjids* had lessons which could be heard over the loudspeaker. You could hear children reciting Qur’an as you go past their schools. [...] Their lifestyle was very simple and beautiful. [...] I mean on the surface everything looked perfect, but unfortunately I’d come to find out not everything that glitters is gold.”⁵²⁴

“You [would] see Islamic and *jihadi* slogans painted all over. You have the loudspeakers blasting *anāshīd* (acapella poetic chants akin to songs without instrumentation) and Islamic lectures,” Abdur Rahman said. “When the time for prayer comes, all the shops

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=91bAl_AhO2o, both last accessed 27 July 2017. They were later released in late May with Arabic subtitles and these versions are available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QmWn1_-AFTg and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rEb_aRRsU1k, both last accessed 27 July 2017.

⁵²² OGN News, “Why My Wife and I Left Shabab in Somalia: Parts 1 and 2,” May 2017. Transcriptions used are my own.

⁵²³ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*

and places of transactions are closed. You also have the *Hisba*, who are like the vice and virtue police for lack of better words; you have them patrolling around and trying to enjoin the good and forbid the evil. These are the first glimpses one gets when they arrive there [Al-Shabaab-controlled Somalia]. At first glance, yeah, it seems like an Islamic environment but, you know, there's more to that than what meets the eye."⁵²⁵

The two claimed that Al-Shabaab maintained strict control over its members by restricting Internet access so they could not consume independent sources of news beyond the official reporting of the group itself.⁵²⁶ Safiyya's first experience of the inequality of the group occurred among its women, who were roughly divided into two main groups, local Somali women and the wives and womenfolk of foreign fighters (*muhājirāt*) like herself. These two groups were then divided again between the wives of rank-and-file fighters and the wives of commanders and senior leaders with the latter group forming what she called an "elite" group of women who wielded a great deal of authority among the other women and played the role of disseminators of rumors against internal dissidents to ruin their reputations.⁵²⁷

"I honestly believe they are more of a cult than anything," Abdur Rahman said. "When they tell members to safeguard the secrets of the group, really what they mean by that is keeping the skeletons in the closet."⁵²⁸ He went on to say that he first began to question the group about a year-and-a-half into his time in Somalia when he was first allowed to interact openly with other members outside of his assigned departments and with local Somalis, both groups of whom, he said, complained about the group's authoritarianism and corruption.⁵²⁹ Although he initially dismissed these criticisms, their frequency, he said, made him

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*

reevaluate his position and conduct his own investigation of sorts. “Deep down inside I knew that the movement was rotten,” he admitted, but said that it took him a while to attempt to leave it because he, like other internal dissidents, was afraid of being imprisoned or killed by the *Amniyat*.⁵³⁰

Al-Shabaab’s leadership did not implement *shari‘a* impartially, Safiyya claimed, but instead used it as a tool to maintain their authority and quash dissent, ignoring Islamic law when it did not suit their purposes.⁵³¹ She recounted one case in which the wife of a rank-and-file foreign fighter was sexually assaulted by an *Amniyat* official and when her husband attempted to bring a case in court, he was pressured by the group to stay silent.⁵³²

“Essentially what I am really trying to say,” she said, “is that *shari‘a* isn’t the highest authority but rather their [Al-Shabaab’s] military rules above the *shari‘a*.”⁵³³

The *jihadi*-insurgent group is also wanton in its application of *takfīr*, Abdur Rahman and Safiyya said, because it demanded loyalty at the point of a sword and accused anyone critical of it to be “apostates.” In short, Al-Shabaab’s leaders identified themselves with “Islam” and thus saw anyone critical of them to be going against Islam.⁵³⁴ As had al-Afghani, they both also alleged that Godane and his loyalists had abandoned the Islamic system of consultative governance through *shūrā* in favor of an increasingly authoritarian system in which the *amīr*’s authority was maintained through violence, threats, and bribery.⁵³⁵ Dissidents were arrested and sent to the *Amniyat*’s prisons where the living conditions were horrible; prisoners were only allowed to bathe once every two weeks, fed scraps, and only provided with one set of clothing, which they were only allowed to wash

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*

⁵³² *Ibid.*

⁵³³ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*

once a month. They were kept three people to a small cell and were sometimes chained with no access to fresh air or sunlight, Abdur Rahman said, basing this on his own experience in an *Amniyat* prison for a total of one year and ten months for attempting to leave the group several times before he and Safiyya were finally able to escape to territory not controlled by Al-Shabaab.⁵³⁶

Safiyya, like Hammami, also alleged that Al-Shabaab's leadership misused tax funds and *zakāt*, using the monies for their own personal benefit rather than to better the *Umma* or the population under the rule.⁵³⁷ The leaders purchased expensive cars and other luxuries while local people struggled to feed their children. Any of members of the *'ulamā* who criticized the group were declared apostates and silenced, she said.⁵³⁸ The reality of Al-Shabaab, she alleged, was far from the "Islamic" image that their leaders projected and resembled instead a dictatorship that elevated human interests over divine commands.

Al-Shabaab, stung by the allegations in the interview, responded the next month in a strongly worded written refutation released by the GIMF, which also coordinates the online distribution of the group's external media.⁵³⁹ Opening with a *ḥadīth* from the canonical collection compiled by Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī in the ninth century in which the Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said that any person who lies about a fellow Muslim will be among the denizens of Hell until he retracts his falsehood, the refutation accused Abdur Rahman and Safiyya of inconsistencies in their claims and of serving as mouthpieces for the enemies of Islam such as the apostate Somali federal government.⁵⁴⁰ Bemoaning the "new trend, greatly aided by social media, to disparage [the *mujāhidīn*'s] endeavors and belittle

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁹ Abu Muhammad al-Muhajir, "Lies in Disguise: A Refutation of the 'On the Ground News Interview' 'Why My Wife and I Left Shabab in Somalia,'" Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF), 5 June 2017.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

their efforts,” its author, Abu Muhammad al-Muhajir, said the two had created severe *fitna* amongst the Muslims and specifically the *mujāhidīn* and also accused interviewer Bilal Abdul Kareem of failing to abide by journalistic standards by thoroughly fact-checking the two’s claims before airing the interview.⁵⁴¹ In short, the two defectors presented nothing but *ad hominem* attacks and “nothing more than unsubstantiated allegations and sweeping statements that sought to delegitimize the *mujahideen* of East Africa by portraying them as an oppressive band of crooks and criminals,” Abu Muhammad wrote.⁵⁴² Contrary to the couple’s claims that foreign fighters were badly treated, he responded by saying that his own experiences proved the opposite. “It is an honour to be a soldier of Allah and part of HSM’s [Al-Shabaab’s] *muhajireen* [foreign fighter] cadre, a cadre that consists of the most varied composition of races, ethnicities, and nationalities,” he said. “United by a common creed and the desire to support the religion of Allah and help in the establishment of Islamic *sharia*, we, the *muhajireen*, have become a part and parcel of the fabric of the Somali society just as the *muhajireen* of [Mecca] became a pillar of the Islamic community in Medina [during the Prophet Muhammad’s lifetime]. Every sincere *muhajir* would, without a shred of doubt, testify to the generosity, hospitality, and selfless sacrifice of the *Ansar* [local *jihadis*] of Somalia and their love of Islamic *sharia*.”⁵⁴³ He went on to list a bevy of *jihadi* heavyweights including Bin Laden, al-Zawahiri, and Islamic State of Iraq leaders Abu ‘Umar al-Baghdadi and Abu Hamza al-Muhājir who had previously praised Al-Shabaab.⁵⁴⁴

“What is deeply saddening today is that we have people who, after failing to persevere in the path of *jihad* due to their inherent weaknesses, are now trying to uproot the tree of *sharia* that was irrigated with the pure blood of thousands of martyrs,” Abu

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*

⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Muhammad wrote. “The same individuals who were yesterday welcomed with open arms are today stabbing in the back the very people who gave them a home and a helping hand so that they can freely practice their religion. [...] These were the people [local Al-Shabaab members and leaders] who sacrificed their lives, wealth, and time to ensure that their *muhajireen* brothers were never in need.”⁵⁴⁵

Five days later, Abdur Rahman responded with his own counter-refutation under the name Abdurrahman bin Abdillah, using a reference to Qur’an 29:41 in which the strength of those who stand against God is described as being as weak as a spider web, a verse also used by other militant Islamist groups including Lebanon’s Hizbullah.⁵⁴⁶ Writing that Al-Shabaab’s response was “nothing more than typical empty rhetoric, personal attacks, and character assassinations that they’re [Al-Shabaab] known for,” he accused the group of “twisting facts” so as to obfuscate the truth and the reality of their abandonment of *shari’a* in the interest of personal aggrandizement and power.⁵⁴⁷ He alleged that Abu Muhammad was the same individual who, in 2013, wrote a refutation of Hammami as “Abu Hamza al-Muhajir,” and was in fact, he claimed, the same man who has served as Al-Shabaab’s English language film and audio narrator since June 2010, whom he named as “Abdullah UK,” who also went by the alias “Awoowe.”⁵⁴⁸ Abdurrahman dismissed the list of *jihadi* leaders who had praised the group as mindlessly “clinging blindly to big names” when “the reality is that these individuals are not in Somalia and have little to no information of what really occurs except whatever reports or letters Al-Shabaab decide to send them.”⁵⁴⁹ He then hypocritically listed other *jihadi* leaders and scholars who had criticized Al-Shabaab. Finally,

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁶ Abdurrahman bin Abdillah, *The Weakest of Homes is the Home of the Spider: A Response to Ash-Shabaab’s ‘Lies in Disguise,’* 10 June 2017.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.* The narrator has never been named even with a *nom de guerre* by Al-Shabaab.

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Abdurrahman vehemently denied Abu Muhammad's allegation that he and his wife may be agents of the Somali government.⁵⁵⁰

Abdurrahman's counter-refutation and a number of other publications critical of Al-Shabaab were distributed online by a new anti-Shabaab *jihadi* media outlet, Al-Haqa'iq, which maintained, as of July 2017, two Twitter accounts and a Telegram account.⁵⁵¹ The Twitter accounts, which are run by user "al-Mu'tazz bi-llah," was started on 7 October 2014 and has tweeted sporadically since then, with activity becoming more frequent in early June 2017. It accused Al-Shabaab of shedding the blood of Somali Muslims wantonly in their attacks in Mogadishu, alleged that Godane was a "sinner" (*zindīq*) for searching for obscure *fiqh* positions against the judgement of past jurists, and claimed he was a "psychopath" who glorified the violence of the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA), which has widely been condemned by other *jihadis* including Bin Laden.⁵⁵²

Al-Haqa'iq and other critics of Al-Shabaab harnessed the power of social media and the Internet and the decline in pre-eminence of the vetted *jihadi* web fora to wage a media war against the group and its supporters, demonstrating how the democratization of media platforms and increasing ease of access has both positive and negative effects on not only the façade of unity of *jihadi* media but also Sunni jihadism as a whole. The Internet provides *jihadis* with a platform independent of established network media run by international conglomerates and state governments but also enables internal dissidents to openly air their grievances and sometimes sensational allegations against established *jihadi* organizations and their leaders, from al-Zawahiri to Godane, and their loyalists.

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵¹ <https://twitter.com/almu3tazz> and <https://t.me/AlHaqaiaiq>, both last accessed 27 July 2017.

⁵⁵² <https://twitter.com/almu3tazz/status/879764448151523328>, 27 June to 5 July 2017, and <https://twitter.com/almu3tazz/status/877932940101070849>, 22 June 2017.

The clashing media campaigns of Al-Shabaab as an organization and, through informal and semi-official means and networks, individual supporters and ranking members, versus Al-Shabaab defectors, dissidents, and critics was marked by the ability, provided by new social media, for the construction and dissemination of a narrative or set of narrative frames that contradicted and critiqued the official organizational *jihadi* message. The two opposing media campaigns, both of which made use of new and social media, not only exposed the internal schisms within Al-Shabaab but also demonstrated that these divisions were not cut-and-dried and nor did they run along simplistic fault lines between Somali and foreign fighters. Indeed, though Hammami was joined by a number of other non-Somali and diaspora Somali foreign fighters, he was criticized and opposed by others. The presence of foreign fighters from different background including those from around the Horn of Africa and those from regions further afield such as North America and Western Europe illustrated the ways in which new media and social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and, later, Telegram empowered and challenged *jihadi* organizations and independent *jihadi* voices in their narrative framing and dissemination.

'Protectors of the Rafida' & the 'Neo-Kharijites': The War between Islamic State and Al-Qaeda

Islamic State and its precursor organizations—the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS, April 2013-June 2014), Islamic State of Iraq (ISI, October 2006-April 2013), Majlis Shūrā al-Mujāhidīn (MSM, January 2006-October 2006), Al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers (AQI, October 2004-January 2006), and Jamā'at al-Tawḥīd wa-l-Jihad (JTJ)—is no stranger to inter-*jihadi* intrigue and controversy. From the time it established a foothold in Iraq under the leadership of founder Abu Muṣ'ab al-Zarqāwī in 2002-2003, the organization has adhered to a particularly virulent interpretation of *takfīr* vis-à-vis other Muslims, both the Shi'a as well as Sunnis whom it considers to be lapsed or have become apostates due to their alliance and cooperation with non-Muslims or the Shi'a. Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri, though

generally supportive of al-Zarqāwī's insurgency against American, British, and other Coalition forces in Iraq, were more hesitant about the Jordanian's campaign targeting Iraqi Shi'a generally as well as his organization's adoption of grisly video-taped beheadings of diplomats and foreign contractors in the country.

The variation in sectarianism and *takfīr* between Al-Qaeda Central and Islamic State is explained by both ideological as well as strategic differences. Al-Qaeda, in relative comparison to Islamic State, has striven to build a broad-based organization, ideological current and social movement. In order to do this, its leadership, beginning with bin Laden and other senior founding members, have sought to downplay or postpone dealing with inter-sectarian and internal political and religious differences and, though critical of Shi'ism, have tended to avoid sectarian conflicts in favor of focusing on the "Crusader" West, Zionism, political Hinduism, and "apostate" Sunni Muslims, whom they see as the main persecutors and opponents of Islam and Sunni Muslims. Though both organizations have been influenced by aspects of Salafism, which is particularly hostile to non-Salafis and particularly the Shi'a, Islamic State draws more directly on the Najdi Salafī tradition and ideological lineage beginning with Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb in the mid-eighteenth century and continuing through his successors to the present day and particularly through the most radical current within "Awakening" (Sahwa) Saudi Salafism. Islamic State and its precursor organizations going back to their founding by al-Zarqāwī were also shaped by the deep, sectarianized contours of the pre- and post-2003 conflict in Iraq and the Syrian civil war beginning in the spring of 2011, framing their extreme sectarianism and using it as a recruitment tool with which to target increasingly sectarianized elements within the Syrian and Iraqi opposition and emerging armed rebel and insurgent groups. In Somalia, though Al-Shabaab also espoused a radical sectarianism towards the Shi'a and 'Alawīs, the organization focused its energies and efforts on attacking and competing with Sunni Sufis,

who form the majority of the country's population. In contrast, in the Levant, the diverse array of Muslim sects and other religious communities influenced the development of a more violent physical aspect to Islamic State's sectarianism.

In February 2004 the U.S.-led Coalition Provisional Authority, which was tasked with overseeing Iraq's transition from one party Ba'athist rule to a representational democratic republic, intercepted a letter from al-Zarqāwī to Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri in which he laid out his organization's ideological views and strategy for sowing chaos in the country. Briefly addressing Iraqi Kurds and their political leadership as a "Trojan horse" of the Americans and "the Jews," meaning Israel, al-Zarqāwī spent the bulk of the letter ranting about the dangers posed by the country's Shi'a, the "lurking snake, the crafty and malicious scorpion, the spying enemy, and the penetrating venom."⁵⁵³ The challenge posed by the Shi'a was far more difficult than that posed by the Americans and "patent infidelity (*kufr*)" because the former worked through subterfuge and cloaked themselves in "the garb of a friend," meaning as fellow Muslims, and outwardly called for unity while covertly seeking to undermine Islam from within, as their ancestors have done throughout history.⁵⁵⁴

"Shi'ism is a religion that has nothing in common with Islam except in the way that Jews have something in common with Christians under the banner of the People of the Book," he wrote. "From patent polytheism (*shirk*), worshipping at graves, and circumambulating shrines, to calling the Companions [of the Prophet Muhammad, the *Ṣaḥāba*) infidels and insulting the mothers of the believers [the Prophet's wives, chief among them 'Aisha] and the elite of this *Umma*..."⁵⁵⁵ He also accused the Shi'a of distorting the Qur'an and spreading "manifestations of atheism" through their books and unique scriptural

⁵⁵³ An English translation of the letter is available at <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/nea/rls/31694.htm>, last accessed 27 July 2017.

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

sources.⁵⁵⁶ Their history, he said, was full of examples of undisguised hostility toward Sunnis, which in turn was their central motivation in Iraq as they were newly empowered by the collapse of Saddam Hussein and the rise of Shi‘i Islamist parties and ‘*ulamā* such as Grand *Ayatullah* ‘Ali al-Sistani.⁵⁵⁷

The majority of Iraq’s Sunnis were listless, leaderless, and fragmented and most of the country’s Sunni ‘*ulamā* and other religious leaders, al-Zarqāwī said, were “Sufis doomed to perdition” and incapable of reviving “true” Islam and the spirit of *jihad* in Iraq.⁵⁵⁸ Sunni politicians largely came from the Iraqi Muslim Brotherhood and they merely used the “blood of the martyrs” to buy themselves political power and “counterfeit glory on the skulls of the faithful.”⁵⁵⁹ They were attempting to gain control over Iraqi *mujāhidīn* simply so they could use them as a bargaining chip and tool during the transition before selling them out once they were ensconced in the new government.⁵⁶⁰ “Their religion is mercurial,” he said. “They have no firm principles and they do not start from enduring legal [*shari‘a*] bases.”⁵⁶¹

In his grand strategy for expelling the Americans and other invaders from Iraq, al-Zarqāwī prioritized violence against the Shi‘a generally in their political and military offices as well as their religious houses of worship, referring to mosques and *husaynīyāt* (places for the commemoration of the martyrdom of the third Shi‘i Imam, Husayn bin ‘Ali, in 680).⁵⁶² His plan, in short, was to provoke a tit-for-tat sectarian war in Iraq so that the country’s Sunnis would fear “imminent danger and annihilating death” and thus be forced to take up

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶² *Ibid.*

arms against the Shi‘a.⁵⁶³ Iraqi Sunnis, he argued, must be forced to recognize the “secret war against the people of Islam” that was being waged by the Shi‘a, making them even more than the Americans the most dangerous enemy.⁵⁶⁴ Al-Zarqāwī urged the Al-Qaeda Central senior leadership to endorse his strategy against the Shi‘a and other “sects of apostasy,” promising, if they did, that he and his men would serve as their “readied soldiers” under their banner.⁵⁶⁵

Under al-Zarqāwī, JIJ carried out indiscriminate attacks on Iraqi Shi‘i civilians and targeted public places with suicide bombers, causing mass casualties among combatants as well as non-combatants. His blanket *takfīr* of all Shi‘a earned him criticisms from his onetime mentor, the Jordanian-Palestinian Salafi-*jihadi* religious scholar Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisī as well as from several Al-Qaeda Central leaders including al-Zawahiri, ‘Aṭīyyatullah al-Lībī, and Abu Yaḥyā al-Lībī. Though all viewed Shi’ism as deviant from a theological perspective, they, unlike al-Zarqāwī, did not believe it justified from a *shari‘a* or strategic perspective the wanton killing of Shi‘a generally since most of the laity were simply ignorant and kept so by their *‘ulamā*. Such brutal tactics would also be seen as confusing and distasteful by most Sunnis, the target audience for Al-Qaeda and JIJ in terms of attracting recruits and funding. The priority, they argued, should be on fighting the Americans, British, and other “Crusader” invaders and those Iraqis directly complicit in their plans for the country.⁵⁶⁶

‘Aṭīyyatullah, long wary of wanton *takfīr* because of his personal experiences in Algeria with the GIA, wrote respectfully but firmly to al-Zarqāwī that he should avoid

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁶ Al-Zawahiri’s and ‘Aṭīyyatullah’s letters to al-Zarqāwī are available in the original Arabic and English translations at <https://ctc.usma.edu/posts/zawahiris-letter-to-zarqawi-original-language-2>, <https://ctc.usma.edu/posts/zawahiris-letter-to-zarqawi-english-translation-2>, <https://ctc.usma.edu/posts/atiyahs-letter-to-zarqawi-original-language-2>, and <https://ctc.usma.edu/posts/atiyahs-letter-to-zarqawi-english-translation-2>, all last accessed 27 July 2017.

casting the Iraqi insurgency in a negative light by turning Muslims away from supporting it due to its perceived brutality and must be guided in his actions by the “judicious *shari‘a*,” which lays out clear and specific guidelines for the waging of war and delineates legitimate and illegitimate tactics and targeting.⁵⁶⁷ Al-Maqdisi also criticized his former student’s tactics in a series of news media interviews including a prominent one in June 2005 with Al-Jazeera Arabic as well as in postings to his web site.⁵⁶⁸ Despite their misgivings, al-Zawahiri, Bin Laden, and other Al-Qaeda leaders desperately needed the boost that al-Zarqāwī’s insurgency in Iraq provided the battered *jihadi* movement they claimed to lead and did their best to ignore his continued transgressions, even eulogizing him as the epitome of *jihad* and “commander of the martyrdom-seekers” (*amīr al-istishhādīyīn*) when he was killed in a U.S. airstrike in June 2006.⁵⁶⁹

Documents captured in the U.S. Navy SEAL raid on Bin Laden’s compound in May 2011 revealed that the Al-Qaeda founder and other senior Al-Qaeda Central leaders including the American Adam Gadahn privately viewed JWT/AQI/ISI with severe distaste and believed al-Zarqāwī’s successors as leaders of the organization, Abu ‘Umar al-Baghdadi and Abu Hamza al-Muhājir, to be even more repulsively brutal and macabre than the Jordanian.⁵⁷⁰ Bin Laden’s hopes that the organization would unify Iraq’s *mujāhidīn* and change course following the April 2010 killings of Abu ‘Umar and Abu Hamza did not come to pass and Gadahn, who had planned to write a letter inviting Arab Christians to convert to Islam,

⁵⁶⁷ Christopher Anzalone, “Revisiting Shaykh Atiyyatullah’s Works on Takfir and Mass Violence.”

⁵⁶⁸ Joas Wagemakers, “Reclaiming Scholarly Authority: Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi’s Critique of Jihadi Practices,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 34, no. 7 (2011), 525-526 and Nibras Kazimi, “A Virulent Ideology in Mutation: Zarqawi Upstages Maqdisi,” *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, 12 September 2005, at <https://www.hudson.org/research/9771-a-virulent-ideology-in-mutation-zarqawi-upstages-maqdisi>, last accessed 27 July 2017.

⁵⁶⁹ Usama bin Laden, *Rithā Shahīd al-Umma wa Amīr al-Istishhādīyīn Abī Muṣ‘ab al-Zarqāwī* (Eulogy of the Martyr of the *Umma* and Commander of the Martyrdom-seekers, Abu Muṣ‘ab al-Zarqāwī), Mu’assasat al-Saḥāb li-l-Intāḥ al-I‘lāmī, 30 June 2006 and Al-Zawahiri, *Rithā Shahīd al-Umma wa Amīr al-Istishhādīyīn Abī Muṣ‘ab al-Zarqāwī* (Eulogy of the Martyr of the *Umma* and Commander of the Martyrdom-seekers, Abu Muṣ‘ab al-Zarqāwī), Mu’assasat al-Saḥāb li-l-Intāḥ al-I‘lāmī, 24 June 2006.

⁵⁷⁰ Lahoud, Caudill, Collins, Koehler-Derrick, Rassler, and al-‘Ubaydi, *Letters from Abbottabad*, 22-28.

criticized the ISI's hostage taking at the Syrian Catholic Our Lady of Salvation Church in Baghdad on 31 October 2010 for alienating potential allies and he questioned the group's justifications for trying to start a war against Iraqi Christians generally.⁵⁷¹

In April 2013, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the *amīr* of Islamic State, unilaterally announced that his organization was retaking control of Jabhat al-Nusra, which had begun as a satellite of the Iraq-based organization.⁵⁷² This move took Jabhat al-Nusra's leadership including its *amīr*, Abu Muhammad al-Jawlānī, by surprise and they rejected the move and appealed for al-Zawahiri to intervene. In June, al-Zawahiri sent a letter rejecting Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's move to assume full control over Jabhat al-Nusra and ruled that the latter would instead be Al-Qaeda's official affiliate in Syria.⁵⁷³ The Al-Qaeda Central leader criticized the Islamic State's chief for making the decision and public announcement without any consultation with or even alerting Al-Qaeda leaders despite the fact that the latter was, at least in theory, an affiliate group.⁵⁷⁴ The infighting led to multiple splits within Jabhat al-Nusra as some members decided to join the newly declared unified organization ISIS/ISIL and others remained loyal to al-Jawlānī.⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷¹ Gadahn's letter is available in the original Arabic and in English translation at <https://ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Letter-from-Adam-Gadahn-Original.pdf> and <https://ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Letter-from-Adam-Gadahn-Translation.pdf>, both last accessed 27 July 2017. On the church attack, see Anthony Shadid, "Church Attack Seen as Strike at Iraq's Core," *The New York Times*, 1 November 2010, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/02/world/middleeast/02iraq.html>, last accessed 27 July 2017 and Muhanad Mohammed, "Iraq Church Raid Ends with 52 Dead," *Reuters*, 1 November 2010, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-violence-idUSTRE69U1YE20101101>, last accessed 27 July 2017.

⁵⁷² Islamic State of Iraq, audio message from Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi [No Title], 9 April 2013.

⁵⁷³ Basma Atassi, "Qaeda Chief Annuls Syrian-Iraqi Jihad Merger," *Al-Jazeera English*, 9 June 2013, at http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/06/2013699425657882.html?utm=from_old_mobile, last accessed 27 July 2017.

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁵ Richard Spencer, "Syria: Jabhat al-Nusra Split after Leader's Pledge of Support for al-Qaeda," *The Telegraph*, 19 May 2013, at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/10067318/Syria-Jabhat-al-Nusra-split-after-leaders-pledge-of-support-for-al-Qaeda.html>, last accessed 27 July 2017 and Ben Knight, "Al Qaeda Infighting Complicates Convolutd Syrian Crisis," *Deutsche Welle*, 6 February 2014, at <http://www.dw.com/en/al-qaeda-infighting-complicates-convolutd-syrian-crisis/a-17410561>, last accessed 27 July 2017.

In the autumn of 2013, ISIS stopped participating in coalitions with Syrian rebel groups and Jabhat al-Nusra and instead focused on building up an insurgent proto-state in territories under its control. By January 2014, ISIS had forcibly taken full control of the northwestern city of Raqqa, which had fallen to a rebel coalition in March 2013, and began trying to seize territory from Syrian rebel groups in other governorates including Aleppo, Dayr al-Zur, Hama, and Homs, which led to the outbreak of severe fighting between it and multiple other insurgent factions including Jabhat al-Nusra and rebel militias under the Free Syrian Army (FSA) umbrella. In February 2014, al-Zawahiri publicly cast out Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's organization from the Al-Qaeda fold after the latter refused to participate in *shari'a* mediation efforts to settle its dispute with Jabhat al-Nusra, one led by al-Zawahiri deputy Abu Khalid al-Sūrī, a cofounder of the Syrian Islamist rebel group Ahrar al-Sham, and a second initiative by the Saudi religious scholar and foreign fighter 'Abdullah al-Muhaysinī.⁵⁷⁶ He disowned the group's actions, saying that Al-Qaeda was not responsible for them, and criticized the ISIS leadership's intransigence and unilateral decision-making, which harmed the cause of *jihad* in Syria.⁵⁷⁷

The outbreak of the infighting between Al-Qaeda and Islamic State/ISIS came during the period when the primacy of the *jihadi* Internet fora was beginning to decline and shift toward a more open model of online distribution and circulation of *jihadi* media materials. The dispute was not only waged on the ground in Syria, where scores of fighters on both sides were killed in battles for control of territory, but also in cyberspace in dueling pieces of propaganda from both the official organizations as well as their supporters online.

⁵⁷⁶ Al-Qaeda Central communiqué, "Bayān bi-shā'n 'alāqat Jamā'at Qā'idat al-Jihād bi-Jamā'at (al-Dawlat al-Islāmīya fī al-'Iraq wa-l-Shām)."

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

Islamic State accused Al-Qaeda of betraying *jihad* in the interest of maintaining its own power and holding back the latter from expanding its campaign and targeting.⁵⁷⁸ In a May 2014 message from Islamic State’s spokesman, Abu Muhammad al-‘Adnānī, sarcastically addressed al-Zawahiri, “apologizing” first for his frank words before then accusing Al-Qaeda under his leadership of leaving the path of its past, dead leaders including the “*imam al-mujaddid*” Bin Laden, Sulayman Abu Ghayth, and Abu Yaḥyā al-Lībī.⁵⁷⁹ Out of respect for Al-Qaeda Central’s leadership, which was concerned about the fate of senior members held in Iran, Islamic State had refrained for years from targeting the Iranians despite the latter’s deep military and political meddling in Iraq.⁵⁸⁰ Despite the squeamishness and waffling positions of al-Zawahiri and other Al-Qaeda leaders in making *takfīr* against Muslims who participate in “*kufṛ*” elections and “apostate councils and parliaments” (*majālis al-ridḍa*), the patent *kufṛ* of these individuals was clear, al-‘Adnānī said.⁵⁸¹ He went on to accuse al-Zawahiri of dividing the ranks of the *jihadis*, corruption, and of colluding to restrain Islamic State and its campaign of seeking Sunni *jihadi* unity.⁵⁸²

Rejecting al-Zawahiri’s casting out of Islamic State and dissolving it, al-‘Adnānī declared that the group “is not a branch that is subordinate to Al-Qaeda, nor shall there be a day when it is such,” and instead demanded that if Al-Qaeda wanted to be active in Iraq it must instead pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who was a Qurayshi through Husayn bin ‘Ali (*ḥafīd al-Husayn*), the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad.⁵⁸³ Islamic State excoriated the leadership of AQAP for rejecting its call to join the group and pledge

⁵⁷⁸ Abu Muhammad al-‘Adnānī, *Uthrān Amīr al-Qā‘ida* (Apologies, *Amīr* of Al-Qaeda), Mu’assasat al-Furqāb li-l-Intāḥ al-I‘lāmī, 11 May 2014.

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸² *Ibid.*

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.*

allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, alleging that Al-Qaeda Central's Yemeni affiliate was betraying Sunnism by continuing to be allied with a group whose leader, al-Zawahiri, is on record as being against the "full" *taḳfīr* and targeting of Shi'a despite the danger they pose to Sunnis.⁵⁸⁴ Further, the position of AQAP was all the more confused given its claim to both adhere to the rulings of al-Zawahiri while also endorsing a virulent anti-Shi'ism directed at the Houthi Movement domestically.⁵⁸⁵

A purported insider and defector from Al-Qaeda Central, Abu Jarīr al-Shamālī, also accused Al-Qaeda leaders of protecting Iran and criticized their refusal to follow in the path of al-Zarqāwī and call for an all-out sectarian war with the Shi'a, saying he was reprimanded for even referring to Iran as a "rāfiḍī" (rejectionist) state.⁵⁸⁶ He also criticized Al-Qaeda for pledging allegiance to the Afghan Taliban under *Mullah* Muhammad 'Umar, who accepted the internationally recognized borders of that country and thus embraced the "*kufr*" creed of nationalism.⁵⁸⁷ The latter accusation became a regular feature of later anti-Afghan Taliban propaganda produced by Islamic State following the public alignment of a number of TTP commanders to Islamic State as the new "Wilāyat Khurasan" (ISWK, Islamic State- Wilāyat Khurasan) after breaking with the TTP's central command under *Mawlana* Fazlullah in the spring of 2014. Islamic State military statements and other print, audio, and audiovisual releases frequently refer to the Afghan Taliban as the "nationalist Taliban movement" (*Ḥarakat Taliban al-waṭanīya*) and Jabhat al-Nusra as "Jabhat al-Jawlānī."⁵⁸⁸

Islamic State's war for control of the global *jihadi* movement was not only waged through official channels but also by the group's supporters individually and online. The

⁵⁸⁴ Abu Maysarah ash-Shami, "The Qa'idah of adh-Dhawahiri, al-Harari, and an-Nadhari," *Dabiq*, issue 6 (December 2014), 16-25.

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁶ Abu Jarīr ash-Shamālī, "Al-Qa'idah of Waziristan," *Dabiq*, issue 6 (December 2014), 40-55.

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁸ See Figure 10 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/07/19/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation/>.

group's supporters released photographs and footage of Jabhat al-Nusra leaders including al-Jawlānī and former Dayr al-Zur commander and *shari'a* official Abu Mārīyā al-Qaḥṭānī, calling for them to be killed on site. Videos of defectors from opposing groups and particularly Jabhat al-Nusra were also posted outside of official Islamic State media on video sharing web sites such as YouTube.⁵⁸⁹ Islamic State supporters on social media platforms including Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat, Instagram, and Telegram also sparred daily with backers of Al-Qaeda and other *jihadis* critical of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's organization. A number of unofficial new *jihadi* media outlets based online were also established with the sole task of producing pro-Islamic State propaganda and attack pieces on Al-Qaeda. These included Al-Battār, Asawirti (al-Āsāwirtī) Media, and the Urdu outlet Ahwal Ummat (*Aḥwāl Umma*), all of which maintained Twitter and Telegram accounts between 2015 and June 2017.⁵⁹⁰

Jabhat al-Nusra, Al-Qaeda Central, and other Al-Qaeda affiliate groups also harnessed the power of new media technologies and the expansive reach of the Internet as well as on the ground counter-propaganda efforts to respond to Islamic State's allegations and promote their own interpretation of events. In March 2014, Jabhat al-Nusra's media apparatus released a series of video "testimonies" from senior leaders about the reality of the schism between the group and Islamic State and the latter's deviance from the path of legitimate *jihad*. Featured leaders included *shari'a* committee official Abu Sulayman al-Muhājir, spokesman Abu Firās al-Sūrī, and commanders Abū Humām al-Sūrī and Abū Ḥafṣ al-Binnishī. A number of other

⁵⁸⁹ *Inshiqāq min Jabhat al-Jawlānī: Ḥaqā'iq Khaṭīra* (Defection from Jabhat al-Jawlānī: Dangerous Truths), 16 August 2014 and *I'tirāfāt Abu Hurayra al-Amrīkī, amīr al-inghimāsīyīn fī Jabhat al-Nusra fī-l-manṭīqa al-janūbīya wa amīr 'askarī fī qāti' al-Qunaytra* (Admissions of Abu Hurayra the American, commander of the storming troops of Jabhat al-Nusra in the southern region and military commander in the Qunaytra sector), 10 October 2015.

⁵⁹⁰ One of the most prolific pro-Islamic State essayists was Gharīb al-Surūrīya, "Al-ḥadharu min taḥsīn šuratihim!" (Beware of Improving Their [Al-Qaeda's, the Afghan Taliban's] Image!), Al-Battār, 3 May 2017.

anti-Islamic State videos were also produced and released by the group beginning in 2014 following the outbreak of severe fighting between the two groups.

Refusing to call Islamic State by its chosen name and opting instead for “Jamā‘at al-Dawla” (the “State Organization”), al-Muhājir said that both Jabhat al-Nusra and Islamic State had initially accepted mediation by al-Zawahiri but that Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and his group later changed their minds and rejected it, instead opting for the path of *fitna* and violence in order to forcibly impose their will on the *mujāhidīn* in Syria.⁵⁹¹ Al-Muhājir also claimed that Islamic State, despite its claim to the contrary, had admitted during meetings that it was subordinate to Al-Qaeda Central and that Islamic State refused to accept the establishment of an independent *shari‘a* court to mediate the two groups’ dispute.⁵⁹² Islamic State was also guilty, he said, of extremism (*ghuluww*) in its justifying of mass violence against Muslims it considers to be apostates and engaged in indiscriminate violence against anyone who dared to criticize it.⁵⁹³ Though exclusivist in its desired political and strategic approach to the Syrian civil war and their use of the conflict as a platform through which to expand in the Levant, Al-Qaeda and its Syrian affiliate also sought to develop, when and where possible, cordial relations and even partnerships, however temporary, with other Syrian Sunni armed rebel actors including the powerful and, for a time, larger and more localized Sunni Islamist organizations such as Ahrar al-Sham. In order to do this, Al-Qaeda and Jabhat al-Nusra generally avoided using *takfīr* even during inter-rebel disputes. In contrast, Islamic State used its adoption of a more literal and extremely violent interpretation of *takfīr* as both a means to attract recruits as regional conflicts hardened sectarianized identities and as an ideological tool with which to implement and construct its desired ideal

⁵⁹¹ Abu Sulayman al-Muhājir *Shahādat al-Shaykh Abī Sulayman al-Muhājir qabīl Intihā Muhlat al-Mubāhala* and *Liqā ma‘ al-Shaykh Abī Sulayman al-Muhājir, ‘udw al-lajnat al-sharī‘a al-‘amma*.

⁵⁹² *Ibid.*

⁵⁹³ *Ibid.*

society and state based on a particularly militant expression of a hybrid Islamism that combined the most radical and extreme elements of Salafī sectarianism and theological exclusivism with revolutionary elements from the “Qutbist” wing of the Muslim Brotherhood. In brief, whereas Al-Qaeda sought to defer inter-sectarian and intra-Sunni differences as much as possible in order to focus on overthrowing apostate Muslim regimes and the “Far Enemy”—chiefly the United States—Islamic State’s leadership saw the purification of ideology and “creed” (*‘aqīda*) as being an important part of the organization’s political platform and narrative framing as well as a way to differentiate itself from other, competing Sunni Islamist and militant Islamist/*jihadi* actors in an environment of increasing conflict-based sectarianization.

Abu Firās al-Sūrī testified that he had met with Abu Khalid al-Sūrī, whom al-Zawahiri had appointed as his deputy to oversee the mediation between Islamic State and Jabhat al-Nusra, and was told by him (Abu Firās) directly of Islamic State’s threats against his life only hours before he was assassinated in a suicide attack in Aleppo on 21 February 2014 following al-Zawahiri’s public denunciation of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.⁵⁹⁴ Abu Firās also accused Islamic State of freewheeling declarations of *takfīr* in contravention of Islamic jurisprudence, a charge repeated by Abū Humām al-Sūrī.⁵⁹⁵ The Jabhat al-Nusra spokesman recounted a hostile meeting between himself and several other Jabhat al-Nusra leaders and Islamic State’s senior Syria official Abu ‘Ali al-Anbārī in which the latter accused them of associating with “apostates.”⁵⁹⁶

In an April 2014 eulogy for Jabhat al-Nusra’s commander in Idlib, Syria, Abu Sulayman accused Islamic State of being the new Kharijites and following in the footsteps of their ancestors in extremism. “This cowardly attack is similar to the act of their forefathers

⁵⁹⁴ Abū Firās al-Sūrī, *Shahādat al-Shaykh Abī Firās al-Sūrī qabīl Intihā Muhlat al-Mubāhala*.

⁵⁹⁵ Abū Humām al-Sūrī, *Shahādat al-Qā’id Abī Humām al-Sūrī qabīl Intihā Muhlat al-Mubāhala*.

⁵⁹⁶ Abū Firās al-Sūrī, *Shahādat al-Shaykh Abī Firās al-Sūrī qabīl Intihā Muhlat al-Mubāhala*.

[the Kharijites] who killed Abdullah bin Khabbab [a companion of the Prophet Muhammad] [and] his wife; sliced open her stomach and killed her unborn baby,” he said. “These same people [Islamic State] were reciters of the Qur’an, stayed up into the night in prayers, and feared to eat anything *haram*, yet had no issues spilling the blood of Muslims.”⁵⁹⁷ The Idlib commander, Abu Muhammad Fātiḥ, was killed alongside his brother, his brother’s wife, their four-year-old daughter, and Fātiḥ’s own daughter, 13.⁵⁹⁸ Abu Sulayman referred in the eulogy to the killing by the original Kharijites of a companion of the Prophet Muhammad and his wife and *aḥādīth* in which the Prophet foretells the coming of a group of Muslims who will recite the Qur’an but for whom “it will not go beyond their throats,” meaning that though they outwardly adhere to piety, they have not internalized Islam’s message and instead have fallen into extremism. The “Kharijite” charge was adopted by Jabhat al-Nusra and its successor organizations, Jabhat Faḥ al-Shām (JFS) and Hay’at Taḥrīr al-Shām (HTS).⁵⁹⁹ Islamic State vehemently denied the charges and argued instead that it only sought to reunify Muslims under the banner of the “caliphate.”⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁷ Abu Sulayman al-Muhājir, “The Gem of Idlib,” 18 April 2014, at <http://justpaste.it/idlbgem>, last accessed 27 July 2017.

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁹ Abu ‘Abdullah al-Shāmī, *Wa law annahum fa ‘alū mā ‘aḏuna bihi lakāna khayrān lahum* (If they did what they are exhorted to do than it would be better for them; Qur’an 4:66), Mu’assasat al-Baṣīra, 16 March 2014 and the video testimony series from Mu’assasat al-Baṣīra, *Wa li-tastabīn sabīl al-mujrimīn* (So the way of the criminals becomes clear; Qur’an 6:55), Parts 1-3, August 2015–November 2015.

⁶⁰⁰ On the historical Kharijites, see G. Levi Della Vida, “Kharidjites,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs (Leiden: Brill, 2006). Consulted online on 2 August 2017 at http://dx.doi.org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0497, Chapter One in Jeffrey T. Kenney, *Muslim Rebels: Kharijites and the Politics of Extremism in Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), and Chapter Two in Lahoud, *The Jihadis’ Path to Self-destruction*. For allegations from mainstream Sunni religious scholars that Islamic State are “neo-Kharijites,” see Abu Aaliyah Surkheel, “Khawarij Ideology, ISIS Savagery: Part One,” *Muslim Matters*, 24 August 2015, at <http://muslimmatters.org/2015/08/24/khawarij-ideology-isis-savagery-part-one/>, last accessed 27 July 2017; Yasir Qadhi, “The Modern Jihadists: Khawarij or Mujahideen,” 12 April 2014, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lezIO8yg2r4>, last accessed 27 July 2017; and Muhammad al-Yaqoubi, *Refuting ISIS: Destroying its Religious Foundations and Proving That it has Strayed from Islam and that Fighting is an Obligation* (Earley, UK: Sacred Knowledge, 2015). For a similar allegation from a controversial Salafi preacher in the United Kingdom, see Abu Usamah al-Thahabi, “The Modern Day Khawarij (ISIS—Al-Muhajiroun—Al-Qaeda),” 25 October 2014, at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jQ0Ja9_Llj4, last accessed 27 July 2017.

One of the harshest anti-Islamic State voices within Jabhat al-Nusra was one of its senior *shari‘a* officials and commander in Dayr al-Zur governorate in eastern Syria, Abu Marīyā al-Qaḥṭānī (Maysar ‘Ali bin Mūsā bin ‘Abdullah al-Jūbūrī), an Iraqi longtime former member of AQI and the ISI since 2004 who was one of the founders of Jabhat al-Nusra in 2011 alongside al-Jawlānī.⁶⁰¹ In Dayr al-Zur Abu Marīyā had attempted to resist Islamic State’s takeover of the region from Syrian rebel groups and established alliances with local tribal militias in an attempt to stave off defeat, ultimately unsuccessfully.⁶⁰² Following his defeat in eastern Syria, he accused Islamic State of serving American interests and of carrying out massacres of Syrian civilians on Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi’s personal orders.⁶⁰³ The group’s wanton declaration of *takfīr* against Jabhat al-Nusra and other “apostate” Syrian rebel groups such as Ahrar al-Sham manifested in the regular shedding of Muslim blood through the perpetration of suicide bombings targeting them, clearly demonstrating their deviation from Islam and similarities to the GIA in Algeria.⁶⁰⁴ Having been denounced by established ‘*ulamā* and *jihadi* leaders, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi’s group was forced to rely, instead, on dubiously credentialed pseudo-scholars such as Turkī al-Bin‘alī.⁶⁰⁵ Further, it was Islamic State, Abu Marīyā alleged, that had facilitated the entrance of Syrian and Turkish Kurdish separatist militias, the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) and YPG militias, by

⁶⁰¹ Lister, *The Syrian Jihad*, 56 and 242, and “An Internal Struggle: Al Qaeda’s Syrian Affiliate is Grappling with Its Identity,” 31 May 2015, at <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2015/05/31/an-internal-struggle-al-qaedas-syrian-affiliate-is-grappling-with-its-identity/>, last accessed 27 July 2017; Abo Bakr al Haj Ali, “Abu Maria: The Nusra Leader Behind the Split with IS in Syria?,” *Middle East Eye*, 14 November 2014, at <http://www.middleeasteye.net/in-depth/features/changes-jabhat-al-nusra-indicate-changes-entire-battlefield-1875666927>, last accessed 27 July 2017; and United States Department of the Treasury, “Treasury Sanctions Al-Nusrah Front Leadership in Syria and Militias Supporting Asad Regime,” 12 November 2012, at <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/pages/tg1797.aspx>, last accessed 27 July 2017.

⁶⁰² Lister, “An Internal Struggle.”

⁶⁰³ Abu Marīyā al-Qaḥṭānī, “Radd al-Shaykh al-Mujāhid Abu Marīyā al-Qaḥṭānī ‘alā ṣawṭiya ‘Qul mūtū bi-ghayẓikum’,” 27 January 2015. He was responding to an audio message from Islamic State spokesman Abu Muhammad al-‘Adnānī which was released on the same day and takes its title from a part of Qur’an 3:119.

⁶⁰⁴ Abu Marīyā al-Qaḥṭānī, *Humiliating Proofs Showing the Ignorance of the Extremists* (2014) and “My Advice to All Those Who are Soft Towards the Khawarij,” January 2015.

⁶⁰⁵ Abu Marīyā al-Qaḥṭānī, *Humiliating Proofs Showing the Ignorance of the Extremists*.

targeting and killing Syrian rebel fighters including those from Jabhat al-Nusra and thus enabling Kurdish militants to make land grabs in northern and eastern Syria.⁶⁰⁶ In his writings and other statements concerning Islamic State and what he sees as its deviation from Islam, the influence of personal experiences with the group, chief among them his defeat in Dayr al-Zur in 2014 by it, are clear, demonstrating the importance of individualized factors on the development and evolution of *jihadi* thought beyond the simplified scope of “religion” and interpretation of scriptural and juridical texts.

Al-Qaeda supporters and other *jihadi* critics of Islamic State also utilized the platforms provided by the Internet and new media to carry out counter-propaganda and anti-Islamic State media campaigns. In 2015 a prominent new *jihadi* media outlet, Katā’ib Rad‘a al-Khawārij (Deterring the Kharijites Brigades), was founded and published materials on social media platforms including Twitter, Telegram, and YouTube. These materials included written documents, photographs, and video testimonies critical of Islamic State including an e-book compilation of statements, essays, and juridical opinions by *jihadi* leaders critical of Islamic State and the extremism it represented.⁶⁰⁷ The outlet also printed and distributed copies on the ground of its publications criticizing Islamic State and accusing them of religious extremism and Kharijite tendencies in northern Syria, which was then a battleground between Syrian rebel groups and Islamic State.⁶⁰⁸ A second media outlet, *Al-Radd ‘alā al-Khawārij* (Deterring the Kharijites), operated a Telegram channel as recently as

⁶⁰⁶ Abu Marīyā al-Qaḥṭānī, “Da‘ish (ISIS) and Conspiracy, June 2015.

⁶⁰⁷ Katā’ib Rad‘a al-Khawārij, *Qālū ‘an Dawlat al-Baghdadi: Aqwāl al-‘Ulamā al-‘Āmilīn wa Ahl al-Ra’y al-mu’tabarīn wa Qādat al-Jihād al-Mayāmīn fī Khawārij Dawlat al-Māriqīn* (What They Said about al-Baghdadi’s State: Sayings of the ‘Ulamā of Action and the Respected Jurists and the Leaders of the Blessed Jihād concerning the Kharijites of the Rogue State), 23 August 2015.

⁶⁰⁸ Katā’ib Rad‘a al-Khawārij, “Ṭabā‘a wa tawzī‘a al-kutub wa-l-maṭwīyāt al-da‘wīya allatī taḥadhdhar min Ṭanzīm al-Dawla wa tabayyan li-l-muslimīn mafhūm al-Khilāfat al-Rāshida” (Publication and distribution of *da‘wa* books and pamphlets which warn against the State Organization and notify the Muslims about the meaning and [true] conception of the Rightly-guided Caliphate), 18 April 2016.

July 2017.⁶⁰⁹ Jabhat al-Nusra and other anti-Islamic State armed groups in Syria, Libya, Yemen, and other countries, like Islamic State, also released videotaped testimonies from defectors “revealing” the organization’s true depths of depravity.⁶¹⁰

A third media outlet, Khawarij and Jihad, set up a Telegram account and published regular posts about the characteristics of the historical Kharijites and linked them, in the present day, to Islamic State. Just like the Kharijites of old, Islamic State proclaims anyone they disagree with them to be “a kaafir, pagan or dangerous deviant,” the outlet said.⁶¹¹ The neo-Kharijite groups are also quick to claim that they are the only “guardians or the only legitimate group upholding the *Sunna*,” using this claim as “a subtle way...to accuse other people of not having faith. [...] They have made Islam into a country club, throwing those out who they don’t want, and making themselves safe from harm.”⁶¹² Despite their claims of piety and religious knowledge, the historical and the neo-Kharijites in reality have only a superficial knowledge.⁶¹³ Other pro-Al-Qaeda and anti-Islamic State *jihadi* media outlets operating on Telegram, Twitter, and other social media platforms in 2015 and 2016 included Al-Maqalaat and Al-Muwahideen, the latter of which also ran a blog.⁶¹⁴

Both Islamic State and its opponents utilized official, organization-controlled media as well as semi-official and independent media outlets to spar online while clashing physically on the ground in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, Nigeria, South Asia, and other locales.

⁶⁰⁹ <https://web.telegram.org/#/im?p=@Eslamy2>, last accessed 27 July 2017.

⁶¹⁰ *Shahādat Abu ‘Abdullah al-Tūnisī, Aḥad Junūd al-Dawla li-l-Baghdadi* (Testimony of Abu ‘Abdullah the Tunisian, One of the Soldiers of al-Baghdadi’s State), 25 March 2014; *Testimony of Defector Abu Talha al-Almani*, 21 April 2014; and Majlis Shūrā Mujāhidīn Derna, *Ma‘adhiratan ilā Rabbikum: Shahādat Mudīr Maḥkamat Tanzīm al-Dawla fī Derna* (To Absolve Yourself before Your Lord: Testimony of the Head of the State Organization’s Court in Derna), 31 October 2015; the first part of the title is taken from Qur’an 7:164.

⁶¹¹ Posted at <https://telegram.org/#/im?p=@KhawarijandJihad>, 11 May 2016, last accessed 11 May 2016 and saved in my archives.

⁶¹² Posted at <https://telegram.org/#/im?p=@KhawarijandJihad>, 3 May 2016, last accessed on 3 May 2016 and saved in my archive.

⁶¹³ Posted at <https://telegram.org/#/im?p=@KhawarijandJihad>, 28 April 2016, last accessed 28 April 2016 and saved in my archive.

⁶¹⁴ https://web.telegram.org/#/im?p=@Al_Maqalaat and <https://web.telegram.org/#/im?p=@almuwmed>, both channels are now defunct but relevant posts have been saved in my archive.

They have harnessed the power of new media platforms and the increasing accessibility and ease of use of the Internet, graphic and video design software, and media production tools as part of their media operations campaign, which they see as an integral part of their ability and “toolkit” that allows them to wage a war on multiple fronts, from the physical battlefield to cyberspace, and against multiple enemies, both external and internal. *Jihadi* media, which has made rapid advances just in the past decade, seeks to reach multiple audiences, sometimes simultaneously in a single media piece, from current members of the organizations and potential and passive supporters (seeking to make the latter more active) to external and internal (to the *jihadi* universe) rivals and opponents ranging from the U.S., NATO, Russia, Israel, and India to *jihadi* competitors for power and economic and human resource supremacy.

PART II

Islamic State Media Operations (2003-2017)

The origins of Islamic State lay in the ideological legacy of the late Abu Muṣ‘ab al-Zarqāwī, his senior aides, and the organization they established in Iraqi Kurdistan in 2002 after departing from Afghanistan, where he had run a *jihadi* training camp. The group, which he named Jamā‘at al-Tawḥīd wa-l-Jihad (JTJ), eventually came to dominate much, though not all, of the insurgency against the U.S. and U.K.-led occupation of Iraq following the March 2003 invasion and collapse of Saddam Hussein’s regime. Under his leadership, JTJ formally affiliated with Al-Qaeda Central in October 2004 and changed its name to Al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers (Al-Qaeda fi Bilād al-Rafidayn, AQI), evolving again shortly before al-Zarqāwī was killed in a U.S. air strike in June 2006 into an umbrella group, the Majlis Shūra al-Mujāhidīn (MSM), in January 2006. One of his most enduring legacies on the organization was the operationalization of a virulently poisonous sectarian and extremely

violent, even by *jihadi* standards, bent to the insurgency. The widespread attacks on military and civilian targets by the organization under his leadership also made him an incredibly popular figure among the broader Sunni *jihadi* community and his influence can today be seen across multiple groups including Al-Qaeda Central, AQAP, AQIM, Al-Shabaab, and the Afghan and Pakistan Taliban groups.

Al-Zarqāwī, a Jordanian from the Banī Ḥasan tribe born Ahmad Faḍīl al-Nazāl al-Khalāyḷa, arrived in the Pakistani frontier city of Peshawar, which was then the base for many of the *mujāhidīn* groups operating in Afghanistan, in December 1989 with a group of other prospective foreign fighters and was met by Hudhayfa ‘Azzām, whose father, the famous ‘Abdullah ‘Azzām, had been assassinated by unknown parties the previous month.⁶¹⁵ In Jordan in the early 1990s, he founded a fledgling *jihadi* outfit, Jund al-Shām, after returning from a few years in Afghanistan before he was imprisoned by the government in 1992. Upon his release in 1999 after a general amnesty by King ‘Abdullah II and after he tried once again, and failed, to set up a militant network in his home country, al-Zarqāwī traveled to Pakistan and from there to Afghanistan.⁶¹⁶ Although he met with Bin Laden and other Al-Qaeda leaders, al-Zarqāwī decided to establish his own military training camp for foreign *jihadis* near the northern city of Herat rather than join Al-Qaeda. Despite his decision not to join Bin Laden’s group, al-Zarqāwī reportedly did request and accept seed money to set up and, later, to operate the camp.⁶¹⁷ Sometime in 2002, after being wounded fighting U.S. and allied forces in Afghanistan, al-Zarqāwī returned to the Levant and eventually

⁶¹⁵ Mary Anne Weaver, “The Short, Violent Life of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi,” *The Atlantic*, July/August 2006 issue, at <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/07/the-short-violent-life-of-abu-musab-al-zarqawi/304983/>, last accessed 7 August 2017.

⁶¹⁶ Craig Whitlock, “Al-Zarqawi’s Biography,” *The Washington Post*, 8 June 2006, at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/08/AR2006060800299.html?nav=rss_world/africa, last accessed 7 August 2017.

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*

permanently relocated to Iraq.⁶¹⁸ Although the Jordanian government indicted him for his alleged role in the “Millenium” plots to attack various targets in Jordan, al-Zarqāwī was not detained by the Iraqi government and those associates of his who were briefly questioned were later released.⁶¹⁹ The Jordanian former street criminal was able to focus his attention now on building up a formidable *jihadi* organization in the lead-up to the U.S. and U.K.-led “Coalition of the willing” invasion of the country the following spring.⁶²⁰

The Beginnings & Evolution of al-Zarqāwī’s Media Operations (2003-2006)

JTJ unofficially announced its presence in Iraq following the Coalition invasion by carrying out major SVBIED “martyrdom” attacks in Baghdad on the Jordanian embassy on 7 August 2003, the Canal Hotel on August 19, killing U.N. special representative Sérgio Vieira de Mello, and the Shrine of Imam ‘Ali in the Shi‘i shrine city of Najaf in southern Iraq on 29 August 2003, killing Iraqi *ayatullah* and Islamist party founder Muhammad Bāqir al-Ḥakīm who had only recently returned to the country from exile in Iran. Al-Zarqāwī’s group also began waging a vicious insurgency against the Coalition and Iraqi government in addition to other foreign individuals and forces present in the country, even if they had not actively participated in the invasion.

As part of his insurgent campaign, al-Zarqāwī and his senior aides, including Abu Anas al-Shāmī, understood the usefulness of a media operations capability and set out to build one. The group’s first media release, which was attributed to al-Zarqāwī and not the group, was distributed online in January 2004 and was followed by another audio message from him in April in which he claimed responsibility for the August bombings in Baghdad

⁶¹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶²⁰ For detailed biographies of al-Zarqāwī and the founding of JTJ and AQI, see Loretta Napoleoni, *Insurgent Iraq: Al Zarqawi and the New Generation* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2005); Jean-Pierre Milelli, “Introduction: Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, Jihad in ‘Mesopotamia,’” in *Al Qaeda in Its Own Words*, 237-250; and Jean-Charles Brisard, *Zarqawi: The New Face of Al-Qaeda* (New York: Other Press, 2005).

and Najaf.⁶²¹ JTJ then began releasing regular audio messages, print statements, and military reports from both its media and military wings as well as from sub-units.⁶²² The organization's first spokesman was an Iraqi native from the Shi'i shrine district of Kāẓimīya, home to the tombs of the seventh and ninth Shi'i Imams, Mūsā al-Kāẓim and Muhammad al-Taḳī, in Baghdad named Abu Maysara al-Iraqi, who had converted from Shi'ism to Salafi Sunnism.⁶²³ After converting he had pursued studies in Qur'anic recitation (*tajwīd*), *aḥādīth*, Islamic law and jurisprudence, and rhetoric, studying under a number of teachers including Ṣubḥī al-Badrī al-Sāmarrā'ī, a relative and teacher of the future self-proclaimed "caliph" Abu Bakr al-Baghdad (Ibrahim 'Awād Ibrahim al-Badrī al-Sāmarrā'ī), and Muḥārib al-Jubūrī, a future spokesman of the organization who formally announced the formation of the "Islamic State of Iraq" (ISI) in October 2006.⁶²⁴ In his early 20s, Abu Maysara had been one of JTJ's first recruits and was both doctrinally knowledgeable and technology savvy, and he coordinated with web site administrators of *jihadi* Internet fora and other sites to distribute the organization's media releases and stayed one step ahead of Coalition attempts to shut down his media outreach until he was finally killed by U.S. troops in 2006.⁶²⁵

JTJ and AQI steadily expanded their media production capabilities and relied on both *jihadi* web sites as well as international news coverage to publicize their releases throughout 2004 and 2005. It was also during this period that the group's members, including al-Zarqāwī himself, and media apparatus began recording and releasing graphic execution films, something its future incarnation, Islamic State, would take to new levels in terms of

⁶²¹ Craig Whiteside, *Lighting the Path: The Evolution of the Islamic State Media Enterprise (2003-2016)* (The Hague, Netherlands: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism), November 2016, at <https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/ICCT-Whiteside-Lighting-the-Path-the-Evolution-of-the-Islamic-State-Media-Enterprise-2003-2016-Nov2016.pdf>, last accessed 7 August 2017, 6.

⁶²² *Ibid.*, 6-7.

⁶²³ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁶²⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶²⁵ *Ibid.*

production quality, frequency, and sheer graphic barbarity. These will be discussed in the following subsection. The bulk of JTJ's output, in addition to audio messages from al-Zarqāwī in which he laid out his ideological vision for the Iraqi war and the aforementioned execution films, was made up of military-themed videos showing IEDs, attacks and assassinations, and suicide bombings.

The organization's media production capabilities underwent a gradual but significant upgrading following the formalization of its affiliation with Al-Qaeda Central in October 2004, which led JTJ to change its name to AQI. The narrative construction and presentation and editing of AQI's films began to shift to a more multifaceted format and away from the more basic style that had characterized JTJ's in which masked insurgents addressed a stationary video camera in often stilted voices. A clear demonstration of this shift is a 2005 martyrology/eulogy film for Iraqi JTJ/AQI military commander 'Umar Ḥadīd (Abu Khattāb al-Fallūjī, 'Umar Husayn Ḥadīd al-Muhammadi), who led the group's forces during the two battles for control of the city of Falluja in Anbar governorate in 2004 and was killed in the second of them in November-December 2004. The film builds upon the production and narrative foundation of a late JTJ film martyrology documenting the life and career of the late deputy leader Abu Anas al-Shāmī, who was killed by a U.S. missile strike in September 2004 just one month before the formalization of the group's affiliation with Al-Qaeda Central.⁶²⁶

A native of the city, Ḥadīd continues to be an influential martyr figure for Islamic State. During the reign of Saddam, Ḥadīd reportedly joined a group that carried out vigilante "hisba" attacks and vandalisms of stores selling risqué videos and music as well as shops selling alcohol. He was pursued but managed to evade Iraqi security forces by escaping to Iraqi Kurdistan and, according to some reports, then traveled to Syria and/or Saudi Arabia,

⁶²⁶ Jamā'at al-Tawḥīd wa-l-Jihad film, *Asad al-Rāfiḍayn, Shaykh al-Mujāhid Abu Anas al-Shāmī* (Lion of the [Land] of the Two Rivers/Iraq, the *Mujāhid Shaykh Abu Anas al-Shāmī*), 2004. The film includes lengthy footage of Ḥadīd, who was then still alive and speaking with his face covered with a scarf except for his eyes, discussing the career and influence of Abu Anas.

and, after the regime's collapse, decided to take up arms against Coalition forces and the new Iraqi government.⁶²⁷

The film martyrology opened with a dedication, taken from an audio recording of al-Zarqāwī, to the Muslim and specifically *mujāhidīn* prisoners held by the “Crusaders, Jews, and polytheists (*mushrikīn*)” and a rhetorical and accusatory question as to why the Muslim viewers had not sought to free them from their chains.⁶²⁸ Muslim women prisoners were specifically singled out in an attempt to tap into Muslim men's sense of masculinity and honor, which was called into question by their inability or unwillingness to pick up arms to defend or avenge their womenfolk from the enemies of Islam and persecutors of Muslims.⁶²⁹ “Have you not heard their screams begging you to help them,” al-Zarqāwī, demanded.⁶³⁰ Footage of martyr wills, suicide attacks, and a confession from a captured Iraqi special policeman, who admitted that reports of security forces carrying out summary arrests and executions were true, made up the bulk of the film. The Iraqi security forces acted as an arm of the Americans and were “unleashed” to spread corruption (*fasad*) in the land (*muḥsid fī-l-ard*) including the arrest, torture, and assassination of anyone who dared to criticize the new regime.⁶³¹ Attacks carried out by the *jihadis* were clearly framed as legally justified, in terms of Islamic law, as revenge and punishment for abuses perpetrated by the new Iraqi government and its Coalition bosses.⁶³² The *mujāhidīn* were simply defending their religion, that which is precious (*ghālīya*) from it, and the honor (*ird*) of the Muslims from the shaming and persecution of hostile *kuffar*.⁶³³ It is only through the steadfast sacrifices of the

⁶²⁷ Hannah Allam, “Falluja's Real Boss: Omar the Electrician,” *Knight Ridder Newspapers*, 22 November 2004, at http://old.seattletimes.com/html/nationworld/2002097538_realboss22.html, last accessed 7 August 2017.

⁶²⁸ Al-Qaeda in Iraq film, *Ghazwat 'Umar Ḥadīd* (Expedition of 'Umar Ḥadīd), 2004.

⁶²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶³¹ *Ibid.*

⁶³² *Ibid.*

⁶³³ *Ibid.*

“Muslim youth” (shabāb al-muslim) that the U.S.-led plans to assist the Zionists (Banī Ṣahyūn) in regaining control over the Biblical “promised land,” with the treacherous help of its Arab clients in countries such as Jordan and Egypt, has been thrown into disarray.⁶³⁴

The film is built around the biography, which is held up as an example for other Muslims to follow, of Ḥadīd, whose career is outlined and praised, and a campaign of attacks named in his honor to avenge the persecution of Muslims in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other places.⁶³⁵ Abu Dhar al-Lībī, one of the suicide bombers who participated in these attacks, is shown reciting the Qur’an and then extolling the necessities and glories of *jihad*, saying that it is only through participation in *jihad* that a Muslim can truly find honor amidst humiliation.⁶³⁶ It has been absent from their upbringing in their homes and mosques, he claimed, which has proven that *jihad* is the only way to make God’s word supreme.⁶³⁷ Those chosen to sacrifice their lives as martyrs have been granted a great honor, according to recorded testimonies from several other suicide bombers who describe their “happiness” and “joy” at being able to demonstrate their pure intentions and love for Islam by carrying out attacks.⁶³⁸

Framing the Macabre: Al-Zarqāwī, the Media, & the Messaging of Execution

The organization received particular global attention for its publication, beginning in 2004, of a series of grisly execution films featuring the killing—usually by beheading with a knife—of captured Iraqi government workers, foreign contractors, and diplomats. Their killings were normally preceded by Qur’anic recitations and ideological screeds from masked insurgents in which their murders were legitimized through selective interpretations of Islamic scripture or other texts. In one video, two captured Iraqis “confess” on camera to

⁶³⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁸ *Ibid.*

working for the Iraqi government's security services while holding TV news-style microphones and standing in front of JIJ's black-and-yellow flag. By extension, they admit, they were active participants in the new government's coordination with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and are then executed by *jihadis* who read from a written script and invoke the *ḥadd* punishment for apostasy as evidenced by their collaboration with "Crusaders" and apostates.⁶³⁹ The video invokes in its introduction Qur'an 5:33-34 in which the *ḥadd* punishment is given for those individuals found guilty of "waging war against God and His messenger [Muhammad] (*alladhīna yuḥāribūna Allāh wa rasūlahu*) and "spreading corruption in the land" (*wa yas'awna fī-l-arḍ fasādan*).⁶⁴⁰ Allegations of "waging war against God and His messenger," illegitimate violence and rebellion (*ḥirāba* and *baghī*), and *fasad* later formed one of the backbones of Islamic State's implementation of "law and order" as it expanded territorially in Syria and Iraq in 2014. The debated and competing historical views of these classifications of crimes are discussed in Chapter Three.

In another execution video, two Turkish truck drivers are accused of apostasy and "betraying" Islam and their fellow Muslims by "providing aid" to the Americans. The film's introduction cites Qur'an 5:80, in which God warned the early Muslims against seeking an alliance with disbelievers over Muslims and promises that if they do His wrath and torment will come upon them, as scriptural justification for the summary execution of one of the Turks.⁶⁴¹ It was also a clear message to other Muslims employed by either the Coalition Provisional Authority or the Iraqi state to rethink their "apostasy" or face a painful death if captured by the *jihadis*. The execution on film of only one of the hostages, leaving the fate of others unresolved in the mind of the viewer, would come to be a regular feature of Islamic

⁶³⁹ Jamā'at al-Tawḥīd wa-l-Jihad film, *Ḥukm Allāh fī-l-murtadīn min al-mukhābarāt al-'Irāqīya* (God's Command concerning the Apostates from the Iraqi Security Services), 2004.

⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴¹ Jamā'at al-Tawḥīd wa-l-Jihad film, *Tanfīdh al-ḥukm al-shar'ī fī aḥad al-Atrāk alladhīna yu'ayyinūn al-Amrīkān bi-imdādihim bi-l-ma'ūnāt* (Implementation of the *shari'a* punishment on one of the Turks hired by the Americans to provide them with supplies/aid), 2004.

State's films, demonstrating the narrative and stylistic continuities within the organization's media operations from its early days to the present.

The most widely publicized execution video produced by JTJ was that documenting the beheading of American Nicholas Berg in May 2004, which was uploaded from London to a Malaysian *jihadi* web site.⁶⁴² Berg had reportedly traveled to Iraq independently in order to conduct humanitarian work after the invasion of the country and he had previously been held for nearly two weeks by U.S. forces over suspicions about his motivations for being there.⁶⁴³ He was executed by al-Zarqāwī himself in a slow and methodical manner, his screams echoing around the bare room in which he was killed, delivering a stark message from JTJ about its plans to wage a brutal, all-out war against anyone it deemed to be allied to the U.S.-led Coalition and new Iraqi government.⁶⁴⁴

The video opened with West Chester, Pennsylvania native Berg, seated in a chair and dressed in an orange prison jumpsuit that would later become the hallmark of many of Islamic State's hostage execution films, briefly giving background information on himself and his family including his father Michael, mother Susan, brother David, and sister Sarah.⁶⁴⁵ The video then transitions to him seated as five masked *jihadis* stand behind him and the one in the center, who was al-Zarqāwī, proceeded to read out a justification for the coming murder. How could any "free Muslim sleep soundly," the JTJ leader asked scornfully, when he sees that Islam and the Muslims are being humiliated slaughtered and their honor decimated by occupation and persecution?⁶⁴⁶ The U.S.-run prison of Abu Ghraib is singled

⁶⁴² *The Sydney Morning Herald*, "Who Killed Nick Berg?", 29 May 2004, at <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/05/28/1085641717320.html>, last accessed 7 August 2017.

⁶⁴³ Mark Oliver, "The Life and Death of Nick Berg," *The Guardian*, 12 May 2004, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/may/12/iraq.usa4>, last accessed 7 August 2017.

⁶⁴⁴ BBC News, "Zarqawi Beheaded US Man in Iraq," 13 May 2004, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/3712421.stm, last accessed 7 August 2017.

⁶⁴⁵ Jamā'at al-Tawhīd wa-l-Jihad film, (No title), May 2004.

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

out by al-Zarqāwī, noting the cases of torture and prisoner abuse that had begun to emerge in the summer of 2003 thanks to the research of human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and investigative journalists.⁶⁴⁷ Although he mentioned men and women, the reported abuse of Muslim women was, and continued to be, a particularly powerful and popular rallying cry for al-Zarqāwī and other *jihadis* because the honor of the Muslim woman is not only her own but extends to that of the male members of her family—her father, brothers, husband, and sons—and is a type of tactical framing that is designed to goad Muslim men who have so far refrained from participating in *jihad* into action, as much to avoid ridicule, shame, and the questioning of their masculinity as to avenge their womenfolk’s lost honor.

Al-Zarqāwī excoriated the *‘ulamā* for their refusal to widely endorse and exhort the Muslim laity to *jihad* and warned them that they would be held to account by God on the Day of Judgment for their failure to fulfill their duty as stewards of the *Umma*.⁶⁴⁸ Instead the “Muslim youth,” meaning the *mujāhidīn*, had shown them up and were now the vanguard of the *Umma*, defending their faith and their community with jealousy (*ghayra*) while the scholars of religion fooled themselves into believing that the “*jihad* of the conferences” (*jihad al-mu’tamarāt*) and “battles of the sermons” (*ma’ārik al-khaṭb*) were substitutes for real action.⁶⁴⁹ He then threatened U.S. president George W. Bush and his Muslim apostate clients, naming specifically Pakistani president Pervez Musharraf, and said they would pay for their crimes against the Muslims, telling Bush that he would regret the day he had ordered the invasion of Iraq.⁶⁵⁰ To the mothers and wives of U.S. soldiers, the JTJ leader said that the responsibility for the deaths of Berg and their sons and husbands lay with their own

⁶⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

government, which they had elected and which had refused an offer he claimed the *jihadi* group made to exchange Berg for prisoners held at Abu Ghraib.⁶⁵¹ Because of this arrogant refusal, the *jihadis* would instead redeem the honor (*karama*) of the Muslim men and women defiled by the “Crusaders” and their clients through “blood and [sacrifice of the] souls” (*dimā’* and *nufūs*) and they, the American women, should expect to receive nothing but “corpse after corpse” of their loved ones in a steady stream of coffins.⁶⁵² Revenge, according to the video, was the only just response for American military hubris and aggression in Muslim lands and the *mujāhidīn* would not be squeamish in their delivery of violence to the Americans and their allies.

The leadership of Al-Qaeda Central and other prominent *jihadi* ideologues such as Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisī, as was discussed earlier in this chapter, were critical of the Iraq-based organization’s brutal and very public violence as well as its wanton and blanket use of *takfīr* and attacks in heavily-populated civilian areas of Iraq. Though al-Zarqāwī and his successors never abandoned such violence or the production and publication of graphic execution videos, the organization did eventually shift its method of execution temporarily to somewhat less graphic, visually and aurally, use of firearms and focused primarily on the execution of usually uniformed Iraqi security forces and civilian employees and officials, whose identification cards were shown to prove who they were and thus legitimize, in the eyes of the *jihadis*, their deaths. Although still graphic and frequent even by the standards of Al-Qaeda, these films were relatively less gruesome than the execution videos produced in the inaugural period of JTJ’s media operations and possibly represented a small if fleeting concession to the organization’s *jihadi* critics, who included heavyweights such as Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri. The criticism of their tactics by senior Al-Qaeda leaders of al-Zarqāwī and his successors coincided with attempts to rebrand AQI in an effort to expand its influence

⁶⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵² *Ibid.*

within the context of Iraq's multiplicity of Sunni insurgent organizations, both Islamist and more nationalist groups. As part of this rebranding effort, the Islamic State of Iraq may have seen a shift in its media strategy, namely a relative decrease in the type, if not the level, of violence to be in its strategic interest.

The official media department of the Islamic State of Iraq, the Al-Furqān Media Foundation (Mu'assasat al-Furqān li-l-Intāj al-I'lāmī), for example, produced a series of such execution films as part of their broader short video series on military operations, *Hell of the Romans and Apostates in the Land of the Two Rivers* (*Jaḥīm al-Rūm wa-l-murtaddīn 'alā Arḍ al-Rāfidayn*) in which other "apostates" and "clients" of the Iraqi government and the West were warned against continuing their collaboration with the "enemies" of Islam. The government hostages were often executed after attempts to exchange them for Muslim prisoners in government custody did not succeed following a "specified period" (*ba'd inqīḍā' al-mudda al-muḥaddida*) of time.⁶⁵³ The ISI's "Ministry of War" also carried out and documented scripted confessions in which government prisoners urged their comrades to "repent to God" and stop working for the forces "of unbelief and apostasy" (*junūd al-kufr wa-l-ridda*).⁶⁵⁴ The executions were often choreographed, following the confessions, and carried out by unseen or masked insurgents and others standing nearby with the ISI's signature black-and-white flag emblazoned with the Muslim testament of faith.⁶⁵⁵ This temporary self-editing, however, did not last and the organization had by 2014 shifted back to producing even more graphic execution video productions, macabre even by *jihadi* standards, when it renamed itself "the Islamic State" and claimed to be a new "caliphate."

⁶⁵³ Islamic State of Iraq film, *Tanfīdh ḥukm Allāh fī 8 min murtaddīn Wizāratī al-Difā' wa-l-Dākhilīya* (Implementation of God's ordained punishment on 8 apostates from the Ministries of Defense and Interior), Mu'assasat al-Furqān li-l-Intāj al-I'lāmī, 2007.

⁶⁵⁴ Islamic State of Iraq film, *Tanfīdh ḥukm Allāh fī tis'a min maghāwīr al-Dākhilīya—Wilāyat Salādin, Samarra* (Implementation of God's ordained punishment on nine Interior [Ministry] commandos in Saladin governorate, Samarra city), Mu'assasat al-Furqān li-l-Intāj al-I'lāmī, 2007.

⁶⁵⁵ For representative examples from Islamic State of Iraq videos in the series, see Figure 16 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/07/19/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation/>.

In early June 2014, ISIS captured Iraq's second largest city, Mosul, in the northern Nineveh governorate and shortly thereafter began pushing eastward toward the city of Irbil (Erbil), the capital of Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and location of a major U.S. consulate in the country.⁶⁵⁶ Alarmed, the U.S. administration of President Barack Obama began airstrikes on the group's forces on August 8, the first offensive military operations it had conducted in Iraq since the withdrawal of U.S. ground forces in 2011.⁶⁵⁷ The Pentagon claimed that the decision was made after ISIS forces began shelling KRG Peshmerga units protecting the city, its residents, and U.S. personnel.⁶⁵⁸ The U.S. was also concerned about the security of its joint military operations center in the city, which served as the main hub for coordinating aid to the Peshmerga.⁶⁵⁹ In late September, the U.S. and allied countries, including the U.S.-backed Arab regimes of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Qatar, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates, began conducting airstrikes against Islamic State targets in neighboring Syria as well as on ISIS rival Jabhat al-Nusra.⁶⁶⁰

Shortly after the U.S. began its air strikes, Islamic State, which changed its name from ISIS following its conquest of Mosul, began releasing a series of short, high definition, and grisly videos of American and British hostages delivering scripted final messages and pleas to their respective governments and families to end military aggression against the group

⁶⁵⁶ Suadad al-Salhy and Tim Arango, "Sunni Militants Drive Iraqi Army Out of Mosul," *The New York Times*, 10 June 2014, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/11/world/middleeast/militants-in-mosul.html>, last accessed 7 August 2017.

⁶⁵⁷ Dan Roberts and Spencer Ackerman, "US Begins Air Strikes against Isis Targets in Iraq, Pentagon Says," *The Guardian*, 8 August 2014, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/08/us-begins-air-strikes-iraq-isis>, last accessed 7 August 2017, and Helene Cooper, Mark Landler, and Alissa J. Rubin, "Obama Allows Limited Airstrikes on ISIS," *The New York Times*, 7 August 2014, at https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/08/world/middleeast/obama-weighs-military-strikes-to-aid-trapped-iraqis-officials-say.html?_r=0, last accessed 8 August 2017.

⁶⁵⁸ U.S. Department of Defense tweet, 8 August 2014, at <https://twitter.com/PentagonPresSec/status/497725099970031616>, last accessed 7 August 2017.

⁶⁵⁹ Dan Roberts and Spencer Ackerman, "US Begins Air Strikes against Isis Targets in Iraq, Pentagon Says" and Helene Cooper, Mark Landler, and Alissa J. Rubin, "Obama Allows Limited Airstrikes on ISIS."

⁶⁶⁰ Phil Stewart and Tom Perry, "U.S. and Arab Allies Launch First Strikes on Militants in Syria," *Reuters*, 22 September 2014, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-usa-strikes-idUSKCN0HI03A20140923>, last accessed 7 August 2017.

after which they were summarily executed by a masked militant who was later revealed to be British citizen Mohammed Emwazi, dubbed by the media as “Jihadi John.”⁶⁶¹ Emwazi was eventually killed in a U.S. drone missile strike in Raqqa city in November 2015 and was subsequently eulogized by Islamic State in the thirteenth issue of its e-magazine *Dabiq* in January 2016. Dubbed Abu Muḥārib al-Muhājir, he had allegedly started down “the path of hijrah and jihād” around the time of the July 2005 London suicide bombings and was a close associate of two other Britons, Bilal al-Barjāwī and Muhammad Saqr, who were later killed fighting within Al-Shabaab in Somalia.⁶⁶² Noting his run-ins with British MI5 intelligence and the police, the ISIS eulogy said that he and others managed to evade the security services and travel to Syria in “the latter part of 2012.”⁶⁶³ Upon his arrival he joined Jabhat al-Nusra but abandoned the group after the beginning of the *fitna* between Abu Muhammad al-Jawlānī and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, accusing the former of becoming “another Shaykh Sharīf,” the former senior leader of Somalia’s UIC who later joined the Somali federal government.⁶⁶⁴

On 19 August the media wing of Islamic State released a short video of American freelance journalist James Foley, who had been captured by unknown perpetrators in November 2012 with some reports claiming he was initially detained by Syrian Ba‘th government forces while others blamed a Syrian rebel group and the FBI stated an “organized

⁶⁶¹ Dominic Casciani, “Islamic State: Profile of Mohammed Emwazi aka ‘Jihadi John’,” BBC News, 13 November 2015, at <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-31641569>, last accessed 7 August 2017; Patrick Sawyer, “Who is Jihadi John, and How Did Mohammed Emwazi become the Symbol of Isil?,” *The Telegraph*, 13 November 2015, at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/03/16/who-is-jihadi-john-and-how-did-mohammed-emwazi-become-the-symbol/>, last accessed 7 August 2017; and Dana Ford and Steve Almasy, “ISIS Confirms Death of ‘Jihadi John’,” CNN, 20 January 2016, at <http://www.cnn.com/2016/01/19/middleeast/jihadi-john-dead/index.html>, last accessed 7 August 2017.

⁶⁶² Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), “Among the Believers Are Men: Abū Muḥārib al-Muhājir,” *Dabiq*, issue 13 (January 2016), 22-23. This article was part of a series on ISIS martyrs and takes its name from a part of Qur’an 33:23, which eulogizes those men who stayed true to their covenant with God without any alteration and were killed in His path.

⁶⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

gang” had carried out the abduction.⁶⁶⁵ Attempts to rescue Foley failed after U.S. Delta Force commandos met stiff resistance east of Raqqa city and also discovered that Foley and other hostages had been relocated by Islamic State.⁶⁶⁶ His was the first in a series of videotaped executions by Emwazi that were cast by Islamic State as a stark response to American military attacks on the organization, a response that sought to capture international media attention. In this they were an unparalleled success, bringing thousands of hours of international media attention to ISIS, inflating its aura of inexorable brutality and conquest, and also being widely talked about, reposted, and viewed on social media platforms including Twitter and Facebook.

The video opened by framing Foley’s execution as a response to Obama’s decision to authorize military actions against Islamic State in Iraq, “effectively placing America upon a slippery slope towards a new war front against Muslims.”⁶⁶⁷ It did this by using footage from Obama’s press conference at the White House announcing the beginnings of U.S. military strikes, in which he cited the plight of Iraq’s Yazidi population in Sinjar as well as U.S. Department of Defense video of one of the initial airstrikes. Dressed in an orange prison jumpsuit like the one Nicholas Berg had been murdered in and kneeling to the left-hand side of Emwazi, whose face was covered with a black scarf except for his eyes, Foley delivered a scripted message to his family and friends, calling for them to “rise up against my real killers, the U.S. government.”⁶⁶⁸ He blamed the U.S. government’s “complacency and criminality” for causing his death and told his parents not to accept the U.S. government’s apologies for

⁶⁶⁵ Michael B. Kelley, “One Big Question Surrounds the Murder of US Journalist James Foley by ISIS,” *Business Insider*, 20 August 2014, at <http://www.businessinsider.com/how-did-isis-kidnap-james-foley-2014-8>, last accessed 7 August 2017.

⁶⁶⁶ Adam Goldman and Karen DeYoung, “U.S. Staged Secret Operation into Syria in Failed Bid to Rescue Americans,” *The Washington Post*, 20 August 2014, at https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-weighs-response-to-apparent-execution-of-american-by-islamic-state/2014/08/20/e33558a8-287d-11e4-8593-da634b334390_story.html?utm_term=.902026925386, last accessed 7 August 2017.

⁶⁶⁷ Islamic State film, *Risāla ilā Amrīkā* (A Message to America), 19 August 2014.

⁶⁶⁸ *Ibid.* See Figure 17 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/07/19/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation/>.

his death.⁶⁶⁹ He asked his brother John, a U.S. Air Force logistics officer, to think carefully about his participation in U.S. military operations in Iraq and alleged that his fate was sealed the day John's colleagues carried out their first airstrike targeting ISIS.⁶⁷⁰

Speaking to Americans, Emwazi accused the U.S. of “going far out” of its way to hinder and attack Islamic State and said that Foley's execution was in revenge for the killings of Muslims in the airstrikes. He warned that Islamic State was no longer simply an insurgency but “an Islamic army” and “a state that has been accepted by a large number of Muslims worldwide,” and, because of this, any aggression by the U.S. against Islamic State was an act of aggression toward all Muslims from “all walks of life.”⁶⁷¹ Emwazi warned Obama that his decision to initiate further military strikes would only endanger his own citizens, holding up the shirt collar of a second American hostage, American-Israeli freelance journalist Steven Sotloff and noting that his fate “depends on your next decision.”⁶⁷²

As U.S. military strikes against Islamic State continued several weeks later, ISIS released the second video in its execution series, this time showing the killing of Sotloff. Following the same pattern as the entire series, Sotloff delivered a final plea as Emwazi stood behind him with a knife. Sotloff asked Obama why, despite his claims to be defending U.S. citizens by authorizing military intervention in Iraq, he (Sotloff) was now in his current captivity and about to be slain by Islamic State.⁶⁷³ Obama was continuing a failed war and marching America back into “a blazing fire.”⁶⁷⁴ Emwazi said Sotloff was being killed because of the U.S. president's “arrogant foreign policy toward the Islamic State” and promised that as long as U.S. missiles continued to strike Muslims the knives of Islamic State

⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷² *Ibid.*

⁶⁷³ Islamic State film, *Risālat thānīya li-Amrīkā* (A Second Message to America), 2 September 2014.

⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

would continue to “strike the necks” of the citizens of the U.S. and other Coalition countries including the U.K.⁶⁷⁵ British hostage David Haines was shown at the end of the video as Emwazi told Obama and his allies to stop their attacks.

Haines’ execution video opened with a clip from an interview of British Prime Minister David Cameron about his country’s support for the Iraqi government and participation in military attacks on Islamic State. Haines, who had traveled to Syria as a humanitarian aid worker and was captured in 2013 by the group, said that he blamed Cameron “entirely” for his execution because of his decision to join in Obama’s war against Muslims.⁶⁷⁶ Regular citizens like himself, he said, would continue to suffer the consequences of their parliament’s “selfish decisions,” referring to the legislative body’s support for British involvement in Iraq. Emwazi said that Haines’ killing was in response to British military support for the Peshmerga and noted the irony, in his view, that Haines, a former Royal Air Force engineer, was dying because of the actions of that same air force. The “evil alliance” between the U.K. and U.S. under the leadership of America’s “lapdog,” Cameron, would continue to endanger the country and drag it into “another bloody and unwinnable war” like the 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq. If Cameron did not heed his warning, Emwazi threatened, then he, like his “master” Obama, would have the blood of his own people on his hands, as he stood beside another British captive, Alan Henning.

Henning, a former taxi driver who went to Syria after being profoundly moved by the suffering of the country’s civilians from brutal repression by the al-Asad government, was captured by Islamic State in the city of Dana in Idlib governorate in the country’s far north in December 2013. Multiple Syrian rebel groups including the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Jabhat al-Nusra reportedly appealed to Islamic State to release Henning because of his work to help

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷⁶ Islamic State film, *Risāla ilā Ḥulafā’ Amrīkā* (A Message to the Allies of America), 13 September 2014.

Syrian refugees but they were rebuffed.⁶⁷⁷ In early October, following the overwhelming approval of the British parliament to back airstrikes against Islamic State in Iraq, the organization released a video showing Henning's execution. Kneeling in front of Emwazi, Henning said that he was going to "pay the price" for the parliament's decision, a statement repeated by Emwazi, who said that Henning's blood was "on the hands of the British parliament."⁶⁷⁸ Henning's last message was very short, much shorter even than the clipped messages of Foley, Sotloff, and Haines. As in the previous three execution videos, the beginning stage of the beheading of Henning by Emwazi were shown, including the graphic sounds of the victim gasping as the *jihadi*'s knife began its work, and was followed by a brief black-screened interlude and then footage of his body and severed head without narration. In the closing scene, as with the previous releases, Emwazi stood alongside another hostage, this time American Peter Kassig, and delivered another warning. "Obama, you have begun your aerial bombardment in Sham, which keeps on striking our people [Muslims], so it is only right that we continue to strike the necks of your people."⁶⁷⁹

Kassig, who converted to Islam during his captivity in Syria, was an Indiana native and veteran of the U.S. Army Rangers, serving for four months in Iraq in 2007. After receiving a medical discharge, he attended university and went to work delivering humanitarian aid in Lebanon and Syria in 2013. He was abducted by Islamic State in October 2013 while on a mission to deliver supplies to internally-displaced refugees in the country's eastern Dayr al-Zur governorate. After his capture, he wrote to his parents and acknowledged that he knew his life might be in danger and they later said that he had

⁶⁷⁷ Tom Harper, "Alan Henning: Al-Qaeda Appealed to Isis to Release British Aid Worker Following Kidnap," *The Independent*, 15 September 2014, at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/alan-henning-al-qaeda-appealed-to-isis-to-release-british-aid-worker-following-kidnap-9734598.html>, last accessed 7 August 2017.

⁶⁷⁸ Islamic State film, *Risālat Ukhrā ilā Amrīkā wa Ḥulafā'ihā* (Another Message to America and Its Allies), 3 October 2014.

⁶⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

converted to Islam of his own volition and not because he was forced to, referring to their son as ‘Abd al-Rahman Peter Kassig even after his murder.⁶⁸⁰ There were complex behind-the-scenes efforts to secure his release from Islamic State, which included the participation of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisī, a former teacher of the organization’s chief *shari‘a* official, Turkī al-Bin‘alī, who was later killed in a U.S. air strike at the end of May 2017 in the Syrian town of Mayadin in Dayr al-Zur. These efforts failed, despite reported progress in al-Maqdisī’s WhatsApp discussions with al-Bin‘alī, after the Jordanian *jihadi* scholar was arrested in late October by the country’s intelligence services and the U.S., despite pleas from American participants, either did not intervene or were unable to convince Jordanian authorities to release him.⁶⁸¹

The video of Kassig’s execution, unlike the previous videos, only showed his decapitated body on the ground at the feet of Emwazi as the Briton delivered an apocalyptic taunt that Islamic State was “eagerly awaiting” the arrival of U.S. forces so they could bury more heads and bodies at Dabiq, a town in northeastern Aleppo governorate near the Syrian-Turkish border that is associated in some *aḥādīth* with a great battle between the armies of Islam and Christianity. The footage of Kassig’s body and Emwazi’s message were part of the end of a longer Islamic State video showing the choreographed executions of eighteen captured Syrian government air force personnel and an audio recording of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi accepting pledges of allegiance (*bay‘a*) from militants in the Sinai Peninsula, Yemen, Libya, and Algeria and declaring unilaterally the dissolving of other *jihadi* organizations in those areas, referring to AQIM and AQAP, a move that was subsequently rejected by their leaderships. The video opened with a narrative introduction that framed the

⁶⁸⁰ Amy Davidson Sorkin, “The Mystery of Abdul-Rahman, or Peter Kassig,” *The New Yorker*, 17 November 2014, at <http://www.newyorker.com/news/amy-davidson/mystery-abdul-rahman-peter-kassig>, last accessed 7 August 2017.

⁶⁸¹ Shiv Malik, Mustafa Khalili, Ali Younes, and Spencer Ackerman, “The Race to Save Peter Kassig,” *The Guardian*, 18 December 2014, at <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2014/dec/18/-sp-the-race-to-save-peter-kassig>, last accessed 7 August 2017.

rise of Islamic State and its “caliphate” as a continuation of the project of the late Bin Laden, al-Zarqāwī, and Islamic State of Iraq leaders Abu ‘Umar al-Baghdadi and Abu Hamza al-Muhājir.⁶⁸²

The organization’s mission, in addition to being global, was cast in clear sectarian, anti-Shi‘i terms with a section set to one of al-Zarqāwī’s audio messages in which the JTJ and AQI founder bemoans the descent of Baghdad into the “darkness” of polytheism with the rise of Iraq’s Shi‘i Muslims to power. Even under Saddam’s oppression, he said, at least the city of Baghdad had never been “*Rāfiḍī*.”⁶⁸³ “Now Baghdad sees the blackness rise over it day after day,” he said. “And here the rites of pagan nationalism (*waṭanīya*) and polytheism (*shirk*) have become apparent to our eyes. The voices of the *Rāfiḍa* [Shi’a] have been raised as they curse the *Ṣaḥāba* of our Prophet [Muhammad] and our mothers, the wives of our Prophet, day and night from their pulpits and in their media.”⁶⁸⁴ As he spoke, the video showed footage of Iraqi Shi’a performing religious rituals including mourning rites for Imam Husayn and his companions at the Battle of Karbala in 680 as well as of the controversial Kuwaiti sectarian Shi‘i preacher Yasir al-Ḥabīb, a follower of the Shirazi family of religious scholars, who is infamous for making vulgar and bizarre statements and allegations about the Prophet Muhammad’s companions and wives, many of whom are viewed as illegitimate by Twelver Shi’a.⁶⁸⁵ “Imam Malik [bin Anas, the founder of one of the Sunni legal schools of thought]...said, ‘One must not remain in a land in which Abu Bakr and ‘Umar [the first two Rāshidūn caliphs] are insulted!’” he exclaimed.⁶⁸⁶

⁶⁸² Islamic State film, *Wa law Kariha al-Kāfirūn* (Although the Disbelievers Dislike It), 16 November 2014. The video’s title is taken from Qur’an 61:8 and connects the grisly killings to the fulfilment of God’s commands and the stopping of those who “want to extinguish the light of God with their speech.”

⁶⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

A narrated section showing footage of Islamic State attacks on Iraqi government forces and territorial expansion followed as an unnamed narrator declared, “It was not befitting the descendants of Abu Bakr and ‘Umar to be subservient and humiliated, so they sharpened every blade to make the *Rāfiḍa* taste all manners of killing and torment. They uprooted the fortresses, pounded the strongholds of polytheism, and cleansed the land from the filth of the *Rāfiḍa*.⁶⁸⁷” The introductory narrative then shifted to Syria and cast Islamic State as the avenger of Syrian Sunnis who were being imprisoned, targeted, and slaughtered by al-Asad government and its ‘Alawi, Christian, and apostate Sunni members and supporters.⁶⁸⁸

Footage of Kassig’s body was preceded by the rehearsed executions of eighteen Syrian regime military personnel by Emwazi and other, unnamed Islamic State fighters. As the captives are led through a sparse grove of trees, Emwazi and the other *jihadis* draw knives from a wooden box as the sounds of blades scraping out of their sheaths ring out, sound effects which were edited in during the film’s production. Addressing Obama, Emwazi said, “To Obama, the dog of Rome [a reference to Christianity and specifically Byzantium], today we’re slaughtering the soldiers of Bashar and tomorrow we’ll be slaughtering your soldiers. And with Allah’s permission, we will break this final and last crusade and the Islamic State will soon, as your puppet David Cameron said, will begin to slaughter your people on your streets.”⁶⁸⁹ The executions of the regime prisoners was preceded itself by a heavily edited section emphasizing their anguished looks and heavy breathing, interspersed with footage of the *jihadis* moving their knives, before the prisoners are forced from their kneeling positions to the ground and beheaded as a group. As Emwazi severs half of his prisoner’s neck and

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

raises it by the man's hair, he looks up and stares menacingly into the camera as added sound effects add to the brutality of the footage.⁶⁹⁰

Emwazi, standing above Kassig's body, said that he "doesn't have much to say; his cellmates have already spoken on his behalf" and threatened Obama and the Americans with more attacks and violence once they re-entered Iraq and Syria. Citing a popular quote from al-Zarqāwī, he said, "The spark has been lit here in Iraq and its heat will continue to intensify by Allah's permission until it burns the Crusader army in Dabiq. And here we are burying the first American Crusader in Dabiq, eagerly waiting for the remainder of your armies to arrive." There was speculation that a final scripted message from Kassig was not included in the film, nor was the beginning of his execution—sections that had been included in the films of the previous hostages—because the event had gone awry and disrupted the plans of Islamic State media operatives. Some suggested that the American had fought back or otherwise disturbed the planned final message and execution sequences and had been shot dead before being decapitated, while others suggested there was some other, as yet unknown reason for the omission and opined that Islamic State had kept the footage in reserve for later use, though none has been released as of November 2018.⁶⁹¹

The final three videos in the series featuring Emwazi were released by Islamic State in January 2015 and included video messages from Japanese independent journalist Kenji Goto who had traveled to Syria to try and work to free another Japanese citizen, Haruna Yukawa, who was working there as a private military contractor. Goto succeeded and the two returned to Japan only to have Yukawa return to the country, where was recaptured in July 2014. Goto's second attempt to secure his countryman's release failed and he was also seized.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹¹ Amy Davidson Sorkin, "The Mystery of Abdul-Rahman, or Peter Kassig" and Colin Freeman, "Peter Kassig 'Killed by Gunshot before He Was Decapitated'," *The Telegraph*, 14 December 2014, at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11293023/Peter-Kassig-killed-by-gunshot-before-he-was-decapitated.html>, last accessed 7 August 2017.

Islamic State initially demanded a ransom of \$200 million USD but later amended it to an exchange of prisoners, Goto for Sājida al-Rīshāwī, a failed AQI suicide bomber who had participated in the November 2005 attacks on hotels in Amman, Jordan and was imprisoned there.⁶⁹² Goto's release and that of captured Jordanian pilot Mu'ādh al-Kasāsba, who was captured after his F-16 jet crashed while on an attack mission over Syria in December 2014, were tied to the freeing of al-Rīshāwī by Jordan. Attempts to negotiate an exchange ultimately failed and Goto and al-Kasāsba were executed and the Jordanian government, in retaliation, executed al-Rīshāwī. Emwazi blamed Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of sealing Goto's fate by allying his country to the U.S. and its "satanic Coalition" in its war against Islamic State and Muslims.⁶⁹³

Decline & Survival (2007-2011)

In September 2006, U.S. military forces in Iraq forged a working alliance with an umbrella of Iraqi Arab tribes in the restive western province of Anbar, which was then the heartland of the ongoing insurgency against the central government and U.S. and British forces in the country. Dubbed the "Anbar Awakening," the "Awakening Councils," and the "Sons of Iraq" (Abnā' al-Iraq), the latter being the tribes' preferred name, the participating tribal *shaykhs* set up their own militias to fight AQI/ISI with support from the U.S. government. The Awakening Councils were an umbrella for a number of effectively separate tribal forces whose leaders received different types of U.S. aid including financial incentives to target *jihadi* forces in their home territories.⁶⁹⁴ The partnership between the Awakening

⁶⁹² Islamic State films, *Risāla min al-Asīr al-Yābānī al-akhir ba'd Dhabh Zamīl* (A Message from the Last Japanese Prisoner after the Slaughter of His Colleague), 24 January 2015 and *Al-Risālat al-Thānīya wa-l-Akhīra min al-Asīr al-Yābānī* (The Second and the Last Message from the Japanese Prisoner), 27 January 2015.

⁶⁹³ Islamic State film, *Risāla ilā Hukūmat al-Yābān* (A Message to the Government of Japan), 31 January 2015.

⁶⁹⁴ Joe Klein, "Is al-Qaeda on the Run in Iraq?," *Time*, 23 May 2007, at <https://web.archive.org/web/20070706191851/http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0%2C8599%2C1624697%2C00.html>, last accessed 11 August 2017; Greg Bruno, "The Role of the 'Sons of Iraq' in Improving Security," *The Washington Post*, 28 April 2008, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/28/AR2008042801120.html>, last accessed 11 August 2017; Austin Long, "The

Councils and the U.S. was the result of direct U.S. military efforts rather than from the Iraqi central government, which was dominated by Shi‘i Islamist parties and politicians who were suspicious of backing tribal Sunni militias. The formalization and expansion of the militias coincided with the U.S. troop “surge” in Iraq that began in January 2007 and saw the deployment of tens of thousands of additional American soldiers to combat the insurgency. The combined military and societal pressures from the surge and the Anbar Awakening Councils severely impeded AQI/ISI’s ability to operate in one of their central territorial bases and began to erode the organization’s capabilities. The targeted killings and arrests of AQI/ISI members including high-ranking officials such as Khalid al-Mashhadānī, the group’s “minister of information” and head of its media operations wing, further impeded its capabilities on the physical and cyber/media battlefields.⁶⁹⁵ The group was further weakened by the successful targeted killing of its founder, al-Zarqāwī, in June 2006 north of Ba‘quba in Diyala governorate and the continued decline of its image in Iraq even among many Sunni Arabs due to indiscriminate bombings and other types of attacks in civilian areas. Disagreements between AQI and Al-Qaeda Central and, reportedly, even within AQI itself also led to its founder being betrayed by some of his own men as well as Iraqi local residents.⁶⁹⁶

As it reeled from battlefield losses and growing unpopularity, AQI and the umbrella organization it created and dominated, the Majlis Shūrā al-Mujāhidīn (MSM), which itself had been an attempt to rebrand, attempted to shake its faltering image again in October 2006

Anbar Awakening,” *Survival* 50, no. 2 (2008), 67-94; and John A. McCary, “The Anbar Awakening: An Alliance of Incentives,” *The Washington Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (2009), 43-59.

⁶⁹⁵ Associated Press, “U.S. says Top al-Qaida in Iraq Figure Captured,” July 19, 2007, at http://www.nbcnews.com/id/12342627/ns/world_news-mideast_n_africa/t/us-says-top-al-qaida-iraq-figure-captured/#.WZtU2D6GO70, last accessed 11 August 2017.

⁶⁹⁶ CNN, “‘Painstaking’ Operation Led to al-Zarqawi,” 8 June 2006, at <http://www.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/meast/06/08/iraq.al.zarqawi.1929/>, last accessed 11 August 2017 and Dexter Filkins, Mark Mazzetti, and Richard A. Oppel, Jr., “Sources Deep Inside Al Qaeda Betrayed Zarqawi,” *International Herald Tribune*, 9 June 2006, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/09/world/africa/09iht-raid.1940557.html>, last accessed 11 August 2017.

by declaring itself to be the “Islamic State of Iraq” (ISI).⁶⁹⁷ The shadowy leader of the newly recast organization, Abu ‘Umar al-Baghdadi, was portrayed as a proto-“caliph” with the title of “commander of the believers” (*amīr al-mu’minīn*) and pretensions of being an actual state as opposed to what it was in reality, a “paper state.”⁶⁹⁸ Despite its setbacks, the ISI continued to further develop and hone its multimedia production capabilities and began producing new audiovisual series including one, *Knights of Martyrdom* (*Fursān al-Shahāda*), eulogizing suicide bombers and documenting their attacks while appealing for new recruits through exhortations to *jihād* and divine rewards, and the previously mentioned series of short attack videos, *Hell of the Romans and Apostates in the Land of the Two Rivers*.⁶⁹⁹ The ISI’s suicide bombers during this period included a substantial number of foreign fighters who were mostly but not entirely from other Arab countries and other countries in the region including Turkey.⁷⁰⁰ In one of the installments of the former film series the ISI dedicated an introductory segment to the recent crackdown by the Nigerian government on the “Boko Haram” movement of Muhammad Yusuf in northern Nigeria including extrajudicial killings by government forces.⁷⁰¹

The organization’s media teams steadily improved their filming, editing, and other production skills and began to produce increasingly professional propaganda pieces even at a time when the ISI’s military, economic, and manpower capabilities and resources were under severe strain. This evolution in media operations, however, enabled the group to continue to

⁶⁹⁷ Majlis Shūrā al-Mujāhidīn film, *Al-I’lān ‘an Qīyām Dawlat al-Iraq al-Islāmīya* and Islamic State of Iraq film, *Farḥa al-Muslimīn bi-Qīyām Dawlat al-Islāmīya* (Joy of the Muslims for the Establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq), Mu’assasat al-Furqān li-l-Intāḥ al-I’lāmī, 24 January 2007.

⁶⁹⁸ I refer here to the apt description of the ISI by Cole Bunzel, in *From Paper State to Caliphate*.

⁶⁹⁹ Islamic State of Iraq films, *Fursān al-Shahāda* (Knights of Martyrdom), Parts 1-9, Mu’assasat al-Furqān li-l-Intāḥ al-I’lāmī, (March 2007-July 2011).

⁷⁰⁰ On the use of suicide bombers in Iraq, see Mohammed M. Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq: The Strategy and Ideology of Martyrdom* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007).

⁷⁰¹ Islamic State of Iraq film, *Fursān al-Shahāda* (Knights of Martyrdom) Part 9, Mu’assasat al-Furqān li-l-Intāḥ al-I’lāmī, 18 November 2010.

project an image of strength during a time of turmoil and relative weakening of its overall capabilities.⁷⁰² In September 2009, the ISI claimed that it had made strides in religious, military, political, security, economic, media, social, and administrative affairs by continuing its war against the Iraqi government and the U.S., conducting *da‘wa* and political outreach to local Sunnis in bids for support, and continuing to bring in new recruits and winning pledges of allegiance from often unnamed tribal leaders and smaller militant groups.⁷⁰³ The ISI also publicly condemned the “apostate” Anbar Awakening Councils and continued to target their fighters and leaders, including the September 2007 assassination of leading tribal militia leader ‘Abd al-Sattār Abu Rīsha with an IED in Ramadi.⁷⁰⁴ As ISIS expanded territorially in 2014, ‘Abd al-Sattār’s brother, Muhammad Khamīs Abu Rīsha, was also assassinated by the *jihadis*, who used a suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (SVBIED) to kill him while he was on a patrol with government-aligned tribal militiamen and government forces in Anbar.⁷⁰⁵

Significant media and military resources were dedicated during this period to carrying out and meticulously documenting ISI attacks on the Iraqi government, KRG, and “apostates” captured working for both. Suicide bombings, street battles, and hit-and-run attacks on Iraqi central government and KRG forces by ISI insurgents were filmed by ISI media operatives and repackaged into narrative productions meant to project an image of continuing relevance and power, an image of an organization that, despite severe losses, was expanding geographically and still viable, an organization deeply engaged in waging “*jihad*” to return

⁷⁰² Islamic State of Iraq film, *‘Āmān li-Dawlat al-Islam* (Two Years of the State of Islam [ISI]), Mu’assasat al-Furqān li-l-Intāḡ al-I‘lāmī, 22 September 2008.

⁷⁰³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁴ *Ibid.* and Associated Press, “Blast Kills Top Sheik Working with U.S. in Iraq,” 13 September 2007, at http://www.nbcnews.com/id/20754861/ns/world_news-mideast_n_africa/t/blast-kills-top-sheik-working-us-iraq/#.WZtgQz6GO70, last accessed 11 August 2017.

⁷⁰⁵ Mohammed Tawfeeq and Chelsea J. Carter, “Iraqi Police: Abu Risha, Head of Ramadi Awakening Council, Killed,” CNN, 3 June 2014, at <http://www.cnn.com/2014/06/03/world/meast/iraq-unrest/index.html>, last accessed 11 August 2017.

Sunni Islam to its glorious past.⁷⁰⁶ In one introductory segment that was used by ISI media producers to open many films during this period, the role of the “blood of the martyrs” in watering the foundations of the “State of Islam” and expanding them was unsubtly demonstrated by the outlines of the ISI’s name in Arabic and notorious black-and-white flag being filled in by dripping blood and the expansion of Sunni jihadism across the world being connected on an animated map to the establishment and victory of the “Islamic State” of Iraq. As the ISI’s influence emanates outward, the names of modern nation-states such as Jordan, Egypt, Iran, and Syria are eradicated and replaced with more historically “Islamic” entities—Khurasan, al-Shām, and Arḍ al-Kināna.⁷⁰⁷

The ISI regrouped in rural areas of governorates including Anbar, Nineveh, and Diyala and plotted their return to form while also planning and successfully executing major attacks on important targets inside urban centers such as Baghdad, Ramadi, and Falluja. In October 2009 the organization launched the first attacks in a series that it dubbed the “Expedition/Raid of the Prisoner” (Ghazwat al-Asīr), which its leaders said sought to avenge the suffering, torture, and imprisonment of Sunnis by the government. Massive SVBIEDs struck the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works, Ministry of Justice, and Baghdad Provincial Council, killing over 150 people and wounding over 700.⁷⁰⁸ Most alarmingly, Iraqi officials admitted that the explosives-laden vehicles were likely built inside the supposedly secure “Green Zone” in the capital, which demonstrated the ISI’s continued ability to plan and carry out major attacks even in the most secure parts of the

⁷⁰⁶ Islamic State of Iraq (all Mu’assasat al-Furqān li-l-Intāj al-l’lāmī) films, *Qāhir al-Peshmerga* (Vanquisher of the Peshmerga), 12 January 2010; *Al-‘Ubūwwāt Anja’* (More Effective Bombs [IEDs]), 21 January 2011; and *Al-Himma Muhimma* (Zeal is Important), 28 October 2009.

⁷⁰⁷ See Figure 18 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/07/19/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation/>.

⁷⁰⁸ BBC News, “Baghdad Bomb Fatalities Pass 150,” 26 October 2009, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/8325600.stm, last accessed 11 August 2017.

country.⁷⁰⁹ The Iraqi government's forensics center in Baghdad was bombed in January 2010 and in April 2010 the ISI carried out the third wave of SVBIED attacks in the campaign by targeting the Iranian, Egyptian, and Syrian embassies, and the German and Egyptian ambassadors' residences.⁷¹⁰

As part of the *Expedition of the Prisoner*, the ISI released a series of films documenting the attacks and framing them as revenge attacks to the detainment, torture, and summary killings of Sunni prisoners by the Iraqi government and its "Crusader" patron, the U.S. Using footage from the news media and documentaries on abuses in government prisons including graphic footage of prisoners' scars and wounds and the bodies of the dead, many of them killed by Iraqi Shi'i sectarian death squads, and excerpts from "apostate" and "Rāfiḍī" politicians such as Sunni Arab Tariq al-Hāshimī, who was then one of Iraq's vice presidents, the films were designed to stir a visceral and emotional response from Sunnis, playing off widespread anger at abuses by Shi'i Islamists.⁷¹¹ Efforts by the Iraqi government to secure the capital by purchasing fake bomb detectors were also roundly mocked in ISI propaganda, which held the foolish reliance on a widely disproven security method as a prime example of the government's stupidity and corruption.⁷¹²

The centrality of the image of the Sunni Muslim prisoner as an individual who is persecuted, beaten, and even killed only because of their dedication to "true Islam," meaning

⁷⁰⁹ Adnkronos International, "Iraq: Deadly Car Bombs 'Made Inside' Green Zone," 26 October 2009, at <http://www1.adnkronos.com/AKI/English/Security/?id=3.0.3914410423>, last accessed 11 August 2017.

⁷¹⁰ Martin Chulov, "Al-Qaida Bombs Hit Three Baghdad Embassies," *The Guardian*, 4 April 2010, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/apr/04/baghdad-iraq-embassy-explosions>, last accessed 11 August 2017; Rod Nordland and Riyadh Mohammed, "Bombs Hits Hub of Diplomacy in Baghdad," *The New York Times*, 4 April 2010, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/05/world/middleeast/05iraq.html>, last accessed 11 August 2017; Martin Chulov, "Suicide Car Bomber Strikes Baghdad Police Forensics Office," *The Guardian*, 26 January 2010, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jan/26/suicide-car-bomber-baghdad-police>, last accessed 11 August 2017; and BBC News, "Iraq Crime Lab Car Bomber Kills Many in Baghdad," 26 January 2010, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/8480220.stm, last accessed 11 August 2017.

⁷¹¹ Islamic State of Iraq films, *Ghazwat al-Asīr* (Expedition of the Prisoner), Parts 1 and 2, Mu'assasat al-Furqān li-l-Intāj al-I'lāmī, 29 March 2010 and 5 September 2010.

⁷¹² *Ibid.* and Kathy Gilsinan, "Why is Iraq Still Using Fake Bomb Detectors?," *The Atlantic*, 6 July 2016, at <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/07/iraq-fake-bomb-detectors/490088/>, last accessed 11 August 2017.

the *jihadis*' interpretation of Sunnism, remains a key component of Islamic State, Al-Shabaab, and broader Al-Qaeda and Sunni *jihadi* ideological and narrative framing, recruitment pitches, and stated motivations for political violence. As part of this framing, the *mujāhidīn* portray themselves as the avengers and saviors of the prisoners, the ones who will break their chains and "demolish the walls" of their prisons, as one ISI campaign put it.⁷¹³

The revival of ISIS/Islamic State also owed much to the re-emergence of widespread protests among large segments of Iraqi Sunnis in Anbar governorate at the sectarian politics and policies of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and the subsequent violent response by government security forces to the spread of protests beginning in December 2012 that culminated in a series of deadly clashes in 2013 that left scores of demonstrators dead.⁷¹⁴ This, coupled with IS' own strategic planning, Iraqi government corruption, and the failure of key military and civilian leaders, enabled the militant organization, rejuvenated by its successes in neighboring Syria and newly declared independence from Al-Qaeda, to sweep across much of western Iraq in the spring and summer of 2014 in the lead-up to the declaration of a new "caliphate" in June.

⁷¹³ Islamic State of Iraq communiqués, "Bayān 'an al-ghazwa al-jadīda nuṣrat al-asrā al-Muslimīn Ahl al-Sunna" (Statement about the New Expedition to Aid the Sunni Muslim Prisoners), 25 February 2012; "Regarding the Second Wave of Revenge for the Freeborn Women of Ahl al-Sunna in the Prisons of the Apostates," 1 January 2013; "Bayān 'an ghazwat al-khamīs raddan 'alā jarā'im al-Ḥukūmat al-Ṣafawīya" (Statement about the Fifth Expedition in Response to the Crimes of the Safavid [Iraqi] Government), 20 April 2012; "Bayān 'an Ghazwat Tikrit al-mubāraka" (Statement about the blessed Tikrit Expedition), 1 April 2011; "Bayān 'an Ghazwat Sijn 'Tasfīrat Tikrit" wa taqrīr bi-l-'amalīyāt al-'askariya al-muwatthiqa li-Wilāyat Saladin wa shumāl Baghdad" (Statement about the Tikrit prison expedition and a report concerning the documented military operations in Saladin Governorate and north of Baghdad), 13 October 2012; "Bayān 'an ghaḍab al-Muwaḥḥidīn raddan 'alā i'dām mu'taqilī Ahl al-Sunna" (Statement about the anger of the Monotheists in response to the execution of Sunni prisoners), 20 March 2013; "Bayān 'an 'amalīyat Abī Ghraib al-mubāraka wa taqrīr bi-l-'amalīyāt al-muwatthiqa fī ba'd minātiq Wilāyat Anbar" (Statement about the blessed Abu Ghraib [Prison] operation and a report concerning the documented operations in some of the regions of Anbar Governorate), 13 June 2011; and "Bayān 'an Ghazwat 'Qahr al-Ṭawāghīt' fī sijnay Abī Ghraib wa-l-Tājī" (Statement about the 'Destroying the Tyrants' Expedition on the Abu Ghraib and Tājī prisons," 23 July 2013.

⁷¹⁴ Kamal Namaa, "Fighting Erupts as Iraqi Police Break Up Sunni Protest Camp," Reuters, 30 December 2013, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-violence-idUSBRE9BT0C620131230>, last accessed 11 August 2017; Tim Arango, "Dozens Killed in Battles across Iraq as Sunnis Escalate Protests against Government," *The New York Times*, 23 April 2013, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/24/world/middleeast/clashes-at-sunni-protest-site-in-iraq.html>, last accessed 11 August 2017; and Mohammed Tawfeeq and Chelsea J. Carter, "Sunni Sheikh to al-Maliki: Hand Over Soldiers Behind Shootings or 'Face Losses'," CNN, 26 January 2013, at <http://www.cnn.com/2013/01/26/world/meast/iraq-protests/index.html?iref=allsearch>, last accessed 11 August 2017.

Revival & Expansion to the ‘Caliphate’ (2012-2014)

In major attacks on Abu Ghraib and Tājī prisons outside of Baghdad in July 2013 ISIS fighters conducted coordinated multi-pronged attacks to break out insurgent prisoners. Using SVBIEDs to open the attacks followed by infantry armed with firearms and explosive vests, ISIS succeeded in penetrating Abu Ghraib and freeing 500 prisoners. The raids followed a similar prison break operation at the Tikrit prison in September 2012 that freed 90 inmates.⁷¹⁵ The Abu Ghraib and Tājī raids came at an important time in ISIS’ revived insurgency following the organization’s expansion and rapid growth in Syria between 2012 and 2013.⁷¹⁶ Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and other senior ISIS leaders had initially sought to penetrate the Syrian civil war through Jabhat al-Nusra, but as the divide between the two groups widened, ISIS turned to other militant groups that it had connections to, such as the Georgian foreign fighter commander Abu ‘Umar al-Shishani (Tarkhan Batirashvili) and his Katibat al-Muhājirīn, which later merged with local Islamist rebels to form Jaysh al-Muhājirīn wa-l-Anṣār, as well as defectors from Jabhat al-Nusra. Al-Shishani and other fighters shifted their allegiances to ISIS in November/December 2013 and he rose to become a senior commander and leader in the organization, overseeing the seizure of Dayr al-Zur governorate in eastern Syria from Jabhat al-Nusra and other Syrian rebel groups and later the northern sector.

ISIS’ recruiters and media producers tapped into the growing anger among many Sunnis across the world at the increasing brutality of the Syrian civil war and perceptions of the persecution of Sunnis and framed the conflict as an existential struggle between truth and falsehood, the forces of Islam against *rida* and *kufr*. Setting up recruitment facilities in

⁷¹⁵ BBC News, “Iraq Militants Attack Tikrit Prison, Freeing 90 Inmates,” 28 September 2012, at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-19750039>, last accessed 11 August 2017.

⁷¹⁶ Kareem Raheem and Ziad al-Sinjary, “Al Qaeda Militants Flee Iraq Jail in Violent Mass Break-out,” *Reuters*, 22 July 2013, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-violence-idUSBRE96L0RM20130722>, last accessed 11 August 2017.

neighboring Turkey, ISIS and other armed groups in Syria were able to bring in foreign fighters across the porous border into northern Syria with relative ease until ISIS' dramatic territorial conquests began to lead governments to crack down on the travel of potential foreign fighters to Turkey and other neighboring countries. However, by that time ISIS had already established deep networks in a number of Turkish cities that facilitated the travel of Turks and other *jihadis*, brought in financial support, and, eventually, carried out attacks inside Turkey.⁷¹⁷ As the organization spread across Syria and Iraq in 2014 and 2015, deepening its alliances with other local groups and notables including tribal leaders, ISIS was also able to attract local recruits and defectors from other armed groups such as Anşār al-Islam, a mixed Iraqi Kurdish-Arab *jihadi*-insurgent group based in northern Iraq that split in the summer of 2014 after the majority of its members pledged *bay'a* to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi following ISIS' capture of Mosul, with a minority operating in Syria remaining independent.

The shift in the ISI/ISIS' tactics from guerilla warfare, characterized by hit-and-run attacks and lightning raids on Iraqi government checkpoints and outlying bases, to renewed and sustained territorial expansion is documented in a film series produced by its Al-Furqān Media Foundation, *Ṣalīl al-Ṣawārim* (The Clanging/Rattle of Sabers), which was launched in July 2012 and ran for four installments through May 2014. In the first two installments of the series ISI fighters are shown operating from rural bases and carrying out surprise attacks on Iraqi forces including nighttime raids on the homes of individual soldiers, police, officers,

⁷¹⁷ Ceylan Yeginsu, "ISIS Draws a Steady Stream of Recruits from Turkey," *The New York Times*, 15 September 2014, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/16/world/europe/turkey-is-a-steady-source-of-isis-recruits.html>, last accessed 11 August 2017; Rukmini Callimachi, "Turkey, a Conduit for Fighters Joining ISIS, Begins to Feel Its Wrath," *The New York Times*, 29 June 2016, at https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/30/world/middleeast/turkey-a-conduit-for-fighters-joining-isis-begins-to-feel-its-wrath.html?_r=0, last accessed 11 August 2017; Aaron Stein, "Islamic State Networks in Turkey: Recruitment for the Caliphate," Washington, D.C.: Atlantic Council. Issue Brief (October 2016), at <http://www.publications.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Islamic-State-Networks-in-Turkey-web-1003.pdf>, last accessed 11 August 2017; and Marielle Ness, *The Islamic State's Two-pronged Assault on Turkey* (West Point: Combating Terrorism Center, 2017), at <https://ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/CTC-Turkey-Final.pdf>, last accessed 11 August 2017.

and civilian employees.⁷¹⁸ Prisoners captured by the *jihadis* are shown being interrogated before their summary executions, which are buttressed with footage from the news media and other sources of abuses carried out by Iraqi security forces including the beating and humiliation of Sunni prisoners.⁷¹⁹ Large groups of insurgents are also shown undergoing military training, chanting *anāshīd*, and planning and carrying out well-planned attacks on Iraqi government checkpoints and barracks in major urban centers such as the city of Haditha in Anbar governorate.⁷²⁰ In addition to raids on barracks, ISI also carried out drive-by shootings, set up roadblocks on highways using captured Iraqi army and police uniforms and vehicles, and continued to deploy IEDs and SVBIEDs to great effect.⁷²¹

Anbar governorate once again emerged as the locus for ISI's rejuvenation and gradual expansion, providing its commanders and fighters with a secure operating space and access to neighboring Syria via the western desert. The *jihadi*-insurgents' targeting of Anbar Awakening Council leaders and tribal militiamen and renewed anger among many locals at the central government beginning in late 2012 enabled the ISI to regain traction in Iraq while ISI fighters dispatched to Syria began securing a foothold across the border. ISI leaders such as spokesman Abu Muhammad al-ʿAdnānī cast the Awakening Councils as *de facto* allies of Iran because of their cooperation with the Iraqi government, which was dominated by Shiʿi Islamist parties and “apostate” Sunnis.⁷²²

Playing off of the “Arab Spring,” ISI leaders and media operatives announced the beginning of their organization's revival in the “Anbar Spring,” which was marked by the

⁷¹⁸ Islamic State of Iraq film, *Ṣalīl al-Ṣawārim: Part 1* (The Clanging/Rattling of Sabers), Muʿassasat al-Furqān li-l-Intāḡ al-Iʿlāmī, 1 July 2012.

⁷¹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷²⁰ Islamic State of Iraq film, *Ṣalīl al-Ṣawārim: Part 2* (The Clanging/Rattling of Sabers), Muʿassasat al-Furqān li-l-Intāḡ al-Iʿlāmī, 17 August 2012.

⁷²¹ Islamic State of Iraq film, *Ṣalīl al-Ṣawārim: Part 3* (2 parts) (The Clanging/Rattling of Sabers), Muʿassasat al-Furqān li-l-Intāḡ al-Iʿlāmī, 11 January 2013.

⁷²² Islamic State of Iraq film, *Rabīʿ al-Anbar* (The Anbar Spring), Muʿassasat al-Furqān li-l-Intāḡ al-Iʿlāmī, 14 January 2012.

targeting of Sunni “apostate” collaborators, collaborationist “criminal gangs” (*‘iṣābāt al-mujrima*) and the government.⁷²³ Al-‘Adnānī, who denied that the ISI intentionally killed Muslims claimed that the *mujāhidīn* would rather lose their own heads than shed innocent Muslim blood, declared that the organization was dedicated to avenging the humiliation and persecution of Sunnis by the Shi‘a in Iraq backed by Iran and the U.S., and return to Sunnis their lost honor.⁷²⁴ ISI leaders had learned from their defeats and setbacks with the rise of the Awakening Councils in 2007 and capitalized on the government’s mistakes and unpopularity among growing segments of the population in areas such as Anbar, Nineveh, and Diyala in 2012 and 2013, laying the foundation for their rapid expansion in 2014.

The dramatic expansion of ISI/ISIS’ numbers, military strength, and territorial control was clear by the time of the publication of the fourth installment of *Ṣalīl al-Ṣawārim* in mid-May 2014. Opening with aerial footage shot by commercial drones of the city of Falluja, which had begun to fall to ISIS forces in January 2014, and of columns of ISIS fighters parading in broad daylight through the streets of the Syrian and Iraqi cities of Raqqa, Aleppo, and Ramadi, the film also featured non-Iraqi foreign fighters at the front-and-center of its narrative, which projected an image of ISIS as rapidly expanding.⁷²⁵ The use of drones foretold the organization’s use of the vehicles by 2016 as not only surveillance tools but also as aerial delivery systems for small explosive devices. The broader importance of the film would be made clear the following month when Iraqi government forces fled Mosul and ISIS triumphantly entered the city and was welcomed by many, though certainly not all, of its residents. Declaring their loyalty only to Islam and rejecting nation-state-centered identities and citizenship as *kufr*, ISIS fighters were shown tearing up their passports in symbolic

⁷²³ *Ibid.*

⁷²⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷²⁵ Islamic State of Iraq film, *Ṣalīl al-Ṣawārim: Part 4* (The Clanging/Rattling of Sabers), Mu’assasat al-Furqān li-l-Intāj al-I‘lāmī, 17 May 2014.

demonstrations of their rejection of the modern secular state as they pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.⁷²⁶

High definition footage of drive-by shootings, the arrests and executions of government officials at insurgent road checks on rural highways, and the overrunning of army and police barracks is shown throughout the film, underlining the resurgence in the *jihadi* organization's military capabilities by the spring of 2014. The film also documented the expansion of ISIS' political and *da'wa* activities in Iraq. These included accepting the "repentances" of former government workers in mosques and the distribution of ISIS leaflets and other literature in villages, towns, and cities captured by the organization.⁷²⁷ ISIS' military, political, and social expansion into Syria was meticulously captured by *jihadi* media teams in a series of short films beginning in 2013, *Nawāfīdh min Arḍ al-Malāḥim* (Windows on the Land of Epic Battles) and *Ṣūr min Arḍ al-Malāḥim* (Photographs from the Land of Epic Battles).⁷²⁸ The latter series showed high definition photographs of ISIS fighters and their families set to soundtracks of *anāshīd* in which the organization was framed as not only a proto-state but also a self-contained community, an exclusivist organization and in-group, a collective of pious and dedicated Muslims who sought only to "return" Islam to its golden age days of glory and conquest and cast away present humiliation and weakness.⁷²⁹ The *Nawāfīdh min Arḍ al-Malāḥim* series was composed of mostly short video reports, most of them running for less than ten minutes, showing a variety of the group's activities in Syria

⁷²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷²⁸ Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (all Mu'assasat al-I'tisām) films, *Nawāfīdh min Arḍ al-Malāḥim* (Windows on the Land of Epic Battles), Parts 1-50 (August 2013-March 2014); the series title alternated between this and *Nawāfīdh 'alā Arḍ al-Malāḥim*; and *Ṣūr min Arḍ al-Malāḥim* (Photographs from the Land of Epic Battles), Parts 1-6 (October 2013-January 2014).

⁷²⁹ For examples of some of the photographs in this series, see Figure 19 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/07/19/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation/>.

including giving sermons at mosques, running *da'wa* events for locals,⁷³⁰ securing new pledges of allegiance,⁷³¹ individual testimonies and recruitment calls of rank-and-file members including a growing cadre of Arab and non-Arab foreign fighters,⁷³² the distribution of food and other aid to the needy,⁷³³ the takeover and running of local children's schools,⁷³⁴ military operations,⁷³⁵ and the destruction of local Sufi shrines.⁷³⁶ The series supplemented other ISI/ISIS media productions.

As ISIS expanded its geographical control, the organization's media operations broadcast idyllic images of the soon-to-be new "caliphate," a *jihadi* proto-state for those Muslims dedicated not only to the defense of Muslim lands but to their expansion inexorably across the globe until the Day of Judgment. In June 2014, following the fall of Mosul to ISIS, the organization's media wing released a series of audio, print, and audiovisual productions heralding the establishment of a new "caliphate" and demanding all "true" Sunni Muslims around the world, not only the *mujāhidīn*, to pledge allegiance and flock to its banners. ISIS' fighters and leaders, including al-'Adnānī and Abu 'Umar al-Shishani, physically bulldozed part of the earthen barrier demarcating the modern national borders of Syria and Iraq as other militants crossed it on foot and in vehicles, participating in a symbolically important political and ideological performance that marked, in the eyes of the

⁷³⁰ Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham films, *Nawāfīdh min Arḍ al-Malāḥim*, Part 11 and 13, 20 September and 3 October 2013; *Taghīya Ṣaḥīfa li-Aḥad al-Khayyam al-Da'wīya fī Wilāyat Ḥalab* (Documentary report on one of the missionary tents in Aleppo governorate), 10 July 2013; and *Kitāb Yahdī...wa Sayf Yansur* (The Book [Qur'an] Guided and the Sword Brings Victory), 25 July 2013.

⁷³¹ Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham film, *Nawāfīdh min Arḍ al-Malāḥim: Part 1*, 8 August 2013.

⁷³² Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham films, *Nawāfīdh min Arḍ al-Malāḥim*, Part 9, Part 10, and Part 15, 13 September, 15 September, and 13 October 2013; *Alladhīna āmanū wa ḥājarū wa jāhadū* (And those who believed and strove in God's path), title taken from Qur'an 8:72, Parts 1 and 2, July 2013; *Those who Were Truthful with Allah*, Al-Hayat Media Center, 16 July 2014; *Join the Ranks*, Al-Hayat Media Center, 22 July 2014; *There is No Life Without Jihad*, Al-Hayat Media Center, 19 June 2014; and *Mujatweets*, Parts 1-8, Al-Hayat Media Center, July 2014.

⁷³³ Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham film, *Nawāfīdh min Arḍ al-Malāḥim: Part 29*, November 2013.

⁷³⁴ Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham film, *Nawāfīdh min Arḍ al-Malāḥim: Part 28*, 21 November 2013.

⁷³⁵ Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham film, *Wa uqṭulūhum ḥaythu thaqiftumūhum* (And Slay Them Wherever You Find Them), 10 September 2013. The title is taken from Qur'an 2:191.

⁷³⁶ Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham film, *Nawāfīdh min Arḍ al-Malāḥim: Part 27*, November 2013.

organization's members at least, the erasure of the border imposed by colonial powers.⁷³⁷

The *Umma* once again, said al-‘Adnānī, had a caliph from the tribe of Quraysh and the *Ahl al-Bayt*, a rightful successor to the Prophet Muhammad and the first generations of Muslims, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who he announced in late June as “Caliph Ibrahim bin ‘Awwād bin Ibrahim bin ‘Ali bin Muhammad al-Badrī al-Hāshimī al-Husaynī al-Qurashī.” In addition to appeals to the visceral emotion and thirst for revenge of his Sunni target audience, the Islamic State’s spokesman declared allegiance to be incumbent upon all Muslims and the nullification of all other Sunni *jihadi* groups in a direct challenge to Al-Qaeda Central and its regional affiliates. “So rush, O’ Muslims, and gather around your caliph so that you may return as you once were to the ages when you were kings of the Earth and knights of war,” he said. “Come so that you may be honored and held in esteem, living as masters with honor and dignity. [...] Know that [...] we fight for an *Umma* to which God has given honor, esteem, and leadership, promising to empower and strengthen it across the Earth...If you reject democracy, secularism, nationalism, and the other garbage ideas from the West, and stand by your religion and creed, then you will possess the Earth and both the east and the west will submit to you. This is God’s promise to you!”⁷³⁸

Al-Shabaab’s Media Operations (2007-2017)

If the role of new media and the rise and expansion of social media provides a lens through which to trace and understand the deep ideological, sectarian, and strategic divisions and variations between militant Islamic organizations such as Al-Qaeda and Islamic State, in the case of Al-Shabaab it was also utilized as a key tool with which to shape a local and regional as well as a more broadly transnational media campaign and set of narrative frames.

⁷³⁷ Islamic State of Iraq films, *The End of Sykes-Picot*, Al-Hayat Media Center, 29 June 2014 and *Kasr al-Hudūd* (Demolishing the Borders), Mu’assasat al-I’tisām, 29 June 2014; and Abu Muhammad al-‘Adnānī (both from Mu’assasat al-Furqān li-l-Intāj al-I’lāmī), *Mā Aṣābak min Ḥasana fa-man Allah* (Whatever good befalls you, it is from God), the title is taken from Qur’an 4:79, 11 June 2014 and *Hadha Wa’d Allah* (This is God’s Promise), 29 June 2014.

⁷³⁸ Abu Muhammad al-‘Adnānī, *Hadha Wa’d Allah*.

Al-Shabaab's media campaign, which drew strategically on global themes and global *jihad*, was clearly aimed at building domestic and regional power on the ground by playing off of the pre-existing deep divisions within Somali and, later, Kenyan society and undermining local rivals and competitors while also attracting new recruits from first the local and regional spheres and then increasingly in the transnational and global sphere. In contrast to Islamic State, Al-Shabaab tempered at times the global nature of its media and narrative frames in an attempt to both benefit from transnationalism and global *jihad* while also controlling and shaping it to meet its strategic interests and goals. While seeking to create an Islamist/*jihadi* "Greater Somalia" in the Horn of Africa, Al-Shabaab, though it invoked the idealized concept of a new "caliphate," continues to limit its on-the-ground strategy and operations to a more gradual and staged strategy than Islamic State, which instead sought, after declaring itself the new "caliphate" in June 2014, to forcibly incorporate all other Sunni *jihadi* groups into its fold and demand the direct allegiance of Muslims globally. Al-Shabaab's more careful use of transnational, globalized framing hand-in-hand with local and regionalized messaging—the latter often operating separately from the organization's external, transnational and global media messaging—enabled its leadership to more closely control the group's media operations and specifically its use of globalized framing, which in turn resulted in the Somali militant group's greater durability and flexibility as an insurgent, a political, and a media organization.

After emerging as a newly independent group following the overthrow of the UIC in 2007, Al-Shabaab began developing its media operations capabilities by establishing a media department (*al-qism al-i'lāmī*) as part of its frontline fighting force, the Jaysh al-'Usra. At first, the media department produced primarily written communiqués and statements about the group's military operations against Ethiopian and Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) forces, which were distributed online via *jihadi* web sites and locally and

regionally to news media outlets. The insurgents also participated in interviews with journalists and news networks including Al-Jazeera. Al-Shabaab's media capabilities did not visibly improve in terms of production quality until 2008-2009 when it began to produce and release higher-quality videos with more cohesive, though still rough, attempts at framing the ongoing conflict against the Ethiopian and AMISOM "Crusaders" and the Somali TFG "apostates." Al-Shabaab's media operations and construction and utilization of narrative frames developed gradually and shifted in places over time as the organization faced different challenges and strategic needs.

Early Somali Jihadi Films (2006-2007)

One of the earliest Somali *jihadi* films was produced by the Jihad Foundation for Islamic Media (Mu'asasadda Al-Jihaad ee Warbaahinta Islaamka) and released at the end of November 2006, *Jaḥīm al-Murtaddīn fi-l-Ṣūmāl* (The Apostates' Hell in Somalia).⁷³⁹ Though not officially branded as an Al-Shabaab production and probably released by a segment of the UIC, the film, which included parts in both Somali and Arabic, hit on a number of themes that would later be used in the group's official media including a transnational conception of *jihad* by which the ongoing Somali civil war was cast as being a part of a broader conflict between Islam and the forces of *kufr*. Featuring *jihadi anāshīd* and clips from earlier video messages and lectures of Bin Laden and 'Azzām, the film included footage of armed Somali insurgents engaged in firefights and raids on Ethiopian and TFG forces as well as well as of *shari'a* lessons (*duruusta sharciga*) and military training of fighters in camps.⁷⁴⁰ Commanders, including the head of the *shari'a* court in Dayniile on the outskirts of Mogadishu, Abu Qutayba, Al-Shabaab commander 'Adan Hashi Farah 'Ayro, and Mukhtar Robow, who was then the deputy commander of the UIC's security forces, and

⁷³⁹ Mu'asasadda Al-Jihaad ee Warbaahinta Islaamka film, *Jaḥīm al-Murtaddīn fi-l-Ṣūmāl* (Hell of the Apostates in Somalia), 30 November 2006.

⁷⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

rank-and-file fighters were interviewed about the growing threat of an imminent Ethiopian invasion and the “un-Islamic” behavior of TFG militia forces, as represented by their consumption of alcohol and alliance with disbelievers.⁷⁴¹ Robow described the conflict as pitting the “soldiers of God” against the “soldiers of Satan” in a battle over the direction of Somalia.⁷⁴² The conflict was framed as a religious contest between the forces of Islam and the forces of the disbelievers and their apostate clients.

A second early Somali *jihadi* film was *Badr al-Ṣūmāl* ([Battle of] Badr of Somalia), named after the Prophet Muhammad’s first battle against the pagan Meccans in 624, a battle that has assumed mythical status in Islamic literature with Qur’an 3:123-125 mentioning that God sent down three thousand angels to aid the outnumbered *muhājirīn* and *anṣār* of Medina against the Quraysh.⁷⁴³ The film, which included parts in Somali and Arabic, included numerous audio insertions from media of international *jihadi* leaders and ideologues including ‘Azzām, Al-Zawahiri, and al-Zarqāwī as well as *anāshīd* staples from earlier *jihadi* films produced by Al-Qaeda Central and *mujāhidīn* groups in the Caucasus and the Balkans.⁷⁴⁴ Military training, including mobile infantry tactics and rappelling between two buildings, made up a significant part of the film as did news footage of anti-TFG demonstrations and interviews with “agents of the Crusaders” (*‘umalā al-ṣalībīyīn*).⁷⁴⁵ In one scene, African leaders including Ethiopia’s president, Meles Zenawi, and U.S. president George W. Bush are pictured as chimpanzees clinging to their “mother,” Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon.⁷⁴⁶ Somali insurgents are then shown praying in congregation before a

⁷⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴² *Ibid.*

⁷⁴³ Iclaanka Mujahidiinta Somalia (Media of the *Mujāhidīn* in Somalia) film, *Badr al-Ṣūmāl* ([Battle of] Badr in Somalia), December 2006.

⁷⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁶ See Figure 11 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/07/19/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation/>.

nighttime raid followed by a display of captured bottles of alcohol and a statue of an African goddess with large breasts captured in a government base.⁷⁴⁷

The Beginnings of Al-Shabaab's Media Operations Campaign (2007-2008)

The online distribution of Al-Shabaab's media materials was coordinated by the Echo of Jihad Media Center (Markaz Ṣadā al-Jihād li-l-I'lām), a unit of the GIMF, which organized the release of new insurgent material on *jihadi* Internet fora. Al-Shabaab and its supporters also set up their own web sites, for example Hegaan.net, Kataaib.info, and Kataaib.net, in Somali, Arabic, and English that served as one-stop shops for the latest news about its military operations, martyrs, and ideological messaging.⁷⁴⁸ A pro-Al-Shabaab *jihadi* Internet forum, the *Shabakat al-Qimmat al-Islāmīya* (Peak/Summit of Islam Forum), alqimmah.net, was also established by the group's supporters, including some in Europe, and included sub-sections in Somali, English, and Arabic. The group adopted media operations tactics and practices pioneered by other *jihadi* organizations including Al-Qaeda and attempted to tap into that group's globalist *jihadi* narrative in order to attract support for its own cause in Somalia and East Africa. The Al-Qaeda Central leadership, though it flirted with the Somali *jihadi*-insurgents' cause, stopped short of directly and unambiguously endorsing Al-Shabaab. This was perhaps due to misgivings on the part of Bin Laden regarding the Somali group's style of governance and insurgency, which was revealed in documents captured in 2011 at his Abbottabad compound.⁷⁴⁹

Bin Laden, in a March 2009 audiovisual message directed generically to the fighters in “*mujāhid* Somalia” (*al-muqātilīn fī-l-Ṣūmāl al-mujāhid*), urged the country's fighters to recognize that the conflict in which they were engaged was not only a domestic or regional

⁷⁴⁷ Iclaanka Mujahidiinta Somalia film, *Badr al-Ṣūmāl*.

⁷⁴⁸ Stig Jarle Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 59-62.

⁷⁴⁹ See SOCOM-2012-0000005, a letter from Bin Laden to Godane, at <https://ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Letter-from-Usama-Bin-Laden-to-Mukhtar-Abu-al-Zubayr-Original.pdf>, last accessed 27 July 2017.

conflict but the continuation of an inter-civilization conflict between Islam and international organizations such as NATO, led by the U.S., in which the latter were trying to subjugate Muslims worldwide through local clients like TFG president ‘Abdullahi Yusuf and Sharif Sheikh Ahmed under the guise of a “national unity government.”⁷⁵⁰

The most direct endorsement of Al-Shabaab came from Al-Qaeda Central *shari‘a* official Abu Yaḥyā al-Lībī who directly addressed, advised, and praised the Somali group’s frontline fighting force, the *Jaysh al-‘Usra*, in March 2007.⁷⁵¹ He urged them to not only focus on expelling the Ethiopians and their apostate allies, the TFG, but also to establish an Islamic state in the country ruled by *shari‘a*, which he said could only be fully established through *jihad*. He called upon on Muslims to make *hijra* to aid Al-Shabaab against the “Abyssinian occupiers” (*al-Aḥbāsh al-muḥtalīn*).⁷⁵² Abu Yaḥyā’s framing of the conflict as one between Somali Muslims and “Abyssinians” was meant to connect the contemporary conflict with the sacred past, namely the attack on Mecca in 570, the “Year of the Elephant,” by the Himyarite ruler of Yemen, Abraha, who was aided by a local guide, Abu Righāl, from the Arabian town of Ta’if, as well as to historical conflicts between Somali Muslims and Ethiopian Christians⁷⁵³ Al-Zawahiri, in an audio message addressed to Al-Shabaab and Somali Muslims generally in the midst of an AMISOM and Somali government offensive in 2012, directly invoked the sacred past through the figure of Abu Righāl, referring to AMISOM, which included Ethiopian military units, as the descendants of those Abyssinians

⁷⁵⁰ Usama bin Laden, *Al-Nizāl al-Nizāl Yā Abṭāl al-Ṣūmāl* (Fight On, O’ Heroes of Somalia), Mu’assasat al-Saḥāb li-l-Intāḥ al-I’lāmī, 19 March 2009.

⁷⁵¹ Abu Yaḥyā al-Lībī, *Ilā Jaysh al-‘Usra fī-l-Ṣūmāl* (To the Army of Difficulty/Hardship in Somalia), Mu’assasat al-Saḥāb li-l-Intāḥ al-I’lāmī, 25 March 2007.

⁷⁵² *Ibid.*

⁷⁵³ On Abraha and Abu Righāl, see A.F.L. Beeston, “Abraha” and “Abu Righal,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs (Leiden: Brill, 2006). Consulted online on 3 August 2017 at http://dx.doi.org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_0149 and http://dx.doi.org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_0242.

who tried to destroy the *Ka'ba* in the Year of the Elephant but were stopped by flocks of birds (*abābīl*) sent by God dropping stones on the advancing army.⁷⁵⁴

Abu Yahyā said that there was no other way except *jihad* for Muslims to defend their religion from those trying to destroy it and urged Somalia's *mujāhidīn* to unify in the face of the *kuffar*.⁷⁵⁵ His advice extended to tactical suggestions including asymmetric guerilla warfare including the planting of IEDs, hit-and-run attacks, car bombs, martyrdom operations (*al-'amalīyat al-istishhādīya*) and SVBIEDs, and ambushes.⁷⁵⁶ God would only extend His assistance, he said, if the *Jaysh al-'Usra* demonstrated its dedication to Islamic principles by fighting *jihad* in His path (*al-jihad fī sabīl Allah*) against not only the "Abyssinians" but also the apostates, whose enmity for the Muslims was "almost as great" as that of the *kuffar*.⁷⁵⁷

The recruitment of foreign fighters to augment their domestic fighters was a central focus of Al-Shabaab's external media operations from its earliest days as an independent insurgent force. The group's domestic fighters were drawn from a mix of clans and sub-clans who were hostile to the Ethiopian occupation and the TFG and some which were more societally and politically marginalized as well as from individual recruits with personal ties to Al-Shabaab's leadership. The group's earliest recruitment films tapped into the global jihadism of Al-Qaeda and framed the Somali conflict as the domestic face of a wider struggle between the lands of Islam and the Christian West, which was attempting to reestablish colonial control either directly or, more commonly, through the use of local and regional Muslim and non-Muslim clients. Among these early films was a series of releases featuring Al-Shabaab fighters giving their last wills and testaments before carrying out SVBIED attacks. In addition to the martyrs' wills (*waṣīya al-shahīd*) these films included footage of

⁷⁵⁴ Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Yā Usūd al-Ṣūmāl Jāhidū Ahfād Abī Righāl* (O' Lions of Somalia, Fight the Descendants of Abu Righāl), Mu'assasat al-Sahāb li-l-Intāḡ al-I'lāmī, 12 May 2012.

⁷⁵⁵ Abu Yahyā al-Lībī, *Ilā Jaysh al-'Usra fī-l-Ṣūmāl*.

⁷⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

the preparation and execution of the attacks as well as frequent audio and audiovisual insertions from major *jihadi* ideologues and leaders including Bin Laden, imprisoned Saudi cleric Khalid al-Rāshid, and ‘Azzām alongside *jihadi anāshīd*. The attacks, according to the young men carrying them out, were in revenge for the persecution of Muslims by the *kuffar* and *murtaddūn* and were part of a campaign to reestablish the rule of *tawḥīd* and *shari‘a* within an Islamic state.⁷⁵⁸ One young bomber, ‘Abd al-Azīz Sa‘d, told Muslims that the time had come for them to “stand up for Islam” and raise His word by fighting the *kuffar* in order to retaliate for their insults against the Prophet Muhammad.⁷⁵⁹ The film tied his actions to the publication of derogatory cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* in September 2005 including one depicting him wearing a bomb as a turban that was drawn by cartoonist Kurt Westergaard.⁷⁶⁰ The “dirty *kuffar*” were shaming their Prophet, Sa‘d said, and most Muslims were not even getting up from their seats to defend him despite claiming that they were his devoted followers.⁷⁶¹ Citing Qur’an 9:24 in which God commands the Muslims to “strive in the path of God” (*al-jihad fī sabīl Allah*) and warns that He will not guide those (*fāsiqīn*) who flagrantly disregard His invocations, Sa‘d attempted to shame Muslims into picking up arms to defend their Prophet.⁷⁶² Insults against the Prophet were not just about him, Sa‘d argued, but aimed at the entire *Umma* and were representative of the *kuffar*’s disdain and lack of respect for Muslims generally.⁷⁶³

Muslims will not truly understand the “sweetness” of *jihad*, Sa‘d said, until they made *hijra* to the lands of *jihad* such as Somalia. Another fighter with him asked Muslims

⁷⁵⁸ Al-Shabaab film, *Al-‘Amalīyat al-Istishhādīyat al-Sābi‘a fī-l-Ṣūmāl: Waṣīyat al-Akh al-Shahīd Abu Bakr Sa‘īd Ḥīrī* (The Seventh Martyrdom Operation in Somalia: Will of the Brother and Martyr Abu Bakr Sa‘īd Ḥīrī), 7 June 2008.

⁷⁵⁹ Al-Shabaab film, *Al-‘Amalīyat al-Istishhādīyat al-Tāsi‘a fī-l-Ṣūmāl: Waṣīyat al-Shahīd ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sa‘d* (The Ninth Martyrdom Operation in Somalia: Will of the Martyr ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sa‘d), 30 October 2008.

⁷⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶² *Ibid.*

⁷⁶³ *Ibid.*

rhetorically in English and Swahili how they could remain inactive when their religion was being attacked and their brethren persecuted.⁷⁶⁴ The *kuffar* can only be stopped from extinguishing the “light of Islam” through *jihad* and the *Umma* needed heroic examples to follow, Sa’d said just before driving off to carry out his attack.⁷⁶⁵ The gates of Paradise and forgiveness for their sins is open, he said, through sacrifice on the battlefield, referencing indirectly some *aḥādīth* about the rewards promised to the battlefield martyr.⁷⁶⁶ Sa’d and his fellow foreign fighter also invoked the concept of the “victorious group” (*al-ṭā’ifat al-manṣūra*), a concept that draws from *aḥādīth*, which were later expounded upon by historically respected Sunni Muslim religious scholars, Qur’anic exegetes, and jurists, in which the Prophet Muhammad predicts the *Umma* will divide into seventy-two sects, only one of which will ultimately be the “correct” and “victorious” group following “true” Islam.⁷⁶⁷ This concept is particularly, but not solely, popular with *jihadis* who portray themselves as the only truly “pure” practitioners of Islam, defining purity of religion through the fulfilment of all religious obligations (*‘ibādāt*) including military *jihad*. The “pure” *mujāhidīn* were contrasted with the corrupt apostates aligned with the Ethiopian “Crusader” occupiers, backed in turn by the U.S.⁷⁶⁸ The “clients” of the U.S., Ethiopia, and other *kuffar* nations and the apostates in Somalia were only interested in self-aggrandizement, Al-Shabaab’s framing claimed, using footage of TFG militias looting shops in Mogadishu’s Bakaara Market.⁷⁶⁹

⁷⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶⁷ A compilation of these references can be found at Aqeedah Ahlus Sunnah Wa Aljamaa’ah, “Who are The Victorious Group...???” 19 October 2015, at <https://thewayofsalafiyyah.wordpress.com/2015/10/19/who-are-the-victorious-group/>, last accessed 1 August 2017 and from a *fatwa* by the Saudi Salafi jurist Muhammad Ṣāliḥ al-Munajjid, 4 March 1999, at <https://islamqa.info/en/206>, last accessed 1 August 2017.

⁷⁶⁸ Al-Shabaab film, *Ghazwat Lā Salām bi-lā Islam* (Expedition ‘No Peace Except Islam’), 28 December 2008.

⁷⁶⁹ Al-Shabaab film, *Al-‘Amālīyat al-Istishhādīyat al-Tāsi‘a fi-l-Ṣūmāl*.

Attempts to establish the TFG as Somalia's government by regional and international bodies such as the UN and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which relied heavily on non-Muslim governments in Ethiopia and Kenya, were no substitute for *jihad* and were ultimately exercises in futility and perversion of Islamic principles.⁷⁷⁰ It was only through armed struggle that the Crusaders and apostates will be defeated since they are both inherently hostile to "believing" Muslims, which makes a negotiated settlement impossible. It is only through the establishment of an Islamic polity governed by *shari'a* and whose people are infused with the spirit of *jihad* and the heroism of the Prophet Muhammad and his Ṣaḥāba that victory will ultimately be achieved by the Muslims.

Military training and images of heroism and sacrifice on the part of its fighters were central to Al-Shabaab's media operations from 2007 and 2008. The group's media department produced a number of lengthy recruitment-themed films showing foreign fighters engaged in various military training exercises including target practice with different types of firearms, rocket-propelled grenades, and recoilless guns as well as ideological exhortations from Al-Shabaab leaders, such as Godane, Mukhtar Robow and commander Abu Sulaym, as well as excerpts from other *jihadi* groups' films of militant luminaries including Bin Laden, al-Zawahiri, 'Azzām, al-Zarqāwī, Al-Qaeda Central Afghanistan commander Abu al-Layth al-Lībī, and Abu Yaḥyā al-Lībī taken from other organizations' films.⁷⁷¹ The films also cited specific Qur'anic verses, such as Qur'an 5:54 and 61:10-13, in which God commands the Muslims to wage *jihad* in His path without fear so as to earn His support and rewards.⁷⁷²

Al-Shabaab's media also called for Muslims to "terrorize the enemies of God" (*turhibūna bihi 'adūwa Allah wa 'adūwakum*), drawing upon a part of Qur'an 8:60 and

⁷⁷⁰ Al-Shabaab film, *Ghazwat Lā Salām bi-lā Islam*.

⁷⁷¹ Al-Shabaab film, *Ghazwat Lā Salām bi-lā Islam*; *Isti'ādāt Ghazwat Lā Salām bi-lā Islam* (Preparations for the Expedition 'No Peace Except Islam'), 30 September 2008; and *Ghazwat Dīnsūr al-Mubāraka* (The Blessed Expedition of Diinsoor), 17 May 2008.

⁷⁷² Al-Shabaab film, *Ghazwat Lā Salām bi-lā Islam* and *Ghazwat Dīnsūr al-Mubāraka*.

interpreting it broadly to include attacks against both combatants and *kuffār* noncombatants, the latter of whom were portrayed as being participants, through their engagement in democratic elections, in the actions of their governments.⁷⁷³ Al-Shabaab and other *jihadis* consider this verse to be not only giving permission, in an Islamic and *shari‘a* sense, but actually commanding Muslims to terrorize their enemies during war so as to ensure the victory of Islam and the *Umma*. The Muslims are to fight God’s enemies, whoever they may be. Al-Shabaab adopted a similar theme in a major military campaign that it launched in the spring of 2008 and continued through the autumn of that year, which they dubbed the “Our Terrorism is Praiseworthy Campaign” (*Ghazwat Irhābinā Maḥmūd*).⁷⁷⁴

Al-Shabaab succeeded in attracting a diverse group of foreign fighters to Somalia as early as 2007-2008 and many were featured in their early recruitment films and other videos. They delivered recruitment pitches and ideological messages about the necessity of *jihad* and the duties of Muslims to fight against the *kuffar*, a part of the group’s “othering” campaign in which the conflict in Somalia and other areas involving Muslims around the world were presented as life-and-death Manichaeian struggles between Islam (light) and *Kufr* (darkness). The narrative framing of Al-Shabaab’s early film productions aimed at Muslim audiences outside of Somalia clearly demonstrated the group’s affinity for the global *jihadi* ideology espoused by Al-Qaeda and militant dissident voices from among the world’s Sunni, and primarily Salafi, ‘*ulamā* including Khalid al-Rāshid, Sulayman al-‘Ulwān, and Ḥamūd bin ‘Uqlā al-Shu‘aybī, who Al-Shabaab heralded as the *Umma*’s exemplary religious scholars whose truthfulness and dedication to their faith shone through the dark clouds of *kufr* and *ridda* represented by the “religious scholars of evil” (‘*ulamā al-sū*’) and the clerical hirelings of governments (‘*ulamā al-balāt*’).

⁷⁷³ Al-Shabaab film, *Isti‘ādāt Ghazwat Lā Salām bi-lā Islam*. See Figure 12 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/07/19/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation/>.

⁷⁷⁴ Al-Shabaab communiqué, “Bayān hāmm šādir ‘an al-qīyādat al-‘āmma li-Ḥarakat al-Shabāb al-Mujāhidīn” (Important Statement issued by the General Leadership of Al-Shabaab), 5 April 2008.

Early *jihadi*-insurgent recruitment films included speakers in Somali, Arabic, Swahili, English, and Urdu who urged Muslims to make *hijra* to Somalia in order to fight against the “new Crusaders” and help their Muslim brothers and sisters in East Africa establish an Islamic state. They utilized a strategic vocabulary that tapped into key ideas, historical events and images of the sacred past, and revered heroic personalities such as the Prophet Muhammad and great Muslim warriors such as Khalid bin al-Walīd in order to secure an aura of historical and religious authenticity and authority for their messaging. The *mujāhidīn* of today, they claim, are the inheritors of the great military tradition of Khalid, the “Sword of Islam,” and other great Muslim commanders and rulers in history. Al-Shabaab and other *jihadis* are modern day versions of the frontier warriors (*murābiṭūn*) of old who were stationed (*ribāṭ*) in Muslim lands to safeguard them from invasion and attack from the *kuffar*.⁷⁷⁵

Recruitment, which was the dominant theme in much of Al-Shabaab’s early video productions, never stopped in the group’s media operations but was reintroduced with new vigor in the autumn of 2010 as the *jihadi*-insurgents began to see their once-rapid territorial advances slow in the face of strategic mistakes, such as the costly failure of their summer 2010 Ramadan Offensive in Mogadishu, and as they braced for a new offensive against them spearheaded by AMISOM and the TFG and augmented by allied clan militia forces including from the Sufi anti-Al-Shabaab militia umbrella Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a (ASWJ), which would

⁷⁷⁵ On the history of these two concepts, see Michael Bonner, “Some Observations Concerning the Early Development of Jihad on the Arab-Byzantine Frontier,” *Studia Islamica* 75 (1992), 5-31, *Jihad in Islamic History*, Chapter Seven, *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War: Studies in the Jihad and the Arab-Byzantine Frontier* (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1996), Christopher Melchert, “Ibn al-Mubarak’s Kitab al-Jihad and Early Renunciant Literature,” in *Violence in Islamic Thought from the Qur’an to the Mongols*, ed. Robert Gleave and István T. Kristo-Nagy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 49-69, and Thomas Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), Chapters Five and Six. On modern *jihadi* interpretations of the two concepts, see Mark Long, “Ribat, al-Qa’ida, and the Challenge for U.S. Foreign Policy,” *The Middle East Journal* 63, no. 1 (2009), 31-47.

begin in February 2011.⁷⁷⁶ In the midst of battlefield and political setbacks as well as the challenge of the 2011 East Africa famine—that is during times of uncertainty and pressure for the group’s leadership—Al-Shabaab once again prioritized replenishing its ranks, which had been thinned in defeat through casualties and defections. Attention was paid in Al-Shabaab recruitment messaging in its early period of expansion and again from 2011 onward to domestic, regional, and foreign fighters from outside of the Horn of Africa.⁷⁷⁷ By producing films in multiple languages, often in a single release by—for example, including Arabic or Somali audio with subtitles in a second and sometimes even a third language—Al-Shabaab’s media apparatus increased the potential viewership for its carefully, if also crudely, framed messaging.

Al-Shabaab had to cast as wide a net for recruitment as possible because of its need to augment its domestically-recruited forces by attracting foreign fighters who in many cases were more reliant on the group for their livelihoods and survival, whereas local Somali fighters could often fall back on other identities such as clan affiliation. The group has probably never far exceeded 9-13,000 total members (not all of whom were frontline fighters) and possibly has had as low as 3-5,000 at other times, including foreign fighters.⁷⁷⁸ By developing a capable media wing, Al-Shabaab was able to fill a media deficit in its early days during 2007 and 2008 when it lacked easy access to traditional news networks and

⁷⁷⁶ Associated Press, “Militants Join Somali Government,” 16 March 2010, at http://archive.boston.com/news/world/africa/articles/2010/03/16/militants_join_somali_government/, last accessed 1 August 2017, BBC News, “Somalia’s al-Shabab Hit by Major Amisom Offensive,” 20 January 2012, at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-16646311>, last accessed 1 August 2017, and Garowe Online, “Al-Shabaab Leaders Condemn Each Other Publicly,” 18 December 2010, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201012180008.html>, last accessed 1 August 2017.

⁷⁷⁷ Al-Shabaab films, *Ghazwat al-Furqān* (the latter term refers to the criteria through which good and evil are determined), 27 June 2009, and *Message to the Ummah: And Inspire the Believers*, Mu’assasat al-Katā’ib, 22 November 2010; the second film takes the second part of its title from Qur’an 4:84.

⁷⁷⁸ The exact number of Al-Shabab numbers is unclear due to the lack of verifiable evidence but is usually estimated to have varied, at different times, from a low of around 3-5,000 to a median of 9-10,000 and a high estimate of 14-15,000. The high estimate, however, relies on dubious, unverifiable figures.

particularly the international news media.⁷⁷⁹ Later, when it had risen to prominence in Somalia, Al-Shabaab operated its own official and semi-official media outlets on the domestic Somali, regional East African, and international/external fronts including the Al-Katā'ib Media Foundation and News Channel (the group used both names), domestic Somali language outlets such as Radio al-Andalus and Radio al-Furqaan, and Swahili language media run by affiliate groups such as the Kenyan Muslim Youth Centre/Al-Hijra and Al-Muhajiroun in East Africa.⁷⁸⁰ Al-Shabaab also benefited from the work of pro-insurgent domestic media outlets such as Someli MeMo, Calamada, and AmiirNuur.⁷⁸¹

The development of a robust and multi-layered set of media operations capabilities also allowed Al-Shabaab to outperform its domestic insurgent competitors such as Hizbul Islam and the Ras Kambooni militia in the arenas of recruitment and fundraising. Al-Shabaab did this in part by adopting transnationalism in at least some of its messaging designed to attract *jihadis* and other Muslims who may not otherwise have been interested in the Somali conflict.⁷⁸² The group has also been careful to develop a multi-tiered and prodigiously productive domestic media operations campaign in Somali that features both official statements and other releases from the group as well as coverage of other domestic, regional, and international news events, particularly but not only those with a direct impact on Somalia and Al-Shabaab. By investing in these multiple tiers of media messaging Al-Shabaab is able to partially transcend pigeonholing itself by appealing to only one or two audiences and instead potentially reach many more people through its official and semi-official media or ostensibly independent but sympathetic news outlets. The group's messaging, though extensive, is often contradictory at least in some of its aspects, in part

⁷⁷⁹ Stig Jarle Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 60.

⁷⁸⁰ <http://radioandalus24.com/> and <http://radioalfurqaan.com/>, both last accessed 1 August 2017.

⁷⁸¹ <http://somalimemo.net/>, <http://calamada.com/>, and <http://www.amiirnuur.com/>, last accessed 1 August 2017.

⁷⁸² Aisha Ahmad, "Going Global: Islamist Competition in Contemporary Civil Wars," *Security Studies* 25, no. 2 (2016), 353-384.

because it tries to address multiple audiences—domestic, regional, and international—whose interests do not always coincide.⁷⁸³

The Media Aspects of Insurgent Rule, 2009-2011

Al-Shabaab conquered large swaths of southern and central Somalia between 2008 and 2010 and the organization's leadership began to implement a form of rebel governance by the second half of 2008. The establishment of local and provincial-level bureaucracies and a flexible but defined command-and-control structure was a key part of Al-Shabaab's strategy to portray itself as the group that would usher in not only an Islamic state to Somalia but also a governing system that actually worked. The group's multi-tiered media apparatus was an ideal tool with which to broadcast *jihadi*-insurgent governance to locals, the diaspora, and non-Somali Muslims around East Africa and further afield including in the Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, Europe, and North America. By highlighting certain aspects of their rule and downplaying, reframing, or ignoring/whitewashing other aspects, such as the harsh interpretation of law and order, Al-Shabaab's leadership sought to portray the group as a viable and even more capable, and certainly religiously more "authentic" and legitimate, alternative to the internationally-backed TFG and later the Somali federal government. The contours of the group's governance of large parts of southern and central Somalia will be covered in depth in Chapters Three and Four; this section will focus specifically on the media operations aspects of Al-Shabaab's rule.

After capturing new territories and specifically sought-after major urban centers and economic hubs such as the city of Baidoa in the Gedo region of western Somalia, the port town of Marka (Merca) in the Lower Shabelle region located between Mogadishu in the north and the southernmost tip of the country, and the port city, the country's largest, of Kismaayo

⁷⁸³ For detailed analysis of Al-Shabaab's domestic media, see Peter Chonka, "Spies, Stonework, and the Suuq: Somali Nationalism and the Narrative Politics of pro-Harakat Al Shabaab Al Mujaahidiin Online Propaganda," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 10, no. 2 (2016), 247-265.

in the Lower Juba region, Al-Shabaab began publicly implementing a philistine interpretation of *shari'a* centered on the penal codes and “set” legal punishments (*hudūd*) after announcing the setting up of a new “Islamic” order in public fora in major towns and cities. The group’s leadership prioritized broadcasting images of the group as a capable and vigilant as well as “Islamically” fair and just ruler. Most importantly, they sought to differentiate the group from the chaos that often preceded its takeover of many areas by cracking down on predatory warlords and wanton criminality. Instead of a multiplicity of actors using violence to self-aggrandize, Al-Shabaab moved to eliminate its competition and become the role purveyor of legitimate violence, revenue extraction, and a harsh form of law and order.

By the autumn of 2009, Al-Shabaab’s media apparatus and affiliated media outlets were producing propaganda videos, photography, print communiqués and reports, and audio and radio recordings highlighting the benefits, as they described them, of insurgent rule. Communal public events such as congregational prayers and festivals to mark the two ‘Eids, as discussed in Chapter Four, and symposia and competitions for locals and rank-and-file insurgent members played a significant role in Al-Shabaab’s domestic media and *da’wa* campaign, the latter of which was intimately linked to the former. The group also publicized locally and to Somali diaspora communities abroad its pursuit of small to medium-sized construction and public works projects and social services provision including building and repairing bridges and other structures, digging irrigation channels for local farmers, and finding and destroying rotten or expired food and medicines. The coverage of these projects and activities in domestic Somali insurgent media was much greater than in the group’s external media, though it was also featured prominently at times in the latter. The insurgents’ domestic media has become part and parcel of the broader Somali news media environment,

which has rapidly expanded in recent years.⁷⁸⁴ Insurgent media was aimed at multiple audiences, sometimes simultaneously, including domestic and diaspora Somalis, East African Muslims, other *jihadis* outside of the region, Muslims generally—particularly potential new recruits or financial supporters—and hostile “enemy” audiences such as AMISOM, the U.S., and the Somali federal and regional state governments.

In an attempt to solidify support for it from Somali and non-Somali Muslims, Al-Shabaab continued to broadcast a narrative of Western “Crusader” hostility toward Muslims and Islam, a narrative in which Muslims were presented with a black-and-white picture of inter-civilizational conflict between Islam and *kufir*. By highlighting incidents such as the publication of the anti-Islam cartoons by *Jyllands-Posten* in September 2005, Al-Shabaab’s media operatives attempted to tap into wider transnational Muslim anger, anger at the perceived disdain that the cartoons, for many Muslims, represented. This was an issue with potential to appeal to a much wider Muslim audience than was possible with Al-Shabaab’s other messaging and might resonate with a segment of non-*jihadi* Muslims.

The Somali insurgent group was presented with and answered a similar opportunity in 2010 when a previously unimportant and obscure American Evangelical Protestant preacher from Florida, Terry Jones, began publicly claiming that he planned to burn copies of the Qur’an in a great bonfire to “commemorate” the anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks by Al-Qaeda Central on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.⁷⁸⁵ Declaring the Islamic scripture to be “full of lies,” despite also admitting that he had “not read much” of the Qur’an, Jones was mostly interested in publicity, yet Al-Shabaab’s media producers were

⁷⁸⁴ The domestic and diaspora Somali news media environment and the local messaging and narrative construction of Al-Shabaab’s media specifically is covered in Peter Chonka, “Spies, Stonework, and the Suuq” and Mohamed Husein Gaas, Stig Jarle Hansen, and David Berry, *Mapping the Somali Media: An Overview* (Ås: Department of International Environment and Development Studies, Noragric, Norwegian University of Life Sciences), report no. 65 (March 2012), at http://www.umb.no/statisk/noragric/publications/reports/noragric_report_no.65cover.pdf, last accessed 3 August 2017.

⁷⁸⁵ Damien Cave, “Far from Ground Zero, Obscure Pastor is Ignored No Longer,” *The New York Times*, 25 August 2010, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/26/us/26gainesville.html>, last accessed 3 August 2017.

quick to latch on to the latest example, they said, of the West's and specifically America's hostility to Islam and utter disrespect and hostility toward its practitioners. Extensively covered by the international news media, the 2005 cartoons and Jones' publicity stunt also enabled *jihadi*-insurgent media to reach a wider audience than would otherwise have been possible in the absence of such a media environment.

Al-Shabaab organized domestic protests against Jones following its official congregational prayers and celebrations for locals on the ground in Somalia, tying the unimportant American Christian preacher's provocative attention-seeking to a broader U.S.-led campaign against Islam.⁷⁸⁶ The wanton disrespect for Muslims and their scripture by Jones was, argued Al-Shabaab's spokesman, 'Ali Mohamud Rage ('Ali Dheere), the latest instance in a long line of American abuses of Muslims, which had previously been demonstrated by the desecration of copies of the Qur'an and abuses of Muslim prisoners in places such as Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib. The best way to "defend" Islam and the Qur'an was for Somalis to become God's soldiers and fight to expel the Burundian and Ugandan AMISOM occupation forces from their country.⁷⁸⁷

In September 2009 as a "gift" to the *Umma* and specifically the *mujāhidīn*, Al-Shabaab's external media department released the largest film, in terms of file size at 1 GB, that it had yet produced, *Labbayka Ya Usama* (We are at Your Service, O' Usama), complete with its own unique *anāshīd* soundtrack. With remarkably high production quality and a coherent, if also repetitive and unoriginal, narrative, the film was centered around Bin Laden's March 2009 message directed generally to Somali *jihadi*-insurgents as well as Godane's "response," which was essentially a public declaration of *bay'a* to the Al-Qaeda

⁷⁸⁶ Al-Shabaab film, *Muṣāharat ʿidd Ḥarq al-Muṣḥaf* (Demonstrations against the Burning of the Qur'an), Qina al-Katā'ib al-Ikhbārīya (Mu'assasat al-Katā'ib), 14 November 2010.

⁷⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Central *amīr*.⁷⁸⁸ At nearly an hour in length, *Labbayka Ya Usama* also included plenty of battlefield footage of Al-Shabaab fighters and “technical,” pick-up trucks and other vehicles equipped with heavy machine guns or pieces of artillery, advancing against AMISOM and TFG forces in Mogadishu. Drawing from the example of earlier Al-Qaeda Central films, *Labbayka Ya Usama* also wove together clips from news reports, speeches by politicians such as U.S. president George W. Bush, including his infamous labeling of the “Global War on Terror” (GWOT) as a “crusade,” the arrival of AMISOM forces to Somalia, and excerpts from the media productions of other Sunni *jihadi* organizations.⁷⁸⁹ Indiscriminate shelling by AMISOM forces on heavily populated Somali neighborhoods in the capital, which caused numerous civilian casualties, was also highlighted, as were similar tactics by the Ethiopian military in earlier Somali *jihadi* films.⁷⁹⁰ Footage of the late ‘Azzām was used to decry Western hypocrisy regarding “legitimate” and “illegitimate” violence in which Western violence was labeled as “just” and Muslim defensive violence as “terrorism.” The increasing quality of Al-Shabaab’s media production and development of more sophisticated narrative frames and messaging was the result of both the organization’s growing human and material resources as well as advances in the capabilities and accessibility of new media technologies and social media platforms.

“The Westerners and the Americans are like a man dressed in white who slaughters a sheep and if that sheep’s leg shudders as its soul departs its body, that is a rude sheep,” ‘Azzām said. “Likewise, they want to slaughter us while dressed in white garments and if our limbs shudder as we die, we are barbaric! ‘Look at them, look at them! They are uncivilized; they are terrorists; they are beasts, they are from a *jihadi* group!’ Protecting one’s honor has become labeled barbarism and cruelty. We must smile to the ones who

⁷⁸⁸ Al-Shabaab film, *Labbayka Ya Usama* (We are at Your Service, O’ Usama), 20 September 2009.

⁷⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

violate our honor. Our wealth must be robbed while we prostrate to them, ‘Yes sir, yes sir.’ Our holy places are stolen and if we carry one bullet, we are ‘terrorists.’ If this is ‘terrorism,’ then we [Muslims] are ‘terrorists.’” As he spoke, footage was shown of the newly-elected TFG president, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, meeting with Ethiopian president Meles Zenawi, who had ordered the December 2006 invasion that had toppled the UIC, which Ahmed had previously headed.⁷⁹¹

The film criticized the TFG for failing to implement *shari‘a* despite promises to do so and argued that its members were unsavable because they had clearly shown their “apostasy” and subservience to “Crusader” Ethiopia and its master, the U.S.⁷⁹² The new U.S. president, Barack Obama, was portrayed as simply an extension of American imperialism and hostility toward Islam through the use of photographs of him meeting with “apostate” Muslim rulers including Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan, Saudi king ‘Abdullah, and Iraqi prime minister Nuri al-Maliki.⁷⁹³ In one scene, Obama is shown speaking in a church in front of a cross made of light bulbs as footage of his predecessor, Bush, is played in which he declared the “GWOT” a “crusade.”⁷⁹⁴ The second half of *Labbayk Ya Usama* transitioned into footage of one of Al-Shabaab’s military training camps, the Military Training Camp of *Shaykh* Abu Sulaym, including of military exercises by elite “commandos,” battle footage from Mogadishu, footage of an Al-Shabaab preacher, who appears to be *Mu‘allim* Burhan Sheikh Hashi, leading children in Kismaayo in a declaration of *bay‘a* to Bin Laden, and closing remarks from Godane praising the Al-Qaeda Central leader.⁷⁹⁵

⁷⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹² *Ibid.*

⁷⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹⁴ See Figure 13 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/07/19/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation/>.

⁷⁹⁵ Al-Shabaab film, *Labbayka Ya Usama*.

Bin Laden, despite Godane's clear desire to formalize Al-Shabaab's relationship with Al-Qaeda Central, did not publicly accept his *bay'a* and remained hesitant in approving closer ties because of his misgivings about the direction of the Somali conflict and the nature of Al-Shabaab's governance, which he believed was too harsh—expressed as much to Godane in a letter responding to one from the Somali *jihadi* leader.⁷⁹⁶ The Al-Qaeda *amīr*, though he agreed that there needed to be a working *jihadi* polity built on the ground, also urged Godane not to declare an emirate publicly or broadcast his ties and discussions with Al-Qaeda in order to avoid bringing unwanted attention and pressure from the U.S. and other parties hostile to the *mujāhidīn*.⁷⁹⁷ Godane, who declared in *Labbayka Ya Usama* that he and other Somali *jihadis* “awaited” Bin Laden's “guidance” about how to proceed with their campaign, was also instructed to leave any mention of Al-Shabaab's relationship with Al-Qaeda vague by referring to it as no more than “brotherly” relations between fellow Muslims.⁷⁹⁸ Civilian casualties must be avoided, Bin Laden said, and he asked Godane to ensure that careful planning was made before any attacks were carried out on AMISOM targets so as to minimize civilian casualties or avoid them all together.⁷⁹⁹ He suggested targeting AMISOM units as they arrived and left Mogadishu's international airport, where attacks were unlikely to endanger many Somali civilians, and advised Godane to avoid targeting AMISOM bases, which were primarily located alongside civilian buildings, unless the insurgents could direct the main thrust of their attack on the center of the targeted base as opposed to, he implied, SVBIEDs that would likely also cause many civilian deaths.⁸⁰⁰ Bin

⁷⁹⁶ SOCOM-2012-0000005.

⁷⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

Laden praised Al-Shabaab's media operations, telling Godane that he and other Al-Qaeda leaders followed the trajectory of the Somali *jihad* through the group's media releases.⁸⁰¹

Al-Shabaab's implementation of a *jihadi* state in territories under its control earned much more fulsome praise from AQAP's Anwār al-‘Awlaqī who, in a lengthy 2010 interview with that group's media department, praised Godane's group for setting an example about how to establish an Islamic state with limited manpower and financial resources.⁸⁰² He even recommended that other *jihadi* organizations dispatch representatives to Somalia so they could learn from Al-Shabaab how best to tackle territorial control and rule.⁸⁰³ Al-Shabaab, far from being a peripheral player, was a central achievement and demonstration of global jihadism's dream, the founding and running of a functioning—however rudimentary in reality—territorial state.⁸⁰⁴

Masking Setbacks: Addressing Territorial Decline, 2011-2016

In February 2011, AMISOM and Somali TFG forces and allied anti-Al-Shabaab clan-based militias, chief among them the loose ASWJ umbrella based primarily in the western Galguduud and Gedo regions, launched a new series of offensives that aimed to push the Somali *jihadi*-insurgent group out of Mogadishu and other major urban areas. The offensive, which was regularly beset with delays caused by strategic, logistical, battlefield, and political setbacks, eventually succeeded in forcing Al-Shabaab to withdraw from most of Mogadishu by the late summer and autumn of 2012. However, the insurgents remain active in the city's suburbs and even the city itself in underground cells as of November 2018, continuing to carry out major and smaller-scale attacks in across the city including in its center. The western city of Baidoa was recaptured from the insurgents in February 2012, the port town of

⁸⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰² AQAP film, *Al-liqā' al-awwal al-ḥaṣrī ma' al-Shaykh al-Dā'iya Anwār al-‘Awlaqī*.

⁸⁰³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

Marka in August 2012, and the port city of Kismaayo in September 2012. Al-Shabaab continued to hold the port town of Baraawe in the Lower Shabelle region south of Mogadishu, the group's last major southern outlet to the ocean, which served as the centerpiece of its governance activities, until October 2014 when they withdrew ahead of an advance by AMISOM and Somali government forces. The insurgents' enemies took advantage of internal squabbling among segments of the group and its significant losses during its failed 2010 "Ramadan Offensive" in Mogadishu. Kenya's military intervention in southern Somalia, Operation Linda Nchi (Protect the Country) in October 2011 and the re-entry of Ethiopia troops into parts of western Somalia the next month further tipped the scales against Al-Shabaab and its leadership decided, probably wisely, to withdraw from most urban centers rather than fight costly, last-ditch battles and instead reserve its forces and resources to fight a longer game insurgency.

Recognizing that the strategic environment and battlefield dynamics were moving against them, Al-Shabaab leaders began to shift back to their guerilla roots and away from the mass frontal infantry wave attacks that had proved so disastrous during the 2010 Ramadan Offensive. Hit-and-run raids, IEDs, the throwing of grenades, drive-by assassinations, periodic shelling with mortars and other artillery, and well-planned SVBIED attacks, sometimes followed by storming (*inghimāsi*) attacks, were used with great effectiveness against enemy targets. Rather than waste men and resources in fighting ultimately hopeless battles to retain control of towns and cities against a numerically and technologically superior array of enemies, Al-Shabaab chose instead to make strategic withdrawals in order to reserve its remaining strength to continue holding territories beyond the capacity of its enemies to permanently hold and to retake territory after AMISOM or government withdrawals. The insurgents also maintained cells in most of the major urban areas that fell to AMISOM and government forces including Mogadishu, Baidoa, and Kismaayo.

Al-Shabaab's shift back to favoring asymmetric warfare was also marked by a readjustment in the group's media operations, which reported on military operations on a daily and later weekly and monthly basis and began to produce films documenting the change in tactics. Guerilla warfare-type attacks such as those mentioned previously were the most frequently reported types of attacks, instead of mass infantry assaults, in the insurgents' regular written military operations reports. These types of attacks, for example, made up the majority of Al-Shabaab's reported military operations conducted between late December 2014 and July 2017.⁸⁰⁵

In a February 2012 film dedicated to the late Anwār al-‘Awlaqī, one of the group's most vocal external supporters, Al-Shabaab documented a major attack on the base of a Somali clan militia loyal to Kenya in the Gedo region in September 2011.⁸⁰⁶ Questioning the official Kenyan government narrative of a successful military intervention, the film accused the KDF of attempting to uproot the “rule of Islamic *shari‘a*” in Somalia.⁸⁰⁷ According to Abu Mus‘ab ‘Abd al-Azīz, Al-Shabaab's military affairs spokesman, the base, which was located on the “so-called border” between Somalia and Kenya, was attacked for its strategic location between Dhobley in Lower Juba and Garbaharey in Gedo and to avenge Kenyan and Ethiopian aggression in western and southern Somalia, with the added bonus result of capturing a substantial amount of weapons and equipment.⁸⁰⁸ The assault on the base was launched at night and the insurgents overran the base the next day, capturing many weapons, military vehicles, ammunition, radios, and other equipment before withdrawing.⁸⁰⁹ Kenyan

⁸⁰⁵ This evaluation is based on my analysis of Al-Shabaab's written monthly military operations reports during this time period.

⁸⁰⁶ Al-Shabaab film, *Battlefront El-Wak: Repelling the Kenyan Proxies*, Mu'assasat al-Katā'ib, 15 February 2012.

⁸⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

foreign fighters participated in the attack and were featured in the film's footage.⁸¹⁰ Similar attacks in Somalia and eastern Kenya were filmed by Al-Shabaab's media operatives in several film series including *Min Thughūr al- 'Izz* (From the Frontiers of Glory), *Hum al- 'Adūw fa-Aḥdharhum* (They are the Enemy so Beware of Them; based on a part of Qur'an 63:4), *Fa-sharrid bi-him man Khalfahum* (Disperse Them so as to Strike Fear in Those Who Follow), and *Lā 'Iṣma ilā bi-Īmān aw Amān* (No Protection except through Faith or a Covenant of Security [with the Muslims]).⁸¹¹

In June 2014, Al-Shabaab fighters carried out a series of attacks in the Kenyan town of Mpeketoni in Lamu County, a frequent area of insurgent attacks following the KDF's military intervention in October 2012, and killed as many as 60 people including in attacks on a hotel, a gas station, and a police station.⁸¹² The attacks were the deadliest in the country since the September 2013 Al-Shabaab takeover of Nairobi's Westgate Mall. Locals claimed that the attackers specifically targeted Christians in an attempt to rile up sectarian strife in the country between the Christian majority and the large Muslim minority in the east, which Al-Shabaab would then turn to its benefit. Kenyan president Uhuru Kenyatta and other members of his government blamed the deadly attacks on political rivals and accused them of trying to spread ethnic and sectarian discord after losing in the polls and denied that Al-Shabaab was responsible.⁸¹³ In a March 2015 film about the attack Al-Shabaab mocked Kenyatta's claim

⁸¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹¹ Al-Shabaab (all Mu'assasat al-Katā'ib) films, *Min Thughūr al- 'Izz* (From the Frontiers of Glory), Parts 1-3 (February-November 2015); *Hum al- 'Adūw Fa-Aḥdharhum* (They are the Enemy, So Beware of Them), Parts 1-7 (January 2012-November 2016); *Fa-sharrid bi-him man Khalfahum* (Make of Them an Example for Those Who Follow Them), Parts 1-12 (April 2013-July 2015), and *Lā 'Iṣma ilā bi-Īmān aw Amān* (No Protection/Defense Except with Faith and Security), Parts 1-4 (March 2015-January 2016).

⁸¹² Reuters, "Unidentified Gunmen Hit Hotels, Petrol, Police Station at Kenya's Coast: Police," 15 June 2014, at <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-kenya-attacks-idUSKBN0EQ15120140615>, last accessed 3 August 2017 and Agence France-Presse, "Mpeketoni Attack: Death Toll Rises to 48," 16 June 2014, at <http://www.nation.co.ke/news/mpeketoni-Lamu-gunfire-al-shabaab-terrorism/-/1056/2349860/-/yf5qvgz/-/index.html>, last accessed 3 August 2017.

⁸¹³ Martin Cuddihy, "Kenya Attack: President Uhuru Kenyatta Blames Political Rivals for Massacre, not Al Shabaab," ABC News (Australia), 17 June 2014, at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-06-18/kenyan-president-casts-doubt-on-who-carried-out-massacres/5531250>, last accessed 3 August 2017 and Edmund Blair and

that the attacks were “orchestrated and politically motivated ethnic violence” and were “not an Al-Shabaab terrorist attack” but instead a “heinous crime” planned by “local political networks” opposed to his government.⁸¹⁴ Splicing together news footage of Kenyatta making his allegations against local political opponents, comments of other politicians at a press conference followed by the publicly-expressed suspicions from Kenyan commentators and analysts about the veracity of the president’s claims, the film asked bluntly, “What would compel a country’s president to lie to his people so unashamedly?”⁸¹⁵

The film put the Mpeketoni attacks in the context of revenge for Kenyan government persecution of its Muslim citizens, an allegation supported in the film’s narrative through photographs and footage of Kenyan security forces raiding mosques and beating prisoners with batons and striking them with military boots together with excerpts from a sermon of the late Kenyan militant preacher Aboud Rogo in which he addressed these issues and accused Kenyan authorities of waging a war against Islam.⁸¹⁶ The film then showed insurgents, including some who appear to be non-Somali (white) foreign fighters, preparing for the attacks followed by footage from the nighttime attacks themselves including scenes where alleged government workers and “agents” are summarily executed and buildings set on fire in the name of “retaliation-in-kind” (*qiṣāṣ*) for abuses and persecution (*ẓulm*).⁸¹⁷ These abuses included the extrajudicial killings of controversial Kenyan Muslim religious leaders by the authorities.⁸¹⁸ The attacks were justified through an invocation of Qur’an 9:29 in which God commanded the Muslims to, “Fight those who do not believe in the One God (*Allah*) or the

Duncan Miriri, “President says Kenyan Politics not Islamists behind Attacks,” *Reuters*, 17 June 2014, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-kenya-attacks-idUSKBN0ES0HE20140617>, last accessed 3 August 2017.

⁸¹⁴ Al-Shabaab film, *Lā ‘Iṣma ilā bi-Īmān aw Amān*, Part 1, Mu’assasat al-Katā’ib, 3 March 2015.

⁸¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸¹⁸ See Figure 14 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/07/19/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation/>.

Last Day [Day of Judgment] nor hold that what God and His messenger [the Prophet Muhammad] have forbidden as forbidden and do not acknowledge the religion of truth (*dīn al-ḥaqq*) from among the People of the Book, until they pay *jizya* in willing submission and feel themselves subdued.”⁸¹⁹ Before departing the area, the insurgents visited a nearby village, Pandanguo, and urged its Muslim residents to support the *mujāhidīn*, promising them that they would not be harmed “for their blood and wealth is protected by Islam; the blood of a Muslim is inviolable!”⁸²⁰ This was said despite the fact that Al-Shabaab regularly kills Muslims in its attacks, even when excluding from these those working for the government whom it considers to be apostates. Al-Shabaab also justified its takeover of and rampage in the Westgate Mall as *qiṣāṣ*, as Godane did in reference to the group’s two “martyrdom operations” in Kampala in July 2010 during the World Cup soccer tournament.⁸²¹

The pace of Al-Shabaab’s media production slowed periodically during times of on-the-ground pressure beginning in the summer of 2011 and continuing into 2012, but by 2013 the insurgent group’s media apparatus began to steadily resume its activities at near pre-offensive levels. The group’s media operatives continued to produce materials on a regular basis through November 2018, including a spate of coordinated media releases between May and early August 2017 about the Kenyan national general elections that were held on August 8. One change in its media operations pattern was the shift from the issuance of daily written military reports and statements to weekly and eventually monthly omnibus print reports coupled with occasional stand-alone statements and communiqués on issues of particular importance. The Somali group, like other *jihadi* organizations, also shifted from distributing

⁸¹⁹ Al-Shabaab film, *Lā ‘Iṣma ilā bi-’Imān aw Amān* Part 1.

⁸²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸²¹ Al-Shabaab (all Mu’assasat al-Katā’ib) films and communiqués, *The Westgate Siege: Retributive Justice*, 19 February 2015 and *Mogadishu: Maqbarat al-Ṣalībīyīn* (Mogadishu: Graveyard of the Crusaders), 30 July 2010, “Statement regarding the Blessed Kampala Operations from the Leaders of Harakat Shabaab al-Mujahideen,” 14 July 2010, and “Bayān min al-Qīyādat al-‘Āmma fī Ḥarakat al-Shabāb al-Mujāhidīn bi-sha’n Tafjīrāt Kampala fī Uganda” (Statement from the General Leadership of Al-Shabaab concerning the Bombings in Kampala, Uganda), 13 July 2010.

its materials on Internet fora to free file-sharing web sites such as JustPaste.it and Telegram accounts.

Al-Shabaab's media operatives, as discussed earlier in this chapter, spearheaded Sunni *jihadi* use of Twitter as a real-time communications tool aimed at attracting international news media attention and harassing its enemies. It proved particularly adept at taking advantage of the Kenyan government's inconsistent and confused response to the Westgate Mall siege in September 2013 by providing a steady stream of updates and slanted reporting about the attacks on its HSM Press Twitter accounts, which it operated and re-opened regularly despite Twitter's multiple suspensions.⁸²² Al-Shabaab's tweets constantly cast doubt on official Kenyan government claims about the attacks including the exact number of gunmen and whether the attack was over. Though Al-Shabaab shifted away from Twitter after Westgate, in part because its HSM Press Twitter handle was banned, the insurgent group was one of the *jihadi* actors that demonstrated how new social media platforms could play an integral and influential role in media operations, surpassing even the official news and propaganda arms of governments. Al-Shabaab proved that a *jihadi*-insurgent group could, in many ways, profoundly impact how a major attack was covered in the international press by drip-feeding tidbits to information-hungry professional and citizen journalists and armchair analysts, something that Islamic State would come to perfect during and after 2014 when journalists and commentators from *The New York Times* and BBC News to tweeters in their parents' basements awaited official *jihadi* statements and claims, some of them false, regarding attacks, particularly in Western countries.

⁸²² On the Westgate attack, see Ken Menkhaus, "Al-Shabab's Capabilities Post-Westgate," *CTC Sentinel*, 24 February 2014, at <https://ctc.usma.edu/posts/al-shababs-capabilities-post-westgate>, David Mair, "#Westgate: A Case Study: How al-Shabaab used Twitter during an Ongoing Attack," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 40, no. 1 (2017): 24-43, and Christopher Anzalone, "The Nairobi Attack and Al-Shabab's Media Strategy."

As its territory shrunk in 2011 and 2012, Al-Shabaab held numerous meetings throughout Somalia in a bid to attract the support of local clans and sub-clans.⁸²³ Insurgent media also began to release films documenting the group's social services and "good governance" including the provision of drought relief and humanitarian aid during the 2011 East African famine, which included the establishment of a temporary camp for internally-displaced people, Al-Yasir, in the Lower Shabelle region.⁸²⁴ The law and order of insurgent governance was contrasted in this framing with the more uncertain, predatory situation under the warlords and the relative "justice" and stability brought by the implementation of *shari'a* was highlighted. The reality, of course, was quite different as Al-Shabaab blocked or otherwise severely impeded the ability of humanitarian organizations to help Somalis suffering from the effects of the drought.⁸²⁵

In a polished, high-definition, documentary-style film, *Under the Shade of Shari'ah*, released by Al-Shabaab's external media department in July 2012, the group deployed previously unseen footage from its multimedia archives documenting its territorial expansion and implementation of rebel governance beginning in 2008. Released in English, Arabic, and Somali language versions, the film was aimed at several audiences both inside and outside of Somalia including current and potential supporters as well as enemies such as AMISOM and the Somali government. Presenting a rosy version of its governance, the film compared and contrasted insurgent rule, which was cast as a natural implementation of God's

⁸²³ Christopher Anzalone, "Harakat al-Shabab & Somalia's Clans," *Al-Wasat*, 8 March 2011, at <https://thewasat.wordpress.com/2011/03/08/harakat-al-shabab-somalias-clans/>, last accessed 3 August 2017; "Harakat al-Shabab Continues to Court Somalia's Clans as Hasan Dahir Aweys Assumes a More Public Role," *Al-Wasat*, 21 March 2011, at <https://thewasat.wordpress.com/2011/03/21/harakat-al-shabab-continues-to-court-somalias-clans-as-hasan-dahir-aweys-assumes-a-more-public-role/>, last accessed 3 August 2017; and "Harakat al-Shabab Claims Support from 'Ayr Clan Leaders," *Al-Wasat*, 4 November 2011, at <https://thewasat.wordpress.com/2011/11/04/harakat-al-shabab-claims-support-from-ayr-clan-leaders/>, last accessed 3 August 2017.

⁸²⁴ Al-Shabaab (all Mu'assasat al-Katā'ib) films, *Under the Shade of Shari'ah*, 1 July 2012 and *Qutūf al-Shari'a* (Harvest of the *Shari'a*: Reviving the Religious Obligation of *Zakāt*) Parts 1-3, April 2011-December 2014.

⁸²⁵ Ken Menkhaus, "No Access: Critical Bottlenecks in the 2011 Somali Famine," *Global Food Security* 1, no. 1 (2012), 29-35.

commandments as expressed in *shari'a* and a black-and-white interpretation of *fiqh* and specifically the *hudūd* penal codes, with previous experiences under clan and warlord militias.⁸²⁶ Beginning with an overview of the Somali civil war and the destructiveness of politicized clannism, the film focused primarily on the western Bay and Bakool and Gedo regions and included footage of insurgent-organized meetings with local clans and sub-clans, particularly from the Rahanweyn, held in 2011.⁸²⁷

The centerpiece of the narrative was the insurgent conquest and rule of the city and economic hub of Baidoa in Gedo, which enjoyed a period of relative economic revival under Al-Shabaab's rule with the return of bustling markets and the construction of new buildings and external investment from the Somali diaspora.⁸²⁸ After two decades of civil war, a remarkable "semblance of stability" was established in the city, the film claimed, citing figures from Al-Shabaab's Office of Statistics that claimed Baidoa's economy had grown by 20% per year between 2009 and 2010.⁸²⁹ Similarly, crime rates had fallen "by up to 98%" in Bay and Bakool after the implementation of *shari'a* and local merchants told insurgent media operatives that they felt "more secure" under the insurgents.⁸³⁰

Under the Shade of Shari'ah also documented the religiosity of locals and showed footage of Al-Shabaab-run schools for children and youth as well as the public economic role of Somali women as merchants and shopkeepers despite being required to wear *hijab* and *niqab*.⁸³¹ The implementation of religious practices, including the establishment and running of religious schools and institutes, based on a "pure understanding of Qur'an and *sunna* under Al-Shabaab was, the film claimed, "based upon the methodology of Prophet Muhammad,"

⁸²⁶ Al-Shabaab film, *Under the Shade of Shari'ah*.

⁸²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸²⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸³¹ *Ibid.*

mirroring a phrase later popularized by Islamic State, “*khilāfa ‘alā minhāj al-nubūwwa*” (caliphate upon the Prophet’s methodology).⁸³² “Extreme Sufis” and the practice of “medieval mysticism” by them was quickly abolished under Al-Shabaab’s rule and soon “all the trails and mystical symbols of the grave-worshippers” were cast aside by a revival of “pure” Islam.⁸³³ One of the greatest “fruits of *jihad*,” according to the narrative, was the education of children upon whom the implementation of “pure” Islam based on the Qur’an and *sunna* had the greatest influence due to their “innocent” eyes and ears which “see the world without disbelief” and are “yet unadulterated by the decadence of Western societies” and their tongues that “utter nothing but the pure message of *tawhīd*.” It is upon this base that the *Umma*, led by the vanguard of the *jihadis*, will build a new Islamic society and state.⁸³⁴

Al-Shabaab also began to refocus on seeking new recruits during this period. In November 2010 it released a major recruitment film, *Message to the Ummah: And Inspire the Believers*, featuring nine named foreign fighters from Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Sudan, the U.K., Sweden, and Pakistan who called upon Muslims to make *hijra* to Somalia in order to fight in *jihad*.⁸³⁵ The fighters addressed an array of issues including the desire to live in an “Islamic” environment and avenge insults to Islam and Muslims exemplified by the insulting of the Prophet Muhammad in cartoons and other mediums.⁸³⁶ Though it was not the first insurgent production to feature Swahili speakers, the film was the first to be fully subtitled in Swahili. Al-Katā’ib also began producing other videos focused on foreign fighter

⁸³² *Ibid.*

⁸³³ *Ibid.*

⁸³⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸³⁵ Al-Shabaab film, *Message to the Ummah: And Inspire the Believers*, Mu’assasat al-Katā’ib, 22 November 2010.

⁸³⁶ *Ibid.*

recruitment from around East Africa as well as further afield.⁸³⁷ Many of these films were multilingual and included parts, either spoken or subtitled, in Somali, Arabic, English, Norwegian, Swedish, Urdu, and a variety of East African regional languages and dialects including Swahili, Kikuyu, Luhya, Digo, Bajuni, Oromo, and working class Nairobi Swahili slang known as Sheng.⁸³⁸ Al-Shabaab's regional recruitment, which has always been its priority in addition to recruitment in Somali diaspora communities in North America and Western Europe, will be discussed and analyzed in the following sub-section.

Al-Shabaab and the Horn: Regional Recruitment & Jihadi-Insurgent Media Operations

Al-Shabaab has limited human resources from which to draw upon for recruits and this has been the case from the time it emerged from the remnants of the UIC. Although it benefited initially from Somali nationalist sentiments in the few years following the Ethiopian invasion and occupation in December 2006 and tapped into Somali diaspora communities around the Horn of Africa, North America, and Europe, Al-Shabaab's puritanism, violence, and ideology eventually slowed the flow of recruits and financial contributions. To bolster its domestic recruitment, Al-Shabaab sought to recruit foreign fighters from outside of the country who, in theory, would be more loyal to the leadership than to local power structures such as the clan system in part because they would lack solid domestic kinship ties.

Since its re-emergence in 2007, Al-Shabaab has drawn upon three main groups in its recruitment: first, domestic recruits from inside the country; second, ethnic Somalis from the diaspora; third, non-Somalis. The second group, ethnic Somali recruits from diaspora communities, can be subdivided further into those from communities in East Africa, such as

⁸³⁷ Al-Shabaab (all Mu'assasat al-Katā'ib) films, *Mujahideen Moments* Parts 1-10 (February 2013-May 2016), *The Path to Paradise: From the Twin Cities to the Land of Two Migrations* Parts 1 and 2 (August 2013 and January 2016), and *And Rouse the Believers* Parts 1-6 (July-August 2016), the latter of which takes its name from Qur'an 4:84.

⁸³⁸ Al-Shabaab film, *Are You Content with...: Questions to the Muslims in Kenya* (Je Umeridhia...: Maswali Kwa Waislamy Nchini Kenya), Mu'assasat al-Katā'ib, 27 July 2017.

the Somali majority ethnic regions of Ogaden in western Ethiopia and the North Eastern Province in Kenya, and those from diaspora communities outside of the region in countries such as the U.S., Canada, the U.K., and Scandinavia. The third group, the non-Somali foreign fighters, can also be subdivided in a similar fashion into a subgroup from countries in and around East Africa, such as Uganda, Burundi, Eritrea, Tanzania, and Kenya, and a second subgroup from outside of the region from countries in the Middle East and North Africa, South and Southeast Asia, Europe, and North America.⁸³⁹ The exact size and makeup, by clan/sub-clan and country of origin, of Al-Shabaab's foreign fighters and, indeed, its total numbers overall, are not known with any certainty and have ranged from low estimates of 3-5,000 to a high of just over 14,000. Despite these ambiguities, it is likely that East African recruits make up the largest single group of Al-Shabaab's foreign fighters, probably since 2007 but certainly, based on Al-Shabaab's own sources, since 2011/2012.⁸⁴⁰ Regional foreign fighters and particularly Swahili speakers have made up an increasing number—the majority in fact—of rank-and-file fighters featured in the group's media operations campaign since the autumn of 2010, though they have been a feature in Al-Shabaab's ranks and media campaign since 2007/2008.⁸⁴¹ Since 2012, Al-Katā'ib has also produced increasing numbers of materials in Swahili or subtitled or otherwise translated into Swahili including videos, audio recordings of religious lectures and Swahili *anāshīd*, and a

⁸³⁹ On Al-Shabaab's recruitment including estimated numbers, see David Shinn, "Al Shabaab's Foreign Threat to Somalia," 209-210.

⁸⁴⁰ At a conference held in September 2010, Terrence Ford, then the director of intelligence and knowledge development for the U.S. Africa Command, estimated Al-Shabab's foreign fighters as numbering around 1,000, including 200 to 300 non-Somalis. See video of his remarks at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTNvXZl0bjw>, last accessed 17 June 2016.

⁸⁴¹ Christopher Anzalone, "Kenya's Muslim Youth Center and Al-Shabab's East African Recruitment," *CTC Sentinel*, 29 October 2012, at <https://ctc.usma.edu/posts/kenyas-muslim-youth-center-and-al-shababs-east-african-recruitment>, last accessed 3 August 2017; Fredrick Nzes, "Al-Hijra: Al-Shabab's Affiliate in Kenya," *CTC Sentinel*, 29 May 2014, at <https://ctc.usma.edu/posts/al-hijra-al-shababs-affiliate-in-kenya>, last accessed 3 August 2017; and Andre LeSage, "The Rising Terrorist Threat in Tanzania: Domestic Islamist Militancy and Regional Threats," Washington, D.C.: Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS) Strategic Forum (September 2014), at <http://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratforum/SF-288.pdf>, last accessed 3 August 2017.

weapons manual for Kalashnikov AK-47 automatic rifles.⁸⁴² The group has sought different types of recruits and has made appeals for those with particular skills including doctors, engineers, and university students and graduates.⁸⁴³

Swahili speakers have also appeared at public insurgent events including ‘Eīd prayers, military rallies, and symposia and contests including the group’s official Kismaayo celebration in February 2012 to mark the formalization of its ties to Al-Qaeda. At the latter, a Kenyan foreign fighter, Abu Hājir al-Kīnī (the Kenyan), was a featured speaker and extolled Al-Shabaab’s joining of the Al-Qaeda family of groups and said that Kenyan Muslims were the “sons” (*abnā’*) of revered historical heroes including ‘Ali bin Abī Tālib, Sa’d bin Abī Waqqāṣ, Sa’īd bin Zayd, and al-Barā’ bin Mālik.⁸⁴⁴ Standing in front of senior Al-Shabaab political bureau official Hussein ‘Ali Fiidow and a banner that declared “terrorism is a religious obligation in God’s religion” (*al-irhāb farīḍa fī dīn Allah*), he also vowed that Kenyan fighters would sacrifice themselves to protect the Somalis and carry out “martyrdom operations” inside Kenya, and urged Kenyan Muslims in Nairobi, Garissa, and Mombasa to join the fight before reciting a praise poem dedicated to Al-Shabaab’s *amīr*, Godane.

The man at the forefront of the Somali insurgents’ Kenyan and regional recruitment campaign is Ahmad Iman ‘Ali, a charismatic Kenyan preacher and founder of the Muslim Youth Centre (MYC), later renamed Al-Hijra, which has been Al-Shabaab’s main Kenyan affiliate officially since January 2012 but which was active even earlier. The MYC coalesced between 2006 and 2008 as a community organization from a precursor group, the Pumwani Muslim Youth, that sought to attract poor Kenyan Muslims who felt disenfranchised in

⁸⁴² Al-Shabaab (all Mu’assasat al-Katā’ib) films, *Maandalizi Ya Jihad, AK-47: Toleo La Kwanza* (Preparation for Jihad, AK-47: First Edition), 24 September 2014; *Sauti ya Ribaati* (Voices of Ribāṭ), 19 October 2014; and Ahmad Iman ‘Ali, *Kitab as-Siyaam: Kutoka Kitabu: Manhaj as-Saalikin wa Tawdhiih al-Fiqh fi Dīn* (The Book of Fasting: Methodology of the Believers and Clarification from Jurisprudence of the Religion), 20 June 2016.

⁸⁴³ Al-Shabaab film, *And Rouse the Believers* Part 5, Mu’assasat al-Katā’ib, 18 July 2017.

⁸⁴⁴ Al-Shabaab film, *‘Amm al-Jamā’a, 1433* (The Year of Unity, 1433 *Hijrī*), Mu’assasat al-Katā’ib, 16 April 2012.

society and who, initially, primarily lived in and around the Majengo district of the capital city, Nairobi. The group later expanded and formed branches in the cities of Mombasa and Garissa, which are both located in historically Muslim majority areas.⁸⁴⁵ The MYC drew its religious authority from ‘Ali and, as importantly, from a popular but controversial Kenyan preacher, Aboud Rogo, who was intimately involved in the group’s activities and youth outreach. Funded by membership dues, the MYC ran lecture series, outings, and other group events for local Kenyan Muslim youth before eventually beginning to funnel recruits into Somalia to join Al-Shabaab. Rogo himself traveled to Somalia some time before 2010, where he was hosted by Al-Shabaab, and the MYC reciprocated by hosting visiting insurgent operatives and leaders.⁸⁴⁶ The Pumwani Muslim Youth began to dispatch Kenyan fighters to Somalia as early as 2006/2007 during the last days of the UIC and the early stages of the emergence of an independent Al-Shabaab.⁸⁴⁷

Al-Shabaab named Iman ‘Ali as the commander of its Kenyan forces in January 2012 and he was featured for the first time that month in the Somali insurgent group’s media operations campaign. In his introductory remarks, the preacher accused the Kenyan government of outward hostility and persecution of its Muslim citizens and argued that this had made the country a legitimate arena for *jihad*.⁸⁴⁸ Kenya has proven its hostility to Islam and Muslims, he said, through its alliances with the U.S., Ethiopia, Israel, and the *murtadd* Somali government.⁸⁴⁹ The labels of “terror” and “terrorist” by the *kuffar* about the *mujāhidīn* were marks of honor, he declared, because they are meaningless justifications by

⁸⁴⁵ U.N. Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, “Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea submitted in accordance with Resolution 1916,” (2010), 140-142.

⁸⁴⁶ U.N. Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, 2010 Report, 141.

⁸⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴⁸ Al-Shabaab film, *Wa inni ustansarūkum fi-l-dīn fa- ‘alaykum al-naṣr* (But If They Seek Your Aid in Matters of Religion, It is Your Duty to Help Them), Mu’assasat al-Katā’ib, 7 January 2012. The title is a part of Qur’an 8:72.

⁸⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

the disbelievers to try and legitimize their war against Islam and persecution of Muslims.⁸⁵⁰

Jihadis are engaged in legitimate defensive *jihad* against the *kuffar*'s aggression and are thus on firm *shari'a* and creedal ground.⁸⁵¹

The only way for Muslims to achieve their rights as human beings, Iman 'Ali said, was through *jihad* because democracy, in addition to be religiously impermissible because it allows human beings to disregard God's commandments, is only used as a tool by the *kuffar* to coordinate their attacks on Muslims.⁸⁵² Democracy, he said, was forcibly spread and imposed on Muslim lands through the "crusades" of the U.S. and its clients around the world including Kenya and apostate Muslim regimes such as the Somali government.⁸⁵³ The best way to participate in *jihad*, he said, was to make *hijra* to Somalia and join the ranks to Al-Shabaab and Kenyan Muslims should not remain behind under the yoke of oppression and humiliation at the hands of the *kuffar*.⁸⁵⁴ He pointed to the persecution of Muslims in historically Muslim majority cities such as Mombasa and asked Kenyan Muslims rhetorically if they were satisfied to remain in such a condition among the people who have murdered, he said, Muslim preachers and religious leaders such as Aboud Rogo.⁸⁵⁵ If they cannot travel to Somalia, Kenyan Muslims should then attempt to participate in *jihad* at home by carrying out attacks, which he described as the "religious obligation (*'ibāda*) to slaughter them [the *kuffar*]."⁸⁵⁶

⁸⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵² Ahmad Iman 'Ali, *Demokrasia ni Ukafiri* (Democracy is Unbelief) Parts 1 and 2, Mu'assasat al-Katā'ib, 3 March 2013 and *Yā Ayyuhā al-Mu'minūn Qūmū bi-l-Hijra* (O' Believers, Depart for *Hijra*), Mu'assasat al-Katā'ib, 7 August 2015.

⁸⁵³ Ahmad Iman 'Ali, *Fa-tarabbaṣū innā ma'akum mutarabbiṣūn* (Await, Then for We are Waiting with You), Mu'assasat al-Katā'ib, 27 June 2016. The title is taken from Qur'an 9:52.

⁸⁵⁴ Ahmad Iman 'Ali, *Yā Ayyuhā al-Mu'minūn Qūmū bi-l-Hijra*.

⁸⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Jihad is not a trivial matter, Iman ‘Ali said, but “one of the most fundamental principles that the Prophet [Muhammad]” brought as part of his message of Islam and it must be waged until the *kuffar* submit and declare that “there is no god but the One God.”⁸⁵⁷ Through their “worship” by participation in *jihad*, “the history of the unbelievers is being written by the weapon of the *mujāhid*.”⁸⁵⁸ Speaking to the Kenyan people, he warned them that the *mujāhidīn*, unlike the *kuffar*, do not fear death and instead “charge into enemy bases with the intention of attaining martyrdom.”⁸⁵⁹ Battlefield losses will never dissuade the *jihadis* from defending Islam and avenging the persecution of Muslims, he said. “You can kill them all [the *jihadis*] if you want and we will never regret or lament their deaths,” he said, remarking that this was because martyrdom on the battlefield is the greatest honor God can bestow upon a believer.⁸⁶⁰ *Jihadis* should remember Qur’an 2:214 in which God has instructed the Muslims that victory will only come through hardship and struggle and that they must maintain patience (*ṣabr*) and steadfastness (*ṣumūd*) in order to achieve the final divinely promised victory.⁸⁶¹

Al-Shabaab’s official media operations are supplemented by materials produced by other East African *jihadi* groups affiliated with or allied to it including Al-Muhajiroun in East Africa and online *jihadi* media agencies such as *Wikālat Shahādat al-Ikhhārīya* (“Martyrdom”/“Witnessing” News Agency).⁸⁶² East African supporters of the Somali insurgent group have produced *Gaidi Mtaani*, a *jihadi* e-magazine whose title roughly

⁸⁵⁷ Ahmad Iman ‘Ali, *Qātilūhum yu ‘adhdhibhum bi-Ayadikum* (Fight Against Them so that God will Punish Them by Your Hands), Mu’assasat al-Katā’ib, 31 March 2017. The title is taken from Qur’an 9:14.

⁸⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶² The exact composition of these groups, or whether they truly are cohesive independent groups distinct from Al-Shabaab’s Kenyan cells, is debated. *Wikālat Shahādat al-Ikhhārīya*, as of late early August 2017, ran both a web site and two Telegram channels: <http://shahadanews.com/>, <https://web.telegram.org/#/im?p=@shahaadanews>, and https://web.telegram.org/#/im?p=c1126389009_13067600275205898593 (all last accessed 9 August 2017).

translates to “terrorist on the street,” since April 2012, numbering a total of eight issues as of July 2017. Other Kenyan *jihadi* publications include another e-magazine, *Amka* (Rise Up), and a newsletter for women, *Al-Ghurabaa* (The Strangers), the latter of which takes its name from *ahādīth* in which the Prophet Muhammad is reported to have predicted that “true” Muslims, who began as a small and unique group in a sea of unbelief, will eventually become a small group once again and be like “strangers” among a sea of false or impious Muslims.

Though the magazine is not an officially branded Al-Shabaab production, its editors and writers have been clear about their support for the Somali group since its launch. Featuring Swahili and English language articles, *Gaidi Mtaani* attempted to bolster recruitment and financial and media/propaganda support for Al-Shabaab and its Kenyan allies by presenting an East Africa and Kenya-centered *jihadi* narrative to regional Muslims. The magazine urged Kenyan Muslims to not only “stand with the *mujahidin*” but also avoid spreading negative rumors (*ghība*) and incorrect reports about them because this will only strengthen and aid the *kuffar*.⁸⁶³ Muslims should also be vigilant against attempts by the *kuffar* to plant spies in their midst who seek only to harm Islam and target the *mujahidin*.⁸⁶⁴

Gaidi Mtaani, like Arab *jihadi* narrative framing regarding the division of the Levant, Transjordan, and Iraq in the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement between the U.K. and France, focused on the history of European colonialism in East Africa. The British role in the division of historical “Greater Somalia” between the modern day nation-states of Somalia, Kenya (the North Eastern Province), and Ethiopia (the Ogaden region) received particular attention. As colonial powers did with Israel, the writers alleged, the U.K. and U.S. seek to create regional proxies such as Kenya through which they can indirectly subjugate Muslim

⁸⁶³ “Kuwalinda Mujahidin na Kusimama Pamoja” and “Kupiga Vita Uongo Khabari za Magharibi,” *Gaidi Mtaani*, no. 1 (April 2012), 3.

⁸⁶⁴ “10 Namna ya Kumjua Jasusi,” *Gaidi Mtaani*, no. 1 (April 2012), 9-10.

populations.⁸⁶⁵ The neo-colonialist and neo-imperial powers seek, it is alleged, to extract natural resources and other economic benefits through their proxies, thus impoverishing Muslim communities and keeping them subservient to Western “Crusader” interests.⁸⁶⁶

Historical injustices are cast as still being relevant to modern day events. For example, the 1984 Wagalla Massacre of as many as 5,000 Kenyan Somalis by security forces in and around the town of Wajir is portrayed as not only a historical attack on Muslims but an assault on Somalis and this framing is meant to tap into not only Islamic religious identity but also Somali ethnic and nationalist identities, despite Al-Shabaab’s frequent claims it rejects “*kufri*” nationalism.⁸⁶⁷ Religious sectarian identities, Muslim and Christian, are used to differentiate between Kenya’s Somali and non-Somali populations as well as between the majority Christians and the minority non-Somali Muslims, prioritizing here religious identity over ethnicity and citizenship.⁸⁶⁸ Al-Shabaab, since its early days in 2007, has combined multiple and sometimes competing identities into its narrative framing and ideology, retooling clan/sub-clan identities, Muslim religious identity and transnational “*Umma*” solidarities, and even Somali nationalism and ethnic identity—albeit through a *jihadi* Islamic lens—into a set of narratives that seek to expand the group’s appeal among as wide an audience pool as possible. The *jihadi*-insurgent group, like Al-Qaeda’s other regional affiliates, is intimately tied to the specific locales in which it operates and is as firmly grounded in Somali domestic and regional East African politics, economics, and shifts in

⁸⁶⁵ “Usaliti wa Uingereza Kwa Wasislamu,” *Gaidi Mtaani*, no. 1 (April 2012), 4-5, and “The Long Road to Kismayu,” *Gaidi Mtaani*, no. 2 (July 2012), 7-16, and “Operation Linda UKAFIRI (*sic*),” *Gaidi Mtaani*, no. 2, 21-25.

⁸⁶⁶ “Leveling the Scales,” *Gaidi Mtaani*, no. 1 (April 2012), 13-14.

⁸⁶⁷ Al-Shabaab film, *The Westgate Siege: Retributive Justice*. For background on the Wagalla Massacre, see Al-Jazeera English, “Kenya’s Wagalla Massacre 30 Years Later,” 27 February 2014, at <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/02/kenya-wagalla-massacre-30-years-later-201422682831165619.html>, last accessed 3 August 2017.

⁸⁶⁸ Al-Shabaab film, *Ghazwat al-Shaykh Abu Yahyā al-Lībī: Iqtihām Qā’idat al-Jaysh al-Ṣalībīyīn al-Kīnī* (The Expedition of *Shaykh* Abu Yahyā al-Lībī: Storming the Crusader Kenyan Army Base [at El-Adde, Gedo region]), Mu’assasat al-Katā’ib, 9 April 2016.

religious and other identities as it is in the pan-Islamic global jihadism of Bin Laden, al-Zawahiri, and Al-Qaeda Central.

In a remarkable example of spin, *Gaidi Mtaani*'s producers claimed that the October 2012 Kenyan invasion and subsequent military occupation of parts of southern Somalia was not a negative for Al-Shabaab and Kenya's *jihadis* but rather a divinely-sent opportunity provided by God. The Kenyan invasion had revealed the truth to Muslims around the Horn but particularly in Kenya that their government was now in open war against Islam and Muslims both at home, where they "disappeared" controversial Muslim community leaders, and abroad, where they were killing, beating, and raping Muslims in raids and through artillery and air strikes. Kenya's government had made the country a legitimate field for *jihad*.⁸⁶⁹ The targeting of Kenyan Muslims domestically would also further divide them from the country's Christian majority because the latter's "hatred towards Muslims" will be undeniable and will transform once foolishly "moderate Muslims" into willing *mujāhidīn* driven to defend their families and belongings from being ravaged by the hostile "Crusaders."⁸⁷⁰ This purification of Islamic belief would reinvigorate the *jihad* in Somalia and expand it to all of East Africa by bringing many more Muslims to accept the core ideological principles of the *jihadis*.⁸⁷¹

In both Al-Shabaab's official media and the media operations of allied and affiliated Kenyan groups, as well as from testimonies from Kenyan foreign fighters in Al-Shabaab's ranks, the importance of a cadre of revered "martyr *shaykhs*" is clear. These figures were charismatic and controversial Kenyan religious preachers and scholars who have been murdered under mysterious circumstances since 2012. They include Aboud Rogo (Aboud Rogo Mohamed), Samir Khan Nusayba (Hashimu Khan, Abu Nusayba), Abubakar

⁸⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷⁰ *Ibid.* and "East Africa: Jihad's Homecoming," *Amka*, no. 2 (July 2015), 15-16.

⁸⁷¹ *Gaidi Mtaani*, "The Long Road to Kismayu."

“Makaburi” Shariff, and Ibrahim Omar “Rogo.” Extensive investigations by news media organizations and human rights organizations alleged that Kenya’s anti-terrorism police units carried out these and other summary, extrajudicial killings as well as mass imprisonments without charge and physical beatings in the name of “fighting terrorism.”⁸⁷² The names, images, and legacies of these preachers are frequently invoked by both East African fighters in Al-Shabaab as well as in official and affiliated *jihadi*-insurgent group media releases.⁸⁷³

In the lead-up to Kenya’s national general elections on 8 August 2017 Al-Shabaab directed a propaganda campaign at the Kenyan electorate in an attempt to sway the results. This media campaign was composed of two central messaging drives, one aimed at the Kenyan electorate in general and the second at Kenyan Muslim voters specifically.

⁸⁷² Ludovica Iaccino, “Kenyan Al-Shabaab Supporter Shot Dead: Who was Sheikh Makaburi?,” *International Business Times*, 3 April 2014, at <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/kenyan-al-shabaab-supporter-shot-dead-who-was-sheikh-makaburi-1443297>, last accessed 3 August 2017; BBC News, “Ibrahim ‘Rogo’ Omar: Kenyan Cleric Shot Dead in Mombasa,” 4 October 2013, at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-24395723>, last accessed 3 August 2017; Maureen Mudi and Raphael Mwadine, “Two Terror Suspects Found Murdered in Mombasa,” *The Star* (Kenya), 13 April 2012, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201204140310.html>, last accessed 3 August 2017; Calvin Onsarigo, “List of Muslim Clerics Killed in Two Years,” *The Star* (Kenya), 11 June 2014, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201406110917.html>, last accessed 3 August 2017; Leela Jacinto, “Kenya’s Mysteriously Disappeared Islamic Clerics,” *France24*, at <http://www.france24.com/en/20120905-kenya-mysteriously-killed-disappeared-islamic-clerics-mombasa-rogo-kassim-shabaab>, last accessed 3 August 2017; Margot Kiser, “Death Squads in Kenya’s Shadow War on Shabaab Sympathizers,” *The Daily Beast*, 6 April 2014, at <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/04/06/death-squads-in-kenya-s-shadow-war-on-shabaab-sympathizers.html>, last accessed 3 August 2017; IRIN News, “Gunned Down in Mombasa—the Clerics That Have Died,” 28 July 2014, at <http://www.irinnews.org/report/100412/gunned-down-mombasa-%E2%80%93-clerics-have-died>, last accessed 3 August 2017; Al-Jazeera, *Al-Jazeera Investigates: Inside Kenya’s Death Squads*, 7 December 2014, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUjOdjdH8Uk>, last accessed 3 August 2017; *Killing Kenya*, 23 September 2015, at <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/peopleandpower/2015/09/killing-kenya-150923092758366.html>, last accessed 3 August 2017; Amnesty International, “Kenya: Set up Judicial Inquiry into Hundreds of Enforced Disappearances and Killings,” 30 August 2016, at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/08/kenya-set-up-judicial-inquiry-into-hundreds-of-enforced-disappearances-and-killings/>, last accessed 3 August 2017; and Human Rights Watch, “Deaths and Disappearances: Abuses in Counterterrorism Operations in Nairobi and in Northeastern Kenya,” 19 July 2016, at <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/07/19/deaths-and-disappearances/abuses-counterterrorism-operations-nairobi-and>, last accessed 3 August 2017.

⁸⁷³ Representative examples include: “Sheikh Aboud Rogo: Chanzo cha Mabadiliko,” *Gaidi Mtaani*, no. 3 (March 2013), 24-27; a closing feature on Abubakar Makaburi in *Gaidi Mtaani*, no. 6 (dated August/September 2014), 58; Al-Shabab communiqué, “Sheikh Aboud Rogo’s Death: A Catalyst for Change,” 27 August 2012; Muslim Youth Centre, “Sheikh Aboud Rogo’s Death: Embrace Change, Mujahidin,” 28 August 2012; Muslim Youth Centre, “Defend Our Sheikh’s Honour: Humiliation of Sheikh Aboud Rogo’s Family,” 14 November 2012; “Defying the Kuffar: Sheikh Makaburi,” *Amka*, no. 2 (July 2015), 5-6; a feature eulogizing the murdered Kenyan preachers in *Amka*, no. 2, 28; Aboud Rogo, “Message to the Ummah of East Africa,” *Amka*, no. 1 (February 2015), 13-14; and Al-Shabaab films (all Mu’assasat al-Katā’ib), *Min Thughūr al-‘Izz* Part 4, 5 July 2016 and Abu ‘Ubayda Ahmed ‘Umar, *Shari‘a aw Shahāda* (Islamic Law or Martyrdom), 12 July 2016.

Addressing the electorate generally, Al-Shabaab's spokesman 'Ali Rage cast doubts on the official government claim that its military intervention into Somalia had been a success and had brought about greater security inside Kenya. Citing the Westgate Mall (September 2013), Garissa University College (April 2015), and Mpeketoni (June 2014) attacks, Rage ominously promised Kenyans that "what awaits you is far greater [in terms of violence]" than any of the previous attacks.⁸⁷⁴ Their sons in the Kenyan Defence Forces (KDF) were dying in vain fighting a war on behalf of the U.S. and to enrich greedy politicians such as President Uhuru Kenyatta.⁸⁷⁵ Their own government does not even tell them the truth, Rage said, and instead hides the true numbers of KDF dead and wounded for fear of a domestic outcry if these were revealed.⁸⁷⁶

Rage further tied the security of Kenyans inside their own country to the withdrawal of their military from Somalia and warned them to be aware of the consequences of their failure to do so by reigning in their politicians. "We've warned you yesterday of the consequences of war and today you are feeling its effects," he said. "Your economy has declined and all government funds have been transferred to the military coffers, thereby wasting the wealth of the public."⁸⁷⁷ Kenya's military aggression in Somalia as well as domestically had also awoken the anger of Kenyan Muslims, who would now join the *mujāhidīn* and turn Kenya into an open war zone.⁸⁷⁸ The security of Kenyan citizens could only be achieved by pressuring their political leaders to withdraw from Somalia and stop meddling in its affairs as well as by ceasing the persecution of Kenyan Muslims. If they do not withdraw, Rage warned, the KDF will face a great defeat and substantial losses and pointed to the examples of the Unified Task Force (UNITAF) and the UN Operation in

⁸⁷⁴ 'Ali Rage, *An Analysis of Events: Part 2*, Mu'assasat al-Katā'ib, 13 July 2017.

⁸⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Somalia (UNOSOM) interventions in the 1990s. “The corpses of dead American soldiers were dragged through the streets of Mogadishu,” he said, referring to the downing of U.S. military helicopters during their October 1993 attempt to capture Somali warlord Mohamed Farah Aidiid. “The Kenyan soldiers will not fare any better,” he promised. “All oppressive enemy forces were destroyed [previously] in this Muslim land [Somalia] just as the Kenyan forces are being destroyed here today and that will be the fate of all enemy forces who seek to oppress Muslims.”⁸⁷⁹

The Al-Shabaab spokesman excoriated Kenyan Muslim politicians for betraying their fellow believers in the interest of the sinful pursuit of worldly power. “Those so-called Muslims whom you have elected, who claim to be your leaders and who look and speak like you [are], in reality, the ones who have surrendered you to your enemies,” Rage said. “[The Kenyan Muslims who say] that the Christians will benefit you and reassure you that you are true Kenyan citizens, certainly they have deceived you.”⁸⁸⁰ He advised Kenyan Muslims to recognize that these politicians did not have their best interests at heart and that the *kuffar* would never bring anything but harm to the Muslims because of their inherent hostility to God’s final revelation through the Prophet Muhammad. “[The *kuffar*, Kenyan Christians] have absolutely no good to offer the Muslims, nor do they respect the ties of kinship or any sort of covenant [such as citizenship],” he said. “This means that they will not spare a believer based on his blood relationship or past agreements [...] It is these sort of people whom they [pro-government Kenyan Muslim politicians and preachers] are trying to convince you are your fellow countrymen, brothers, and nationals.”⁸⁸¹ The reality, in

⁸⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁰ ‘Ali Rage, *An Analysis of Events: Part 3*, Mu’assasat al-Katā’ib, 28 June 2017.

⁸⁸¹ *Ibid.*

contrast, is that Muslims can only secure their safety and futures and that of their families through *jihad*.⁸⁸²

In a documentary-style film released only two weeks before Kenya's elections, Al-Shabaab again warned the country's electorate to recognize that their own government was lying to them about the realities of their military intervention in Somalia. Not only had Operation Linda Nchi further destabilized the security situation inside Kenya—the exact opposite of what Kenyatta's government had claimed it would do—it had also resulted in serious economic losses in the tourism sector.⁸⁸³ Instead of funding programs to lower the country's high poverty and unemployment rates, the government instead was wasting money by funding the Somali adventure, Rage alleged. The film incorporated into its broader, Kenya-centric narrative ongoing internal disputes within Kenya including protests by the country's doctors and other medical professionals over low government funding rates and deadly fights between Kenyan police and nomadic herders in Laikipia and Baringo.⁸⁸⁴

In an attempt to sow divisions and discontent in the KDF, rank-and-file soldiers were warned that their senior officers and political leaders did not care about them and thought they were expendable in the latter's pursuit of personal wealth through corruption and rigged contracts in southern Somalia and coastal regions of eastern Kenya.⁸⁸⁵ Their leaders' disrespect can be clearly seen, the film claimed, by the flippant attitude of Kenyatta and the KDF generals about the real casualty figures among their forces in Somalia.⁸⁸⁶ Holding up a captured KDF uniform shirt, the film's narrator addressed the Kenyan soldiers directly. "As for this uniform, it has become a symbol of shame woven by the threads of humiliation and sewn with the flimsy fibers of incompetence making any Kenyan soldier who wears it utterly

⁸⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸⁸³ Al-Shabaab film, *The Kenyan Invasion before and after 'Linda Nchi,'* Mu'assasat al-Katā'ib, 23 July 2017.

⁸⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

disgraced. It no longer has the glamor once associated with the military. Rather it reeks with the putrid stench of defeat and humiliation, all praises is due to Allah (sic). And in thanks to Operation Linda Nchi, no matter of decoration could restore its dignity or salvage its reputation.”⁸⁸⁷

Warning that Kenya was at a crossroads, the film urged the country’s voters not to make a poor decision like American voters in November 2016, referencing the narrow election of Republican candidate Donald Trump. “When the Americans voted for Donald Trump last year they had visions of ‘making America great again.’ What they underestimated however was the man’s level of stupidity and what they got was arguably the most stupid president a country could ever have, a brainless billionaire who singlehandedly succeeded in making the United States the greatest joke on Earth and is now propelling it further towards its eventual defeat and destruction,” the film’s narrator said, speaking around the infamous clip, created by a Trump supporter, of the businessman “beating” the “Fraud News Network” (CNN) in a social media video created from actual footage of Trump’s appearance at World Wrestling Entertainment’s Wrestlemania 23 show in April 2007.⁸⁸⁸

The future of Kenya and its security was at stake. If the country’s voters chose badly then they should expect “even larger attacks in Nairobi and Kenyan cities” than had already been carried out as well as more major military defeats in Somalia, such as the overrunning of the KDF bases in Somalia at El-Adde in January 2016 and Kulbiyow in January 2017. The film also referenced the killing and dragging in the streets of U.S. soldiers in October 1993 in Mogadishu. “Now it’s your turn,” he said. “Will you follow in the footsteps of your masters and allow a handful of greedy saber-rattling politicians to put your country in the path of destruction or vote with your feet and hold your corrupt leaders to account? Are your

⁸⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁸ *Ibid.* On the YouTube video, which Trump himself retweeted, see Daniella Silva, “President Trump Tweets Wrestling Video of Himself Attacking ‘CNN’,” NBC News, at <http://www.nbcnews.com/politics/donald-trump/president-trump-tweets-wwe-video-himself-attacking-cnn-n779031>, last accessed 3 August 2017.

leaders clean and sober enough to make clear decisions on your behalf? Whatever it is that you decide upon, know that we will be watching you.”⁸⁸⁹

Information Wars & Jihadi Journalism: Exploiting the Media Environment

The main strategic objective of Al-Shabaab’s multifaceted multimedia campaign is to influence, infiltrate, and direct the news media and reporting environment about the ongoing conflict in Somalia and related issues in the region and internationally. Aware of the finite nature of their military and financial resources in comparison to their multiple foes, the insurgent group, understanding the importance of media and information operations in war, has invested a significant amount of time and resources in building up a formidable and resilient media capability. Beginning in 2010, the group began branding segments of its media apparatus as “journalistic” and documentary, as outlets that provided more reliable news and truthful reporting than the official press organs of their enemies. Insurgent media operations, of course, are heavily slanted to favor the producer’s narrative framing and ideological outlook and they must be evaluated with care, with information presented being triangulated and checked against other independent sources whenever possible. However, Al-Shabaab’s media operations are a vital part of its insurgency and strategic decision-making and it is important to study its messaging at the local/domestic, regional, and international/transnational levels so as to understand the multiple audience-tailored narratives that the group presents to its members and supporters, potential recruits and financial backers, business partners, and enemies.

In July 2010 Al-Shabaab rebranded its media department, which was previously known simply as the “media department” of its frontline fighting force, the Jaysh al-‘Usra, as the Al-Katā’ib Media Foundation and the Al-Katā’ib News Channel, names it alternated between, though it more frequently favored the former. This rebranding included the creation

⁸⁸⁹ Al-Shabaab film, *The Kenyan Invasion before and after ‘Linda Nchi.’*

of a new media department logo in Arabic that was designed to mimic the logos of major Arabic satellite TV news channels such as Al-Jazeera.⁸⁹⁰ In the formal announcement of the establishment of the “new” external media department, the importance of the media war was explicitly addressed. “The media battle being waged by the *mujāhidīn* is one of the most difficult and most important in our war against the Zionist-Crusader disbelievers, which made us, as the caretakers on the frontier of the media *jihad* (*thaghr al-jihad al-i‘lāmī*) in our beloved battlefield of Somalia, strive harder to develop methods for media warfare and to advance the weapon of *jihadi* media in order to report the truth to the people from the battlefields,” the statement said.⁸⁹¹

In a follow-up statement, Al-Shabaab’s media department said that the rebranding and investment into enhancing the insurgent group’s media machine was done so as to broadcast “the voice of their [Muslim] brothers, the *mujāhidīn* on the frontiers, to all the Muslims” and to provide regular news coverage of what was happening on the battlefield as well as the homefront.⁸⁹² In addition to *jihadis* inside and outside of Somalia and Muslim audiences generally, Al-Shabaab’s new media project was also aimed at its enemies such as AMISOM, and the Somali federal government. Al-Katā’ib also launched a short-lived terrestrial TV broadcast station in Mogadishu, which was meant to complement Al-Shabaab’s two domestic radio stations, Radio al-Furqan and Radio al-Andalus.⁸⁹³

Al-Katā’ib’s first productions were two documentary-style films about ongoing battles for control of Mogadishu between Al-Shabaab and AMISOM and TFG forces, *The*

⁸⁹⁰ See Figure 15 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/07/19/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation/>.

⁸⁹¹ Al-Shabaab communiqué, 27 July 2010.

⁸⁹² Al-Shabaab communiqué, 19 December 2010.

⁸⁹³ Al-Shabaab communiqué, “Najāh al-bath al-araḍī al-tajrībī li-Qinā al-Katā’ib al-Ikhhārīya wa bath film li-‘amīl li-‘CIA’” (The Successful Experimental Terrestrial Broadcast of the Al-Katā’ib News Channel and the Broadcasting of a Film of a CIA Client [spy],” 2 February 2011.

African Crusaders: Fighting the West's War and *Mogadishu: The Crusaders' Graveyard*.⁸⁹⁴

The films, which were released one month apart, were aimed at the Burundian and Ugandan publics and were designed to convince both populations to pressure their governments to withdraw troops from AMISOM, which at the time would have effectively put an end to its ability to operate and keep the TFG in power in the narrow strip of the capital city it then controlled. Burundians and Ugandans were presented with unedited and graphic footage of the battles between their soldiers and the insurgents and dead AMISOM soldiers, some of them badly burned after being trapped inside destroyed tanks in close-quarter urban battles with highly mobile Al-Shabaab fighters. The people of both AMISOM countries were warned that their sons would “continue to die in the streets of Mogadishu” and “be left for the dogs to devour,” as had been the case with past foreign invaders, if they did not convince their respective governments to withdraw and stop meddling in Somali affairs.⁸⁹⁵

The films, which were both narrated by a British foreign fighter who was not identified even with a *nom de guerre* and spoke with his face covered with a scarf in the second film and who was not shown at all in the first, were edited to resemble frontline war coverage on a regular news network or in a documentary. Long before Islamic State's masked British executioner “Jihadi John” Muhammad Emwazi became infamous internationally in 2014 after appearing in a series of extremely graphic videos in which American and British hostages were summarily executed, Al-Shabaab's English language narrator was already becoming an important player in the media operations of a major *jihadi* organization, following in the path of Adam Gadahn, the American member of Al-Qaeda Central. Al-Shabaab's narrator, as of July 2017, continued to appear regularly in person or as

⁸⁹⁴ Al-Shabaab (all Mu'assasat al-Katā'ib) films, *The African Crusaders: Fighting the West's War*, 27 June 2010 and *Mogadishu: The Crusaders' Graveyard*, 30 July 2010.

⁸⁹⁵ Al-Shabaab films, *The African Crusaders: Fighting the West's War* and *Mogadishu: The Crusaders' Graveyard*,

the voice narrator of many of the insurgent group's films and audio messages produced in English.

The message to the Burundian and Ugandan people was split into two parts and over both films. In the first, *The African Crusaders*, which was released in June 2010, they are warned that they must act and pressure their governments to withdraw all forces from Somalia.⁸⁹⁶ If they do not, then they will bear the consequences for not only the continued meaningless deaths of their husbands, sons, and brothers in the military but also for Al-Shabaab's retaliation.⁸⁹⁷ The narrator asked Ugandans rhetorically if they did not agree with him that their army, the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF), would be better used by their government to defend them from Joseph Kony and his Lord's Resistance Army.⁸⁹⁸

The core message of the second film, *Mogadishu: The Crusaders' Graveyard*, which was released in late July 2010 following Al-Shabaab's two suicide bombings in Kampala during the World Cup, was that the Ugandan people were paying for their failure to convince their politicians to ensure the security of the nation by withdrawing from AMISOM.⁸⁹⁹ Because of their failure, the narrator said, "lessons a little more closer to home" had been necessary and the film then transitioned into graphic photographs and footage of victims from the attacks and their funerals as well as the dismay of Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni.⁹⁰⁰

The film showed carefully edited footage of a battle in Mogadishu in which an AMISOM tank collapses into a sinkhole on a road and is then seemingly destroyed by rocket or recoilless gun fire from insurgents. After footage of the burning tank and celebrating Al-Shabaab fighters, the film used edited footage from an AMISOM press conference following

⁸⁹⁶ Al-Shabaab film, *The African Crusaders*.

⁸⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹⁹ Al-Shabaab film, *Mogadishu: The Crusaders' Graveyard*.

⁹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

the battle in which a spokesman, Major Ba-hoku Barigye, flippantly dismisses losses suffered, asking reporters, “And if you lose one soldier, so what?”⁹⁰¹ He also denied allegations that AMISOM fired without regard into civilian areas and claimed that the destroyed tank had simply “run into a ditch and caught fire” due to “a problem with the wiring.”⁹⁰² The narrator dismissively asked Ugandans and Burundians rhetorically, “But it seems once again that you, the people of Uganda and Burundi, remain heedless to our calls. How many more of your sons are you willing to sacrifice for this American-led Western cause? How many more defeats like these can your spineless army tolerate?”⁹⁰³ As the film transitioned to graphic footage of a dead and badly burned Ugandan tank crewman, the narrator warned that their sons would meet the same fates as the American and Ethiopian soldiers who had been sacrificed by their governments and their bodies defiled and dragged in the streets of Mogadishu.⁹⁰⁴ In the end, their soldiers will become “just another statistic” in the ongoing war and will have died for nothing, disrespected even in death by their own governments.⁹⁰⁵ The film closed with the narrator standing beside the burned AMISOM tank with his hand placed on its gun barrel and ending his “report” mimicking a news reporter: “Al-Katā’ib News Channel, live from the front lines of Mogadishu.”⁹⁰⁶

Al-Shabaab continued to address the general populations of enemy countries and rank-and-file soldiers in their armies in its media campaign into the autumn of 2018, including after insurgents overran the KDF military bases at El-Adde in January 2016 and Kulbiyow in Lower Juba in January 2017, after which the Kenyan government denied it had suffered heavy casualties or, in the case of Kulbiyow, even lost control of the base, claims

⁹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰² *Ibid.*

⁹⁰³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

which were disproven not only by insurgent video footage and photography but also independent reporting and testimonies of local residents.⁹⁰⁷ By presenting an alternate version of events, Al-Shabaab actively attempts to muddy the waters and exploit the media and information environment by, in part, calling into question the official statements and claims of its enemies. In many cases, including in the aftermath of the Westgate Mall siege and the El-Adde and Kulbiyow base attacks, similar doubts of official government narratives were being raised by independent parties as well, including by private citizens and journalists. By raising questions about the truthfulness and reliability of the claims of its enemies, Al-Shabaab presents itself as a more truthful and reliable reporter about what is happening on the ground in Somalia and even in enemy countries such as Kenya and Uganda and masks its own misleading version of events by juxtaposing itself with the demonstrable untruths or silence of its opponents. Insurgent media is also aimed at multiple audiences and is composed of a multiplicity of narrative frames that are designed to resonate with specific audiences while maintaining a cohesive overall narrative. Earlier in this chapter the group's harnessing of the new media environment and the international thirst for information during the Westgate Mall siege was analyzed and, in the following paragraphs, insurgent media operations around the October 2011 ambush of Burundian AMISOM forces in Dayniile outside of Mogadishu and the overrunning of the El-Adde and Kulbiyow KDF bases in January 2016 and 2017 respectively will be discussed with regard to Al-Shabaab's media and information warfare.

In October 2011 Al-Shabaab successfully ambushed a column of Burundian AMISOM troops in the Dayniile district on the northern outskirts of the capital city of

⁹⁰⁷ Al-Shabaab (all Mu'assasat al-Katā'ib) films, *Ghazwat al-Shaykh Abu Yahyā al-Lībī: Iqtihām Qā'idat al-Jaysh al-Ṣalībiyīn al-Kīnī* and *They are Not Welcome, They Shall Burn in the Fire: The Sheikh Muhammad Dhulyadeyn Raid*, 30 May 2017. The second film takes its title from Qur'an 38:59 and is dedicated to Al-Shabaab senior commander Mohamed Mohamud 'Ali, who was also known as Kuno Gamadere and Dulyadayn/Dhulyadeyn and was killed in a joint attack by U.S. Special Forces and Somali government troops on 1 June 2016.

Mogadishu and claimed to have killed over 100 of them while suffering only 10 dead.⁹⁰⁸ AMISOM denied the insurgents' claims and said that it had only lost 10 dead, with Burundi only admitting to six killed in action, but this claim was called into serious question by journalists who spoke to local residents, who reported that an estimated 60 to 70 AMISOM dead in Burundian uniforms and who "did not look like Somalis" had been publicly displayed by Al-Shabaab following the battle.⁹⁰⁹ The insurgent group released photographs of a large number of Burundian dead as well as close-up photographs of some captured identification cards as well as footage of the ambush, the battlefield, and the public display of enemy bodies, calling into further question the official AMISOM and Burundian claims regarding their casualties even if Al-Shabaab's initial claim that it had killed over 150, which it later lowered to "over 101," were significantly exaggerated.⁹¹⁰ In a well-produced documentary-style film about the ambush and ensuing battle, Al-Katā'ib framed the attack in the context of alleged AMISOM abuses including the wanton shelling of civilian areas including markets, residential areas, and near mosques.⁹¹¹ Footage of cheering local residents mingling with insurgents around scores of uniformed slain soldiers and remarks by Al-Shabaab's spokesman, 'Ali Rage, portrayed the battle as part of a war between the Christian Burundians and the Muslim Somalis as well as revenge for AMISOM killings and abuse of civilians.

⁹⁰⁸ Al-Jazeera English, "Al-Shabab Claims Peacekeepers' Killings," 21 October 2011, at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2011/10/20111021102141422988953.html>, last accessed 3 August 2017 and Josh Kron and Mohamed Ibrahim, "African Union Peacekeepers Killed in Somalia Battle," *The New York Times*, 21 October 2011, at http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/22/world/africa/african-union-takes-casualties-in-somalia-but-numbers-vary.html?_r=0, last accessed 3 August 2017.

⁹⁰⁹ Al-Jazeera English, "Al-Shabab Claims Peacekeepers' Killings" and Josh Kron and Mohamed Ibrahim, "African Union Peacekeepers Killed in Somalia Battle."

⁹¹⁰ Al-Shabaab film, *The Burundian Bloodbath: Battle of Dayniile*, Mu'assasat al-Katā'ib, 12 November 2011 and Christopher Anzalone, "Harakat al-Shabab al-Mujahidin Releases Statement & Information on Burundian AMISOM Soldiers Slain at Battle of Dayniile," *Al-Wasat* blog, 12 December 2011, at <https://thewasat.wordpress.com/2011/12/12/harakat-al-shabab-al-mujahideen-releases-statement-information-on-burundian-amisom-soldiers-slain-at-battle-of-dayniile/>, last accessed 17 June 2016, and "The Rapid Evolution of Al-Shabab's Media and Insurgent 'Journalism'," *openDemocracy*, 16 November 2011, at <https://www.opendemocracy.net/opensecurity/christopher-anzalone/rapid-evolution-of-al-shabab%E2%80%99s-media-and-insurgent-%E2%80%9Cjournalism%E2%80%9D>, last accessed 3 August 2017.

⁹¹¹ Al-Shabaab film, *The Burundian Bloodbath: Battle of Dayniile*.

“We want to tell the Muslims to rejoice in the fact that those who have displaced you from your homes, caused you so much trouble, and violated the honor of your women have been today humiliated by God,” he said. “This is a war between *īmān* and *kufṛ*, between Islam and Christianity.” Rage then held up a captured rosary and declared, “This is the cross and here is their Bible. They carry these two things along with them while we carry the Book of God [the Qur’an] and the *Sunna* of His messenger [Muhammad] and since the battle is between the defenders of this cross and Bible and those defending the holy Qur’an, it is obligatory upon Muslims as a whole to stand by and support the holy Qur’an.”⁹¹²

On 15 January 2016 an Al-Shabaab special commando unit, the Brigade of the Martyr Ṣāliḥ al-Nabhānī, launched a major surprise attack on the KDF’s base at El-Adde. Opening with a SVBIED attack at the base’s front gate, the assault was carried out by between 150 and 300 insurgents who swarmed into the base and killed between 141 and 150 Kenyan soldiers and wounded or captured an estimated two dozen others. The insurgents claimed that over 180 KDF troops had been killed or captured, but this number was probably inflated. The Kenyatta government denied that it had suffered significant casualties and then did its best to sweep the entire embarrassing affair under the rug. A CNN investigation, however, found that the Kenyan government had carried out a cover-up in order to hide the true extent of its losses and defeat at El-Adde.⁹¹³

In a video message to his fellow Kenyans following the base attack, Ahmad Iman ‘Ali warned them that new attacks would be carried out if the Kenyan government continued its military occupation of southern Somalia and continued to imprison, abuse, and kill its own

⁹¹² *Ibid.*

⁹¹³ Robyn Kriel and Briana Duggan, “Kenya Covers Up Military Massacre,” CNN, 31 May 2016, at <http://www.cnn.com/2016/05/31/africa/kenya-soldiers-el-adde-massacre/index.html>, last accessed 3 August 2017.

Muslim citizens.⁹¹⁴ He advised them not to waste their time seeking honest answers about the deaths or capture of their sons at El-Adde from the Kenyan government, which, he said, is defined by its perfidy, but instead to contact Al-Shabaab and the *mujāhidīn* with questions if they are interested in frank but honest answers about the realities of the battle.⁹¹⁵ Iman ‘Ali’s remarks reiterated statements made in Al-Shabaab’s official press releases in Swahili and English that were released two days after the attack.⁹¹⁶ Insurgent media also published scores of high definition photographs of the base after its capture including of KDF dead and captured military vehicles, weaponry, ammunition, and other equipment.⁹¹⁷

One year later, the same Al-Shabaab special commando unit launched a similar attack on the KDF base at Kulbiyow and once again succeeded in overrunning the base and killing or capturing scores of Kenyan troops while capturing vehicles, weaponry and ammunition, and other equipment before setting the base alight. Two SVBIED attacks softened up the base’s defenses and were followed by a mass infantry attack backed by the strategic deployment of “technicals” similar to the assault that overwhelmed the KDF forces at El-Adde the previous January. Surviving KDF soldiers fled in panic as the insurgents poured into the base.

The Kenyan Ministry of Defence denied that its forces had even lost control of Kulbiyow and claimed that the KDF had only lost two officers and seven enlisted soldiers during the battle, with another 15 wounded.⁹¹⁸ The Kenyan government also claimed that it had killed 70 insurgents. In contrast, Al-Shabaab claimed over 67 KDF soldiers had been

⁹¹⁴ Al-Shabaab film, *Will be the Morning for Those Warned* (Fasā’ Šabāḥ al-Mundharīn; Itakuwa Asubuhi Mbaya Kwa Walioonywa), Mu’assasat al-Katā’ib, 22 February 2016. The title is taken from Qur’an 37:177.

⁹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹¹⁶ Al-Shabaab communiqué, “100 Kenyan Invaders Massacred, Others Captured Alive” and “Wanajeshi Wakenya 100 Wauliwa, Wengine Wakamatwa Hai,” both released on 17 January 2016.

⁹¹⁷ Al-Shabaab communiqué, “In Pictures: 100 Kenyan Invaders Massacred,” 20 January 2016.

⁹¹⁸ Kenyan Ministry of Defence, “Follow Up Operational Update-Kolbiyow,” 27 January 2017, at <https://twitter.com/kdfinfo/status/825033773087674368>, last accessed 3 August 2017.

killed and dozens more wounded and captured.⁹¹⁹ In its official May 2017 documentary-style film about the base attack, Al-Shabaab's media operatives included lengthy pieces of footage of the attack including of scores of insurgents breaching the base's perimeter and surviving KDF troops fleeing into the surrounding countryside to escape them.⁹²⁰ The film tied the Kulbiyow attack to the previous successful insurgent capture of the El-Adde base, which were both framed as revenge for KDF abuses, rapes, and killings of civilians. It promised that further military disasters were "not a question of if but when and where."⁹²¹ Citing human rights organizations and using video clips from academic lectures, news reports, and documentaries, the film also presented some of AMISOM's and specifically Kenya's alleged crimes in Somalia including the rape and sexual abuse of Somali women and fatal traffic accidents caused by the wanton disregard and recklessness of AMISOM troops, issues that Somalis outside of Al-Shabaab have regularly complained about.⁹²² By tapping into a wide array of issues including some of concern to average Somalis, Al-Shabaab hoped to sway at least some of them, even if a minority, to provide active support or, at the very least, acquiesce to their continued presence in the country and territorial control of a significant part of it.

⁹¹⁹ Al-Shabaab film, *They are Not Welcome, They Shall Burn in the Fire*.

⁹²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹²¹ *Ibid.*

⁹²² *Ibid.* One of the human rights NGO reports cited is Human Rights Watch, *'The Power These Men Have Over Us': Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by African Union Forces in Somalia*, 8 September 2014, at <https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/09/08/power-these-men-have-over-us/sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-african-union-forces>, last accessed 3 August 2017. On fatal traffic accidents caused by AMISOM drivers, see Dalsan Radio, "AMISOM Linked to 500 Accidents in Somalia," 19 July 2017, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201707190656.html>, last accessed 3 August 2017 and Xinhua, "AU Seeks Strategies to Cut Road Accidents on Convoys in Somalia," 6 May 2017, at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-05/06/c_136262122.htm, last accessed 3 August 2017. AMISOM, aware of the anger of Somalis including traffic police and politicians, at the regularity of fatal (to Somalis) traffic accidents caused by its personnel has attempted to placate them through road safety workshops and propaganda releases about them, for example, "AMISOM Concludes Road Safety Awareness Workshop," AMISOM, May 2017, at <http://amisom-au.org/2017/05/amisom-concludes-road-safety-awareness-workshop/>, last accessed 3 August 2017.

Conclusion

Islamic State utilizes the recording and broadcasting of scenes of graphic violence as an integral part of its communications strategy that is aimed at multiple audiences—current and potential members and supporters, for whom the slaughter is cast as divinely-commanded justice in revenge for the imprisonment, torture, and killings of Muslims, the international news media and social media punditry in order to keep the organization in the headlines and thus magnify its actual power and reach, and the organization’s enemies, from the Iraqi and Syrian governments to the U.S., U.K., and NATO to its *jihadi* rivals. Al-Zarqāwī and his aides, like ‘Abdullah ‘Azzām and Al-Qaeda’s Bin Laden before them, understood the potential power of media operations to act as a force multiplier in conflicts in which *jihadis* are pitted against opponents with vastly larger, more well-financed, and technologically superior forces. *Jihadi* media operations, which have been greatly pushed forward with the expansion and availability of production and design software and other technological advances, enable the physical organization on the ground to establish a lasting footprint in the digital and media space even as Islamic State itself is driven from more territory in Iraq, Syria, Libya, and other locales where it has active affiliates. Its claimed “caliphate” is transformed through its media productions into both a physical proto-state/caliphate and a media entity, a digital “state” in which its actual rule on the ground is both magnified and transformed from a philistine and self-serving implementation of Islamic law into grandiose narrative frames in which the group’s members are cast as a “return” to the glorious, and often highly idealized and even fictitious sacred past. In this way “the caliphate” becomes a reified idea in the minds of *jihadis* instead of a highly contested and variant historical evolution of political thought and expedient monarchical rule, as discussed in Chapter One.

At their basest level, the graphic execution messaging videos produced by JTI, AQI, the ISI, ISIS, and Islamic State serve two purposes. They are first stark messages and threats

to the organization's enemies and, second, a cathartic and even exhilarating ritual performance of both of claimed legitimacy and governing authority, in the case of the implementation of the *hudūd*, and, in the case of the execution of hostages and prisoners of war, demonstrations of the "caliphate's" ability to "avenge" the persecution and killings of Muslims from both inside and outside its ranks, particularly in the context of vicious and increasingly sectarianized civil wars and insurgencies in Iraq and Syria. The execution of Shi'i, 'Alawī, and "apostate" Sunni prisoners is also a strategic way for Islamic State to broadcast its particular brand of sectarianism and dedication to ideological purity in a bid to claim a segment of the increasingly radicalized and sectarianized segments among the world's Sunnis.⁹²³ The bodies of those killed are objects, not subjects, upon which violence is acted on by the *jihadis* (the subjects), demonstrating their helplessness, which is representative of that of all of the organization's enemies.⁹²⁴

In contrast, unlike Islamic State, Al-Shabaab has produced relatively few execution films and those handful it has are, by comparison, much less grisly. Al-Shabaab's official execution films have been limited to a 2009 video showing the executions by firing squad of two Somalis accused of either spying for or otherwise aiding AMISOM and Somali TFG forces, two showing the executions of captured Ugandan and Kenyan soldiers after the expiration of set periods of time for negotiations, or footage in which captured enemy fighters or accused spies are summarily executed that makes up a short part of longer film productions or, more commonly, is not even shown on screen.⁹²⁵ Whereas Al-Shabaab's

⁹²³ For an argument about the potential organizational and recruiting advantage to ideological extremists in civil war environments, see Barbara F. Walter, "The Extremist's Advantage in Civil Wars," *International Security* 42, no. 2 (2017), 7-39.

⁹²⁴ I draw here on the discussion of the roles of "subject" and "object" in photography and particularly violent photography in Dora Apel, "Lynching Photographs and the Politics of Public Shaming," in *Lynching Photographs*, eds. Dora Apel and Shawn Michelle Smith (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 62-64.

⁹²⁵ Al-Shabaab films (all Mu'assasat al-Katā'ib), *Iqāmat Hukm Allah 'alā Jāsūsayn; Lā 'Iṣma ilā bi-Īmān aw Amān* Part 1; *So They May Take Heed: The Final Message from the Ugandan POW*, 18 January 2017; and *The Bitter Truth: Final Message of El-Adde POW Betrayed by His Country*, 5 August 2017.

media operatives believe that executions, even if implied and not shown in full on film, serve a strategic messaging purpose, Islamic State has, as part of its projected self-image and ideological and strategic messaging roots, opted for a much more brutal and explicit form of recorded and visualized violence. Al-Shabaab leaders and commanders are also more constrained by local customs and norms of behavior and, although certainly not averse to the liberal use of different types of violence, have not utilized violence to anywhere near the same scale of Islamic State because they do not see doing so as strategically useful, once again demonstrating how local dynamics impact *jihadi*-insurgent decision-making, controlling and mediating even shared transnational/globalist ideological positions.

Seeking to ground its religio-ideological and political claims to legitimate authority and statehood in a more universalist, global bid for power, Islamic State pursued a media and framing campaign that placed a great deal of focus on broadcasting the proto-state organization's violence—particularly the *violence of control*—to an international audience. By doing this, Islamic State attempted to lay claim to the mantle of the caliphates of old and push forward its own claim to be resurrecting the idealized Sunni “Islamic” state model in the modern age. Al-Shabaab in contrast has pursued a more locally (Somali) and regionally (East African) proto-state-building project and, as a result, has focused on framing much of its own use of the *violence of control* in localized terms, seeing no real strategic need to broadcast it internationally. Instead, the mainly Somali insurgent organization has emphasized its military activities and violence aimed at foreign invaders and their native “apostate” allies in its media campaign. By focusing on themes of resistance and what the group sees as defensive military *jihad*, Al-Shabaab has sought to attract new recruits and supporters while also maintaining its more localized and relatively more limited governance focus. Islamic State's more rigid ideology at the expense of operational flexibility and durability, in comparison to Al-Qaeda's and specifically Al-Shabaab's relatively more

flexible strategic and operational outlook, may explain in part the differences between the former and the latter with regard to their different levels and types of violence, particularly Islamic State's much more macabre forms and implementation of "revenge" executions of non-Muslim hostages and prisoners of war. These differences and reasons for them will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Three.

The importance of the media sphere is a key component of the strategy and operations of Islamist insurgent organizations such as Islamic State and Al-Shabaab because, as organizations that are usually smaller and weaker than the governments and nation-states opposing them, they rely on the democratizing element of new media technology, the ever increasing accessibility and spread of the Internet, and social media platforms to bypass traditional state and corporate-controlled media and directly reach the public including potential new members and supporters. *Jihadi*-insurgent media is also used not only digitally and on the web but also as part of organizations' strategic campaigns and narrative framing processes on the ground within insurgent-controlled and governed territory.⁹²⁶ *Jihadi* organizations both benefit and face new challenges from the expansion and evolution of new and social media as access to technology and communication platforms empowers both official organizations as well as dissident voices from within them, a fact bemoaned by al-Zawahiri in 2015 when he noted that the once unified and triumphant *jihadi* media field has become beset with infighting that was destroying the "foundations of *jihad*" by airing internal divisions, backbiting, and a betrayal of the weighty trust that *jihadi* media operatives have to push forward the cause.⁹²⁷ The media sphere has become a multi-directional street and *jihadi* elites and official organizations are no longer able to fully control the information and

⁹²⁶ Islamic State, for example, at the height of its territorial control invested in the construction of "media points" (*niqāṭ i' lāmīya*) across the regions they governed to serve as propaganda cinemas from which its films were broadcast to local populations. See Figure 20 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/07/19/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation/>.

⁹²⁷ Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Ayām ma' al-Imām: Part 7* (Days with the Imam: Part 7), Mu'assasat al-Sahāb li-l-Intāḡ al-I'lāmī, 15 August 2015.

communication space. The flow of information and propaganda is now multi-directional and *jihadi* leaders are still adjusting to this new reality and have continued to seek to integrate, shape, and control the media aspects of their insurgent campaigns in order to best fulfill and achieve their strategic interests and organizational goals.

Chapter Three

Projecting Power and Organizing Violence: *Jihadi* Rebel Governance and Territorial Control

If, as I have argued in the previous chapter, the use of new and social media has presented global *jihadis* with the opportunity to amplify their power, recruit new members and supporters while expanding their networks, and undermine the legitimacy of their ideological and political rivals, the conquest of territory presents *jihadi*-insurgent organizations with a unique set of challenges. These organizational and operational challenges include whether and how to adjust their strategic operations to transition into the role of territorial ruler and determining the best manner in which to impose their authority over local populations. A *jihadi*-insurgent organization's media operations can be used as part of this transition process, at a local/regional and transnational/global level, as a tool for *jihadi* rulers to project governing power and, as importantly, the image of power.

Originating as small groups that had little to no direct or independent experience with the governance of territory, *jihadi*-insurgent organizations like Al-Shabaab and Islamic State had to make strategic decisions as they were transitioning into insurgent proto-states and attempt to put into practice the theoretical visions proposed by *jihadi* ideologues and strategists who were not faced with the actual challenge of attempting to operationalize their theories of a *jihadi* state. The implementation of *jihadi* systems of territorial control and varying levels of governance by Al-Shabaab beginning in 2008 and ISIS/Islamic State in 2013 were major experiments in *jihadi* statecraft as a real, lived phenomenon rather than a theoretical exercise on paper and in the minds of utopian ideologues. The manner in which these experiments have been undertaken by the organizations' leaderships is based on a number of dynamics—ideological, strategic/military, and economic, all of which have been

crucially dependent on mobilization frames—and have been exercises in framing actions within broader *jihadi*-insurgent narratives.

Jihadi-insurgent territorial rule is based on the organization's conceptions of law and order, justice (*'adl*), and *amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar* ("commanding/enjoining the right and prohibiting/forbidding the wrong," a key Islamic religious principle).⁹²⁸ In seeking to construct an overall governance project and mechanisms based on these concepts and the organization's ideology, *jihadi*-insurgent leaders, commanders, and civil administrators seek to build an idealized and, to them, ideologically pure proto-state and government rather than necessarily a system solely seeking effective governance. The mechanisms through which law and order and imposed justice, however harsh, is implemented are *shari'a* and *fiqh*, specifically an interpretation of Islamic criminal/penal law reduced mostly to the public carrying out of the *hudūd* punishments. The implementation of these "set" punishments for crimes such as theft, highway robbery, sexual offenses such as fornication and homosexuality, and murder has important symbolic and ideational dimensions for the ruling organization's projection of power and its ideological commitments, serving as potent public performances of power and demonstrations of organizational identity. However, the implementation of the *hudūd* is not only an ideological exercise but is intimately connected and intertwined with the ruling organization's economic

⁹²⁸ On this concept, see Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (New York City: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and *Forbidding Wrong in Islam: An Introduction* (New York City: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Writing about a book by Sunni *jihadi* strategist Abu Bakr Nājī, *Idārat al-Tawahhush: Akhṭar Marḥala satamurru bihā al-Umma al-Islāmiya* (The Management of Savagery/Barbarity: The Most Crucial Stage which the Islamic *Umma* will Pass), Peters notes that the "barbarity/savagery" in the title does not only refer to violence, as is often assumed, but "rather the anarchy of society." See Rudolph Peters, *Jihad: A History in Documents: Updated 2016 Edition* (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2016), 192-193. Nājī is concerned with how to implement a governing structure over territory so as to avoid "barbaric anarchy" (*fawḍā mutawahhisha*), which is equated with the period of pre-Islamic "ignorance" (*Jāhiliya*). The book has been influential with a number of *jihadi* rebel groups including Islamic State. The focus on establishing "Islamic order" over society and territory is clear in Nājī's writing.

interests, desire to clearly demarcate its authority, and desire to regulate specific spheres of public and private behavior and interpersonal and communal relations.

The implementation of *jihadi*-insurgent rule is achieved through the strategic utilization of the *violence of control*, that is violence and the threat of force used to project the ruling organization's authority and power over the territories and populations that it controls. This need to claim a monopoly on the use of violence and coercion is in turn shaped by the need for *jihadi* rulers to provide symbolic demonstrations of their ability to deploy violence as needed while also achieving their economic goals through taxation, forming alliances or acquiescent relationships with local merchants and notables, and other forms of revenue collection. Violence, though integral to *jihadi*-insurgent rule, is not sufficient for groups such as Al-Shabaab and even the much more violent Islamic State to retain their military primacy and territorial control for protracted periods of time. As with other rebel organizations outside of the Muslim majority world, *jihadi*-insurgent groups often rely on working relationships with outside groups, for example local tribal or clan leaders or the local business class as well as local residents generally, to help exercise territorial control and particularly financial control through revenue extraction. This is particularly true when, as in many regions of Somalia, Iraq, and Syria, there are powerful independent groups present, such as tribes and clans, capable of marshaling their own armed forces to resist or even overthrow insurgent control.⁹²⁹ The success of long-term territorial presence and control requires *jihadi* leaders and administrators to establish alliances or other negotiated agreements with local power brokers, often through partnerships against shared external enemies or rivals, mutually beneficial financial or power-sharing deals, or intermarriage.

⁹²⁹ For example, on the key role of tribal actors in the Syrian civil war, see 'Ubayda 'Āmir, "Shuyūkh al-Ḥāra: Kayfa fawwāda ḥubb al-za'āma 'afiqa al-Thawrat al-Sūrīya?" (*Shaykhs of the Regions: How did the involvement/attachment of the [tribal] leaderships affect the Syrian Revolution?*), *Maydan*, 6 November 2017, at <http://midan.aljazeera.net/reality/community/2017/11/6/شيوخ-الحارة-كيف-قوض-حب-الزعامة-أفق-الثورة-السورية>, last accessed 7 November 2017.

Though the proto-state-building projects of both Al-Shabaab and Islamic State have been shaped by their interpretation and attempted implementation of Islamic law and jurisprudence as a method of social regulation and control, both organizations have, in a number of ways, also engaged in different types of governance projects. First, while Islamic State has sought to rapidly expand territorially in a way that has, as of the spring of 2018, drastically outpaced its military and governance capabilities, Al-Shabaab has favored a more limited and locally-rooted approach that relies heavily on relations with local powerbrokers and preexisting groups and institutions including Somalia's clans. While Islamic State's leaders have also sought to establish cordial relations with local tribes in Syria, Iraq, Sinai, Libya, and other areas of operation, the organization has also been more willing to engage in mass acts of violence against opposition and recalcitrant tribes in a way that Al-Shabaab has largely avoided, perhaps because the latter is more constrained by preexisting social structures and codes of behavior despite its embrace of "Islamic" over ethnic or other forms of identity. In part, these differences in the approach to both governance and military action are tactical, but they are also ideological. Al-Shabaab, despite its adherence to revolutionary Islamism on the one hand, emerged in a sociopolitical environment of state collapse and in an arena where preexisting social identities continue to hold a particularly strong sway over individual as well as group identity. In order to thrive, Al-Shabaab's leaders and administrators have sought to shape these existing social structures to their benefit rather than uproot them entirely, taking a more gradual and *da'wa*-based approach to transform Somalia's clans into allies.

In comparison, Islamic State, though it has not attempted to entirely uproot local tribes and the clans within larger tribal structures and has indeed sought to forge partnerships with some where possible, was much more willing to use mass violence against local competitors and opponents. Islamic State, due in part to its size as an organization and much

more diverse membership including the presence of thousands and perhaps tens of thousands of foreign fighters, was also more willing to go against preexisting norms of social behavior because it was, in comparison to Al-Shabaab, less reliant on local populations and, as a result, was more able and willing to use a greater level of violence as part of its governing strategy.

Organization of the Chapter

This chapter examines different methods of *jihadi*-insurgent governance and territorial control through the case studies of Al-Shabaab and Islamic State, drawing on the literature on rebel/insurgent governance and use of violence and with particular focus on the strategic utilization and public performance of violence in its various forms as a power projection tool used to regulate local populations and combat enemies and outcompete local rivals. The important symbolic dimensions of the public implementation of the *hudūd* punishments by *jihadi*-insurgent rulers are of particular importance here with the public events in which they are carried out serving as venues for the claims-making performances discussed by Tilly, that is contentious gatherings in which social movement—here *jihadi*-insurgent—activists utilize a standardized set of repertoires as a means of dramatizing or “performing” their claims, repertoires which in turn can change as on-the-ground dynamics shift.⁹³⁰ By asserting their claims of authority over local populations and territory, *jihadi* rulers, like other rebels and social movement participants, are making defined collective claims against their enemies and competitors, who include both internationally-recognized governments in a given conflict zone as well as other non-state claimants, such as rival rebel/insurgent organizations.⁹³¹ These claims are made through ritualized performances—spectacles—of violence that frame *jihadi* rulers’ assertions of religiopolitical authority and territorial control.

⁹³⁰ Charles Tilly, *Contentious Performances*, particularly Chapters 1-3.

⁹³¹ On collective action, claims-making, and social movements, see Charles Tilly, *Social Movements, 1768-2004* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2004) and Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Revised and Updated Third Edition*.

The framing and use of symbolic violence for both Al-Shabaab and Islamic State are shaped by organizational ideology, chiefly a proclaimed call for and adherence to particular interpretations of Islamic law and jurisprudence which emphasize social regulation and control. There are, however, variations between the two *jihadi*-insurgent organizations with regard to the implementation and maintenance of insurgent territorial control through violence as well as in the level of the effectiveness of their respective governance projects over time. These variations are best understood as the result of differences in organizational structure, which is shaped by the social endowments available to each group, as well as the type of civil conflict and sociopolitical and territorial dynamics at play and the level of resonance and legitimacy each organization's ideological framing achieves in support of the proto-state-building project.

The chapter also analyzes the use of violence and the political economy of *jihadi*-insurgent implementation of *shari'a*, specifically the *hudūd*, and other forms of regulation in light of broader organizational strategic goals and interests. Revenue extraction is a key aspect of the process of *jihadi* proto-state formation because it not only funds the organization's military operations and sociopolitical activities but is also a necessary demonstration of its political and broader social claims to be the legitimate counter-authority to the government and its non-state rivals.⁹³² Claims to statehood status require an organizational demonstration of the capability and capacity to replicate or replace in some fashion the "apostate" state. The organization of the violence of control so that it publicly

⁹³² I take inspiration here from Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," in *Bringing the State Back In*, eds. Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 169-187. Tilly argues here that European state formation was driven by the need for material resources which in turn led to a shift to direct methods of governance and the creation of modern governing institutions. He famously remarks: "If protection rackets represent organized crime at its smoothest, then war risking and state making—quintessential protection rackets with the advantage of legitimacy—qualify as our largest examples of organized crime" (169). He notes also the specificities of the European case and the differences to Third World cases. Regarding Islamist actors in civil war environments, Aisha Ahmad demonstrates that there is a similar "extortion-protection agreement" in which the former is legitimized through a mutually-beneficial arrangement with local notables, merchants, and businesspeople. See Aisha Ahmad, *Jihad & Co.*, 19.

broadcasts *jihadi* rulers' claims to authority and territorial governance is integral to their overall campaign and comes at a key stage in the group's development as the insurgents begin to face the problem of how to govern and exert control over territories they capture. In making a claim against the legitimacy of both the internationally-recognized government and insurgent rivals, groups such as Al-Shabaab and Islamic State must demonstrate their ability to exercise some semblance of rule with, at the very least, the acquiescence, if not the active participation, of the local populace or a significant segment of it. Independent actors such as tribes and clans and other non-tribal armed groups have to either be suppressed or convinced not to actively resist *jihadi*-insurgent rule and this requires strategic decision-making and the simultaneous managing of the interests of both the local population and the rebels.

The public nature of the implementation of the *hudūd* is the key element to its demonstrative power as a symbol of the ruling organization's claim to authority and sole legitimate arbiter of violence. By carrying out strategic and controlled—as opposed to indiscriminate—violence, *jihadi* rulers are making a symbolic claim to the mantle of the Islamic sacred past from the time of the Prophet Muhammad through the “golden age” of the classical and medieval caliphates. These performances of violence and counter-state authority are highly ritualized and, I argue, implemented with different priorities than other types of *jihadi* violence such as the recorded executions of Western hostages discussed in Chapter Two, despite their outward similarities.

PART I

Theorizing Rebel/Insurgent Governance & Dimensions of Power

Social and economic endowments, as Weinstein notes, play a key role in shaping the organizational characteristics of rebel groups.⁹³³ Indeed, rebel groups are to a large degree shaped by the economic and social endowments on which they are able—or unable—to draw

⁹³³ Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion*, Introduction.

upon for support.⁹³⁴ The availability or lack of social and economic endowments influences the rebel group's decision-making with regard to recruitment, internal and external control mechanisms over its membership and local population respectively, use of violence, the type of governance or lack thereof its leaders choose to pursue, and its resilience when facing challenges such as battlefield losses or, conversely, impending victory over the government/enemy.⁹³⁵ How insurgent groups use violence is determined by the variation in the initial conditions facing its leaders.⁹³⁶ Group leadership and ideology and the importance of personalities within insurgent organizations are important dynamics but are "endogenous to the process of group formation" rather than independent variables.⁹³⁷

Recruitment is the lifeblood of any insurgency and requires the rebel organization's leaders to convince individuals from key segments of society or the outside world—the latter in the form of foreign fighters—to make the decision to risk their lives and livelihoods as well as those of their families for a particular cause and/or for other actual and perceived benefits. Insurgent leaders understand that potential recruits will make a cost-benefit analysis before deciding whether or not to join the organization and so they often provide selective incentives in order to recruit new participants.⁹³⁸ These incentives are themselves determined to a significant degree by the availability of economic and social endowments to insurgent leaders. Insurgent leaders seek to recruit new members in three main ways: (1) by offering exclusive benefits to participants, (2) by appealing to a shared sense of identity or set of values, or (3) by framing the act of participation as a "reward in itself," something that "contributes to a greater sense of personal efficacy," heroism, or sense of self-worth.⁹³⁹ The

⁹³⁴ Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion*, Introduction.

⁹³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 99.

types of recruits they attract are of key importance to insurgent leaders because not all potential recruits are equal in terms of their character, commitment, and long-term usefulness as participants (*investors*) in the insurgent group's project. The insurgent leadership seeks to minimize the number of lower quality *consumer* recruits who seek mostly self-aggrandizement rather than the group's victory per se by intelligence gathering on potential recruits' past behavior and background, having current members vouch for new recruits, and making the process of joining the group costly by implementing an apprenticeship or probationary period before full membership and its accompanying benefits are granted.⁹⁴⁰ High-commitment individuals will show their quality by responding to recruitment calls based on dedication to a long-term activist project rather than promised short-term material gains. In contrast, low-commitment individuals will instead be unlikely to accept deferred personal and material benefits or, instead, recruitment messaging based on shared identities and values with local populations.⁹⁴¹

In the cases of Islamist/*jihadi*-insurgent organizations such as Al-Shabaab and Islamic State, insurgent leaders and recruiters see the development of capable, durable, and sophisticated media arms as being integral to the process of further subsuming existing members and new recruits into the organization's long-term project. An example of how this process works in practice can be seen in the case of a young Al-Shabaab fighter, Ahmed 'Abdi 'Aziz 'Abdullah (b.1995/1996, 1416 *hijrī*), who carried out a suicide truck bombing during an insurgent attack on a Somali government militia base in the town of Bula Gaduud in the Lower Juba region on the night and early morning of September 2-3, 2017. Before being recruited into the group's selective "Martyrdom-seekers Brigade" (*Katibat al-Istishhādīyīn*), he first underwent basic military training upon joining in 2014-2015/1436 *hijrī* and then participated as a foot soldier in several "big battles" where he demonstrated his

⁹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 102-103.

⁹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 103.

commitment.⁹⁴² During one of the battles, Al-Shabaab's successful assault on and capture of the Kenyan military base at Kulbiyow in the Lower Juba region in January 2017, 'Abdullah was wounded and spent time recuperating.⁹⁴³ After he recovered, he joined the Martyrdom-seekers Brigade and was selected to carry out the bombing that opened the insurgent group's successful attack on the Bula Gaduud base.⁹⁴⁴

While insurgent groups which have access to rich economic endowments, such as abundant natural resources or external financial support tend to rely less on the local population and, as a result, commit higher levels of indiscriminate violence and attract more opportunistic recruits,⁹⁴⁵ organizations that emerge in resource-poor environments must rely to a much greater degree on local support and cooperation through social rather than economic endowments, that is endowments based on "shared beliefs, expectations, and norms that may exist (or be mobilized from within) certain ethnic, religious, cultural, or ideological groups."⁹⁴⁶ As a result, rebel organizations that rely on social endowments commit lower levels of indiscriminate violence so as not to alienate the local population or, worse, drive it to openly resist and fight the insurgents' presence and governance project.⁹⁴⁷ Recruitment by insurgent groups without rich economic endowments relies instead heavily on appeals to shared beliefs and values between the insurgents and the local population to provide support for an *activist* rebellion. This type of rebellion attracts highly committed recruitments willing

⁹⁴² Al-Shabaab film, *Wa Aghluz 'alayhim* (Be Harsh with Them), Mu'assasat al-Katā'ib, 13 November 2017. The title is taken from Qur'an 66:9 and 9:73 in which the Prophet Muhammad and early Muslims are commanded to "strive" (*jahida*) against the *kuffār* and *munāfiqīn* in a harsh manner to punish them for their transgressions.

⁹⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴⁵ Weinstein, 7, 9-10, and 20.

⁹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 7 and 20.

to take high risks and who are *investors* rather than *consumers* because they make substantial sacrifices in the interest of aiding and achieving success for the group's long-term project.⁹⁴⁸

Rebel governance, which is defined here as occurring when a rebel group controls territory and establishes rule-governed institutions to manage relations with and extract taxes from the local civilian population, varies in type and in particular with regard to the extent to which rebel rulers allow civilians to participate in the process.⁹⁴⁹ In addition to being composed of administrative institutions, rebel governance is also composed of the “practices of rule” adopted by rebel groups.⁹⁵⁰ The establishment of governing institutions by rebel organizations is not synonymous with effective governance⁹⁵¹ and, indeed, in the case of Islamist/*jihadi*-insurgent organizations with proto-state ambitions their emphasis on ideological purity as part of the organization's efforts to construct an idealized religious and moral state often wins out over the adoption of more effective and inclusive and democratic governing methods. Though they seek to win the support or at least the acquiescence of local communities, *jihadi*-insurgent proto-state administrators also frequently rely on strategic and selective violence as tool of social control and regulation.

Despite parallels between rebel governance and the origins of the nation-state, Mampilly disagrees that rebellions necessarily represent “an elementary form of state building” and instead argues that it is important to “recognize that certain strategies for generating consent by a political authority are transferable outside the sovereign nation-state framework *without* downplaying the modern state's integral role in cultivating and developing such practices (emphasis in the original).”⁹⁵² This raises the question of whether

⁹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 9-10 and 49.

⁹⁴⁹ Weinstein, 164-167.

⁹⁵⁰ Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers*, 4.

⁹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 17 and 62-65.

⁹⁵² Weinstein, 9. See also 34-40. He argues that rebel governance “is not state formation but rather the formation of a political order outside and against the state” (37) and that “rebel governments are not on the trajectory of embryonic states” because many, faced with the difficulty of “legitimizing their authority in the

jihadi-insurgencies can or should be viewed as projects in proto-state construction and bids to eventually and ideally replace existing governments. The role of ideology is a key dynamic at play in many insurgencies, but is it more important in *jihadi* bids to overthrow and take over the state? Does *jihadi* political theorizing, as outlined in Chapter One, influence *jihadi*-insurgents' views with regard to the implementation of governing structures?

Political culture—the symbols and rituals of political legitimacy drawn from cultural symbols recognized by the civilian population that the group seeks to rule—is a key component of rebel groups' framing of their legitimacy as a governing authority over the state and other rival non-state actors.⁹⁵³ This is certainly the case in the two main case studies examined in this chapter, Al-Shabaab and Islamic State. Ideology is articulated in insurgent organization and governance in both external and internal ways, influencing, for example, internal organizational and external governance and military strategies.⁹⁵⁴

Instead of seeing rebel groups as always being engaged in state-building projects, Mampilly proposes another way of classifying their political activities, as “counterstate sovereignty” projects.⁹⁵⁵ Rebels can also be “counterstate actors in that their competitive relationship with the state” is the main motivating factor that shapes their civil governance strategies. They take their sovereign status by adopting the “empirical functions of the state” as well as in their quest to claim legitimacy by “mimicking the trappings of the nation-state itself,” through which they make a claim for “juridical recognition within international

face of overwhelming odds” prefer instead to “retain their empirical gains without risking everything for a doomed transition to statehood” (37). Embryonic states do exist but “solely in situations where the incumbent state is no longer able or willing to pose a challenge to the nonstate political authority” (38). Despite this, rebels are at times capable of establishing durable institutions equal to those in weak states (38). The question of internationally-recognized sovereignty has also changed over time, making it more difficult for insurgent regimes to gain outside legitimacy while weak states that are unable to exert military control over their territory or deliver effective public services still enjoy recognition as states (38-39).

⁹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 56-57 and Zachariah Mampilly, “Performing the Nation-State: Rebel Governance and Symbolic Processes,” 88-89.

⁹⁵⁴ Zachariah Cherian Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers*, 78.

⁹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 61.

society.”⁹⁵⁶ In the case of *jihadi*-insurgent organizations such as Al-Shabaab and Islamic State which actively pursue proto-state projects, the rebel organizations in question find themselves in competition with and sometimes even constrained by the vestiges of the state they seek to take over and replace. In environments of state collapse or where the internationally-recognized state and government is very weak, such as in Somalia, *jihadi*-insurgent state-building projects such as Al-Shabaab’s are more easily able to compete with and even outcompete the state with regard to the projection of power and territorial control and even relative effectiveness or perceived effectiveness of governance and conflict management and resolution within society. In Syria, Islamic State stepped into the void left by several years of fighting between the Ba’th government and multiple rebel groups, seizing territory from both and implementing its vision of an ideal state at first through both a sustained projection of strength and power and, initially, the implementation of a relatively greater semblance of “law and order” through its interpretation of Islamic law. In Iraq, Islamic State literally took over, as will be discussed later in this chapter, social services and mechanisms once run by the Iraqi government and sought to reframe them as becoming more “Islamic” and “moral” under the insurgent organization’s control and through its use of Islamic law and jurisprudence than had been the case under the previous “apostate” regime. Al-Shabaab and Islamic State’s different governing strategies and mechanisms were shaped by the unique social and political dynamics on the ground in their respective arenas of operation and both groups have behaved both as counterstate as well as proto-state actors.

Political economy approaches alone, though useful in partially understanding , first, why some rebel groups set up civil administrations and, second, the division of rebellions into “opportunistic” and “activist” do not hold up, Mampilly argues, because rebel groups have a diverse array of revenue sources and often show considerable flexibility in managing and

⁹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

switching between them.⁹⁵⁷ Funding sources and availability cannot by themselves explain the variation in different governance outcomes under rebel rulers because, for example, it is problematic to speak generally of “external” sources of revenue as a single category because there is a difference between “external” funding provided by diaspora communities and “external” funding coming from foreign patrons or the sale of looted natural resources, the latter of which is associated with negative impacts on insurgent governance and relations with civilians.⁹⁵⁸ Additionally, many rebel groups also collect revenue through multiple streams and adjust as necessary.⁹⁵⁹

Similarly, ideological orientation alone is insufficient in predicting the preferences of the rebel leadership regarding relations with civilians, he argues.⁹⁶⁰ Both the political economy and ideological approaches tend to favor top-down analysis of rebels in which the preferences of insurgent leaders are prioritized and assume that rebel groups cannot change course at different stages and do not necessarily have to remain stagnant ideologically, operationally, or strategically.⁹⁶¹ Mampilly instead argues for an “interactive and multifaceted approach” that recognizes civil governance by insurgent groups is shaped by “a combination of the initial preferences of rebel leaders and the interaction of insurgent organizations with a variety of other social and political actors active during the conflict itself” and that governance is “an evolutionary process” that cannot be predicted by using only a single variable but which requires, rather, analysis of multiple variables and concurrent processes.⁹⁶² Rebel leaders are influenced and constrained in their decision-making

⁹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

⁹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁹⁶² *Ibid.*

throughout the conflict by the behavior of other actors including the state and rival non-state groups.⁹⁶³

Rebel leaders' preferences for civilian governance are shaped by the nature of the relationship between the state and society before the start of the rebellion and the ethnic composition and central strategic objective of the rebel group.⁹⁶⁴ Civilian demands of rebel rulers are shaped by the pre-conflict situation between the state and the local populace and rebels often find themselves accountable to meet a minimum level of service provision after their territorial takeover.⁹⁶⁵ While recognizing the importance of leadership preferences, Mampilly argues that variations in rebel civil governance occur as the situation on the ground during the conflict changes and rebel leaders face different sets of challenges including the maintenance of unified command and control structures, the actions of both the state and local civilians as well as other non-state actors including rival rebel groups, religious and civilian leaders, businessespeople, neighboring states, and international organizations and humanitarian agencies, changes in conflict intensity, and the existence or exacerbation of preexisting communal cleavages.⁹⁶⁶ Insurgents must win over local acquiescence or active support for their governing and military projects beyond simply focusing on the unpopular or insufficient aspects of the state in order to rally the locals behind their "distinct strategy of resistance against the preexisting order."⁹⁶⁷ Recruitment can be achieved both through coercive and non-coercive methods.⁹⁶⁸ Al-Shabaab, for example, utilizes both conscription of local youth as well as voluntarily recruitment from domestic and foreign cadres as well as through strategic alliances with local sub-clans and clans whose leaders may then provide the

⁹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 66-73.

⁹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 16 and 79-82.

⁹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 236-237.

jihadi-insurgent group with clan militiamen or other forms of military, financial, sociopolitical, and symbolic support.

Territorial control fluctuates during the conflict and can be classified generally into territories (1) under direct rebel control, (2) contested between the state and the rebel group and/or other rebel groups, and (3) controlled by the state.⁹⁶⁹ Differences in these types of territorial status and control in turn impacts the governance projects of both the state as well as the insurgent leadership, both of whom make strategic decisions with regard to the nature and depth of their relationship and investment in certain areas and with certain groups.⁹⁷⁰ Insurgents must balance their desire to project governing authority and power with the need to maintain operational flexibility so as to react to “the realities of a violent engagement where the ability to expediently abandon a position in the face of strategic shifts is essential to the survival of the group itself.”⁹⁷¹

Al-Shabaab, for example, withdrew from major urban centers including Mogadishu, Kismaayo, Marka, Baraawe, and Baidoa between 2011 and 2014 rather than expending precious human, financial, and military resources on pointless last-ditch stands against superior AMISOM and Somali government and militia forces and instead refocused its governance and military activities to towns and villages where its enemies were less able to penetrate or maintain consistent control—all while leaving covert cells in place in the cities and major towns from which it had outwardly withdrawn. Al-Shabaab also developed ways in which it could exert influence over “lost” territories indirectly by controlling trade routes and using pressure on merchants and other key local notables and classes in urban centers it had withdrawn from.⁹⁷²

⁹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 59-60.

⁹⁷² In Mogadishu’s central Bakaara Market, for example, Al-Shabaab continued to exert influence over local merchants and extort monetary payments ranging from \$100 up to \$30,000 USD as of July 2017 according to a

In contrast, Islamic State's leadership, which claimed to have formed a new "caliphate," invested more heavily in trying to retain major centers of importance to its projection of authority such as the cities of Mosul and Raqqa, even to the detriment of its human, military, and media resources, because its claims to statehood were tied to expansive territorial control. Islamic State, in short, was more constrained by the rigid grandiosity of its political and territorial claims; it cannot be a caliphate without controlling significant amounts of territory while also being rejected by the vast majority of the world's Sunni Muslims, whom it claims to lead and represent. The organization, in contrast to Al-Shabaab, also had access to greater economic endowments and a vastly larger pool of human resources and particularly foreign fighters from outside many of the regions it operated in within Syria, Iraq, Sinai, Libya, and other areas, which made Islamic State less reliant on local populations and more able and willing to use a greater level of violence as part of its operations while Al-Shabaab has remained more locally and regionally rooted and more constrained in its use of violence.

Civil wars, defined as conflicts between a sovereign state authority and parties within its territory at the beginning of the fighting, though they are often seen as cycles of continuous violence, often include periods of "tense calm" as active fighting moves elsewhere and locals then try to regain a sense of normalcy to their daily lives.⁹⁷³ Civilian populations living in insurgent-controlled territories are impacted in their day-to-day activities not only by rebel violence but also through any structures of governance, including civil administrations, established by rebel leaders.⁹⁷⁴ The government and its rebel foes see in civilians both an opportunity and a challenge because the population can potentially

Voice of America investigation. See <https://twitter.com/HarunMaruf/status/888841766417444865>, 22 July 2017, last accessed 7 November 2017.

⁹⁷³ Arjona, Kasfir, and Mampilly, "Introduction," in *Rebel Governance in Civil War*, 2.

⁹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

provide much needed material and human resources as well as financial support and refuge but can also betray one side and align themselves with the other.⁹⁷⁵ Civilians have several options in civil war/insurgency environments and their preferences can shift over the duration of the conflict as dynamics on the ground change: (1) they can side with the state/government; (2) they can side with the insurgent group or a specific group in environments where multiple rebel organizations exist, such as in Syria; (3) they can side with neither the government nor the rebels but instead maintain a flexible position between the two sides with some local notables or groups seeking to establish connections to both sides, as is the case with some sub-clans/clans in Somalia between the internationally-recognized federal and regional state governments and Al-Shabaab. Civilians may also decide to not actively support or join either the government or the rebel group but still acquiesce and not actively resist its rule and territorial control.⁹⁷⁶ Insurgent organizations, which are usually in a weaker position than the government at the start of a conflict, have a vested interest in winning civilian acquiescence if not active support by entering into dialogue with local populations or nodes of power within local communities such as clan or tribal elders and religious leaders. In addition to material incentives, insurgent leaders also attempt to harness symbolic power in the form of ritual practices and ceremonies and other cultural traditions that may influence the local population to cooperate with their governance project.⁹⁷⁷

Like incumbent governments, insurgent governing regimes are engaged in a multi-directional communicative relationship with the civilian population and they seek to use symbolic processes that include both referential and condensation symbols for a variety of

⁹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

different purposes.⁹⁷⁸ These include recruitment, maintaining organizational in-group solidarity and cohesion, broadening their domestic support, winning external support, and combating attempts by its enemies—both by the government and rival rebel groups—to successfully embed their own narrative framing, messaging, and symbolic claims of authority.⁹⁷⁹ The “paradigmatic symbolic model” for insurgent governance, Mampilly argues, is not the non-violent social movement but rather the nation-state, an entity which, like the insurgents, claims sole legitimacy to exercise power and utilize violence to maintain territorial control and order.⁹⁸⁰ The interactions between the rulers and the ruled are a set of “performative acts cued by symbolic markers” taken from the nation-state, symbols that “reinforce a specific form of authority relationship” between the governing regime and those being governed.⁹⁸¹

Insurgent rulers may use different framing when attempting to reach different domestic audiences, taking into account the social context in which their deployment of symbolic power will occur.⁹⁸² Their first priority is usually their core membership and constituency, which they motivate by getting them to “define a new collectivity as the basis for insurgent action” by binding individual members and supporters, who originally represent a disparate array of backgrounds and agendas, into a unified cause.⁹⁸³ Outside of their existing membership and core set of supporters, insurgent rulers must also consider how their messaging and symbolic appeals will be received by different segments of the rest of the population including potential recruits and supporters as well as potential opponents who can

⁹⁷⁸ Referential symbols represent the coercive governing power of the rebel political authority while condensation symbols seek to strengthen the local civilian population’s identification with the rebel group. These are discussed in more detail in Chapter Four. See Zachariah Mampilly, “Performing the Nation-State: Rebel Governance and Symbolic Processes,” 79.

⁹⁷⁹ Mampilly, “Performing the Nation-State: Rebel Governance and Symbolic Processes,” 82.

⁹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸² *Ibid.*, 85.

⁹⁸³ *Ibid.*

mount challenges to their territorial control.⁹⁸⁴ Condensation symbols are particularly useful to maintain the loyalty and unity of the core constituency as well as attract potential recruits, while referential symbols, such as public displays of military power, are used to signal to potential opponents the capabilities of the insurgent regime as well as the scope of its claim to authority and territorial control.⁹⁸⁵ Outside of insurgent-ruled territory, other audiences include diaspora communities as well as transnational actors without ethnic or family ties to the arena of conflict.⁹⁸⁶

Rebel governing regimes do not exist in a vacuum but rely on a complex set of relationships and negotiations between the insurgents and societal groups and nodes of power such as religious leaders and sets of activists. The relationships between rebel groups and these nodes of power within society are multi-directional and involve dialogues in which each party seeks to further its own set of goals. In interacting with each other, the participants are also changed and their collective interests can converge and shift throughout the period of the alliance.⁹⁸⁷ Al-Shabaab and Islamic State, despite their claims to represent a thoroughly “Islamic” political vision and governing project, engage with independent local and regional nodes of power such as clan and tribal leaders and other non-state armed factions and, throughout their existence, have found it necessary to enter into negotiations with them. These interactions can result in alliances, *modus vivendi* understandings, or hostilities between the parties. *Jihadi*-insurgent leaders, for example, seek to gain clan or tribal support while clan/tribal elders pursue their own interests by supporting, existing alongside, or opposing the rebels or the central state. Both are also shaped by their

⁹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸⁷ Shane Joshua Barter, “The Rebel State in Society.” Barter draws upon Joel Migdal’s concept of “state in society” in which the state/government is understood as not being independent from but rather entangled with and shaped by societal forces and dynamics. State power is the result of its interactions with the society over which it governs and must be understood through this lens. See Joel S. Migdal, *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

interactions. Rebel rulers too must take into account the power of the clans/tribes and local notables and power structures and they must reevaluate what type of relationship with the local civilian population is in their best interest. Local notables are also adept at playing the state and the rebels against one another, as happens in Somalia with many clan leaders who maintain relations with both sides in order to further clan and personal interests.

The Struggle to Build *Jihadi* Proto-States

The rapid geographic expansion of Al-Shabaab and Islamic State presented the leaderships of both *jihadi*-insurgent organizations with a major challenge: how to institute some form of governance and population control over newly-acquired territories. The implementation of organizational control over these areas, their populations, revenue sources, and nodes of independent sociopolitical power was vital for several reasons. Firstly, the insurgents needed to establish a relatively stable level of security over conquered areas so that they could then focus military attention on the frontline fighting forces as they tried to further expand rebel-held areas. This was particularly important for Al-Shabaab because of its limited manpower, which has probably never far exceeded 8-10,000 total members. Insurgent leaders had to set up governing administrations and domestic security forces and intelligence apparatuses as well as mechanisms to communicate and interact with local notables such as clan and tribal leaders and influential religious scholars and other potential critics and rivals.

Secondly, *jihadi*-insurgent organizations are engaged not only in the process of military expansion but also a political project in which they are contesting the legitimacy of internationally-recognized state governments as well as rival non-state actors present in the same territories. Islamic State, for example, faced a large number of other non-state armed factions as it began its state-building project including powerful Islamist rivals such as Jabhat al-Nusra and Ahrar al-Sham. In Somalia, Al-Shabaab faced its sometimes-ally and

sometimes-rival Hizbul Islam, a coalition of Islamist clan-based rebel militias under the nominal leadership of Hasan Dahir Aweys. In other areas that Al-Shabaab began to capture in 2008 there were other pre-existing, powerful sociopolitical and armed forces including clan militias. The presence of these independent potential challengers required the insurgent leadership to develop a mechanism through which to demonstrate their organization's power while also seeking to win over the support or acquiescence of these other individuals and groups.

Thirdly, because *jihadi*-insurgents are engaged in claims against the sitting government over the nature and direction of the state, it is symbolically and strategically important for them to project the image of governance even if their actual capability and capacity in implementing it remains rudimentary. The image of Islamically-legitimate and capable governance is broadcast not only domestically but also internationally through the *jihadi*-insurgent organization's media operations via messaging and propaganda. In places such as Somalia that have experienced long periods of predation by rival warlords, *jihadi*-insurgent organizations were able to win over the support of locals, at least temporarily, by defeating these groups and monopolizing the use of violence and streamlining the collection of revenue through taxation, extortion, and other means. Much like the state governments they seek to supplant, *jihadi* rulers recognize that it is to their advantage to try and embed themselves within local communities and power structures, developing partnerships with key independent local nodes of power, so as to achieve a smoother transition to insurgent territorial control. By negotiating with key local powerbrokers, insurgent leaders are able to implement security over conquered territories in a more economic fashion and thus free up human, financial, and military resources for the battlefield.

Should *jihadi*-insurgent territorial administrations be seen, then, necessarily as elementary state-building projects or are they something else, projects that are using

recognized strategies of generating consent, as Mampilly puts it, without necessarily trying to exactly replicate the modern nation-state? There are arguments to be made for both possibilities. Historically, there have been relatively few *jihadi* organizations that have actually both succeeded in capturing significant amounts of territory and then attempted to develop civil administrative mechanisms in parallel with their military ones in order to take a try at governance. In many ways, certainly rhetorically, *jihadis* reject outright many aspects of the secular nation-state and propose to replace it with an “Islamic” state model, a model which often remains loosely defined and, in essence, an alternative vision of the state that is developed almost entirely in opposition to *jihadi* perceptions of the secular nation-state. But, as discussed in Chapter One, *jihadis* find themselves in a bind when it comes to ideologically and organizationally challenging the dominant nation-state model, often mimicking it in terms of structure, understandings of sociopolitical authority between the governing and the governed, use of symbolism and identity construction, and views on the role of an idealized Muslim superstate (neo-caliphate) within the global system. Linguistically, *jihadi* rulers are clear about their aspirations for statehood regardless of whether they use “emirate” (*imāra*) or “caliphate” (*khilāfa*) to describe their envisioned, ideal political model, though their implementation remains middling to rudimentary at best. The goal, however, to compete with the nation-state is an unmistakable and central part of *jihadi*-insurgent thought and, in cases including that of Al-Shabaab and Islamic State, as important a priority as winning victories on the battlefield. In essence, the construction of an alternative state model is, in *jihadi* rebel thought, the sought-after endgame for a military campaign. The central purpose of the use of armed force is to create a new political and moral order.

The definition of establishing territorial control, at its most basic level, is quite low for *jihadis*, who use the term “emirate” in a highly scalable manner even if they control very little to no territory or exert a tenuous level of control over it, such as in the case of the so-

called Islamic Emirate of the Caucasus.⁹⁸⁸ Other *jihadi*-insurgent groups implemented governance of some sort over urban centers but most ruled over sparsely-populated, barren landscapes, as was the case with the coalition of *jihadi* organizations that controlled northern Mali for much of 2012 with the exception of a few major cities and towns such as Timbuktu and Gao. In contrast, the Afghan Taliban, Al-Shabaab, and Islamic State implemented more extensive civil as well as military administrations that included offices and departments for taxation and other forms of revenue extraction and charity distribution, religious affairs, judicial affairs, *da'wa* and media, and relations with locals.

The symbolic power of “emirate” and *amīr* as organizing structures is important because it connects modern organizations with the sacred past and, through the use of specific terminology, imbues contemporary militants with a sense of (a)historical legitimacy. This scalability of their state-building project enables *jihadis* to claim that every action they take, however minor, is a part of their ultimate territorial political project of raising a new “caliphate” in the modern world.⁹⁸⁹ Historically, *jihadi* experiments with governance have ranged the gamut between very limited territorial control, such as the few neighborhoods claimed by the Egyptian Gama‘at al-Islāmīya in the Imbaba area of Cairo, to widespread territories such as Afghan Taliban control of large parts of Afghanistan during the 1990s.⁹⁹⁰ Not all *jihadi* rulers established civil institutions as part of their bid to exert territorial control, with some relying solely on military force and coercion while others have used a mix of military force in tandem with civil administration and negotiations with local powerbrokers and potential challengers to achieve a negotiated system of insurgent territorial control.

⁹⁸⁸ Lia, “Understanding Jihadi Proto-States.”

⁹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹⁰ Lia includes a useful table of historical *jihadi* attempts at state-building beginning in the 1980s and includes information about the extent of their territorial control (or lack thereof) as well as whether or not they included the formation of civil institutions.

Given their interest in state-building then, why do *jihadi*-insurgents prove so unwilling to adapt their behavior in the interest of gaining more domestic and international support and recognition? Lia argues that rivalries between rebel actors and the dependence of *jihadi* organizations on external constituencies may together explain *jihadi* proto-state intransigence.⁹⁹¹ The centrality of ideology to the group identity of a *jihadi* organization, even one seeking to engage in insurgent state-building, may, in short, prevent the organization from compromising and adopting more pragmatic, “non-ideological” solutions for fear of losing key external constituencies wedded to uncompromising ideologies and who are also able to select which arena of “*jihad*” they support.⁹⁹² Unlike diaspora support, foreign fighter and other external support unrelated to shared ethnic or national identities is more flexible and less reliable, causing *jihadi* proto-states that are more reliant on external support to be less flexible for fear that they may lose this support if they compromise ideologically.⁹⁹³ Islamic State’s dedication to ideological purity, as demonstrated by its thoroughly uncompromising interpretation of Islam, is a prime example, Lia argues, of a *jihadi* proto-state seeking to outbid its *jihadi* rivals by demonstrating its uncompromising dedication to radicalism that in turn attracts a greater level of support from a transnational support base whose members adhere to a hardline ideological agenda instead of pragmatism.⁹⁹⁴ Certain *jihadi*-insurgent organizations, including Islamic State, are also more capable of disregarding local populations because of their greater economic and social/human resources endowments, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

Jihadi-insurgents, by seeking to attract external support and courting more rigid and puritanical currents within Sunni Islam, bind themselves to a particularly radical worldview, a

⁹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

worldview they may find hard to adjust, even if strategically beneficial, because they are often too heavily reliant on the external support of this radical base. In the case of organizations such as Islamic State, the group's senior leadership may also be wedded to extreme radicalism and unwilling to compromise because of its own ideological commitments whereas Al-Shabaab's leadership has been relatively more willing to engage in some compromise, despite its radicalism, because it is more reliant on social endowments and establishing working relationships or *modus vivendi* agreements with local social groups and power structures such as Somalia's clans.

As is the case in many puritan movements, internal cleavages can develop over the question of whether the organization, despite its ideological rigidity, is radical enough and even more ideologically puritanical factions can emerge.⁹⁹⁵ *Jihadi* rulers may also wed themselves to external causes closer to home in a bid to recruit foreign fighters and fundraise, as is the case with Al-Shabaab and its Kenyan operational strategy that seeks to attract Kenyan Muslims who are angry at government persecution including torture and extrajudicial killings of controversial but popular preachers. This does not mean, however, that the same organization may not also demonstrate operational and even ideological, in practice, flexibility in the interest of furthering its strategic objectives. While Islamic State remains at the most puritanical end of the *jihadi* spectrum, other Sunni *jihadi* groups have shown varying degrees of flexibility when it comes to certain issues including sectarian relations and interactions with local powerbrokers. Al-Shabaab, for example, has not waged full-scale

⁹⁹⁵ Islamic State has reportedly seen the emergence of an even more puritanical fringe within its ranks, the so-called "Hazimi current," which disagrees with other Sunni *jihadi* and "*jihadi* Salafi" actors that ignorance is a defense against *takfir*. These split has reportedly led to power struggles within the organization. On the split, see Middle East Monitor, "ISIS Executes One of Its Sharia Judges," 10 March 2015, at <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20150310-isis-executes-one-of-its-sharia-judges/>, last accessed 1 September 2017; Tore Hamming, "The Extremist Wing of the Islamic State," *Jihadica*, 9 June 2016, at <http://www.jihadica.com/the-extremist-wing-of-the-islamic-state/>, last accessed 1 September 2017; and Hassan Hassan, "The Sectarianism of the Islamic State: Ideological Roots and Political Context," (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), Paper, 13 June 2016, at <http://carnegieendowment.org/2016/06/13/sectarianism-of-islamic-state-ideological-roots-and-political-context-pub-63746>, last accessed 1 September 2017.

wars against clans that do not actively support it, though the group has assassinated some enemy clan elders and clashed with clan militiamen on occasion. The Afghan Taliban and even Al-Qaeda Central have also not sought total war with Shi‘i or Ahmadi sects even though they view them as theologically deviant (*firaq munḥarifa*) and have instead limited hostilities to cases where groups from those sects deliberately target the *jihadis*. In contrast, Islamic State has killed hundreds of tribesmen from those tribal groups that have opposed it in Syria and Iraq and continues to espouse a virulently sectarian ideological program toward all Shi‘i, ‘Alawi, and other “deviant” sects who, they allege, falsely claim to be Muslims. There is a scale of ideological rigidity with Sunni *jihadi*-insurgent/proto-state organizations, with some demonstrating a greater willingness to engage in compromise, even if limited, in the interest of their state-building projects.

Rebel violence is best understood not simply as the outcome of a conflict but rather as the product of a social process, of a linkage of different events and experiences of individual and small-group actors that affects future decision-making and actions.⁹⁹⁶ It can be produced both unilaterally by a single actor or bilaterally and multilaterally by competing actors who can include one or more insurgent groups and the state as well as segments of the civilian population.⁹⁹⁷ The framing of violence as “legitimate” is a key part of the territorial and political challenges facing *jihadi*-insurgent organizations pursuing proto-state projects because it is through the strategic use of violence that the organization’s ideological objectives are linked to its sociopolitical goals and with which its entire state-building project is underpinned.

The strategic dimension of the utilization of violence by *jihadi*-insurgent rulers is also key to understanding how violence is used as a governing tool for social and territorial control. The classification of violence into “instrumental” or “selective” versus

⁹⁹⁶ Kalyvas, 21-22.

⁹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 28-29.

“indiscriminate” violence is supposed to differentiate between nihilistic or “expressive” violence, such as sectarian or identitarian violence, and supposedly more strategic uses of violence.⁹⁹⁸ It is in the interest of insurgent rulers to win over support by gaining the loyalties of the local population or at least key segments/sub-groups within it rather than coercing obedience through repression. The fluctuating and multilateral nature of civil war conflicts, such as those in Somalia, Syria, and Iraq, “turns the permanent and stable acquisition of loyalty into a very difficult enterprise” as the effective use of violence begins to outperform the provision of benefits in steering individuals’ actions.⁹⁹⁹ Implementing control over territory further enhances the likelihood and effectiveness of collaboration between locals and insurgent rulers, enabling the latter to establish an environment conducive to bids for civilian support and the strategic and effective implementation of violence.¹⁰⁰⁰ The longer a period of territorial and social control, the more socialization occurs wherein locals come to see insurgent rulers as legitimate authorities and joining them as “a natural course of action.”¹⁰⁰¹

Selective violence is a form of instrumental violence that attempts to distinguish between individual versus collective guilt and direct violence accordingly.¹⁰⁰² The implementation of violence as a method of maintaining social order (law and order) against specific individuals accused and convicted of crimes or other actions deemed disruptive is an example of selective violence and selective targeting. Selective violence is undertaken in a “joint process” that involves communication and interaction between the political (here the insurgent) actor and individuals within the civilian population over which it rules.¹⁰⁰³

Insurgent rulers rely on the ability to collect detailed information about locals from locals in

⁹⁹⁸ Kalyvas, 23-27.

⁹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 114.

¹⁰⁰⁰ On the relationship between territorial control and collaboration, see *Ibid.*, 118-124.

¹⁰⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 125.

¹⁰⁰² *Ibid.*, 142.

¹⁰⁰³ *Ibid.*, 173-174.

order to direct their violence toward parties they view as being guilty of various infractions or otherwise threatening the insurgent order.¹⁰⁰⁴ This is achieved by political and malicious *denunciation*, the latter being information provided by locals against other locals (consensual provision) that seeks primarily to settle a personal, private score rather than a genuine report against a criminal or individual contravening insurgent edicts.¹⁰⁰⁵ Though often ignored or overshadowed by the perpetrators of violence, locals are intimately involved in the social process of implementing violence through the act of denunciation, which in turn may be institutionalized along specific procedural lines.¹⁰⁰⁶

Collective targeting occurs when an entire group of people is punished for the transgressions of the group regardless of the individual guilt or innocence of its individual members—in other words, guilt by association.¹⁰⁰⁷ An example of this is Islamic State’s mass executions of male members of tribes or subsidiary clans within them deemed to be hostile to the organization’s religiopolitical project regardless of whether each individual killed was actively engaged in actions against the insurgents. Random, indiscriminate violence is dangerous in a civil war situation because individuals have options for defection, which in turn may damage the fortunes of the perpetrators.¹⁰⁰⁸ Civilians are “reward-sensitive” rational actors who seek to survive conflict situations and chose paths which they believe will produce results to their greatest benefit.¹⁰⁰⁹

The underlying goal of *jihadi*-insurgents is to achieve deterrence by convincing the local population that the ruling authority is capable of effectively monitoring their behavior

¹⁰⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 174.

¹⁰⁰⁵ *Ibid.* and 176. For a detailed discussion of “denunciation,” see *Ibid.*, 176-181.

¹⁰⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 180-181.

¹⁰⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 142.

¹⁰⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 143-144. For more on the use of indiscriminate violence, see Chapter 6. My focus in this chapter is primarily on selective rather than indiscriminate violence, though I discuss potential strategic aims behind selective incidents of “indiscriminate” violence, particularly by Islamic State.

¹⁰⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 196.

and implementing sanctions against those it deems to be harming the desired social and political order with reasonable accuracy—that is, they need to “cultivate a *perception of credible selection*” (emphasis in the original).¹⁰¹⁰ This does not require perfect accuracy in determining appropriate targeting but rather getting it “right” more often than getting it “wrong” so as to project an image that the ruling group is able to garner accurate intelligence and act on it accordingly.¹⁰¹¹ In the two central case studies, *jihadi*-insurgent rulers attempt to lessen the likelihood of false denunciation, which is sometimes but not always necessarily synonymous with malicious denunciation, by publicly rebuking and punishing individuals who bear false witness (*shāhid zūr*) against their neighbors.

Conflicts and particularly civil wars often appear at the local level to be driven more by local issues than the “master cleavage” and narratives that drive the conflict at the national or macro level.¹⁰¹² This can be partly explained by the fact that many locals seek to take advantage of the broader conflict to settle individual scores at the local level even though these local disputes may have only a tenuous, if any, connection to the conflict’s grand narratives.¹⁰¹³ By understanding violence as a joint process, as Kalyvas argues, the linkages between “local” and “national” violence and between personal and group/elite violence highlight the transformative effect of civil war as a social process.¹⁰¹⁴

The Spectacle of Public Violence: Ritualizing the Implementation of ‘Law’

Violence is a tool utilized by *jihadi*-insurgent organizations as part of a broader repertoire of political behavior and strategy of territorial control and administration, the latter of which can be understood, as discussed earlier in this chapter, as a form of governance. In order to harness the symbolic and demonstrative power of violence as a tool for social control

¹⁰¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 190.

¹⁰¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹² *Ibid.*, 364.

¹⁰¹³ *Ibid.*, 364-365.

¹⁰¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 365-366.

it must be performed in public where it serves as a clear representation of the *jihadi* ruler's claim to legitimate governing authority. The primary areas of concern for *jihadi*-insurgent rulers are the implementation of the *hudūd* penal code and the law of rebellion (*aḥkām al-bughāt*), the first because of the necessity of regulating the civilian population and members of the *jihadi*-insurgent organization itself and the second to prevent violent resistance and insurrection. Like state governments, *jihadi*-insurgent rulers seek to monopolize public violence as a part of their claim to represent the sole legitimate authority.¹⁰¹⁵ Historically, Islamic state authorities sought to extend their power over “semi-public” spaces such as markets because of their centrality to social life and centers of public discourse and economic exchange.¹⁰¹⁶ Markets, public squares, and other communal spaces were also the sites of the implementation of punishments on offenders, who served as unmistakable examples of the state's power of regulation.¹⁰¹⁷

The core aim of the violence of control is to implement demonstrative violence in an organized, regimented, and ritualized manner so as to increase its symbolic power rather than simply administer justice.¹⁰¹⁸ Historically, Muslim jurists viewed the *hudūd* punishments as a form of ritual, the recognition and carrying out of the “rights of God” (*ḥuqūq Allah*) on those who violate the law.¹⁰¹⁹ The public implementation of punishment (*iqāmat al-hudūd*) on criminals was viewed by medieval authorities as a “conflict-solving public performance, which by force of deterrence (*zajr*) prevents further offences and thus guarantees social

¹⁰¹⁵ For a discussion of the conceptualizations of the “public sphere” and “public” versus “semi-public” and “private” spaces between modern Western societies and premodern and medieval Islamic societies, see Christian Lange and Maribel Fierro, eds., *Public Violence in Islamic Societies: Power, Discipline, and the Construction of the Public Sphere, 7th-19th Centuries C.E.* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 3-5.

¹⁰¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

¹⁰¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁰¹⁸ Robert Gleave, “Public Violence, State Legitimacy: The *Iqāmat al-ḥudūd* and the Sacred State,” in Lange and Fierro, *Public Violence in Islamic Societies*, 256.

¹⁰¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 9 and Jonathan Brown, “Stoning and Hand Cutting—Understanding the Hudud and the Shariah in Islam,” 12 January 2017, at <https://yaqeeninstitute.org/en/jonathan-brown/stoning-and-hand-cutting-understanding-the-hudud-and-the-shariah-in-islam/>, last accessed 3 September 2017.

cohesion.”¹⁰²⁰ The main goal is thus the maintenance of social order and the prevention of communal discord by cracking down on behavior that is deemed to be harmful to public order.

The body of the criminal—or of the individual who is deemed by the ruling authority to have violated the social order—is a political object and the physical drawing board on which the ruler demonstrates power over the ruled. The body, according to Foucault, is “directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold on upon it [...] This political investment of the body is bound up, in accordance with complex reciprocal relations...”¹⁰²¹ The body of the condemned serves as a prop in the governing authority’s ritual of punishment and maintenance of social control. The structure of the ritual of punishment in turn sanctifies its symbolic power and meaning by imbuing it with religious meaning and justifying and narrating it with selective symbolic vocabulary such as Islamic legal, historical, and eschatological terminology.¹⁰²²

Historically, Muslim jurists generally took a cautious view with regard to the overly-rigorous and stringent implementation of the *ḥudūd* and sought to regulate the carrying out of punishments by highlighting the high evidentiary requirements, the suspension of punishment due to doubt (*shuba*) regarding the guilt of the accused, and the necessity of a legitimate ruling authority.¹⁰²³ Jurists and judges historically sought to be as merciful as possible when it came to exercising legal authority over those accused of committing a *ḥudūd* offense, basing this on various *aḥādīth* in which the Prophet Muhammad is reported to have urged his followers to be sparing in their application of the punishments in the interest of justice

¹⁰²⁰ Lange and Fierro, 9.

¹⁰²¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 2012), 66.

¹⁰²² Lange and Fierro, *Public Violence in Islamic Societies*, 10-12.

¹⁰²³ Gleave, “Public Violence, State Legitimacy,” 256.

because it is better to “err in mercy than to err in punishment.”¹⁰²⁴ The *shari‘a* historically was seen not as a code of law but rather as the “idea and ideal” of God’s law based on the Qur’an, Prophetic *Sunna*, *ijmā‘* (according to Sunnis), and *fiqh* (educated but fallible jurisprudence based upon legal deduction by the jurists throughout history).¹⁰²⁵

Modern *jihadi*-insurgent rulers, in contrast, view the *hudūd* primarily as a reified tool of social control, a means to achieve exemplary deterrence of “bad” behavior, and have transformed *shari‘a* into a static and rigid code of behavioral regulation rather than a dynamic lived embodiment of the Islamic moral ideal. The *hudūd*, in other words, is detached from the realm of “God’s rights” as embodied in the fulfilment of His law and vulgarized into a worldly set of codes designed to further *jihadi* statecraft ambitions, albeit while retaining the same religio-ideological claims about the implementation of the “set” punishments. The *hudūd* offenses include *zinā* (fornication), *sariqa* (theft), *qadhf* (slander, defamation including bearing false witness), *shurub al-khamr* (consumption of alcohol), *hirāba* (a broad and contested concept that encompasses those who “war against God and His messenger” and highway brigandage), and *mufsid/fasād fi-l-Ard* (“spreading corruption in the land”, which is another broad concept with debated meanings).¹⁰²⁶ Murder, accidental killings, and physical injuries are considered private offenses against individuals and families and are not part of the *hudūd*, but the verdicts and punishments for the offenders have historically been overseen by the state.¹⁰²⁷ While they have dramatically recast the idea of punishment for offenses “against God,” modern *jihadis* often still maintain a close abidance to other aspects of the historical legal code including the variations in punishment for different offenders found

¹⁰²⁴ Jonathan Brown, “Stoning and Hand Cutting.”

¹⁰²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰²⁶ For a detailed overview of the punishments and offenses historically see *Ibid.*; Walter Young, *Stoning and Hand-amputation: The Pre-Islamic Origins of the Hadd Penalties for Zinā and Sariqa*, M.A. thesis, McGill University, 2005; and Rudolph Peters, *Crime and Punishment in Islamic Law: Theory and Practice from the Sixteenth to the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹⁰²⁷ Jonathan Brown, “Stoning and Hand Cutting.”

guilty of crimes like *zinā* (married versus unmarried; *muḥsin/ghayr muḥsin*) and theft (thieves who meet or do not meet the minimum financial level or *niṣāb* regarding the stolen property for the *ḥudūd*).

Historically Muslim state authorities also implemented discretionary (*taʿzīr*) punishments for crimes not covered under the *ḥudūd* penal codes with punishments for the former not being permitted to reach the equivalent punishment for a comparable *ḥudūd* offense.¹⁰²⁸ This has continued to the present day with Islamists and specifically *jihadi*-insurgents who have sought to establish territorial control and governance. The modern groups, however, do not try to avoid but instead conduct invasive investigations (*tajassus*) to reveal offenses done in private and seek to regulate those as well through public punishment. This include acts of *zinā* such as adultery and homosexual sex (*faʿalat qawm Lūt, ʿamal qawm Lūt*).

The symbolic power of public punishment comes from its extraordinary and sensational nature—the performance of punishment is meant to be viewed and consumed publicly, not privately.¹⁰²⁹ The presence of scores or even hundreds or thousands of witnesses to the violence enacted on the bodies of the criminals transform punishment into stark reminders of the ruling authority’s claim to be the sole legitimate purveyor of violence. Indeed, to achieve the epitome of its symbolism and utility as a means of social regulation and control, the violence of control must be implemented in public in front of the masses. Like historical instances of “mob justice” and lynching, public punishment by *jihadi*-

¹⁰²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰²⁹ I draw here upon several excellent studies about the symbolic elements of extrajudicial punishment (“lynching”), though I extend their general observations and arguments to include not only extralegal and infrequent examples of “mob justice” but also instances of the revolutionary and, with regard to my two main case studies, *jihadi*-insurgent, public punishment of accused criminals. Similar to lynchings in the United States, which gained their symbolic power through the participation of mass groups of spectators flagrantly disobeying the letter of the law while still claiming to be carrying out justice and often with the acquiescence of state authorities, *jihadi*-insurgent public rituals of punishment rely on the participation, even if passive, of the crowds viewing them to achieve the height of their symbolic power and utility as a tool for social regulation and control.

insurgents is performative and ritualized, following regular though not necessarily formalized patterns of implementation.¹⁰³⁰ The publicness of the violence does not end with the implementation of the punishment but continues in the aftermath through speeches or other ideological exhortations and, in the case of capital punishment, the public display and potential abuse of the body of the executed.¹⁰³¹ The performance of violence is aimed not only at the subjugated target audience(s) but also to the dominant one by clearly

¹⁰³⁰ For studies on historical practices of public punishment and particularly execution as well as death as a public spectacle, see Sean Anthony, *Crucifixion and Death as Spectacle: Umayyad Crucifixion in its Late Antique Context* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 2014); Daniel A. Cohen, "In Defense of the Gallows: Justification of Capital Punishment in New England Execution Sermons, 1674-1825," *American Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (1988), 147-164; Esther Cohen, "Symbols of Culpability and the Universal Language of Justice: The Ritual of Public Execution in Late Medieval Europe," *History of European Ideas* 11 (1989), 407-416; John Wilson Croker, *History of the Guillotine* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1853); Simon Devereaux, "Recasting the Theatre of Execution: The Abolition of the Tyburn Ritual," *Past & Present* 202, no. 1 (2009), 127-174; H. Byron Earhart, "Ishikozume Ritual Execution in Japanese Religion, especially in Shugendo," *Numen* 13, no. 2 (2013), 51-63; Paul Friedland, *Seeing Justice Done: The Age of Spectacular Capital Punishment in France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Vic Gatrell, *The Hanging Tree: Execution and the English People, 1770-1868* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Donald G. Kyle, *Spectacles of Death in Ancient Rome* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Christian Lange, *Justice, Punishment and the Medieval Muslim Imagination* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008) and "Capital Punishment," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* 3, eds. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Annulla Linders, "The Execution Spectacle and State Legitimacy: The Changing Nature of the American Execution Audience, 1833-1937," *Law & Society Review* 36, no. 3 (2002), 607-656; Andrew Marsham, "Public Execution in the Umayyad Period: Early Islamic Punitive Practice and its Late Antique Context," *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 11, no. 4 (2011), 101-136; Andrea McKenzie, *Tyburn's Martyrs: Execution in England, 1675-1775* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007); Mitchell B. Merback, *The Thief, the Cross, and the Wheel: Pain and the Spectacle of Punishment in Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (London: Reaktion, 1999); Terance D. Miethe and Hong Lu, *Punishment: A Comparative Historical Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Molly Morrison, "St. Catherine of Siena and the Spectacle of Public Execution," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 16, no. 3 (2013), 43-55; Rasheed Oyewole Olaniyi, "Hisbah and Sharia Law Enforcement in Metropolitan Kano," *Africa Today* 57, no. 4 (2011), 70-96; Katherine Royer, "The Body in Parts: Reading the Execution Ritual in Late Medieval England," *Historical Reflections* 29, no. 2 (2003), 319-339; Scott D. Seay, *Hanging between Heaven and Earth: Capital Crime, Execution Preaching, and Theology in Early New England* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009); J.A. Sharpe, "'Last Dying Speeches': Ideology and Public Execution in Seventeenth-century England," *Past & Present* 107 (1985), 144-167; Andrew Silke, "Ragged Justice: Loyalist Vigilantism in Northern Ireland,"; Philip Smith, "Executing Executions: Aesthetics, Identity, and the Problematic Narratives of Capital Punishment Ritual," *Theory and Society* 25 (1996), 235-261; Petrus Cornelis Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering: Executions and the Evolution of Expression: From a Preindustrial Metropolis to the European Experience* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984); and David Sternbach, "Hanging Pictures: Photographic Theory and the Framing of Images of Execution," *NYU Law Review* 70 (1995), 1100-1143.

¹⁰³¹ While noting the different historical contexts, the underlying social and symbolic processes at play in *jihadi*-insurgent enactment of "legitimate" violence as a form of social control and regulation can also be seen in other historical cases including incidents of lynching and state-sanctioned or permitted "law and order" violence in places such as the post-Civil War United States and "Wild" West. See, for example, Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 1-2; James Allen, ed., *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* (Santa Fe: Twin Palms, 2000); Jack Taylor, *Death and Blackness: The Aestheticization of Death from Lynching Photography, to African American Literature, to Memorial*, Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 2013; and Dora Apel, *Lynching Photographs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

demonstrating the primacy of one and the subjugation of the “other” or those deemed to be in violation of desired social, political, and ideological and moral norms.

Violence does not only impact those who personally witness it but extends by word of mouth and through cultural expression to other members of society who come to understand the threat of violence for various infractions to be very real.¹⁰³² Both aspects of the cultural and political power of public violence in the form of punishment rely on its performance as a spectacle, a ritualized and theatrical demonstration of the desired social order and power and reach of those carrying it out.¹⁰³³ The violence of control must be *witnessed* in person or through other representations—such as through media—in order to achieve symbolic and societal or cultural meaning and power.¹⁰³⁴ This violence is a reaction to severe challenges to political legitimacy coupled with major sociopolitical dislocation, a violent rejection against the shifting sands that are perceived by the perpetrators as posing an existential threat to an idealized identity and status quo.¹⁰³⁵ The public implementation of violence represents the starkest form of *jihadi* rulers’ rejection of this change and a clear statement about their desire to “return” to an imagined and idealized past, which they equate to the rigid and literal application of the *hudūd* and other Islamic legal punishments and rulings. By participating in or witnessing public executions and other forms of physical punishment, *jihadis* and their local supporters “perform and attach themselves” to their core beliefs and are able “to literally inhabit them.”¹⁰³⁶

Narrative and media representations of violence, particularly the mimetic nature of visual media, act to reproduce the ritualized demonstration of the *jihadi* ideal with regard to

¹⁰³² Apel, 2.

¹⁰³³ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁰³⁴ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

¹⁰³⁵ Robert W. Thurston, “Lynching and Legitimacy: Toward a Global Description of Mob Murder,” in *Globalizing Lynching History: Vigilantism and Extralegal Punishment from an International Perspective*, ed. Manfred Berg and Simon Wendt (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 69-86.

¹⁰³⁶ Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, 8.

social organization and political order. The perpetrators' violence is portrayed as controlled, masculine, and legitimate as opposed to the wanton and criminal savagery of the victims of the violence, those who wantonly betray societal norms and disrupt the communal order.¹⁰³⁷ Visual media representations of violence can alter the viewer's perception of truth and understanding of the surrounding society by casting what is broadcast, even if slanted and selective, as objective truth and reality.¹⁰³⁸ In the case of *jihadi*-insurgent organizations such as Al-Shabaab and Islamic State, the ruler's violence is portrayed as a legitimate and "Islamic" response to the illegitimate violence of the *kuffār* and, in terms of territorial control, lapsed or "apostate" Muslims who seek to secularize or otherwise lead Muslim majority societies astray from the "straight path" (*al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*) into licentiousness and corruption. The form that the implemented violence takes is also a key part of the public act of physical punishment, with specific forms of violence representing different aspects of organizational claims to authority and framed messaging to target audiences ranging from the general public to those individuals who have or are thinking of violating the social order.¹⁰³⁹

Violence, as enacted by *jihadi*-insurgent organizations pursuing proto-state projects, is at its heart a strategic tool and its performance is shaped by the organization's ideological commitments and sociopolitical and economic goals. Violence, both through its implementation and performance as well as its symbolic dimensions, serves the organization's strategic need to, first, broadcast and demonstrate its power and willingness to

¹⁰³⁷ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

¹⁰³⁸ *Ibid.*, 10-13.

¹⁰³⁹ I draw here not only on historical studies of public execution in Muslim and non-Muslim societies but also on the literature on organized crime and Narco and Mafia cultures and symbolism of violence. See Bunker, Campbell, and Bunker, "Torture, Beheadings, and Narcocultos"; Dennis Rodgers, "Living in the Shadow of Death: Gangs, Violence and Social Order in Urban Nicaragua, 1996-2002," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 38, no. 2 (2006), 267-292; Campbell and Hansen, "Is Narco-Violence in Mexico Terrorism?"; Bunker and Sullivan, "Extreme Barbarism, a Death Cult, and Holy Warriors in Mexico"; Stefano D'Errico, Cristoforo Pomara, Carmela Fiore, Floriana Monciotti, and Vittorio Fineschi, "A Novel Macabre Ritual of the Italian Mafia ('Ndrangheta): Covering Hands with Gloves and Burying the Corpse with Burnt Lime after Execution," *American Journal of Forensic Medicine & Pathology* 32, no. 1 (2011), 44-46; and Andrew Lantz, "The Performativity of Violence: Abducting Agency in Mexico's Drug War," *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 25, no. 2 (2016), 253-269.

utilize violence as part of its new sociopolitical order as well as, second, being a symbolic performance through which both hard and soft power is projected.

PART II: CASE STUDIES

AL-SHABAAB IN SOMALIA

Al-Shabaab's Insurgent Order in Somalia

Emerging fully independent from the ashes of the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC; Midowga Maxkamadaha Islaamiga, Ittiḥād al-Maḥākim al-Islāmīya) in 2007, Al-Shabaab quickly rejuvenated itself after suffering significant losses during the December 2006 Ethiopian invasion of Somalia. Evolving from its origins as a small clandestine faction within the UIC's military wing, the group by 2008 began to capture significant amounts of territory in southern and central Somalia. By the spring of 2009, Al-Shabaab had succeeded in seizing control of the lucrative economic centers of Baidoa, Kismaayo, and Marka as well as large parts of Mogadishu. A year later in March 2010, the group ruled most of Somalia south of the autonomous northern region of Puntland. This presented its leaders with the dilemma of how to implement and exercise effective territorial control and systems of governance over the local population while also continuing their military campaign and expansion.

In order to facilitate territorial control and governance as it expanded geographically, Al-Shabaab began to set up local civil and military administrations throughout the pre-existing regions of the country as well as in urban centers and cities under its control. These administrations were organized locally into "Islamic provinces/governorates" (*wilāyāt Islamīya*) and headed by an appointed governor (*wālī*). Individual offices within provincial administrations included ones for *da'wa*, education and teaching (*Maktab al-Tarbīya wa-l-Ta'līm*), finances and taxation, judiciary (*Maktab al-Quḍā' al-ʿĀmm*), police force (*Jaysh al-*

Hisba), and social relations. Militarily, Al-Shabaab maintained a frontline fighting force, the *Jaysh al-'Usra*, a military intelligence service, and a feared general intelligence apparatus, the *Amniyat*, whose members were fully dedicated to the *amīr*.¹⁰⁴⁰

The implementation of justice and maintenance of law and order was achieved on three levels beginning at individual checkpoints overseen by lower-ranking commanders and running through local and then regional administrators. Minor infractions such as wearing clothing or having a hairstyle deemed to be indecent and mixing with the opposite sex were handled at the lowest level and did not require the involvement of the judiciary. Punishments for these offenses were generally minor and were carried out on the spot under the supervision of the local commander, with variations in the enforcement and redress of offenses from locale to locale due in part to the apparent ignorance of many local commanders to the intricacies of Islamic criminal law.¹⁰⁴¹ Corruption did occur in some places, in part because Al-Shabaab sometimes had to rely on local allies, many of them former predatory warlords.¹⁰⁴² At the district and provincial level, the judiciary was divided into civil and criminal courts and offices that supervised everything from registering marriages and hearing civil cases to adjudicating *ḥudūd* crimes.¹⁰⁴³ In December 2011, the judiciary was expanded to include a grievances response court and office (*Maḥkama/Dīwān Radd Maẓālim*), which was first established on a trial basis in the regions of Lower and Middle Shabelle before being expanded to other provinces. The establishment of this branch of the judiciary will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Stig Jarle Hansen, "Shabab Central: Africa's 'Taliban' Grows More Unified," in *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 16 July 2010; United Nations Monitoring Group on Somalia, *Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia*, (New York: United Nations), 10 March 2010, 14-16; and Stig Jarle Hansen, 83-92.

¹⁰⁴¹ Stig Jarle Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 85-86.

¹⁰⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴³ For a detailed breakdown of Al-Shabaab's court system at the district and provincial/regional levels, see *Ibid.*, 86-88.

By establishing local, district, and provincial administrations to govern the large amounts of territory and growing number of people under its control, Al-Shabaab was able to implement both a degree of security and a relative environment of regulation and control through the strategic use and threat of violence coupled with outreach to locals and powerbrokers such as clan elders. It also served as a valuable framing tool in the group's domestic and external media operations campaigns as a clear demonstration of its interest in establishing a *jihadi*-insurgent state in Somalia. The relative success of Al-Shabaab's administrative system compared to the dismal failure of the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG), particularly between 2008 and 2011, also sent a clear message: the insurgents could do what the TFG, despite the international support and financing for it, could not. It could implement a form of law and order, albeit harsh, by cracking down on local warlords and monopolizing the use of violence. Through a philistine implementation of *shari'a* that centered on the *hudūd*, the *jihadi*-insurgent rulers succeeded in reducing levels of crime, which in turn led to the partial rejuvenation, compared to early periods of the civil war, of business and trade in cities and major towns including Baidoa and Kismaayo. The group's governance was not democratic or pleasant and was backed by coercion and force, but many locals initially welcomed it after enduring years of predation by warring militias and civil war. Though it probably never enjoyed universal or even particularly widespread and energetic support, Al-Shabaab did succeed in obtaining the acquiescence of many locals for many years. The contours and framing of the group's *jihadi*-insurgent governance are traced in what follows by using both secondary and primary sources including previously unused proclamations and reports of its leadership's law and order activities beginning in the summer of 2008, the earliest days of its territorial rule, as more and more territory fell under their control.

Establishing and Maintaining *Jihadi-Insurgent Territorial Order*

The rapid conquest of territory presented Al-Shabaab's leadership with the dilemma of how to project governing authority over a growing civilian population. In setting up its provincial and local administrations, the group met Weinstein's conditions of rebel government: it exercised governing authority over territory under its control, established offices and institutional mechanisms to manage relations with the civilian population and, in the Somali case, particularly clan and sub-clan elders and prominent merchants and traders, and, through these offices and institutional mechanisms, developed a set of formal rules through which their authority as rebel rulers was implemented as well as systems of taxation in the form of *zakāt* as well as forms of revenue extraction including protection money.¹⁰⁴⁴ The group's close interaction with clans and sub-clans, which, as of the autumn of 2018, remained a cornerstone of its domestic relations and outreach, was guided by the nature of Somali society and state-society relations before the outbreak of the 1991 civil war through the period of the Union of Islamic Courts.¹⁰⁴⁵

Though it is not democratic in its governance, it is in Al-Shabaab's interest to convince elements within Somali society to not only interact with it but, in some cases, to invest, even if temporarily, in their governance project.¹⁰⁴⁶ This engagement can take the form of direct cooperation or the maintenance of ties and lines of communication between societal actors, such as clan elders, and Al-Shabaab despite advances in the capabilities of the Somali federal government. Marginalized minority clans and sub-clans and ethnic minorities, such as members of Bantu and Bajuni communities in the far south, in particular have been targeted by Al-Shabaab leaders and administrators, but the pan-clan composition

¹⁰⁴⁴ Weinstein, 164.

¹⁰⁴⁵ This is in line with Mampilly's observation that rebel leaders' preferences for civilian governance are shaped in part by the nature of state-society relations before rebellion together with the insurgents' central strategic objective. See Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers*, 16.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Weinstein, 165-170.

of the rebel leadership, which is particularly noteworthy in the Somali sociopolitical context, has enabled it to maintain relations with segments of more prominent clans as well as merchants and businesspeople who see a benefit in being in communication with the group.

Al-Shabaab falls between the two poles of rebel governance outlined by Weinstein. It engages civilian leaders rather than simply implementing its edicts solely through the use of force but it has still engaged in predatory behavior such as the extortion of traders and merchants as well as farmers and herdsmen, which has sometimes resulted in tensions and clashes between the local population and rebel officials and administrators.¹⁰⁴⁷ Its leadership remains exclusivist and closed and it often relies on coercion to implement its writ over civilians, but it is at the same time also cognizant of the fact that it is important to engage with clan elders and other powerful individuals in society to further embed itself locally. Al-Shabaab's leaders and commanders, such as the popular former senior founding group commander (since-defected) Mukhtar "Abu Manşūr" Robow, have even used their social ties to recruit and fundraise, for example among Robow's Leysaan/Rahanweyn clan and other Rahanweyn sub-clans, whose members once reportedly made up a significant number of the insurgent group's frontline fighting force.¹⁰⁴⁸

The cooperation and acquiescence of local civilians and particularly notables is a cornerstone of Al-Shabaab's longevity as a rebel territorial player. To encourage this support, the group has, through its local offices and regional administrations carried out small to medium scale public works projects such as road repairs, bridge and irrigation canal construction, home and factory repairs, and provision of healthcare and veterinarian services

¹⁰⁴⁷ Weinstein, 171-172.

¹⁰⁴⁸ There is evidence that recruits from various Rahanweyn sub-clans, as of the early autumn of 2017, continued to account for many of the organization's rank-and-file fighters. Of the four fighters identified by Al-Shabaab as having been killed in the September 2-3, 2017 attack on a Somali government militia base in Bula Guduud (Bula-Gaduud, Bula-Gadud) north of Kismaayo, at least three were identified as being from Rahanweyn sub-clans, the Eelay, Boqol Hore, and the Hubeer, and the fourth seems to have been from another Rahanweyn sub-clan, the Hadame. See Al-Shabaab film, *Wa Aghluz 'alayhim*.

for locals including farmers, women, and children. During the 2011 and 2017 East African famines, while it prevented many international NGOs from reaching the most impacted areas, the group pursued and publicized its own drought relief efforts, which included the distribution of food, medical, and other forms of humanitarian aid and the construction and the running in 2011 of a temporary refugee camp for internally displaced Somalis, Al Yasir in the Lower Shabelle region south of Mogadishu.¹⁰⁴⁹

Throughout 2008 through early 2009, as it came to control a growing number of major population centers including important economic hubs such as Baidoa, Marka, and Kismaayo, Al-Shabaab began implementing territorial control and governance through the implementation of the *hudūd* and *ta'zīr* (discretionary) punishments. The group's *shari'a*-based penal code was carried out in public and was preceded by announcements in towns and cities as insurgent forces rolled in and secured control. On November 13, 2008 in the port city of Marka (Merca) in the Lower Shabelle region, for example, Al-Shabaab administrators and commanders gathered the population and publicly announced the implementation of the group's interpretation of *shari'a* and particularly Islamic criminal law in the city and the surrounding suburbs as part of its campaign to "reform" society and rid it of manifestations of moral corruption and sin to "begin a new stage through the implementation of Islamic law" (*ijtināb jamī'a mazāhir al-fasād al-akhlāqī wa bada'a marḥala jadīda ma' taṭbīq al-sharī'a*).¹⁰⁵⁰ Speaking to the crowd, the insurgent leaders quoted a speech attributed to the first Rāshidūn caliph, Abu Bakr, in which he told the gathered Muslims to "watch over" him to ensure that he always remained faithful to the commandments of God and His final

¹⁰⁴⁹ Jamal Osman, "Al-Qaida's Public Show of Aid to Somali Drought Refugees," *The Guardian*, 1 November 2011, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/nov/01/al-qaida-aid-somalia-refugees>, last accessed 9 September 2017 and "Al-Qaida and the Politics of Aid in Somalia," *The Guardian*, 1 November 2011, at <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/nov/01/al-qaida-politics-aid-somalia>, last accessed 9 September 2017; and Christopher Anzalone, "Al-Shabab's Setbacks in Somalia," *CTC Sentinel*, 31 October 2011, at <https://ctc.usma.edu/posts/al-shabab's-setbacks-in-somalia>, last accessed 9 September 2017.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Al-Shabaab communiqué, "Al-I'lān 'an taṭbīq sharī'at al-Islam fī madīnat Marka amām ḥashid ḡhafīr min al-Muslimīn" (The Announcement concerning the implementation of the Law of Islam in Marka city in front of a large crowd of the Muslims), 13 November 2008.

prophet, Muhammad, and to obey him when he is on the correct path and to not obey him if he turns away from it.¹⁰⁵¹ The gathered populace was told that they would not face punishment unless they violated the “sanctity” (*hurmat Allah*) of God, represented by the *shari‘a*, and Al-Shabaab would deal with them as brothers in faith with mercy (*rahma*) and gentleness (*rifq*).¹⁰⁵²

The following day, Robow, who was then Al-Shabaab’s official spokesman as well as a key commander and recruiter, delivered a speech at Friday prayer in Marka to what the group’s official report claimed was the “largest crowd” (*akbar hashid*) to ever gather there.¹⁰⁵³ He announced that the people’s safety and security would be the responsibility of the group and called for their support in the implementation of the insurgent organization’s *shari‘a* and the *hisba* program.¹⁰⁵⁴ He also called upon the Jaysh al-*Hisba* to carry out their duties and announced the formation of a court for the city and local environs that would implement the law, enjoining the audience to safeguard their piety and abide by God’s laws both at an individual and group level.¹⁰⁵⁵ On the same day similar public addresses were given by other senior insurgent leaders including Al-Shabaab’s governor of the Lower and Middle Juba regions, Ibrahim al-Afghani (who was also known as Abu Bakr al-Zayla‘ī),¹⁰⁵⁶ who was also a founding member of the group. Speaking at Friday prayer in the town of Janaale to the west of Marka, he encouraged the local population to fight against “Crusader”

¹⁰⁵¹ *Ibid.* For the text of Abu Bakr’s speech, see <http://www.alim.org/library/biography/khalifa/content/KAB/17/3>, last accessed 9 September 2017.

¹⁰⁵² Al-Shabaab communiqué, “Al-I‘lān ‘an taṭbīq sharī‘a al-Islam fī madīnat Marka amām hashid ghafīr min al-Muslimīn.”

¹⁰⁵³ Al-Shabaab communiqué, “Qiyādat al-Ḥaraka tuwāṣil al-da‘wa ilā Allāh wa taw‘īya al-sha‘b ba’d fāṭh mu‘āzīm mināṭiq Shabīlā al-Suflā” (Leadership of [Al-Shabaab] continues calling the people to God and educating them after the conquest of most areas of Lower Shabelle), 14 November 2008.

¹⁰⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵⁶ His real name was Ibrahim Haji Jama Mee’aad, but he was usually referred to by this name which noted his home village of Zayla‘ (Saylac in Somali and either Zaylā or Zayla‘ in Arabic) in what is now the self-declared republic of Somaliland.

America's blatant hostility toward Islam and Muslims as demonstrated by its support of the Ethiopian invasion in December 2006.¹⁰⁵⁷ In particular he sought the support of Somali 'ulamā against the "clients" ('*umalā*') giving aid to the Crusaders (*a 'wān al-ṣalībīyīn*).¹⁰⁵⁸ Al-Afghani also said that the group, unlike other political factions in the country, did not represent a particular political program but rather sought to rise above politics, here referring to destructive clannism, through pursuing the transformation of Somali society through God's law (*shari'at al-Raḥman*) and the removal of injustice (*ẓulm*).¹⁰⁵⁹ Al-Shabaab's program, he said, was neither clannist nor nationalist but rather religious. Here it is important to note that the group is not clannist in the manner in which much of the country was divided following the overthrow of Siyaad Barre in 1991, but neither does Al-Shabaab ignore clan dynamics. Indeed, the group has continuously shown that it is both well aware of their importance and an often adept manipulator of clan grievances and interests.

The public nature of these announcements and the exercising of insurgent governance was symbolically important because it challenged the authority and legitimacy of the TFG (and, after August 2012, the Somali federal government) and also broadcast Al-Shabaab's "counterstate sovereignty," that is its adoption and mimicking of aspects of the nation-state's structures and governance activities in a way that sometimes rivaled or even surpassed that of the fledgling Somali federal state.¹⁰⁶⁰ The group exercised this claim to governing legitimacy and authority through its provincial administrations and domestic "police" force, the Jaysh al-Ḥisba. The latter oversaw a program centered on the reinvigoration of the Islamic maxim of "enjoining the good and forbidding the wrong" (*al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahī 'an al-munkar*) among local populations as an integral component of its implementation of a semblance of

¹⁰⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶⁰ Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers*, 61.

law and order to get civilians to invest in the project.¹⁰⁶¹ In their public pronouncements the rebel leadership said that it was only through *shari‘a* and enjoining the good and forbidding the wrong that a spirit of brotherhood and harmony (*rūḥ al-ikhā’ wa al-tālaf*) would return to war-torn areas of the country still reeling from the overthrow of the UIC and the Ethiopian occupation of large swaths of the country and propping up of the corrupt and inept TFG.¹⁰⁶²

As part of the work of the Jaysh al-Ḥisba, it focused on the defeat of local warlords and the removal of their checkpoints where previously they had extorted money from travelers, merchants, and traders along roadways. Bandits and thieves were arrested and punished and coffee shops and public places were regulated to remove temptations and forbidden things (*shayāṭīn*) from them.¹⁰⁶³ In addition to ushering in the “Islamic” order that Al-Shabaab’s senior leadership sought, the removal of cinemas and other “*ḥarām*” pursuits also enabled the rebel group to more easily sway and recruit local youth who were usually unemployed and angry about the presence of thousands of Ethiopian, and later African Union, troops on Somali soil. Those who tried to prevent Al-Shabaab’s implementation of their new order were harshly punished or otherwise dissuaded from interfering.¹⁰⁶⁴

The strategic exercising of public violence, coercion, and punishment was and continues to be an integral part of Al-Shabaab’s governance and territorial control. The group’s political culture, that is its use of symbols and political rituals practices to advance claims of religious and political legitimacy, included the work of its local courts as well as, later, of higher levels of the insurgent judiciary such as the grievances response (*radd maẓālim*) court and security court run by the Amniyat. The public enactment of the violence

¹⁰⁶¹ Al-Shabaab communiqué, “Al-Qiyādat al-‘āma tastanfīr Jaysh al-Ḥisba li-l-qīyām bī wājib al-da‘wa ilā Allāh fī al-mudun wa-l-qurā al-muḥarara” (The General Leadership calls upon the Jaysh al-Ḥisba to [fulfill] the duty of calling people to God in the liberated cities and villages), 5 August 2008 and “Qiyādat al-Ḥaraka tuwāṣīl al-da‘wa ilā Allāh wa taw‘īya al-sha‘b ba’d fath mu‘aẓim mināṭiq Shabīlā al-Suflā.”

¹⁰⁶² Al-Shabaab communiqué, “Al-Qiyādat al-‘āma tastanfīr Jaysh al-Ḥisba li-l-qīyām bī wājib al-da‘wa ilā Allāh fī-l-mudun wa-l-qurā al-muḥarara.”

¹⁰⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

of control served as both a strategic tool and a political performance in which the organization as a proto-state entity advanced its claims to (proto) statehood and ideological purity as the ideal “Islamic” movement and state-in-the-making. In order for it to have symbolic and performative as well as physical and regulatory power, the violence of control must be implemented publicly because as a framing mechanism it relies to a significant degree on its public nature. Performed in private the violence of control loses part of its regulatory and symbolic power and utility as a means of power projection and demonstration by *jihadi*-insurgent proto-state rulers.

The main goal in its post-territorial conquest governance campaign was to establish an environment of law and order, however harsh, in order to win over the support or acquiescence of locals and particularly merchants, traders, farmers, and other businesspeople who would benefit from crackdowns on thieves, bandits, and highway robbers as well as the monopolization of legitimate violence by a single actor—the insurgent proto-state.¹⁰⁶⁵ There were clear economic goals to the rebel leadership’s focus on eradicating specific types of crime, chief among them property and economic crimes such as theft, banditry, and highway brigandage, which will be discussed in more depth in the following sub-section. Criminals who were captured by the Jaysh al-Ḥisba were punished in public squares and fields in villages, towns, and cities so that their cases served as examples to others. Murder, rape, and child molestation, which are destabilizing to local communities, were classified by the group as serious offenses and Al-Shabaab carried out punishments for these crimes in public after the cases were adjudicated in their courts.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Al-Shabaab communiqué, “Jaysh al-Ḥisba yuwāṣil mahāmmahu al-da‘wīya wa yuṭahhir madīnat Būrhakabā [Buurhakaba] min qitā’a al-ṭuruq fī jawlat tafaqqudīyat li-l-mināṭiq al-muḥarrara” (Jaysh al-Ḥisba continues its *da‘wa* duties and cleanses Buurhakaba of highway bandits and checkpoints in a tour of inspection of the liberated areas), 9 August 2008 and “Jaysh al-Ḥisba yuqatil wa yuṣlib ithnayn [muḥrimayn] min qitā’a al-ṭuruq fī Wilāyat Jūbā janūb al-Šūmāl” (Jaysh al-Ḥisba kills [executes] and crucifies two highway robbers in the Juba region of southern Somalia), 10 August 2008.

In one case that was heard by Al-Shabaab's court in the Banaadir/Mogadishu region and overseen by Robow, a mother was murdered with her two sons after she and one of them were tortured by a gang of criminals. The Jaysh al-Ḥisba investigated the case for eighteen days and eventually arrested five men and one woman for being involved in the murders. The six were convicted for their various roles in the attack on the family and received sentences of *ḥadd qisās*, flogging, monetary reparations, or prison terms depending on whether they had participated in the torture and murders directly or indirectly.¹⁰⁶⁶ In another case, one of Al-Shabaab's courts in the Lower Shabelle region convicted two brothers after they murdered their parents and a neighbor of their mother's in the towns of Qoryooley and Buulo Mareer. The investigation, interviewing of witnesses, and arrests were once again carried out by the Jaysh al-Ḥisba and the two brothers, Hasan Ibrahim Yusuf and 'Ali Hussein 'Ali, were sentenced to death on December 13, 2008 and were executed publicly.¹⁰⁶⁷ In a 2011 case of accidental manslaughter in which the offender, 'Uthman Ibrahim Tayyib, accidentally killed three people, monetary compensation (*dīya*) to their families was levied on the offender.¹⁰⁶⁸

Al-Shabaab carried out public floggings and executions of individuals convicted of crimes in its *shari'a* courts. The public aspect of the punishments served both as a deterrent as well as a means for the group to advertise the beginning of its governance over these areas. The violence was performative, symbolic, ritualized, and strategic as well as ideological,

¹⁰⁶⁶ Al-Shabaab communiqué, "Majlis quḍā' Muqḍīshū al-tābi'a li-Ḥarakat al-Shabāb al-Mujahidīn yubatt fī jarīmat qatl wa ta'dhīb ta'rḥāḍat lihā 'ā'ilā" (Judiciary council of Al-Shabaab in Mogadishu rules on the case of the murder and torture of a family), 28 October 2008.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Al-Shabaab communiqué, "Iqāmat ḥukm al-qisās 'alā murtakabay jarīma al-qatl bi-ḥaqq wa-l-dīhumā fī Wilāyat Shabīlā al-Islāmīya" (Implementation of the set punishment of qisās on two perpetrators of the murder of their parents in the Islamic Province of Shabelle), 15 December 2008.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Al-Shabaab communiqué "Al-ḥukm 'alā rajul qatala 3 ashkhās bi-l-khaṭā' bi-l-Wilāyat Qīdū [Gedo] al-Islāmīya" (The ruling on a man who killed three people by accident in the Islamic Province of Gedo), 25 September 2011.

whatever the group claimed about the purity of its religious motivations.¹⁰⁶⁹ There were clear temporal interests at play in the organization's implementation of law and order. The new socio-legal order was also implemented through cooperation and negotiation with local notables.¹⁰⁷⁰

The adjudication and punishment of infringements to Al-Shabaab's system of law and order was, at least in the early days of the group's governing experiment, carried out at several levels. The first was at the very local level of checkpoints, which were run by low-level field commanders who had a great deal of leeway in determining courses of action so long as they fell broadly under the group's program. The second was the level of the local administrative district with cases being heard by local *shari'a* courts. The third was at the regional/provincial level, which involved the insurgent shadow governors. For many infractions there was not a single standardized punishment and this was left to individual

¹⁰⁶⁹ Al-Shabaab communiqués, "Iqāmat ḥadd al-sariqa bi-qat'a al-yad 'alā rajul tammat idānatahu fī manṭiqa Shalāmbūd" (Implementation of the set punishment for theft by cutting off of the hand of a man convicted in Shalambood), 3 July 2009; "Taṭbīq ḥukm al-rajm 'alā shāb ighṭasab fitā wa qatalahā fī ḍāḥīyat madīnat Wanlawayn" (Implementation of the set punishment of stoning on a young man who raped and killed a girl in the suburb of Wanlaweyn), 30 June 2009; "Iqāmat ḥadd al-ḥirāba 'alā arba'a fityān kānū yanhabūn amwāl al-muslimīn" (Implementation of the set punishment for ḥirāba on four boys who were looting the wealth of the Muslims [in Banaadir]), 24 July 2009; "Iqāmat ḥadd al-sariqa fī madīnat 'Eil Būr" (Implementation of the set punishment for theft in El Buur), 17 December 2009; "Al-faṣl fī qaḍīya qatl bi-madīnat Harardhere bi-Wilāyat Muṭhuq [Mudug] al-Islāmīya" (The judgement concerning the case of murder in Harardhere in the Islamic Province of Mudug), 28 August 2011; "Taṭbīq ḥadd al-rajm wa ḥadd al-ḥirāba bi-Wilāyat Shabīlā al-Wuṣṭā al-Islāmīya" (Implementation of the set punishment of stoning and the set punishment for ḥirāba in the Islamic Province of Middle Shabelle), 31 December 2011; "Tanfīdh ḥukm ta'zīr 'alā shābayn bi-madīnat Haqar bi-wilāyat Jūbā al-Islāmīya" (Implementation of the discretionary punishment on two young men in Hagar in the Islamic Province of Juba), 10 June 2011; "Tanfīdh ḥadd al-rajm 'alā mughtaṣib fitā bi-madīnat Dīnsūr" (Implementation of the set punishment of stoning on a rapist of a girl in Diinsoor), 4 April 2012; Somali MeMo, "Nin Gacan ku dhiigle ah oo lagu qisaasay Magaalada Xarardheere," 1 September 2011, last accessed 1 September 2011, at http://somalimemo.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=941:nin-gacan-ku-dhiigle-ah-oo-lagu-qisaasay-magaalada-xarardheere&catid=34:warar, and Shabelle Media Network, "Al Shabaab Executes a Young Boy in Central Country [for murder and rape]," 1 September 2011, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201109011452.html>, last accessed 9 September 2017.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Al-Shabaab communiqué, "Wilāyat Jūbā tanaqād li-shari'a al-Islām wa Jaysh al-Ḥisba yuwāṣil qam'a qitā'a al-turuq wa-l-da'wa ilā Allah" ([Administration of the] Juba region is governed by Islamic law and the Jaysh al-Ḥisba continues to suppress highway bandits [literally "cutters of the roads"] and call [the people] to God), 13 August 2008.

administrators who were in charge of operationalizing the implementation of the *ḥisba* campaign.¹⁰⁷¹

Al-Shabaab, through its local administrations, emphasized that its implementation of *shari‘a* and specifically criminal law applied to all segments of Somali society including members of the insurgent group itself. The group’s courts tried, convicted, and punished its own members for infractions. In an April 2010 case, a 27-year-old member of the Jaysh al-Ḥisba, Musa ‘Ali ‘Abid, was arrested and charged with murdering 20-year-old Ahmed ‘Abdi Yusuf in the Lower Shabelle region. After an investigation, ‘Abid was convicted and executed in accordance with a court ruling of *ḥadd qiṣās*. In its decision, the court noted:

The family of the murdered man requested equity in punishment [...] thus the ruling of God was implemented in equity on one of the brothers of the movement; let everyone see that there is no judgment but God’s and let the people see that the soldiers of *tawḥīd* in Ḥarakat al-Shabaab al-Mujāhidīn are of the Muslim *Umma* and they will not hesitate to implement the rulings of Islam that call for equity in punishment even against their own members.¹⁰⁷²

In another case in April 2008 in the town of Wajid in the Bakool region of western Somalia, an Al-Shabaab fighter, ‘Abd al-Rahman Hasan Kusow, was charged with the murder of one of its residents, Adan ‘Ali Ibrahim, in a case of intentional murder. The court gave the victim’s family the choice, based on Islamic penal law, between *ḥadd qiṣās*, forgiveness/amnesty, or *dīya* and the family chose the first. The group’s officials emphasized that in carrying out the punishment, which it noted was mentioned in Qur’an 2:179, they were underlining that there was “no favoritism in the application of *shari‘a* and we apply it to ourselves before others” (*lā muḥāba fī taṭbīq al-sharī‘a wa tanfīdh al-ḥadd li-nā wa ‘alaynā, wa nuṭabbiquhu ‘alā anfusinā qabl ghayrinā*).¹⁰⁷³ The group’s leaders also said that those accusing them of abusing their power should note that the *shari‘a* was being implemented

¹⁰⁷¹ Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 85-88.

¹⁰⁷² Al-Shabaab communiqué, “Tanfīdh ḥukm Allāh ‘alā aḥad min junūd fī Jaysh al-Ḥisba fī-l-Wilāyat al-Islāmīya al-Shabīlā al-Suflā” (Implementation of God’s ruling on one of the soldiers in the Jaysh al-Ḥisba in the Islamic Province of Lower Shabelle), 6 April 2010.

¹⁰⁷³ Al-Shabaab communiqué, “Tanfīdh ḥukm al-qiṣās ‘alā aḥad al-mujāhidīn fī madīnat Wajid” (Implementation of the set punishment of *qiṣās* on one of the mujāhidīn in Wajid), 25 April 2008.

even on one of its “heroes” (*min abṭālinā*), whom it considered to be a “martyr” and prayed for God to accept him as such.¹⁰⁷⁴ Al-Shabaab was ready, its leadership said, to implement Islamic law over all of Somalia and would not shed blood unless it was justified under *shari‘a*, noting also that it was not infallible and was open to correction from the *Umma* for the actions of its fighters.¹⁰⁷⁵

As battlefield, economic, and political pressure mounted on Al-Shabaab in the autumn and winter of 2011 following the start of a new series of offensives against it spearheaded by AMISOM together with TFG troops and allied clan-based militias, the insurgent leadership announced the opening of a new office and court of grievances (*maḥkamat al-mazālim*) in the regions of Lower and Middle Shabelle. Noting the historical precedence for the implementation of the justice of the *shari‘a* even upon the ruler and other government officials, the announcement stated that the purpose of the court is to “cover the grievances that are committed by those in power and those with authority, from the *amīr*, officials, and soldiers, in order to address the people’s grievances and provide redress for the oppressed from their oppressor even if the oppressor is a governor.”¹⁰⁷⁶ The *mazālim* courts would first be opened in Lower and Middle Shabelle, according to the announcement, before expanding to other regions under insurgent control.¹⁰⁷⁷ Historically, the *mazālim* court was an institution in which, in theory, state officials were held accountable and normal people could come to lodge cases and complaints about even high-ranking officials.¹⁰⁷⁸ The establishment

¹⁰⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷⁵ *Ibid.* The group’s classification of Kusow as a martyr here despite the fact that it privileges battlefield martyrdom and he was not killed in battle is interesting and worthy of further consideration in future research. Was it his participation before his crime in *jihad* that earned him the status of martyr? What does this say about Al-Shabaab’s conception of military martyrdom and *jihad* over other forms of non-battlefield martyrdom in Islamic thought?

¹⁰⁷⁶ Al-Shabaab communiqué, “Bayān min Majlis al-Quḍā’ li-Ḥarakat al-Shabaab al-Mujāhidīn” (Statement from the Judicial Council of Al-Shabaab), 31 December 2011.

¹⁰⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷⁸ Wael B. Hallaq, *Shari‘a: Theory, Practice, Transformations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 55. On the role of *mazālim* courts historically, see: Nimrod Hurvitz, “The Contribution of Early Islamic

of a *maẓālim* court came after years of the insurgent movement's exploitation of local populations including military conscription, extortion, high taxation, and other forms of predatory behavior. Significantly, the establishment of the *maẓālim* courts by the group occurred when it was starting to lose significant amounts of territory to its enemies. The courts were one of the ways that it attempted to mitigate the negative impact of these setbacks, though its effect in this regard was debatable.

In the spring of 2012, the *maẓālim* court heard dozens of cases, some of them, the insurgent group claimed, which had been festering for decades due to the destructive clan-based conflicts that broke out during the civil war in 1991.¹⁰⁷⁹ The cases were heard by a panel of judges headed by Al-Shabaab's chief *qaḍī*, 'Abd al-Haqq, in the presence of senior insurgent officials including spokesman 'Ali Mohamud Rage ('Ali Dheere) as well as local clan elders (*zu'amā' al-'ashā'ir bi-l-wilāya*).¹⁰⁸⁰

The Political Economy of Al-Shabaab's Insurgent 'Justice'

The success of a state-building enterprise relies to a significant degree on its ability to collect and extract revenue from the governed population in order to support the construction and expansion of the state project and its accompanying bureaucracy and administration.

Rebel organizations, if they wish to establish self-sufficient proto-state governance structures

Rulers to Adjudication and Legislation: The Case of the Mazalim Tribunals," in *Law and Empire: Ideas, Practices, Actors*, eds. Jeroen Duindam, Jill Diana Harries, Caroline Humfress, and Nimrod Hurvitz (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 135-156; H. F. Amedroz, "The Maẓālim Jurisdiction in the Aḥkām Sultāniyya of Mawardi," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland* 43, no. 3 (1911), 635-674; Nasser O. Rabbat, "The Ideological Significance of the Dar al-'Adl in the Medieval Islamic Orient," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27, no. 1 (1995), 3-28; Maaïke van Berkel, "Abbasid 'Mazalim' between Theory and Practice," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 63 (2014), 229-242; Jørgen S. Nielsen, "Mazalim and Dar al-'Adl under the Early Mamluks," *The Muslim World* 66, no. 2 (1976), 114-132; Christian Müller, "Redressing Injustice: Mazalim Jurisdictions at the Umayyad Court of Cordoba," in *Court Cultures in the Muslim World: Seventh to Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. Albrecht Fuess and Jan-Peter Hartung (New York: Routledge, 2011), 93-104; and J.S. Nielsen, "Mazalim" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam: 2nd Edition*, eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs (Leiden: Brill, 2006), consulted online at http://dx.doi.org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0721, last accessed 10 September 2017.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Al-Shabaab communiqué, "Maḥkamat radd al-maẓālim bi-Wilāyat Shabīlā al-Wusṭā taṣḍur 'asharāt al-aḥkām" (The Grievances Response/Maẓālim court in the Islamic Province of Middle Juba issues dozens of rulings), 9 March 2012.

¹⁰⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

and project themselves as a viable counterstate alternative to the existing government, must demonstrate their extractive and regulatory capacity as part of their claim to legitimacy as an alternative governing authority. In doing so, the rebel organization lends credibility to its state-building project and competition with the existing state by forging a social contract with local populations and actors, distributing public goods, delivering some services and carrying out public works projects on the path towards building a working system of governance and establishing sovereignty.

Economic interests were central to Al-Shabaab's implementation of *shari'a* as it expanded territorially throughout 2008 and 2009. Its drive to crack down on economic and property crimes such as highway brigandage, banditry, theft, and robbery—which was backed by its symbolically-laden and strategic implementation of public violence through the Jaysh al-Hisba—was in part meant to allow for the relative revival of local economies which the group then taxed as a means of financing its military operations, public works, charities, and administrative expansion.¹⁰⁸¹ In addition to levying taxes on farmers, merchants, and traders, the insurgent group also developed working relationships with wealthy Somali businessmen with interests, including charcoal and livestock trading, in East Africa and the Arab Gulf states and also resorted to extortion and other forms of coercive revenue extraction for both money and property, particularly livestock gathered as *zakāt*.¹⁰⁸² In this the group built upon a previously successful strategy that helped bring the UIC coalition to power through the support of influential businessmen who liked the Islamists' ability to institute a semblance of law and order and thus protect their financial interests.¹⁰⁸³

¹⁰⁸¹ On Al-Shabaab's taxation, see Hansen, 91-92 and the reports of the U.N. Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea between 2010 and 2016 at <http://static.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/751/work-and-mandate/reports>, last accessed 7 February 2017.

¹⁰⁸² Dahir Jibril, "Somali Farmers Relish Freedom from al-Shabaab Extortion," 27 August 2013 at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201308280685.html>, last accessed 17 August 2017 and U.N. Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, 2010 report, 18 July 2011, 27-30, at http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2011/433, last accessed 17 August 2017.

¹⁰⁸³ Aisha Ahmad, *Jihad & Co.* and "The Security Bazaar."

In its media operations and public relations, Al-Shabaab frequently reached out to civilians to win their endorsement, even if lukewarm, for the *hisba* campaign.¹⁰⁸⁴ Local merchants, clan elders, and residents were regularly featured in its media campaign to demonstrate the alleged popular support the insurgents' efforts enjoyed.¹⁰⁸⁵ The success claimed by the group was due, its spokesman 'Ali Rage said, to the fact that it had done away with the destructive and chauvinistic clannism in favor of "Islamic" universalism and *shari'a* rule (*sīyāsāt al-shari'a*).¹⁰⁸⁶ At a December 2010 ceremony marking Al-Shabaab's forced takeover of a large segment of rival Somali Islamist rebel coalition Hizbul Islam, local residents and businessmen operating in the Afgooye corridor in the Lower Shabelle region south of Mogadishu were interviewed by the group's media operatives and said that Al-Shabaab had ushered in a period of order following the lawlessness that followed the fall of the UIC in December 2006-January 2007.¹⁰⁸⁷ The Afgooye corridor had previously been the place of frequent clashes between Al-Shabaab and Hizbul Islam as they competed for political and economic advantage in the anti-TFG, anti-AMISOM, anti-Ethiopian insurgency. Insurgent publication of these testimonials, real or scripted, on the positive impact of rebel rule was part of Al-Shabaab's sustained outreach campaign to merchants, traders, and other businesspeople for support and it was stepped up following the group's political and military setbacks beginning in the spring of 2011 and continuing, off and on, through the autumn of

¹⁰⁸⁴ On the development and evolution of Al-Shabaab's media operations at the domestic, regional, and international levels, see Christopher Anzalone, *Continuity and Change: The Evolution and Resilience of Al-Shabab's Media Insurgency, 2006-2016* (Oslo: Hate Speech International), November 2016, available at <https://www.hate-speech.org/new-report-on-al-shabab-media/>, last accessed 19 March 2017.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Al-Shabaab films (both from Mu'assasat al-Katā'ib), *Al-bayān al-mar'ī li- 'ām al-jamā'at 1432* (Visual Statement of the Year of Unity, 1432), 1 February 2011 and *Under the Shade of Shari'ah*.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Al-Shabaab film, *Al-bayān al-mar'ī li- 'ām al-jamā'at 1432*.

¹⁰⁸⁷ *Ibid.* Even if these testimonials were scripted or coerced, they are revealing with regard to how Al-Shabaab wanted to frame its law and order campaign and implementation of a new legal and political order.

2014.¹⁰⁸⁸ In the early days of its media department, Al-Shabaab juxtaposed its claims about the positive effects of its implementation of law and order with the well-known corruption of the TFG through the use of footage of TFG militiamen looting Mogadishu's Bakaara Market, the country's largest, as well as scenes of residents of newly "liberated" areas welcoming the insurgents as they pushed out predatory warlords and government, Ethiopian, and AMISOM forces.¹⁰⁸⁹

Merchants interviewed by insurgent media operatives recount the lawlessness of the days when the TFG and its Ethiopian backers controlled areas such as Baidoa city, saying that the insurgents have created an environment of safety and security, which in turn has allowed for a revival of local economies. In addition, the well-publicized provision of humanitarian aid and services—packaged and presented in insurgent information operations as charity—is also portrayed in these interviews as major improvements over the internationally-recognized Somali government. These charitable services included regular distribution of *zakāt* and a program to provide humanitarian aid during the 2011 and 2017 famines, which included the construction of a temporary camp for internal refugees.¹⁰⁹⁰ In addition to the economic benefits of imposing territorial order, Al-Shabaab also initially

¹⁰⁸⁸ Al-Shabaab released a documentary-style film, *Under the Shade of Shari'ah*, for example, in the summer of 2012 that featured archival footage originally recorded in 2011 and earlier by its media teams in Baidoa and other parts of the Bay and Bakool regions. These outreach activities had been publicized shortly after they happened via the web sites of the group's terrestrial radio stations and media outlets, Radio Al-Furqaan and Radio Al-Andalus, as well as by sympathetic Somali language news web sites such as Somali MeMo and Calamada. On Al-Shabaab's media strategies amidst its setbacks between 2011 and 2014, see Christopher Anzalone, "Al-Shabab's Tactical and Media Strategies in the Wake of its Battlefield Setbacks," *CTC Sentinel*, 27 March 2013, at <https://ctc.usma.edu/posts/al-shababs-tactical-and-media-strategies-in-the-wake-of-its-battlefield-setbacks>, last accessed 17 February 2017.

¹⁰⁸⁹ See Chapter Two, Part II for a detailed analysis and history of Al-Shabaab's expansion as framed in its media operations.

¹⁰⁹⁰ On Al-Shabaab's framing of its services campaigns, see Chapter Two, Part II and Anzalone, "Al-Shabab's Tactical and Media Strategies in the Wake of its Battlefield Setbacks" and "Al-Shabab's Setbacks in Somalia," *CTC Sentinel*, 31 October 2011, at <https://ctc.usma.edu/posts/al-shabab-s-setbacks-in-somalia>, last accessed 17 February 2017. See also : <http://somalimidnimo.com/salafi/2012/02/maktabadka-zakawaadka-wilaayada-banaadir-oo-xoola-qaybiyey-haweenka-oo-yiri-baybal-bari-ayaan-ka-nahay-iyoo-odayaashii-oo-leh-ciradu-bilaash-ayey-nooga-soo-baxday/>, last accessed 21 February 2012 and Radio Al-Furqaan, "Wilaayada Islaamiga ah ee Shabeelaha Hoose oo Bilowday Zako Qeybinta" (Islamic Province of Lower Shabelle begins *Zakāt* Distribution), 17 December 2011, at <http://radioalfurqaan.com/400650102113%20Zako%20qeybin.html>, last accessed 17 December 2011.

benefited on the ground and in its public relations in the early days of its expansion after putting an end to the multitude of predatory gangs of highwaymen and independent predatory warlords in the territories it conquered as well as through the distribution of *zakāt* and humanitarian aid and running of health and veterinary clinics and public works projects. These governance activities allowed the rebels to highlight the positive effects of their rule while masking or downplaying the harsh realities of its territorial order.

As political entrepreneurs, Al-Shabaab's leadership and administrators use coercion and top-down violence to implement law and order over territory. This violence takes the form of various types of public coercion aimed at convincing the population to adhere to a strict interpretation of *shari'a* and specifically Islamic criminal law and social codes of behavior. Compliance is overseen by the Jaysh al-Ḥisba and, within the group's ranks, by the *Amniyat*.¹⁰⁹¹ Support or acquiescence for this harsh system of law and order enabled Al-Shabaab to secure territory under its control and ward off, for the most part, major domestic challenges from subject populations. Local merchants, traders, and businesspeople as well as other locals had an interest in the insurgent group's early success following the overthrow and collapse of the UIC so that serious crimes such as murder, assault, highway robbery, theft, and predation by a multitude of predatory gangs and warlords were cracked down upon. It was, in many respects, a Faustian bargain, the exchange of multiple violent and predatory groups for a single organization, Al-Shabaab. This bargain did, however, make it easier for locals, at least in the early years of insurgent territorial rule, to determine how to operate and live their daily lives by appeasing, or at least not aggravating, one armed group rather than dozens of them from locale to locale. Al-Shabaab, in effect, became a proto-state in place of

¹⁰⁹¹ On the activities of the *Amniyat*, see: Mahad Ibrahim, "Somalia: Al-Shabaab Amniyat Branch Tasked with Protecting Godane," *Sabahi*, 16 July 2013, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201307170057.html>, last accessed 13 February 2014; Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, "How Somalia's Civil War became New Front in Battle against al-Qaida," *The Guardian*, 7 June 2010, at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jun/07/somalia-civil-war-al-qaida>, last accessed 7 June 2017; Abdi Sheikh, "U.S. Strike Killed al Shabaab Commander: Somali Officials," *Reuters*, 27 January 2014, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/01/27/us-somalia-strike-idUSBREA0Q0VZ20140127>, last accessed 7 June 2017.

the then non-existent Somali federal state. Support and participation, either through passive acquiescence to or active support of the insurgent group's implementation of its form of law and order was likely given by some locals for personal reasons, including the desire to safeguard or revive individual and local economic interests. This bottom-up response conferred legitimacy on its use of coercion and violence in the name of law, order, and insurgent justice.¹⁰⁹²

In addition to winning acquiescence or outright support from the local population, Al-Shabaab also had an economic interest in its formative years as a territorial ruler in encouraging the revival of local economies.¹⁰⁹³ The rejuvenation of trade and other forms of business and building in areas controlled by the group were key prerequisites to its ability to then tax and extract significant monies and other resources such as livestock and harvested foodstuffs through which it financed its administrative and military wings as well as stocked its charitable *zakāt* campaigns.¹⁰⁹⁴ Insurgent leaders also benefited from mutually beneficial partnerships with businessmen involved in the lucrative but illegal charcoal trade between Somalia and Arab Gulf states as well as through the overland trade and transport of goods such as sugar and livestock around East Africa to Somalia and beyond.¹⁰⁹⁵

¹⁰⁹² David Keen, "Incentives and Disincentives for Violence," in *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, eds. Mats Berdal and David M. Malone (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 25-26.

¹⁰⁹³ The local-level results vary. In Somalia, Al-Shabaab was relatively quite successful vis-à-vis the internationally-backed Transitional Federal Government for years in terms of projecting authority and territorial control as well as running limited social services. However, Islamic State in Syria and Iraq took over from much stronger, if also dysfunctional, centralized states and the result was a significant decrease in social and municipal services and the decline of local economies during the period of its "caliphate;" see RAND Corporation, "When the Islamic State Comes to Town," at <https://www.rand.org/nsrd/projects/when-isil-comes-to-town.html>, last accessed 13 September 2017.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Jeffrey Gettleman and Nicholas Kulish, "Somali Militants Mixing Business and Terror," *The New York Times*, 30 September 2013, at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/01/world/africa/officials-struggle-with-tangled-web-of-financing-for-somali-militants.html?_r=0, last accessed 7 June 2017.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Said Ismail, "Charcoal Trade Stripping Somalia of Trees: Deforestation Contributing Factor to Famine, say Experts," 23 August 2011, at http://piracyreport.com/index.php/post/1426/Charcoal_Trade_Stripping_Somalia_of_Trees, last accessed 7 June 2017; Zach Baxter, "ICE Case Study: Somalia's Coal Industry," at <http://mandalaprompts.com/ice/ice-cases/somalia-coal.htm>, last accessed 7 June 2017; Farah M. Mohamed, "Gulf States have a Moral Obligation to Stop Importing Somali Charcoal," *London School of Economics blog*, 19 June 2013, at <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2013/06/19/gulf-states-have-a-moral-obligation-to-stop-importing-somali->

Al-Shabaab's economic interests, which have befittingly greatly from the continuation of the country's civil war and anti-government insurgency, raise the question as to the role of economics in the decision-making of the group's leadership. To what extent may insurgent leaders, government officials, and local notables be interested in prolonging the status quo in the conflict cycle so as to continue extracting revenue and overseeing the looting of resources such as charcoal, sugar, and livestock or promote their own private business interests by setting up trade and natural resources deals from which they will benefit personally? Is Al-Shabaab, in other words, driven in part or even primarily by greed, that is, the desire to continue their collection of economic gains as the primary driver of their prolonging of civil conflict?¹⁰⁹⁶ Or is the group's pursuit of economic resources rather the means to a more ideologically and politically-motivated end, that being the creation of a *jihadi* proto-state in which it is able to make a claim to counterstate sovereignty against the internationally-recognized and backed Somali federal government?

Elements of the "greed" model are at first glance seemingly present in the case of Al-Shabaab. The group does have major economic interests in the lucrative transport and trade of goods between Kenya, Somalia, and states outside of the region. Until it lost control of cities and towns such as Kismaayo, Baraawe, Marka, and Baidoa and their ports and trade hubs between the autumn of 2012 and the autumn of 2014, the insurgents oversaw these economic transactions interests there. Members of Al-Shabaab's provincial and district administrations partnered with businessmen, who had varying ideological sympathies and connections to the group, in the exporting of charcoal and other trade goods estimated to have

[charcoal/](#), last accessed 7 June 2017; U.N. Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016 reports, at <http://static.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/751/work-and-mandate/reports>, last accessed 7 June 2017.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers* 56 (2004): 563-595; Paul Collier, "Doing Well Out of War: An Economic Perspective," in *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, eds. Mats Berdal and David M. Malone (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 91-111; and David Keen, *The Economic Functions of Violence in Civil Wars*, Adelphi Paper no. 320 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1998).

been worth in excess of \$15 million USD in 2011.¹⁰⁹⁷ Having lost physical control of the ports, Al-Shabaab switched to taxing merchants at checkpoints along the roadways running through territory still under its control, particularly in the Middle and Lower Juba regions. Transport trucks were reportedly taxed at the rate of \$1,000-\$1,500 USD per truck with as many as 230 trucks per week for annual revenue of between \$12-18 million USD.¹⁰⁹⁸ The Somali government's National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) estimated that the group was bringing in \$9.5 million USD annually just from taxing agricultural production in the Juba River Valley and millions more from the lucrative livestock trade, which makes up 40 per cent of the country's gross domestic product at \$384 million USD in exports in 2015.¹⁰⁹⁹

The insurgent group brought in between \$400-800,000 USD from the taxation of imports of sugar and other commodities in 2010 with the leadership maintaining partnerships with wealthy Somali businessmen based in Dubai and other Arab Gulf states through which the latter were exempt from these duties in exchange for financial donations and support.¹¹⁰⁰ Though its direct ties to Somali pirates remain debated and unclear, with the likelihood being low that it directly sponsored piracy, Al-Shabaab did have territorial access or control of many of the areas from which pirates operated and imposed taxes on them.¹¹⁰¹ It was also alleged that the insurgents were taxing the illegal trade in animal products such as ivory that,

¹⁰⁹⁷ United Nations Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea 2010 report, at http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2011/433, last accessed 7 June 2017, 181-203.

¹⁰⁹⁸ United Nations Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea 2016 report, at http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2016/919, last accessed 7 June 2017, 26-27.

¹⁰⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰⁰ United Nations Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea 2010 report, 183.

¹¹⁰¹ Jonathan Saul and Camila Reed, "Shabaab-Somali Pirate Links Growing: UN Adviser," *Reuters*, 20 October 2011, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/10/20/ozatp-somalia-shabaab-pirates-idAFJ0E79J0G620111020>, last accessed 7 June 2017.

though originating in neighboring Kenya, involved transport through Somalia.¹¹⁰² Al-Shabaab has also profited from the financial support of members of the sizeable Somali diaspora, which numbers at least one million people across the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, and other African countries. Revenue streams through diaspora donations were important in the group's formative period but likely largely dried up once the group's puritanical ideological program became clear in 2009 and 2010. By then, the group had established solid domestic and regional revenue streams that continued, as of the autumn of 2017, to allow it to function as both an insurgent organization as well as a limited but often potent territorial ruler.

Though individual insurgent commanders can and do benefit from their positions of authority, the primary motivation of Al-Shabaab is not self-aggrandizement or "greed" but is driven to a significant degree by the organization's founding ethos and ideology as well as its desire to establish a viable proto-state. Aspects of the greed model are arguably more persuasive in explaining the decisions of smaller groups who allied or otherwise cooperated with Al-Shabaab, such as the Ras Kambooni militia, including the faction led by Hasan 'Abdullahi Hirsi "al-Turki" and others that cooperated in the August 2008 takeover of Kismaayo from warlord Barre Hirale, and the fickle warlord Yusuf Mohamed Siyaad "Indha'adde," who switched allegiances between Al-Shabaab and the TFG based on his own personal interests rather than for any deeply rooted ideological reasons.¹¹⁰³ Economic

¹¹⁰² Catrina Stewart, "Illegal Ivory Trade Funds al-Shabaab's Terrorist Attacks," *The Independent*, 6 October 2013, at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/illegal-ivory-trade-funds-alshabaabs-terrorist-attacks-8861315.html>, last accessed 7 June 2017.

¹¹⁰³ On the joint Islamist takeover of Kismaayo, see Al-Jazeera, "Somali Fighters 'Capture Kismayo'," 25 August 2008, at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2008/08/2008824151125251807.html>, last accessed 7 June 2017; Sahra Abdi Ahmed, "Corpses Litter Somali Port Seized by Insurgents," *Reuters*, 23 August 2008, at <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/corpses-litter-somali-port-seized-insurgents>, last accessed 7 June 2017; and IRIN, "Thousands Displaced as Insurgents Take Control of Kismayo," 25 August 2008, at <http://www.irinnews.org/news/2008/08/25/thousands-displaced-insurgents-take-control-kismayo>; last accessed 7 June 2017.

On the split between Al-Shabaab and Hizbul Islam over control of the port city after the former refused to abide by an agreement to rotate insurgent governors and the infighting between Hizbul Islam militias that preceded it,

disputes also led to the later dissolution of the partnership between the Hizbul Islam clan-based Islamist rebel militia coalition and Al-Shabaab over control of the port city. This led to a split in Ras Kambooni between Hasan al-Turki and Ahmed Mohamed Islam “Madobe,” the latter of whom later became the first president of the Jubaland regional administration/state within the Somali federal system in May 2013.

Infighting between Al-Shabaab and Hizbul Islam, and between different factions of the latter, began within a year over the administration of the port city after Al-Shabaab, despite agreeing to share the administration with the other groups, monopolized governance of it. In September 2009, Ras Kambooni leader Hasan al-Turki criticized Al-Shabaab’s disregard for the agreement to jointly administer the city and said its administration headed by Ibrahim al-Afghani was illegitimate.¹¹⁰⁴ Open fighting began in early October between Al-Shabaab and a faction of Ras Kambooni led by Ahmed Madobe, over control of the city and the surrounding areas. The former soon pushed Madobe’s militia out of the city, though fighting continued in other areas of the Lower and Middle Juba regions. During the fighting, al-Turki’s faction of Ras Kambooni, eventually sided with Al-Shabaab, leading to a split within the Ogaden clan-based militia.¹¹⁰⁵ The conflict between the two groups and rival Hizbul Islam factions also took on a clan dynamic as Mareehan/Darod clans in the area sided

see Shabelle Media Network, “Fighting between Islamist Factions Kill Four People,” 21 April 2009, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200904210829.html>, last accessed 9 September 2017; BBC News, “Behind Somalia’s Islamist Rivalry,” 1 October 2009, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8284958.stm>, last accessed 9 September 2017; IRIN, “Islamist Groups on a ‘War Footing’ in Kismayo,” 29 September 2009, at <http://www.irinnews.org/report/86338/somalia-islamist-groups-war-footing-kismayo>, last accessed 9 September 2017; BBC News, “Somali Port City Buries the Dead,” 2 October 2009, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8286449.stm>, last accessed 9 September 2017; Voice of America, “Somali Clan Disputes Giving Boost to al-Shabab,” 10 November 2009, at <https://www.voanews.com/a/a-13-2009-10-19-voa35/414614.html>, last accessed 9 September 2017; and Reuters, “Somalia’s al Shabaab Rebels Declare War on Rivals,” 30 September 2009, at <http://af.reuters.com/article/kenyaNews/idAFLU00164220090930?pageNumber=2&virtualBrandChannel=0>, last accessed 9 September 2017.

¹¹⁰⁴ Garowe Online, “Somalia: Islamist Leader Snubs Al Shabaab Rulers in Kismayo,” 24 September 2009 at http://www.garoweonline.com/artman2/publish/Somalia_27/Somalia_Islamist_leader_snubs_Al_Shabaab_rulers_in_Kismayo.shtml, last accessed 23 February 2014.

¹¹⁰⁵ BBC News, “Somali Islamists al-Shabab ‘Join al-Qaeda Fight’,” 1 February 2010, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8491329.stm>, last accessed 9 September 2017.

with Al-Shabaab against the Ogaden/Darod clan-based forces of Madobe.¹¹⁰⁶ Weakened following a failed U.S. airstrike targeting his house and then suffering from a severe illness, al-Turki and his allies eventually sided with Al-Shabaab against Madobe. One of al-Turki's commanders who joined him, Mohamed Mohamud 'Ali, who was more commonly known as Dulyadayn/Dhulyadeyn as well as Kuno Gamadere, rose to become a key Al-Shabaab military commander and operational planner after a stint as a group administrator in the Juba River Valley.¹¹⁰⁷

Al-Shabaab's profiting from taxation, extortion, and involvement in the illegal trade in charcoal and ivory were means to an end rather than ends in themselves. The group under its longtime *amīr*, Ahmed Godane, and his successor, Ahmed 'Umar, has been keen on collecting enough money and resources to fund its administrative and military activities as a *jihadi*-insurgent proto-state rather than to simply engage in predation for personal or group self-aggrandizement for its own sake, though this may occur on an individual level at times to some degree. While the availability of sources of revenue is key to the continued viability of Al-Shabaab and enables the group to pose a greater threat than if it did not have access to them, the primary importance of these revenue streams continues to be the funding of the group's operations and district administrations.¹¹⁰⁸ Revenue creation and extraction is thus a part of Al-Shabaab's strategic operations and not the goal in and of itself. The establishment of a working system of revenue collection and extraction and the development of a capable

¹¹⁰⁶ Voice of America, "Somali Clan Disputes Giving Boost to al-Shabab."

¹¹⁰⁷ Andre Le Sage, "Statement of Dr. Andre Le Sage at a Hearing on "Security and Governance in Somalia: Consolidating Gains, Confronting Challenges and Charting the Path Forward," before the Subcommittee on African Affairs, Foreign Relations Committee, U.S. Senate," 8 October 2013, at http://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Le_Sage_Testimony.pdf, last accessed 23 February 2014. Dulyadayn was killed in a joint U.S./Somali government raid in June 2016.

¹¹⁰⁸ Organizational finance thus abets the group, but does not "make it or break it," as McClintock puts it with regard to the similar role of available revenue streams in supporting the Marxist insurgency of Peru's Sendero Luminoso. See Cynthia McClintock, "The Evolution of Internal War in Peru: The Conjunction of Need, Creed, and Organizational Finance," in *Rethinking the Economics of War: The Intersection of Need, Creed, and Greed*, eds. Cynthia J. Arnson and I. William Zartman (Washington, D.C. and Baltimore: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 83.

political administration to oversee it was seen by Al-Shabaab's leaders as being one of the primary goals and stages in the organization's state-building enterprise and contest of legitimacy with the internationally-recognized but often weak and ineffectual Somali federal government. By establishing reliable revenue streams, Al-Shabaab was able to solidify and expand its structures of governance and territorial administration which in turn served as the sociopolitical means, alongside its political violence campaign, through which to wage its insurgency against the state.

This is not to argue that greed cannot emerge in the future as the primary goal for the group or factions within it under the right circumstances. Individual Al-Shabaab commanders have their own interests, some of which have to do more with internal clan politics and interests rather than the group's grand political goal of running an insurgent proto-state, and the clans themselves have reason to promote their own interests by attempting to manipulate and otherwise use Al-Shabaab, the federal government, or regional state administrations to their own advantage. Indeed, many clans continued to hedge their bets by maintaining fluid relations with all sides so that they always have lines of communication with whichever side is on top at a given moment.¹¹⁰⁹

The role of clan politics is also an important factor in Al-Shabaab's strategy and has been so since it emerged as a territorial player in 2008, with the group's administrators and courts mediating inter-clan disputes on a regular basis. Insurgent leaders have actively courted support from the clans and, through this outreach and establishment of pan-clan relationships as well as its own multi-clan membership, promoted an image of itself as being an inclusive organization under the banner of Islam and Somali identity, the latter despite its outward rhetorical rejection of secular nationalism, rather than a destructive adherent to clan

¹¹⁰⁹ Stig Jarle Hansen, "An In-Depth Look at Al-Shabab's Internal Divisions," *CTC Sentinel*, 24 February 2014, at <https://ctc.usma.edu/posts/an-in-depth-look-at-al-shababs-internal-divisions>, last accessed 9 September 2017.

chauvinism that proved so destructive to Somalia during the multi-stage civil war.¹¹¹⁰ Al-Shabaab's leadership and rank-and-file includes members of multiple clans and sub-clans and the group recruits from more marginal clans as well as among ethnic minorities in Somalia such as Bantu and Bajuni communities in and around Kismaayo.¹¹¹¹ In addition to its domestic recruitment, Al-Shabaab since 2012 has expanded to become a more embedded regional group that includes hundreds of foreign fighters from Kenya and other East African countries as well as along the Swahili Coast south to Mozambique. Aided by sympathetic preachers such as the late Aboud Rogo, Ibrahim Omar, Samir Khan Nusayba, and Abubakar Makaburi in Kenya, Al-Shabaab taps into grievances among Kenya's sizeable Muslim minority and particularly the poor, unemployed or underemployed youth angry about broad sweeps and human rights abuses, including mass arrests and brazen killings, by the Anti-Terrorism Police Unit (ATPU).¹¹¹²

¹¹¹⁰ Christopher Anzalone, "Al-Shabab's Setbacks in Somalia" and "Al-Shabab's Tactical and Media Strategies in the Wake of its Battlefield Setbacks." On Al-Shabaab's clan outreach, see also Christopher Anzalone, "Harakat al-Shabab & Somalia's Clans"; "Harakat al-Shabab Continues to Court Somalia's Clans as Hasan Dahir Aweys Assumes a More Public Role"; and "Harakat al-Shabab Claims Support from 'Ayr Clan Leaders.'"

¹¹¹¹ Roland Marchal, "Joining Al-Shabaab in Somalia," in *Contextualising Jihadi Thought*, eds. Jeevan Deol and Zaheer Kazmi (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 270.

¹¹¹² On abuses by the Kenyan security forces, see: Ludovica Iaccino, "Kenyan Al-Shabaab Supporter Shot Dead: Who was Sheikh Makaburi?," *International Business Times*, 3 April 2014, at <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/kenyan-al-shabaab-supporter-shot-dead-who-was-sheikh-makaburi-1443297>, last accessed 5 October 2016; BBC News, "Ibrahim 'Rogo' Omar: Kenyan Cleric Shot Dead in Mombasa," 4 October 2013, at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-24395723>, last accessed 5 October 2016; Maureen Mudi and Raphael Mwandine, "Two Terror Suspects Found Murdered in Mombasa," *The Star* (Kenya), 13 April 2012, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201204140310.html>, last accessed 1 October 2016; Calvin Onsario, "List of Muslim Clerics Killed in Two Years," *The Star* (Kenya), 11 June 2014, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201406110917.html>, last accessed 5 October 2016; Leela Jacinto, "Kenya's Mysteriously Disappeared Islamic Clerics," *France24*, at <http://www.france24.com/en/20120905-kenya-mysteriously-killed-disappeared-islamic-clerics-mombasa-rogo-kassim-shabaab>, last accessed 5 October 2016; Margot Kiser, "Death Squads in Kenya's Shadow War on Shabaab Sympathizers," *The Daily Beast*, 6 April 2014, at <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/04/06/death-squads-in-kenya-s-shadow-war-on-shabaab-sympathizers.html>, last accessed 5 October 2016; IRIN News, "Gunned Down in Mombasa—the Clerics That Have Died," 28 July 2014, at <http://www.irinnews.org/report/100412/gunned-downmombasa-%E2%80%93-clerics-have-died>, last accessed 1 October 2016; Al-Jazeera, *Al-Jazeera Investigates: Inside Kenya's Death Squads*, 7 December 2014, at <https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/kenyadeathsquads/>, last accessed 9 September 2017 and *Killing Kenya*, 23 September 2015, at <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/peopleandpower/2015/09/killing-kenya-150923092758366.html>, last accessed 9 September 2017; Amnesty International, "Kenya: Set up Judicial Inquiry into Hundreds of Enforced Disappearances and Killings," 30 August 2016, at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/08/kenya-set-up-judicial-inquiry-into-hundreds-of-enforced-disappearances-and-killings/>, last accessed 9 September 2017; and Human Rights Watch, "Deaths and Disappearances: Abuses in Counterterrorism Operations in Nairobi and

The regulation of the local economy was seen by Al-Shabaab leaders and administrators as involving, in addition to taxation and revenue extraction, also extending into the realm of “enjoining the good and forbidding the wrong” and ensuring the “public good” in accordance with the Islamic concept of *maṣlaḥa*. As part of its attempt to both implement both economic control as well as project an image of governing legitimacy, Al-Shabaab, beginning in 2009, expanded not only its taxation capabilities but also its regulatory activities over both local communities and domestic and foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs).¹¹¹³

in Northeastern Kenya,” 19 July 2016, at <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/07/19/deaths-and-disappearances/abuses-counterterrorism-operations-nairobi-and>, last accessed 9 September 2017, and “Kenya: Killings, Disappearances by Anti-Terror Police,” 18 August 2014, at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/08/18/kenya-killings-disappearances-anti-terror-police>, last accessed 9 September 2017.

On Al-Shabaab’s Kenyan and regional East African recruitment, see Christopher Anzalone, *Continuity and Change: The Evolution and Resilience of Al-Shabab’s Media Insurgency, 2006-2016*, 24-34 and the sections on Al-Shabaab in Chapter Two, Part II.

¹¹¹³ The group’s new Office for the Supervision of Foreign Agencies was tasked with regulating foreign NGOs and international organizations such as those of the United Nations. Those organizations deemed to be “working against” Somalis or seeking to “disrupt the formation of an Islamic state” were closed by the insurgent group. These included the UN Development Programme, the UN Department of Safety and Security, and the UN Political Office for Somalia. The closures, which included the confiscation and burning of rotten food from the UN’s World Food Program (WFP) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), was carried out by the Jaysh al-Ḥisba in places such as Mogadishu’s Bakaara Market. The closure of the WFP in particular included a strong domestic aspect given the program’s mixed record on food delivery, corruption, effectiveness, and harming of the production of local farmers.

See Al-Shabaab communiqués, “Jaysh al-Ḥisba yuṣādir at‘ima fāsida fī Sūq al-Bakāra bi-Muqdishū” (Jaysh al-Ḥisba confiscates rotten foodstuffs in the Bakaara Market in Mogadishu), 29 June 2009; “Ihrāq at‘ima fāsida tammat maṣādiratuhā min Hay’at ICRC” (Burning of rotten foodstuffs confiscated from the International Committee of the Red Cross), 6 December 2011; “WFP Must Terminate All its Operations Inside Somalia,” 28 February 2010; “Closure of Christian Organizations Operating inside Somalia,” 8 August 2010; and the Al-Shabaab film, *Quṭuf al-sharī‘a ihyā’ farīdat al-zakāt wa liqā’ khās ma’ amīr Dīwān al-Zakāt fī Ḥarakat al-Shabāb, Sulṭān bin Muḥammad Āl Muḥammad* (Harvest of the Shari‘a: Revival of the Religious Obligation of Zakāt and a Special Interview with the Head of the Office of Zakāt, Sultan bin Mohamed Al Mohamed), Mu’assasat al-Katā’ib, 1 April 2011.

Details about the WFP’s problems can be found in the U.N. Monitoring Group on Somalia’s 2010 report at http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2010/91, last accessed 9 September 2017, 60-66. See also Jason McLure, “The U.N. Food Programme’s Rampant Corruption,” *Newsweek*, 23 March 2010, at <http://www.newsweek.com/un-food-programmes-rampant-corruption-69491>, last accessed 9 September 2017 and Jeffrey Gettleman and Neil MacFarquhar, “Somalia Food Aid Bypasses Needy, U.N. Study Says,” *The New York Times*, 9 March 2010, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/10/world/africa/10somalia.html>, last accessed 9 September 2017.

ISLAMIC STATE

Organizing Violence and Projecting Power: The Governing Structures of Islamic State (2014-2017)

The types and level of violence carried out by Islamic State varied according to the evolution of its military, sociopolitical, and economic goals and success on the battlefield. The insurgent organization, though it had pretensions to being a territorial power as early as 2003 and 2004 when its predecessor organizations took over limited areas in Sunni Arab-majority western Iraq, largely operated as a non-governing insurgent organization until 2012-2013 when it entered the Syrian arena. Indeed, Islamic State's predecessor organizations, the self-declared Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham/Islamic State (October 2006-June 2014), Jamā'at al-Tawhīd wa-l-Jihad (later renamed Al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers and reshaped in January 2006 into the Majlis Shūrā al-Mujāhidīn) founded in 2002-2003 by Abū Muṣ'ab al-Zarqāwī, did not, for most of its history, maintain sustained control of significant territory with the exception of relatively brief periods when it controlled the Sunni Arab city of Falluja between the spring and autumn of 2004 alongside Iraqi insurgent groups and the strategically located town of Tal'afar near the Iraqi border with Syria the same year. During these periods, the insurgents exerted territorial control largely through sheer terror and did little to nothing in the way of governance or service provision. Negotiations took place largely between the different insurgent organizations operating in Falluja, for example, rather than between the insurgents and the local population.¹¹¹⁴ This was followed by the largely pantomime display of being a "state" when the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) was formed in October 2006, complete with the naming of "ministers" in a cabinet of the organization's new, shadowy leader, Abu 'Umar al-Baghdadi, and his "minister of war," Abu Hamza al-

¹¹¹⁴ Brian Fishman, *The Master Plan*, 52-53 and Richard A. Oppel, Jr., "Magnet for Iraqi Insurgents is a Crucial Test of New U.S. Strategy," *The New York Times*, 16 June 2005, at http://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/16/world/middleeast/magnet-for-iraq-insurgents-is-a-crucial-test-of-new-us.html?_r=0, last accessed 9 September 2017.

Muhājir, who nonetheless possessed little in the way of territorial control. Instead, the ISI largely operated an underground and rural-based insurgency, carrying out ambushes, hit-and-run attacks on checkpoints and isolated outposts, and suicide bombings in the cities.

The organization's shift to insurgent rulers came as it shifted manpower and resources to neighboring Syria after the outbreak of mass demonstrations and protests against that country's ruling Ba'ath Party government in the spring of 2011. Laying the groundwork in Syria while also expanding its military capabilities and territorial foothold in Sunni Arab areas in Iraq, the ISI/ISIS emerged as a major territorial player in 2013-2014 when it began to seize control of territory from Syrian rebel groups including local Free Syrian Army (FSA) umbrella militias and its main *jihadi*-insurgent rival, Jabhat al-Nusra. Though it faced a serious threat from pushback from Syrian rebels and Jabhat al-Nusra in January 2014, ISIS emerged by the summer of 2014 fully in control of major Syrian and Iraqi cities including Raqqa, Mosul, Falluja, Ramadi, and Tikrit.¹¹¹⁵ The organization's rapid expansion across vast swaths of Syria and Iraq presented its leadership with the opportunity to realize the longtime *jihadi* dream of actually governing territory, an ambition that was unambiguously announced by the group's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, in a Friday sermon (*khutba*) delivered in early July in Mosul's medieval Zengid Al-Nūrī Mosque.

Islamic State, much like Al-Shabaab, faced the challenges and necessities of territorial governance and its administrators, commanders, and senior leaders attempted to operationalize what previously was almost an entirely theoretical exercise, that of how to actually govern, however rudimentarily, large amounts of territory and millions of people. The organization was also constrained in its decision-making by its ideological commitments which, in theory, limited its governing and other operational choices due to the need to justify

¹¹¹⁵ Ben Hubbard and an Employee of The New York Times, "Life in a Jihadist Capital: Order with a Darker Side: In a Syrian City, ISIS Puts Its Vision into Practice," *The New York Times*, 23 July 2014, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/24/world/middleeast/islamic-state-controls-raqqa-syria.html>, last accessed 9 September 2017.

these choices both internally and externally in accordance with a philistine interpretation of *shari'a* and Islam writ large. Like Al-Shabaab, Islamic State also sought to form alliances and working partnerships with local notables and powerbrokers such as clans and tribes as well as wealthy and influential businessmen. However, unlike Al-Shabaab, Islamic State was ultimately more constrained by its ideology in its relations with locals and, in comparison with the Somali group, was less inclined to make ideological concessions.¹¹¹⁶ Al-Shabaab, in other words, is at its core thoroughly the product of the Somali milieu, despite its leaders' attraction to the transnational and globalist militancy of Al-Qaeda, and is, as a result, more inclined to an air of Somali nationalism, albeit defined through the prism of Islam.

After pushing out rival armed groups, Islamic State instituted a semblance of law and order through the liberal use of violence and coercion.¹¹¹⁷ It took over many of the duties of the state including the maintenance of roads, regulation of trade and traffic, overseeing of construction projects, issuance of fines for minor infractions, collection of taxes, and the punishment of crimes and other offenses against the social and legal order it imposed. The organization even succeeded in winning the support or acquiescence, and even respect, of some locals because of its ability initially to implement an environment of stability and calm in comparison to cities that, in 2014, were still wracked by battles between, in Syria, the

¹¹¹⁶ Al-Shabaab, too, portrays itself as religious pure and immovable, but in reality regularly makes concessions to Somali identity including the centrality of clans/sub-clans in society despite its emphasis of religious (Muslim, Islamic) identity over all other forms of identity including nationalism and ethnicity.

¹¹¹⁷ The implementation of a philistine interpretation of Islamic law and jurisprudence was particularly useful in establishing territorial control because it allowed the *jihadi*-insurgent rulers to both implement territorial control over local populations and economies while also claiming cultural/religious legitimacy. For an overview of Islamic State's use of law, see Andrew F. March and Mara Revkin, "Caliphate of Law: ISIS' Ground Rules," *Foreign Affairs*, 15 April 2015, at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/syria/2015-04-15/caliphate-law>, last accessed 13 September 2017; Mara Revkin, *The Legal Foundations of the Islamic State* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution), Analysis Paper no. 23 (July 2016), at <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Brookings-Analysis-Paper-Mara-Revkin-Web.pdf>, last accessed 11 December 2016; and Sohaira Siddiqui, "Beyond Authenticity: ISIS and the Islamic Legal Tradition," *Jadaliyya*, 2 March 2015, at <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/20944/beyond-authenticity-isis-and-the-islamic-legal-tra>, last accessed 2 March 2015.

government and competing rebel groups, such as in Aleppo and surrounding cities like al-Bāb and Manbij.¹¹¹⁸

As it swept through eastern Syria and western Iraq, seizing control of major cities and towns, Islamic State began establishing its own governing structures while also attempting to co-opt existing structures and state employees to help run its fledgling self-proclaimed “caliphate.” Teachers, municipal workers, and medical doctors who remained in cities like Mosul as government forces collapsed and fled in panic in front of the *jihadi* advance were faced with a stark choice, to continue to try and do their jobs or flee. Those that remained were rounded up by the new Islamic State administrative offices (*dawāwīn*) and pressed into service at the point of a gun.¹¹¹⁹ Some of civil servants returned under duress while others were more enthusiastic about joining the new political order under the black banners of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi’s group.¹¹²⁰ The Iraqi federal government, thinking that its forces would soon return, continued to pay the salaries of municipal workers in cities and towns now under Islamic State control, essentially bankrolling the social services programs that the organization was setting up as one of the centerpieces of its claim to political legitimacy and territorial control.¹¹²¹ It was not until July 2015, just over one year after Islamic State swept across much of western Iraq, that the federal government cut off payments of salaries and pensions in an attempt to weaken the insurgents’ hold on territory, hitting the militants, who were forced to either abandon services provision or pick up the tab themselves, but making life even more difficult for civilians.¹¹²² In Syria, the Ba‘th regime too used its control of

¹¹¹⁸ Ben Hubbard and an Employee of The New York Times, “Life in a Jihadist Capital.”

¹¹¹⁹ John Beck, “How ISIL Used Government Workers to Control Mosul,” *Al-Jazeera English*, 10 August 2017, at <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/08/isil-government-workers-control-mosul-170803142445067.html>, last accessed 9 September 2017.

¹¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹²² Isabel Coles, “Despair, Hardship as Iraq Cuts Off Wages in Islamic State Cities,” *Reuters*, 2 October 2015, at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-salaries/despair-hardship-as-iraq-cuts-off-wages-in-islamic-state-cities-idUSKCN0RW0V620151002>, last accessed 9 September 2017.

state funding to pressure those on government salaries to remain loyal to the state, embedding services provision and receipt of subsidies and salaries deeper into the al-Asad-run system as a means of population control.¹¹²³

In the education sector, Islamic State sought to first expand its administrative capacity in order to strengthen its claim to represent a viable and “Islamically” and politically legitimate alternative to existing governments in Syria, Iraq, and the Sinai or, as was the case in Libya, in an environment of state collapse and civil war. Second, Islamic State’s leaders saw in the education sector a means through which to spread their ideology, namely the organization’s interpretation of Islamic law and jurisprudence and call for public support to build a new “caliphate,” in particular targeting children and other youth for indoctrination and ideological transition from the existing society into the *jihadi* proto-state project. As part of its proto-state-building project, the militant organization imposed its own curriculum in schools, requiring teachers to follow it and eliminate aspects of the pre-IS curriculum deemed to be politically, religiously, or socially problematic including the mention of modern national borders, photographs of women, and even the wearing of sports jerseys with team badges.¹¹²⁴ Teachers who refused were flogged.¹¹²⁵ Other teachers and university graduates were pressed into service by the insurgent group under the threat that if they refused, the group would try them for apostasy (*ridda*), a capital offense.¹¹²⁶ Teachers were forced to

¹¹²³ Kheder Khaddour, “The Assad Regime’s Hold on the Syrian State,” Carnegie Middle East Center paper, 8 July 2015, at <http://carnegie-mec.org/2015/07/08/assad-regime-s-hold-on-syrian-state-pub-60608>, last accessed 9 September 2015 and Aron Lund, “A Fistful of Dollars: The Dwindling Value of Syrian State Salaries,” The Century Foundation commentary, 13 May 2016, at <https://tcf.org/content/commentary/fistful-dollars-dwindling-value-syrian-state-salaries/>, last accessed 9 September 2017.

¹¹²⁴ Beck, “How ISIL Used Government Workers to Control Mosul.”

¹¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹²⁶ Morgan Winsor, “ISIS Threatens Teachers in Raqqa: College Graduates, Educators in Syrian City Forces to Repent, Teach in Islamic State Schools,” *International Business Times*, 3 April 2015, at <http://www.ibtimes.com/isis-threatens-teachers-raqqa-college-graduates-educators-syrian-city-forced-repent-1869204>, last accessed 9 September 2017.

undergo a special training course to acclimate them to the new curriculum.¹¹²⁷ Students were also required to pay monthly taxes for education at local schools and universities amounting to approximately \$21 USD for kindergarteners, \$42 USD for high schoolers, and \$62.50 USD for college undergraduates, according to Iraqi government officials in November 2014.¹¹²⁸

As the “caliphate” came under increasing strain, students were eventually forced to print off, at their own expense, the group’s new textbooks from recordable CDs produced by the group.¹¹²⁹ The curriculum was propped up by the production of new textbooks on a range of subjects including chemistry, English language, history, mathematics, physical education, *shari‘a* politics (*sīyāsāt al-shari‘a*), Islamic law and jurisprudence, Islamic theology, and Arabic grammar. The main changes in the texts and curriculum was the emphasis in the rewritten books and classroom lessons on the relationship between the subject matter being taught and direct benefits to Islamic State’s religiopolitical state and military program.¹¹³⁰ Schools were sometimes shut down by the group until the curriculum could be rewritten, leaving hundreds of thousands of children without an education.¹¹³¹

The new curriculum was produced by Islamic State’s central publishing house, Maktabat al-Himma, which operated on the ground in territory controlled by the group while also distributing digital versions of its publications through IS’ sophisticated and extensive

¹¹²⁷ *Ibid.* and Ahmad Khalil, “A Teacher in Raqqa, Living under ISIS Rule,” *Syria Deeply*, 18 November 2014, at <https://www.newsdeeply.com/syria/articles/2014/11/18/a-teacher-in-raqqa-living-under-isis-rule>, last accessed 9 September 2017.

¹¹²⁸ NBC News, “ISIS Imposes Education Tax on All Students in Iraq’s Mosul,” 19 November 2014, at <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/isis-imposes-education-tax-all-students-iraqs-mosul-n251686>, last accessed 9 September 2017.

¹¹²⁹ Beck, “How ISIL Used Government Workers to Control Mosul.”

¹¹³⁰ On Islamic State’s textbooks, see Jacob Olidort, *Inside the Caliphate’s Classroom: Textbooks, Guidance Literature, and Indoctrination Methods* (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2016), 8-24.

¹¹³¹ Joshua Barajas, “Islamic State Locks 670,000 Children Out of Syrian Schools,” PBS News Hour, 7 January 2015, at <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/islamic-state-school-closures-syria-leave-670000-children-without-education>, last accessed 9 September 2017; Reuters, “ISIS Closes Schools in Syria, Leaving 670,000 Children Without Education: UN,” 6 January 2015, at https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/01/06/isis-schools-syria_n_6422066.html?ncid=tweetlnkushpimg00000017, last accessed 9 September 2017; and UNICEF, “New Year in Syria Offers Little Chance of Children’s Education as Schools Remain Targets of Conflict,” 6 January 2015, at https://www.unicef.org/media/media_78365.html, last accessed 9 September 2017.

media networks online. Sub-units of the publishing house focused on different types of materials. For example, Islamic State editions of historical texts by classical, medieval, and modern Muslim religious scholars such as Ibn Qudāma al-Maqdisī (1147-1223), al-Nawawī (1233-1277), and Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (1703-1792) were produced by the Maktab al-Buḥūth wa-l-Dirāsāt. Publications included the new textbooks, *da‘wa* pamphlets and weekly newsletters distributed both on the ground and online, and special editions of historically important works by Sunni Muslim religious scholars with commentary from Islamic State’s publishing house. Other organs of the group’s extensive media operations apparatus, such as the Al-Furqān Media Foundation, published other print releases including messages from its senior leadership or consultative council while others, such as the Al-Hayat Media Center, published the group’s e-magazines *Dabiq* and, later, *Rumiyah* (Rome; *Rūmīya*) in multiple languages. The militant organization’s media operations and framing mechanisms together with its control and reshaping of the education sector in governed areas was meant to transform society and particularly the youth/students into future recruits and members of the *jihadi* state-building enterprise by legitimizing in their eyes the organization’s use, level, and justification of violence as both a political and legal tool and a military tactic.

Islamic State at its greatest territorial extent in 2015 was organized in a top-down hierarchy with the group’s “*amīr al-mu’minīn*,” Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and his two senior deputy *amīrs* (plural: *umarā’*) for Syria and Iraq, at the head. These three leaders were in theory answerable to the consultative council and were aided by a cabinet of “ministers” for major portfolios as the Islamic State of Iraq had been earlier. The senior leadership relied on a number of supervisory councils to oversee the administration of the “caliphate” including its finances and taxation, drafting of laws and codes of conduct, military affairs, intelligence, and internal security and policing.

Early in the expansion of its experiment with territorial governance in Syria, Islamic State partnered with Syrian rebel groups including Ahrar al-Sham and local rebel militias to implement a semblance of control and social order over territory captured from the Syrian Ba‘th regime. This cooperation included partnerships in both military affairs and the establishment of joint courts to govern territory and implement law and order.¹¹³² Only after Islamic State felt strong enough in relation to its Syrian rebel partners, beginning in late 2013 and continuing into the first half of 2014, did it begin to try and seize control of territory unilaterally and forcibly push out other armed groups, such as its defeat and expulsion of rival group Jabhat al-Nusra from Dayr al-Zur governorate in eastern Syria in the spring and early summer of 2014.¹¹³³ Islamic State and its rivals both attempted to gain the support of local tribes such as the al-Bakkir and al-‘Ukaydat in Dayr al-Zur.¹¹³⁴ Local clan and tribal notables in Syria and Iraq, particularly in places such as the Sunni Arab majority Anbar governorate in the west, also split along pre-existing lines of tension with rival clans/tribes competing over control of natural resources such as oil, taking advantage of the conflict to try and gain an upper hand against opponents by either siding with Islamic State or its enemies.¹¹³⁵ The strategic decision-making of local actors to take advantage of civil war

¹¹³² Charles Lister, *The Syrian Jihad*, Chapters 7 and 8, and *Profiling the Islamic State* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2014), at https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/en_web_liste.pdf, last accessed 9 September 2017, 25-29 and Aymenn al-Tamimi, “The Evolution in Islamic State Administration: The Documentary Evidence,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 4 (2015), at <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/447/html>, last accessed 9 September 2017.

¹¹³³ Aron Lund, “Syria’s al-Qaeda Wing Searches for a Strategy,” *Diwan* (Carnegie Middle East Center), 18 September 2017, at <http://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/56673?lang=en>, last accessed 9 September 2017.

¹¹³⁴ Abdallah Suleiman Ali, “War between ISIS, Jabhat al-Nusra Splits Deir Ez-Zor Tribes,” *Al-Monitor*, 31 March 2014, at <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/2014/03/war-isis-nusra-deir-ez-zor-tribes-kassab.html>, last accessed 9 September 2017.

¹¹³⁵ Wissam Abdallah, “Tribal Disputes Heat Up in Syrian Desert,” *Al-Monitor*, 8 July 2015, at <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2015/07/syria-desert-tribes-division-oil-geography.html>, last accessed 9 September 2017; Hadi Salama, “How ISIS Changed Its Game Plan in Iraq,” *Al-Monitor*, 14 July 2014, at <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2014/07/syria-clans-isis.html>, last accessed 9 September 2017; and Haian Dukhan, “Tribes of Syria: Pieces on a Chessboard?,” *Hate Speech International*, 10 August 2016, at <https://www.hate-speech.org/tribes-of-syria-pieces-on-a-chessboard/>, last accessed 9 September 2017 and “Tribes and Tribalism in the Syrian Uprising,” *Syria Studies* 6, no. 2 (2014), at <https://ojs.st-andrews.ac.uk/index.php/syria/article/view/897>, last accessed 9 September 2017.

environments to settle old scores or try and gain an advantage against competing groups and social formations is a regular feature of civil conflict because the resulting violence can be either blamed or lost due to the “social condition of war,” thereby lessening the chances that the perpetrators will be called to account in the same way as they would be absent a war environment.¹¹³⁶

In addition to securing funding for its military operations, Islamic State began early on in the process of its territorial governance experiment in 2014 to earmark a significant level of manpower and other resources to the establishment of visible structures of governance at the local and provincial levels. This included the seizure of local industry and municipal services and restructuring of control of them under its own administrators as well as exerting control over food production facilities such as bakeries and the subsidization of staple foodstuffs such as bread.¹¹³⁷ The group also set up free bus services for local civilians between cities and towns and used government municipal workers in Iraq and Syria to run much of the blue collar, day-to-day public services such as street cleaning, garbage collection, health care, and education.¹¹³⁸

The gradual implementation of proto-state governance culminated in 2014 with the overt takeover of territory, much of it once jointly-held with other armed groups, by Islamic State. As it consolidated its territorial holdings in Raqqa, Aleppo, and Dayr al-Zur governorates in Syria, for example, the insurgent organization began to implement its own

¹¹³⁶ Stephen C. Lubkemann, *Culture in Chaos: An Anthropology of the Social Condition of War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), particularly Chapter 5. Studying war-time violence in the Machaze district of Mozambique, Lubkemann notes that much of the violence constituted a “fragmented war” in which violence was not solely motivated by the competition for control of the state between rival rebel groups or even exclusively controlled by them. Rather, localized violence took on a life of its own through pre-existing systems of social order and belief.

¹¹³⁷ Lister, *Profiling the Islamic State*, 27-28. Lister notes that upon seizing control of Dayr al-Zur governorate in July 2014, Islamic State reduced the price of bread from 200 Syrian pounds to 45 and also began to exert *zakāt* donations of bread from local bakeries for redistribution to the poor. In Mosul, it opened up a free health clinic/hospital and later capped monthly rent at \$85 USD. See Lister, 28.

¹¹³⁸ For examples of public transportation under Islamic State rule, see Figure 23 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/07/19/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation/>.

independent organs of “caliphal” power and governing authority such as courts, police and internal security offices, and bureaus for taxation, education, and the overseeing of Islamic religious and social affairs. By the end of the year, Islamic State’s administrative apparatus had expanded to include fourteen separate *dawāwīn* for education, public services, natural resources, mosques and *da‘wa*, health, public affairs and tribal relations, internal security, the judiciary, police forces including *ḥisba* enforcement, agriculture, military affairs, and the *Maktabat al-Himma* publishing house.¹¹³⁹ These administrative divisions included a centralized leadership as well as provincial and local offices responsible for implementing policies on the ground.

Islamic State used a variety of strategies to gain a territorial foothold in parts of Syria including the infiltration of existing groups and the founding of front organizations through which it implemented a gradual presence and semblance of control.¹¹⁴⁰ One such group is Jaysh Khalid bin al-Walīd, an armed group that continued to operate militarily and administratively as of October 2017 in western parts of Dar‘a governorate in southern Syria where it targeted Syrian rebel groups.¹¹⁴¹ By establishing a physical presence within territory, the insurgents were then able to begin their propagation and proselytization campaign aimed at winning the support of segments of the local population before later moving on to exercising a form of governing authority through the implementation of their legal and social codes, which were backed by the force of the group’s military might and *ḥisba* forces.¹¹⁴² After being expelled from territory, the group maintained, as of the autumn

¹¹³⁹ Al-Tamimi, “The Evolution in Islamic State Administration.”

¹¹⁴⁰ Zelin, “The Islamic State’s Territorial Methodology,” 1-2.

¹¹⁴¹ Jaysh Khalid bin al-Walīd, in addition to its military activities, also attempted to exercise visible performances of territorial control and governance including the running of elementary schools and the regulation of markets and trade. See Figure 24 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/07/19/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation/>.

¹¹⁴² *Ibid.*

of 2017, a guerilla presence, for example in Diyala, Anbar, and Saladin governorates in Iraq as well as Idlib governorate in neighboring Syria.¹¹⁴³

Geographically the “caliphate” was, as of the summer of 2016, divided into 35 provinces (*wilāyāt*), 19 of which were located in either Syria or Iraq and 16 others located outside of those two countries.¹¹⁴⁴ In addition to the administrative *dawāwīn*, the organization also included at least four major committees or offices: the *Hay’at al-Hijra* (Committee of Emigration), *Hay’at Shu’ūn al-Asrā wa-l-Shuhadā’* (Committee of Prisoners’ and Martyrs’ Affairs), *Maktab al-Buḥūth wa-l-Dirāsāt* (Office of Research and Studies, the publication house of the organization’s media *dīwān*), and the *Idārat al-Wilāyāt al-Ba’ida* (Administration for Distant Provinces, referring to those provinces outside of Syria and Iraq).¹¹⁴⁵ The neo-caliphate, under the auspices of the “*amīr al-mu’minīn*” Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, claimed to dispense justice evenly and without bias and worked to instill the fear

¹¹⁴³ In Iraq, Islamic State, as of September 2017, continued to slowly re-emerge as a potent guerilla force in governorates after losing control of almost all of the major urban centers it held between 2014 and the summer of 2017. In Syria, the Syrian rebel coalition Hay’at Tahrīr al-Sham conducts regular security sweeps throughout areas of Idlib governorate that are under its control to root out Islamic State sleeper cells that carry out assassinations, hit-and-run attacks, and plant IEDs and other explosive devices targeting Syrian rebels and religious leaders critical of them such as the Saudi cleric ‘Abdullah al-Muḥaysinī. See Hay’at Tahrīr al-Sham statement, “Tamaddud al-hamla al-amniya li-Hay’at Tahrīr al-Shām qidda al-khalāyā al-tābi’a li-Tanzīm al-Dawla ilā Sarmīn bi-rīf Idlib wa i’tiqāl al-‘asharāt min al-Khawārij ba’d al-sayṭara ‘alā ‘idda awkār lahum” (Continuation of Hay’at Tahrīr al-Sham’s security operation against cells of the ‘Kharijite State Organization [Islamic State]’ in Sarmīn in the Idlib countryside and the arrest of dozens of the ‘Kharijites’ after the capture of a number of their hideouts/dens), Wikālat Ibā’, 9 July 2017, accessed via the organization’s Telegram account at https://web.telegram.org/#/im?p=@Ebaa_Agency, last accessed 9 July 2017.

¹¹⁴⁴ The named provinces were: Khurasan (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan), the Caucasus, Aden-Abyan (Yemen), Shabwa (Yemen), Hadramawt (Yemen), San’a (Yemen), Bayda’ (Yemen), Sinai, Barqa (Libya), Tripoli (Libya), Fezzan (Libya), Algeria, West Africa (Nigeria), al-Liwā’ al-Akhḍar (literally “the Green Province,” in Yemen combining parts of Ibb and Ta’iz governorates), Damascus (Syria), Aleppo (Syria), Homs (Syria), Hama (Syria), Furāt (“Euphrates,” a province encompassing parts of Syria and Iraq), Najd (Saudi Arabia), Hijaz (Saudi Arabia), Baghdad (Iraq), Anbar (Iraq), Tigris (Iraq), Jazīra (encompassing parts of Syria and Iraq), Hasaka (Syria, called “al-Baraka”), Dayr al-Zur (Syria, called “al-Khayr”), Raqqa (Syria), Saladin (Iraq), Falluja (Iraq), Diyala (Iraq), North Baghdad (Iraq), and “al-Janūb” (Iraq, areas south of Baghdad). Affiliate groups such as those in Somalia and Southeast Asia were recognized but not referred to as “provinces.”

See Islamic State film, *Ṣarḥ al-Khilāfa* (Structure of the Caliphate), Mu’assasat al-Furqān, 6 July 2016. The term “*ṣarḥ*” refers to an imposing structure. It is noteworthy that this film was published in the midst of the Iraqi government’s offensive against the *jihadi*-insurgent organization in and around the city of Mosul, suggesting that the film was aimed at shoring up supporters and members whose steadfastness was being challenged by the loss of highly strategic and symbolic territory to the “enemies of Islam.”

¹¹⁴⁵ Islamic State film, *Ṣarḥ al-Khilāfa*.

of God in the population in the interest of building an Islamic polity.¹¹⁴⁶ Many of Islamic State's "provinces" generally followed the boundaries of pre-existing governorates/provinces in Syria and Iraq such as Aleppo, Raqqa, Anbar, and Nineveh, though some with slight territorial modification, for example the organization's inclusion of the town of Qaryatayn in Syria as part of its "Damascus province" instead of Homs governorate. The organization also introduced some new provinces, some of which seemed to follow the boundaries of earlier governorates such as the "Jazīra Province" that roughly adhered to an Iraqi governorate, Bādīya al-Jazīra, before 1958¹¹⁴⁷ while others, such as the "Euphrates Province" (Wilāyat al-Furāt), symbolically straddled the Sykes-Picot borders that Islamic State had so dramatically "abolished" in cinematic fashion in June 2014.¹¹⁴⁸

Subsumed within the powerful role of the caliph were six main responsibilities: (1) overseeing the spread of Islam and seeing that its tenets are upheld, (2) defending Muslim lands ("the homeland"), (3) protecting and fortifying lands at the front of the battles with the *kuffār*,¹¹⁴⁹ (4) preparing the armies of the Muslims (*yujahhiz al-juyūsh*), (5) implementing the *ḥudūd*, and (6) enforcing the adherence of the ruled population to Islamic law (*yaḥmil al-nās 'alā al-iltizām bi-aḥkām al-shar'*).¹¹⁵⁰ The caliph, who the organization recognizes cannot carry out governance duties alone, is aided by his consultative council/cabinet of ministers

¹¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴⁷ See Figure 31 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/11/17/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation-figure-31/>.

¹¹⁴⁸ See Figure 32 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/11/17/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation-figure-32/>. See also the Islamic State film, *The End of Sykes-Picot*, Al-Hayat Media Center, which was released in multiple languages in June 2014. The Sykes-Picot borders are referred to by the organization as a "nationalist idol" and representative of the "idol of nationalism" (*awthān al-waṭanīya al-qawmīya*).

¹¹⁴⁹ Islamic State and other *jihadi* organizations use an older meaning of the term "*thughūr*" (frontline lands in danger of attack). This meaning was also used in classical and medieval Islamic texts about the borderlands between the lands of Islam and the lands of *kufr*. See Michael Bonner, "Some Observations Concerning the Early Development of Jihad on the Arab-Byzantine Frontier," *Jihad in Islamic History*, Chapter Seven, and *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War: Studies in the Jihad and the Arab-Byzantine Frontier*.

¹¹⁵⁰ Islamic State film, *Ṣarḥ al-Khilāfa*.

who were selected based upon their administrative skills, knowledge, and personal piety.¹¹⁵¹

The most important consultative and supervisory body is the Delegated Committee (*Lajnat al-Mufawwada*), which is responsible for overseeing the operations of the provinces, administrative offices and “ministries” (*dawāwīn*), and the other offices and committees.¹¹⁵²

The need for the Delegated Committee and an active administration, and particularly the provincial offices and networks through which administrative activities were regionalized and localized, increased as the amount of territory directly controlled by Islamic State steadily increased in late 2014 and into 2015.¹¹⁵³ The provinces were overseen directly by an insurgent shadow governor (*wālī*) appointed directly by the “caliph” who was tasked with implementing the *jihadi* proto-state’s governing principles and edicts at a regional level. He relied on local-level administrators and commanders in cities and towns within his province to further localize the implementation of the organization’s governing authority. Major decisions were referred by the shadow governor upward to the Delegated Committee. The governors were responsible for seeing that “justice” was secured and implemented and that the needs of local populations were met (*qaḍā’ ḥawā’ij al-nās*).¹¹⁵⁴

The administrative activities of Islamic State were carried out by the *dawāwīn* and affiliated offices whose activities were further organized at the regional and local levels and overseen by the Delegated Committee.¹¹⁵⁵ The image that the organization’s senior leadership, like that of Al-Shabaab, wanted to promote was that its governance sought to protect the rights of locals (*ḥifẓ al-ḥuqūq*), maintain the public interest (*ri’āya al-maṣāliḥ al-*

¹¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* For a chart of the expanding bureaucracy of Islamic State’s *jihadi*-rebel proto-state between late 2014 and the first half of 2016, see Figure 29 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/11/15/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation-figure-29/>.

¹¹⁵⁵ Islamic State film, *Ṣarḥ al-Khilāfa*.

‘āma), and ensure the security of the religion and the people (*taḥaffāza ‘alā al-nās dīnīhim wa amanīhim*).¹¹⁵⁶

As of the summer of 2016, the official *dawāwīn* were: (1) judiciary and grievances response courts (*Dīwān al-Qadā’ wa-l-Mazālim*), which served as the judiciary arm responsible for everything from hearing civil complaints and criminal cases to overseeing the *mazālim* courts; (2) *Dīwān al-Ḥisba*, which was responsible for enforcing the organization’s legal and social codes in governed territories under the banner of “commanding the good and forbidding the wrong”; this included the destruction of “forbidden” items such as musical instruments, satellite TV dishes, alcohol, and tobacco; (3) *Da‘wa* and Mosques (*Dīwān al-Da‘wa wa-l-Masājīd*), which was responsible for organizing and running social and religious programs for locals and members of the organization, training/indoctrinating local preachers (*khuṭabā’*; singular: *khaṭīb*) and missionaries (*du‘āt*), and maintaining and building local mosques as well as seeing that they followed Islamic State’s edicts; in Mosul, this *dīwān* oversaw the construction of a new mosque named after the first leader of the Islamic State of Iraq, Abu ‘Umar al-Baghdadi, the construction of which began in the spring of 2015 and was completed that summer;¹¹⁵⁷ (4) *Dīwān al-Zakāt*, which collected and determined the appropriate distribution of religiously-mandated charity and taxes meant for certain groups within society including the poor as well as those “striving on the path of God,” a group that includes soldiers stationed at the front; (5) Military affairs and soldiery (*Dīwān al-Jund*), which was in charge of recruiting, training, and supplying and otherwise maintaining the preparedness of the organization’s military forces as well as planning and carrying out military campaigns and raids (*ghazawāt*) and garrisoning (*ribāṭ*) and protecting the fronts (*thughūr*); (6) Public Security (*Dīwān al-Amn al-‘Ām*), which was in charge of internal

¹¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵⁷ See Figure 30 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/11/15/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation-figure-30/>.

security (*al-aman al-dākhilī*) and counter-intelligence within governed territory; (7) Treasury (*Dīwān Bayt al-Māl*), which minted the organization's new silver and gold coinage that was designed to mimic historical Islamicate coinage and maintained its finances and monetary and natural resources, businesses, and expenditures; (8) Media (*Dīwān al-I'lām*), which ran the organization's expansive multimedia campaign both internally on the ground as well as externally and internationally through thousands of accounts and web sites online and on social media platforms including Twitter, Telegram, Facebook, YouTube, Internet Archive, and Instagram; this unit organized the provincial-level media outputs as well as the activities of the central media organizations such as the Al-Furqān Media Foundation; (9) Education (*Dīwān al-Ta'līm*), which oversaw the reorganization of the curriculums at the elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels in areas under Islamic State's control; (10) Health (*Dīwān al-Ṣiḥḥa*), which was in charge of the health sector and running vaccination campaigns; (11) Agriculture (*Dīwān al-Zirā'a*), which regulated agricultural and livestock production and food resources; (12) Natural resources (*Dīwān al-Rikāz*), which ran the production/collection of oil, gas, and minerals; (13) Booty from military operations and seized property (*Dīwān al-Fay' wa-l-Ghanā'im*), which oversaw the counting, storage, and distribution of all spoils captured or otherwise obtained by Islamic State;¹¹⁵⁸ and (14) Public services (*Dīwān al-Khidamāt*), which was locally sometimes referred to as an "office" (*maktab*); this unit oversaw the work of municipal workers such as road and bridge maintenance, the upkeep and cleaning of streets and public places including playgrounds, markets, and parks, and the running of utilities.¹¹⁵⁹

¹¹⁵⁸ This includes the spoils of war (*ghanīma*, Plural: *ghanā'im*) as well as another class of property, *fay'*, about which there are different juridical opinions concerning its definition. *Fay'* in general refers to properties taken by the state without force from *kuffār* and could include properties taken after the cessation of fighting and, for contemporary *jihadis*, it also includes property seized from "apostates" executed or otherwise punished for infractions against Islamic law. On the legal definitions of the two types of seized property, see Majid Khadduri's annotated translation of the ninth century Hanafi jurist Muhammad ibn al-Ḥasan Shaybānī, *The Islamic Law of Nations: Shaybani's Siyar* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 48-49.

¹¹⁵⁹ Islamic State film, *Ṣarḥ al-Khilāfa*.

In addition to the *dawāwīn* there were also several committees and offices staffed by professionals and also overseen by the Delegated Committee: (1) *Hay'at al-Hijra*, which supervised the process of inclusion and maintenance of foreign fighters (*muhājirīn*) and their families and ensuring that the other administrative units had their staffing needs met; (2) Prisoners' and Martyrs' Affairs (*Hay'at Shu'ūn al-Asrā wa-l-Shuhadā'*), which was tasked with trying to free Muslim prisoners held by "apostates" and *kuffār* as well as maintaining the families of martyrs including their widows and children; (3) the Office of Research and Studies (*Maktab al-Buḥūth wa-l-Dirāsāt*), which was the organization's publishing house that produced Islamic State's official publications on issues of law and theology; (4) the Administration for Distant Provinces (*Idārat al-Wilāyāt al-Ba'ida*), which managed Islamic State's "provinces" located outside of Syria and Iraq; and (5) the Office for Public and Tribal Relations (*Maktab al-'Alāqāt al-'Āma wa-l-'Ashā'ir*), which was tasked with outreach to local civil society and tribal leaders.¹¹⁶⁰

The operations of Islamic State's *dawāwīn* were symbolically important for the organization at both the local and international levels. Locally, they enabled it to physically take over the role of the state even if to a limited degree and this, in turn, advanced the leadership's claim of counterstate sovereignty. Internationally, carefully framed and choreographed presentations of the organization's administrative offices served to back up its claim that it was in the process of establishing and administering a state.¹¹⁶¹ In Syria, Iraq, and Libya this was in the absence of the state in war-torn areas of the country where Islamic State sought to insert itself as the new governing authority. The organization sought, in brief,

¹¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶¹ Islamic State's media operations output was used both locally and internationally. Films, radio broadcasts, and print materials were distributed not only online through an extensive Internet and social media network but also on the ground within territory that the organization controlled. For example, as it expanded territorially in late 2014 into 2015, Islamic State issued radio broadcasts highlighting the activities of its administrative offices in its various "provinces" including the distribution of *zakāt* and other forms of aid to the needy, police and *ḥisba* work, and more mundane administrative work such as the issuance of fishing licenses. See: Islamic State radio broadcast, 8 June 2015, in which the organization's media and news wing provided a brief overview of administrative work, including the implementation of the *ḥudūd* and *ta'zīr* punishments, across its provinces.

to stake its claim to legitimacy as an insurgent counterstate and proto-state actor through action and not only in theory or via its media operations. The physical implementation of its territorial control through the strategic use of violence was a key step in this process because it directly linked the organization's claim to ideological/religious and political legitimacy to physical demonstrations and performances of its coercive governing power and capacity. Islamic State's territorial expansion and the extension of the performative aspects of its violence and particularly the "law and order" violence of control enabled the organization to mimic, in its eyes, the coercive power of the states with which it was competing as well as the historical Muslim states that it idealized, often ahistorically. Strategic violence was both a tool of state-building as well as a way for the *jihadi* proto-state to frame its claim to legitimacy and project an image of power and ideological purity through the ritualization of the *hudūd*.

Economics, Currency, and the 'Caliphate'

The key to the legitimacy of Islamic State's self-proclaimed neo-caliphate came via the framing of its perceived operational competency and projection of authority as well as its attempt to monopolize the use of legitimate violence. The organization sought to take over and embody the position of the former nation-state governments in areas of Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Yemen that it controlled as well as, through its regional affiliate "provinces" and to radically varying degrees, in territory stretching from northeastern Nigeria to Somalia, Afghanistan, northern Pakistan, and Southeast Asia. The ability to implement taxation and other methods of revenue extraction and the maintenance of a political economy of the violence of law and order was at the center of the insurgent leadership's ability to project power both on the ground and in the media sphere. In addition to taking advantage of money provided to municipal workers in Iraq by the central government, the organization also collected revenue from various streams including taxation, extortion and protection rackets,

smuggling of natural resources such as oil and antiquities, and bank robberies or the takeover of state financial institutions with the capture of major cities such as Mosul, Tikrit, Falluja, and Ramadi.¹¹⁶² Among the most lucrative of these revenue schemes came through the underground oil and fuel trade between Islamic State and Syrian Ba‘th regime-held areas in the eastern part of the country, chiefly the oil rich Dayr al-Zur governorate, which provided the insurgents with an estimated \$50 million USD per month in 2015.¹¹⁶³ In many cases, particularly with local Syrians, it was Islamic State’s cash and its ability to pay salaries that attracted new recruits, particularly as the organization pushed out its rivals and consolidated territorial control.¹¹⁶⁴ The anti-IS rival group Jabhat al-Nusra also benefited from its better

¹¹⁶² Peter Taylor, “‘It’s God’s gift.’ Islamic State Fills Coffers with Iraqi Government Cash,” *The Guardian*, 21 April 2015, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/22/isis-fills-coffers-with-iraqi-government-cash>, last accessed 9 September 2017. On the organization’s taxation patterns across resource-rich and resource-poor areas of Syria, see Mara Revkin, “What Explains Taxation by Resource-rich Rebels? New Data from the Islamic State in Syria,” Working Paper (last revised 23 October 2017), at https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3023317, last accessed 25 October 2017.

¹¹⁶³ *Ibid.*; Fazel Hawramy and Luke Harding, “Inside Islamic State’s Oil Empire: How Captured Oilfields Fuel Isis Insurgency,” *The Guardian*, 19 November 2014, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/19/sp-islamic-state-oil-empire-iraq-isis>, last accessed 9 September 2017; Rachel Kreisman, “Raqqa and the Oil Economy of ISIS,” *The Atlantic Council*, 15 May 2017, at <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/syriasource/raqqa-and-the-oil-economy-of-isis>, last accessed 9 September 2017; George Kiourktsoglou and Alec D. Coutroubis, “ISIS Export Gateway to Global Crude Oil Markets,” *London Shipping Centre, Maritime Business Forum*, 12 March 2015, at <http://www.marsecreview.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/PAPER-on-CRUDE-OIL-and-ISIS.pdf>, last accessed 9 September 2017; Hamza Hendawi and Qassim Abdul-Zahra, “Despite US-led Campaign, Islamic State Rakes in Oil Earnings,” *Associated Press*, 23 October 2015, at <https://apnews.com/061e7a83299644868c920bed0667eb9c/despite-us-led-campaign-islamic-state-rakes-oil-earnings>, last accessed 9 September 2017; Benoit Faucon and Ahmed Al Omran, “Islamic State Steps Up Oil and Gas Sales to Assad Regime,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 19 January 2017, at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/islamic-state-steps-up-oil-and-gas-sales-to-assad-regime-1484835563>, last accessed 9 September 2017; Matthew M. Reed, “Taking Stock of ISIS Oil: Parts 1 & 2,” *The Fuse*, 23 and 29 October 2015, at <http://energyfuse.org/taking-stock-of-isis-oil-part-1/> and <http://energyfuse.org/taking-stock-of-isis-oil-part-2/>, last accessed 9 September 2017; Ericka Solomon, Robin Kwong, and Steven Bernard, “Inside Isis Inc: The Journey of a Barrel of Oil,” *Financial Times*, 29 February 2016, at <http://ig.ft.com/sites/2015/isis-oil/>, last accessed 9 September 2017; Erika Solomon, Guy Chazan, and Sam Jones, “Isis Inc: How Oil Fuels the Jihadi Terrorists,” *Financial Times*, 14 October 2015, at <https://www.ft.com/content/b8234932-719b-11e5-ad6d-f4ed76f0900a#axzz3sDYr6K8C>, last accessed 9 September 2017; Tim Lister, “Is ISIS Going Broke?,” *CNN*, 29 June 2016, at <http://www.cnn.com/2016/03/04/middleeast/isis-finance-broke-lister/index.html>, last accessed 9 September 2017; Jessica Hartogs, “ISIS Oil Production Takes a Hit: Study,” *CNBC*, 18 April 2016, at <https://www.forbes.com/sites/timdaiss/2016/08/26/why-islamic-states-oil-revenue-is-plunging/#5da07ae627b9>, last accessed 9 September 2017; and Ahmed Rasheed, “ISIS Suffers Near Collapse in Oil Revenue as It Loses Territory in Iraq,” *Reuters*, 28 July 2016, at <http://www.businessinsider.com/isis-loses-oil-revenue-as-it-loses-territory-in-iraq-2016-7>, last accessed 9 September 2017.

¹¹⁶⁴ Jalal Zein Eddine, “Poverty Sparks Enrollment in ISIS,” *Syria Deeply*, 29 January 2015, at <https://www.newsdeeply.com/syria/articles/2015/01/29/poverty-sparks-enrollment-in-isis>, last accessed 9 September 2017 and Ian Black, “Poverty Driving Syrian Men and Boys into the Arms of Isis,” *The Guardian*, 4

financial status and expanding military power and succeeded in wooing away thousands of local fighters from rebel militias under the Free Syrian Army umbrella.¹¹⁶⁵

In the case of Islamic State, in 2015 fighters were reportedly paid between \$400-\$1200 USD per month depending on their skillsets with stipends of \$50 USD for wives and \$25 USD per child.¹¹⁶⁶ Of an estimated \$2 billion USD the group amassed in 2014, an estimated \$360 million USD came from various forms of taxation: 10% from income taxes, \$10-15% from business taxes, a 2% sales tax, a 5% tax on all cash withdrawals from banks, and taxes of 10-35% on pharmaceuticals.¹¹⁶⁷ The insurgents also charged road tolls of between \$200-1000 USD, *jizya* taxes on non-Muslims, and fees for permission to travel temporarily outside of IS-controlled territory with the travelers' homes and possessions taken as collateral to ensure they returned.¹¹⁶⁸ In 2015, an estimated \$500 million was collected through the oil and gas trade along long-established smuggling routes in Syria and Iraq.¹¹⁶⁹ A 2017 report from the Central Bank of Iraq estimated that Islamic State also garnered almost \$830 million USD between July 2014 and August 2017 simply from monies captured from state banks in cities and towns it captured.¹¹⁷⁰

In services provision, such as electricity, insurgents were given priority over the general population, enjoying, for example, round-the-clock power while other Mosul

May 2016, at <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/may/04/poverty-driving-syrian-men-and-boys-into-the-arms-of-isis>, last accessed 9 September 2017.

¹¹⁶⁵ Mona Mahmood and Ian Black, "Free Syrian Army Rebels Defect to Islamist Group Jabhat al-Nusra," *The Guardian*, 8 May 2013, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/08/free-syrian-army-rebels-defect-islamist-group>, last accessed 9 September 2017 and Al-Jazeera English, "FSA Brigade 'Joins al-Qaeda Group' in Syria," 20 September 2013, at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/09/2013920164342453621.html>, last accessed 9 September 2017.

¹¹⁶⁶ Jose Pagliery, "Inside the \$2 Billion ISIS War Machine," CNN, 11 December 2015, at <http://money.cnn.com/2015/12/06/news/isis-funding/index.html?iid=EL>, last accessed 9 September 2017.

¹¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷⁰ Jack Moore, "ISIS Members Plundered \$800 Million from Iraq, Central Bank Says," CNN, 9 August 2017, at <http://www.newsweek.com/isis-members-plundered-800-million-iraq-central-bank-says-648492>, last accessed 9 September 2017.

residents had to deal with only receiving six hours or less of electricity per day.¹¹⁷¹ The insurgent group also overworked municipal workers such as street cleaners in order to present a pristine image of the idyllic life in the new “caliphate,” lengthening work shifts and eliminating weekly days off.¹¹⁷² In contrast to the group’s rhetoric about equality under their interpretation of Islam and Islamic law, its commanders had their residences cleaned daily by the toil and sweat of municipal workers.¹¹⁷³ Islamic State even confiscated the workers’ uniforms of orange and blue coveralls, using them instead to dress prisoners for public or privately filmed executions.¹¹⁷⁴ After the Iraqi government cut off salary payments in 2015, the group reduced the workers’ salaries to around \$70 USD per month and threatened anyone who did not accept the reduced wages with death if they refused to continue in their jobs.¹¹⁷⁵ When resources became scarce to shore up public municipal services such as electricity, public service workers were forced by the group to loot abandoned Christian towns around Mosul for the needed supplies.¹¹⁷⁶

Islamic State’s violence and puritanism in Mosul increased as the organization came under increasing pressure by mid-2016 from advancing Iraqi government, allied militia, and Iraqi Kurdish forces backed by the U.S.-led Coalition and Iran.¹¹⁷⁷ However, elsewhere the group’s members reportedly loosened their enforcement of religious and political edicts either because they were preoccupied with military matters or in the interest of collecting funding as they became increasingly cut off by advancing enemy forces, with overall funding

¹¹⁷¹ Beck, “How ISIL Used Government Workers to Control Mosul.”

¹¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

reportedly decreasing by 80% from its high in 2015.¹¹⁷⁸ In Raqqa city, as U.S.-backed Syrian Kurdish and Arab militias advanced, Islamic State militants were forced to spend most of their time shoring up defensive positions at the expense of the implementation of their form of law and order.¹¹⁷⁹ Infractions formerly punished corporally, such as women and men wearing incorrect dress, were handled financially, for example by forcing detained women to buy *niqabs* from the insurgent group's religious police for roughly \$40 USD each or levying fines ranging from \$25 USD for a pack of cigarettes to \$150 USD for a cartoon instead of a public flogging, as they had done at the height of the group's power in 2015.¹¹⁸⁰ The group required residents of the city to use only the gold and silver coinage it produced, which had to be bought with U.S. and Syrian currency, something the militants wanted to use if they had to flee to other areas of Syria.¹¹⁸¹ Islamic State also began to charge Raqqawis for electricity, water, and other public utilities.¹¹⁸² The insurgents continued to seek revenue from trade in oil and antiquities with the former continuing to bring in an estimated \$4 million USD per month in October 2017.¹¹⁸³ The group raked in an estimated \$2.4 billion USD in 2015, down from around almost \$3 billion USD, according to one estimate, in 2014, but shored up falling oil and gas revenues in 2016 by raising taxes and other fees it imposed on locals in Syria and Iraq.¹¹⁸⁴

¹¹⁷⁸ Abdulrahim Raja, "Cornered in Raqqa: The Last Days of ISIS: Militants Loosen Enforcement of Religious Edicts and Scrounge for Cash," *The Wall Street Journal*, 26 August 2017, at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/cornered-in-raqqa-the-last-days-of-islamic-state-1503672428>, last accessed 9 September 2017.

¹¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸³ Bennett Seftel, "With Coffers Draining, ISIS May Seek Donations & Step Up Crime," *The Cipher Brief*, 27 October 2017, at <https://www.thecipherbrief.com/coffers-draining-isis-may-seek-donations-step-crime>, last accessed 27 October 2017.

¹¹⁸⁴ Jose Pagliery, "ISIS Makes Up for Lost Oil Cash with Rising Taxes and Fees," CNN, 31 May 2016, at <http://money.cnn.com/2016/05/31/news/isis-oil-taxes/index.html>, last accessed 9 September 2017.

Islamic State's discourse on financial matters and especially currency, in addition to being a key temporal interest for its senior and administrative leadership because of its importance to the organization's ability to function as both a military and political actor, also included an ideological and symbolic aspect. On 13 November 2014 Islamic State's administration announced that it would begin minting its own copper, silver, and gold currency on the orders of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, which it said was more religiously and historically authentic than the paper money of the "apostate" and "Crusader" nation-states.¹¹⁸⁵ The proposal came, the announcement said, after a study and recommendation by the Dīwān Bayt al-Māl to al-Baghdadi and the organization's *majlis al-shūrā*.¹¹⁸⁶ The new coinage, which was produced in limited amounts, was produced in *dīnār* (gold in one and five *dīnār* coins), *dirham* (silver in one, five, and ten *dirham* coins), and *fulūs* (copper in ten and twenty *fulūs* coins) denominations.¹¹⁸⁷ Each coin was embossed with the name "Islamic State" (*al-Dawlat al-Islāmīya*) and the organization's official slogan and religiopolitical claim about its proto-state, "Caliphate upon the Prophet's methodology" (*khilāfa 'alā minhāj al-nubūwwa*) and included images such as stalks of wheat (representing God's bounty), a world map (based on a *ḥādīth* prophesizing that the *Umma* would one day expand across the entire globe), a spear and shield (representing the martial history of the Prophet and his Companions), the "White Minaret" (*al-manārat al-bayḍa*) of the Great Umayyad Mosque in Damascus where some Islamic traditions say the prophet Jesus will return, the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem (the first of the two *qiblas* of Islam), the crescent moon, and a date palm tree (based on a

¹¹⁸⁵ Islamic State communiqués, "Announcement Concerning the Minting of a Currency Specific to the Islamic State" and "Bayān 'an sakka 'umla naqdīya bi-l-Dawlat al-Islāmīya" (Statement about the minting of new currency for the Islamic State), both issued 13 November 2014.

¹¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

ḥādīth narrated by ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar in which the Prophet Muhammad compared this tree, whose leaves do not fall, to Muslims).¹¹⁸⁸

This announcement was posted in public spaces in towns and cities under Islamic State control and followed by pamphlets published by the organization’s publishing arm, the Maktab al-Buḥūth wa-l-Dirāsāt. In one, the historical authenticity of the organization’s new coinage was traced back to the Umayyad caliph ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān (646-705) who was the first Muslim ruler to mint a distinctly Islamic currency, which provoked a war with the Byzantine emperor Justinian II.¹¹⁸⁹ The switch to paper money only occurred, the pamphlet claimed, in the modern period after the U.S. Federal Reserve de-linked its paper currency from the gold standard which was, the pamphlet alleged, a trick orchestrated by “the Jews” to relieve the deficits of America in its many “lost wars against the Muslims” (*ḥurūb Amrīkā al-khāsira ma‘ al-muslimīn*).¹¹⁹⁰ Islamic State’s decision to mint new coins included a symbolically important ideological challenge to the “enemies of Islam” and linked this hostility to the sacred past in a bid for legitimacy, which it backed up with additional historical, Qur’anic, and *ḥādīth* references.¹¹⁹¹ Although it claimed that the new coinage would ultimately replace the paper currency in Iraq and Syria as well as American dollar notes, the organization continued to use the paper currencies of all three countries, though it sometimes imposed bans on the use of certain high denomination or newly-printed notes and regulated the use of these currencies in certain transactions.¹¹⁹² Minting of the new currency

¹¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸⁹ Islamic State, “Dīnār al-dhahab al-Islāmī aw dūlār al-waraq al-Amrīkī?” (The Islamic Gold Dinar or the American Paper Dollar?), *Maktab al-Himma*, November 2014.

¹¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹² In October 2015, for example, Islamic State banned the use of new paper currency printed by the Syrian Ba‘th regime. See Figure 33 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/11/17/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation-figure-33/>.

began in the late autumn of 2014 in Syria and Iraq with additional public notices being placed in public spaces and distributed in pamphlet form to locals.¹¹⁹³

The symbolism of the new “caliphal” currency was two-fold. Firstly, the very minting of the new coinage was a clear ideological challenge to the dominance of the existing nation-state and international order and an attempt to connect the activities of a thoroughly modern organization to the revered Islamic sacred past. Secondly, the new coins also served as a vehicle for the organization to broadcast its own symbols and messages through the embossments on the currency itself.¹¹⁹⁴ The decision, for example, to include the White Minaret on the five *dirham* silver coin was, in part, based on the apocalyptic narrative framing endorsed and adopted by the organization’s senior leadership that referred to the place of Syria as “Bilād al-Shām” and the “land of epic battles” (*arḍ al-malāḥim*) in end of days prophecies.¹¹⁹⁵

The “return of the gold *dīnār*,” as Islamic State described it, was linked to the “return” of the “caliphate” and the dawn of a “new age” that would see the “Victorious Sect” (referring, of course, to themselves; *al-ṭā’ifat al-manṣūra*) bring about victories until the coming of “the Hour” of the Day of Judgment.¹¹⁹⁶ The “satanic” financial system of capitalism, represented by the U.S. and meant to enslave the rest of the world, would crumble under the blows of the “caliphate,” the organization promised.¹¹⁹⁷ The decision to begin

¹¹⁹³ See Figure 34 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/11/17/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation-figure-34/>.

¹¹⁹⁴ David J. Wasserstein, “The Coinage of the Islamic State,” *Israel Numismatic Research* 11 (2016), 182.

¹¹⁹⁵ Islamic State communiqué, “Bayān ‘an sakka ‘umla naqdīya bi-l-Dawlat al-Islāmīya.” For detailed historical numismatic analysis on this coin, see Wasserstein, “The Coinage of the Islamic State,” 191-192, and Ian Oxnevad, “The Caliphate’s Gold: The Islamic State’s Monetary Policy and Its Implications,” *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 7, no. 2 (2016), 125-140.

¹¹⁹⁶ Islamic State film, *The Rise of the Khilafah: Return of the Gold Dinar*, Al-Hayat Media Center, 29 August 2015.

¹¹⁹⁷ Islamic State films, *Hadam ‘Urūsh al-Kuffār bi- ‘Awdat al-Dīnār* (Demolishing the Disbelievers’ Throne with the Return of the Dīnār), Maktab al-I‘lāmī bi-Wilāyat al-Janūb, 11 September 2015; *Ighāza al-Kuffār bi- ‘Awdat al-Dīnār* (Vexing the Disbelievers with the Return of the Dīnār), Maktab al-I‘lāmī bi-Wilāyat Nineveh (Nīnawā), 7 September 2015; *Farḥat al-Amṣār bi- ‘Awdat al-Dīnār* (Joy of the Garrison Towns for the Return of the Dīnār), Maktab al-I‘lāmī bi-Wilāyat al-Fallūja, 10 September 2015; *Farḥat al-Muslimīn bi- ‘Awdat al-Dīnār*

minting copper, silver, and gold currency was one step in this process and was just as important symbolically and physically as the “return” of the implementation of the *hudūd*, *zakāt*, and *jizya*.¹¹⁹⁸ These stages were foreseen by the Prophet Muhammad and would purify the world of corruption, secularism, and blasphemy.¹¹⁹⁹ The return to using precious metals for currency was ordained by the Abrahamic God in the revealed scriptures He sent to the Jews, Christians, and Muslims, Islamic State’s officials and propagandists claimed.¹²⁰⁰ The world banking system was framed as an evil system designed to subjugate the world’s peoples in financial shackles controlled by the U.S. and its Federal Reserve.¹²⁰¹ Interestingly, the shift away from the gold standard, which is also a rallying cry for many U.S. Libertarians such as former Republican congressman Ron Paul,¹²⁰² was of particular interest to Islamic State, which highlighted this charge as one of its pieces of evidence proving the fraudulent and deceptive U.S.-dominated economic system.¹²⁰³

The minting of new coinage was also used as a propaganda tool historically by rising and expanding Islamic states such as the Isma‘ili Fatimid Caliphate in North Africa and Egypt whose rulers began minting their own gold *dīnārs* as their Imamate-Caliphate grew in a symbolic challenge to their Sunni rivals, the ‘Abbasids.¹²⁰⁴ The new “caliphate,” however,

al-Dhahabī (Joy of the Muslims for the Return of the Golden Dīnār), Maktab al-I‘lāmī bi-Wilāyat Dijla, 11 September 2015; and *Farḥat Ḥalab bi-‘Awdat Dīnār al-Dhahab* (Joy of Aleppo for the Return of the Gold Dīnār), Maktab al-I‘lāmī bi-Wilāyat Ḥalab, 6 September 2015.

¹¹⁹⁸ Islamic State film, *The Rise of the Khilafah: Return of the Gold Dinar*.

¹¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰⁰ Islamic State film, *The Dark Rise of Banknotes and the Return of the Gold Dinar*, Al-Hayat Media Center, 11 October 2015.

¹²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰² Charles Postel, “Why Conservatives are Obsessed with Gold,” *Reuters*, 17 September 2013, at <http://www.businessinsider.com/why-conservatives-like-gold-2013-9>, last accessed 29 October 2017.

¹²⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰⁴ Wasserstein, “The Coinage of the Islamic State,” 196-197.

would probably be aghast at the historical connection between its use of currency as a propaganda tool and that of the “Rāfiḍa Bāṭinīya,” the Fatimid *Imam-Caliphs*.¹²⁰⁵

Islamic State, the Violence of Control, and Spectacular Punishment

Violence is a strategic tool used by *jihadi*-insurgent rulers to establish territorial control and a system of governance in the name of “the” *shari‘a* and implementing “God’s rule” (*shar‘ Allah*) on earth. Bolstered by their claims to divine sanction, *jihadi* rebel rulers harness the power of demonstrative public violence in the form of the *ḥudūd* as a means of social control. In order to have power, this violence must be performed in front of the population. Furthermore, it must be performed in a ritualized manner that is understandable to those viewing it. When a thief who has met the *ḥadd* financial requirements of stolen goods has his or her right hand cut off or the *zānī/ zānīya muḥṣin/muḥṣina* (fornicator who is married and judged to be sane and legally responsible for his or her actions) is stoned to death, the act of corporal or capital punishment is carried out according to a set script, that is a set of ordered and ritualized motions or parts that include the court case and presentation of witnesses, gathering of the population in the public square, the reading out of the sentence, at times the confession or repentance (*tawba*) of the criminal, and, finally, the implementation of the *ḥadd* or *ta‘zīr* punishment.¹²⁰⁶

Public violence must also be, in the eyes of the law imposing it, spectacular, Foucault notes because the punishment “must be seen by all almost as its triumph.” Proving the old adage that nothing succeeds like excess, public violence in the form of corporal and capital punishment achieves its aim only through spectacle.

The very excess of the violence employed is one of the elements of its glory: the fact that the guilty man should moan and cry out under the blows is not a shameful side-effect, it is the very ceremonial of

¹²⁰⁵ Islamic State and other sectarian anti-Shi‘i Sunni *jihadi* organizations refer to the Shi‘a as “rejectionists” of “true” Islam and refer to Isma‘ili Shi‘a as Bāṭinīs because of their belief that their Imams possess the ability to discern esoteric “inner” meanings from the Qur’an.

¹²⁰⁶ On the public ritual of punishment and repentance under *jihadi* rebel rule, see Figure 41 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/11/22/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation-figure-41/>.

justice being expressed in all its force. Hence no doubt those tortures that take place even after death: corpses burnt, ashes thrown to the winds, bodies dragged on hurdles and exhibited at the roadside. Justice pursues the body beyond all possible pain.¹²⁰⁷

The categories of criminals, offenders, and punishments implemented by Islamic State and other *jihadi*-insurgent rulers follows the outline of Islamic criminal law as it coalesced as Islamic civilization spread out of Arabia and began to establish bureaucratic empires and regional kingdoms.¹²⁰⁸ The carrying out of justice in the name of law and order is ritualized not only when it involves *ḥadd* crimes but also the implementation of discretionary (*ta'zīr*) punishment for offenses that either do not fall under the *ḥadd* classification or do not meet its minimum requirements, such as the *niṣāb* value in cases of theft. This was true of historical Muslim states and it is true today of *jihadi* proto-states whose rulers seek to claim the mantle of Prophetic and temporal sociopolitical legitimacy for themselves.¹²⁰⁹

In addition to the *ḥadd* crimes, the legal systems of *jihadi* rebel proto-states such as those formed by Islamic State, Al-Shabaab, and the Afghan Taliban are also focused on heading off rebellions and domestic challenges to their territorial control and authority, which they do by implementing the *aḥkām al-bughāt* against real and potential or suspected challengers and dissidents. Like nation-states, *jihadi* proto-states claim the right to monopolize the legitimate use of violence as an extension of their right to govern and implement the law. Just as medieval Islamic states sought to extend their authority over semi-public spaces such as markets because of these places' centrality to public life, modern *jihadi* governing authorities claim the right to regulate not only public but also, increasingly, private behavior in a manner that was previously unheard of in premodern Islamicate

¹²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰⁸ On the development and outline of Islamic criminal law and practices of punishment historically and up to the modern period, see Rudolph Peters, *Crime and Punishment in Islamic Law*.

¹²⁰⁹ On historical examples of Muslim state implementation of public violence and punishment in the name of law and order, see Christian Lange, *Justice, Punishment and the Medieval Muslim Imagination* and Kristen Stilt, *Islamic Law in Action: Authority, Discretion, and Everyday Experiences in Mamluk Egypt* (New York City: Oxford University Press, 2012).

societies. Thus, the powers of these modern proto-states' "*hisba*" powers extend not only over regulation of markets, trade, and commerce, as they did historically, but include all manner of "verification" of public behavior and morality. This vastly expanded regulatory authority and power of punishment is all justified under the rubric of *hisba*. The violence of punishment as exercised by the state is not an emotional or exasperated act but a purposeful display of legal authority and legitimacy.

The term 'penal torture' does not cover any corporal punishment: it is a differentiated production of pain, an organized ritual for the marking of victims and the expression of the power that punishes; not the expression of a legal system driven to exasperation and, forgetting its principles, losing all restraint. In the 'excesses' of torture, a whole economy of power is invested.¹²¹⁰

It is through the levying of pain and, in some cases, death that "injured sovereignty" and claimed legitimacy, "wounded by the affront of crime," is reclaimed and restored by the *jihadi* proto-state.¹²¹¹

The ritualization of public violence and punishment by the state is meant to justify the implementation of justice as a means of establishing official truth of a crime as narrated by the ruling authorities.¹²¹² This "truth" was inscribed for all to see on the body of the convicted.¹²¹³ The carrying out of punishment, including execution, also serves to connect the violence that is being meted out to the crime that has been committed. "It [the execution, punishment] pinned the public torture on to the crime itself; it established from one to the other a series of decipherable relations," Foucault observed.

It was an exhibition of the corpse of the condemned man at the scene of his crime, or at one of the near-by crossroads. The execution was often carried out at the very place where the crime had been committed...[...] There was the use of 'symbolic' torture in which the forms of the execution referred to the nature of the crime: the tongues of blasphemers were pierced, the impure were burnt, the right hand or murderers was cut off; sometimes the condemned man was made to carry the instrument of his crime [...] There were even some cases of an almost theatrical reproduction of the crime in the execution of the guilty man—with the same instruments, the same gestures. Thus justice had the crime

¹²¹⁰ Foucault, 34-35.

¹²¹¹ Paul Friedland, *Seeing Justice Done*, 11.

¹²¹² Foucault, 44.

¹²¹³ *Ibid.*

reenacted before the eyes of all, publishing it in its truth and at the same time annulling it in the death of the guilty man.”¹²¹⁴

In practice, the punishment of *ḥadd qiṣāṣ* exemplifies this symbolic and ritualized connection between the violence of the punishment and the violence of the capital crime or the magnitude of the offense to the legal and, more importantly, the social and political order.

Public punishment as carried out by *jihadi* proto-states is meant to not only control behavior through the punishment of set offenses but also to serve as demonstrative violence through which the symbolic authority of the ruler is increased. State-sanctioned violence thus serves two purposes: it regulates public behavior, serving as a deterrent (*ẓajr*) and warning to other would-be offenders, and it enhances the image of the state and its ability to project its power and authority outward onto the population it controls. The body of the convicted serves as the canvas on which (proto-) state authority is written and, in this way, serves as a political field on which the power relations between the governing and the governed is inscribed.¹²¹⁵ Islamic law and specifically the *ḥudūd* is utilized by modern day *jihadi* rulers as a method for social control, that is, as a tool to regulate public behavior and ease the way for territorial control which, in turn, allows those governing to pursue economic projects as well as trumpet symbolic ideological achievements. The spectacle of punishment and “seeing justice done” enables *jihadi* rulers and their supporters to attach themselves through the performance of violence to their core beliefs by means of symbolic, ritualized, and demonstrative action.¹²¹⁶

¹²¹⁴ Foucault, 44-45.

¹²¹⁵ Foucault, 66.

¹²¹⁶ Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, 8.

Ritualizing Law: Territorial Control and the Performance of ‘Justice’

Islamic State, as it solidified territorial control and expanded its governing administrations between the autumn of 2014 and throughout 2015, also increased its externally and internally broadcast media activities designed to highlight particular aspects of its governance, all of which were carefully framed so as to portray the group as both administratively capable and ascendant against its many enemies. From Raqqa city in western Syria, Islamic State’s senior leadership oversaw what was then an expanding territorial proto-state, the largest ever ruled by a *jihadi* organization. The organization’s top-down hierarchical structure ensured that the decision-making and actions of subordinates remained within the parameters set by the senior leadership but was also flexible enough to allow regional and local administrators and commanders some degree of leeway in implementing territorial control in their own geographical areas of operation. The guiding principles of this control were the twin concepts of *ḥisba* and “commanding the good and forbidding the wrong,” which the “State” organization¹²¹⁷ took on as a right of conquest as part and parcel of its claim to have re-formed “the Caliphate,” a historically problematic claim as discussed in Chapter One.¹²¹⁸

The local offices of the Dīwān al-Ḥisba dispatched officers in marked “*ḥisba*” vehicles and wearing distinctive vests identifying them as *ḥisba* agents to make the rounds of cities, towns, and villages under Islamic State’s territorial purview.¹²¹⁹ These agents, according to Abu Ṣuhayb al-Anṣārī, a *ḥisba* official in Raqqa Province, were tasked with overseeing the reintroduction of Islamic moral, legal, and religious codes amongst the local population as a part of the insurgent organization’s program of ordering society and

¹²¹⁷ The organization’s *jihadi* and Islamist enemies often refer to it as such (*Jamā‘at al-Dawla*) as well as “*Tanzīm al-Baghdadī*” (Baghdadi’s Group), rejecting its claim to represent an “Islamic state” or neo-caliphate.

¹²¹⁸ Islamic State film, *Jawla fī Dawāwīn al-Dawla* (Tour of the Offices of the State), Maktab al-I‘lāmī li-Wilāyat al-Raqqa, 3 April 2016.

¹²¹⁹ *Ibid.* See also Figure 25 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/07/19/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation/>.

solidifying the moral bases of its claimed state.¹²²⁰ It was *ḥisba* and the rule of *shari‘a* that enabled local commerce, trade, and economic prosperity to return since the rights of both merchants and consumers were protected with regard to the fairness of business and quality of products such as meat and other foodstuffs.¹²²¹ Banned substances such as alcohol and tobacco products, musical instruments and recordings, and “polytheistic” paraphernalia were also seized and destroyed as part of the Dīwān al-Ḥisba’s policing of behavior in both the public and private realms.¹²²²

The implementation of Islamic State’s governing authority under the rubric of “commanding the good and forbidding the wrong” extended to even the more mundane aspects of daily life such as the regulation of traffic through its Shurṭa al-Murūr (Traffic Police). In cities and major towns, this police force conducted traffic at busy intersections and thoroughfares, issued tickets and fines for infractions, investigated vehicular accidents, and oversaw the registration and regulation of commercial and private vehicles.¹²²³ The organization’s courts, in addition to serving as the judicial face of its implementation of *ḥudūd* and *ta‘zīr* punishments, also maintained records of marriages and other social contracts and oversaw mediation efforts that also involved personnel from its administrative office responsible for public relations and outreach to local tribes.¹²²⁴ Missionary propagation (*da‘wa*) and the running of official courses in Islamic law and jurisprudence, Qur’anic studies and memorization, and *‘ulūm al-ḥadīth* was controlled by the Dīwān al-Masājīd wa-l-Da‘wa. This *dīwān* organized and ran classes for locals including women and

¹²²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²²¹ *Ibid.* See also Figure 26 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/07/19/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation/>.

¹²²² Islamic State film, *Jawla fī Dawāwīn al-Dawla*. See also Figure #27 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/11/13/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation-appendix-2/>.

¹²²³ Islamic State film, *Jawla fī Dawāwīn al-Dawla*.

¹²²⁴ *Ibid.*

children as part of Islamic State’s program to expand its base of support and build a grassroots ideological foundation for its governing and military structures.¹²²⁵ Public services, such as trash removal, the maintenance of parks and other public spaces, and provision of electricity and water were handled by the Markaz al-Khidamāt (Services Office), which in some locales included an Office of Public Parks (Maktab al-Ḥada’iq) that oversaw the repair and reopening of public gardens and playgrounds for locals.¹²²⁶ These seemingly mundane administrative activities enabled the organization to project an image of an Islamic utopia that in reality did not exist but that proved to be a powerful lure for both locals as well as foreigners.¹²²⁷

The responsibility of framing Islamic State’s administrative structures as “more manifest than the sun in the middle of the sky” fell to the organization’s sprawling media wing, which produced materials distributed to both local and global audiences.¹²²⁸ The establishment and expansion of the neo-caliphal system was made possible only through the defiance and sacrifices of the organization’s *mujāhidīn* who “irrigated” its foundations with their blood.¹²²⁹ Based, the group claimed, solely on the Qur’an and *Sunna* of the Prophet Muhammad and pushed forward by the sword, the political structures put in place were a fulfillment of the requirement for *imāma* and *khilāfa* “upon the Prophetic methodology.”¹²³⁰ Their main goal in forming and building a state was a part of Islamic State’s project to renew

¹²²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²²⁶ See Figure #28 at

¹²²⁷ For more on the framing of an Islamic State “utopia,” see Charlie Winter, “Fishing and Ultraviolence,” BBC News, 6 October 2015, at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/ids-88492697-b674-4c69-8426-3edd17b7daed>, last accessed 9 September 2017.

¹²²⁸ Islamic State film, *Ṣarḥ al-Khilāfa*.

¹²²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²³⁰ As discussed in Chapter One, the group’s claim that it built a state/caliphate “upon the Prophet Muhammad’s methodology” is ahistorical in that the full theorization of the caliphate as a system of government was not laid out completely until the medieval period. Islamic State is also fond of using a phrase from the thirteenth century Hanbali jurist Ibn Taymiyya about how it operates under “the guiding Book [Qur’an] and the aiding sword,” (*qawām al-dīn kitāb yahdī wa sayf yansur*), “[Islam’s] strength is the book that guides and the victory-bringing sword.” See: <https://saaid.net/aldawah/58.htm>, last accessed 9 September 2017.

religious purity and return political power to Muslims by renewing their dedication to Islam and its traditions, thus currying the blessings of God who would ensure victory.¹²³¹

Framing Punishment: The Performative Implementation of Law and Order

Public execution has always served multiple purposes for the state and society. For the rulers, it is an unmistakable and brutal display of the power of the law and the might of the state. In the area of religious belief it was an earthly performance of divine judgment in the Hereafter where the condemned were called to account for their crimes and other affronts to God's law.¹²³² Through their ritualized punishment and the literature and other cultural practices and artifacts that grew up around it, the condemned served as a mirror to society at large about issues of morality, law, and their own sins.¹²³³ Executions were ritualized and often dramatized actions meant to invoke and manipulate symbols "through orienting bodily action, comportment, and speech" and achieve a particular narrative framing of action.¹²³⁴

Rituals may be understood as prescribing and orchestrating bodily movements, speech acts and symbolic material artifacts within spatial and temporal environments with a view to projecting particular narratives of existing social relationships. Narratives, working through ritual, can be considered causal in that they confer moral and political status and authority, allocate identity, offer plans for action, comment on and define social relationships and prompt emotional and cognitive responses in individuals and groups—in other words, they alter subjective perceptions and internal environments of action.¹²³⁵

In certain contexts the ritual of public execution also served to demonstrate the "cooperative authority" between the authority of the temporal state and the dominant religion, the latter being represented through the clerical class.¹²³⁶ "Spectacles of suffering" often took place during particularly key moments in the political and legal development or evolution of the

¹²³¹ Islamic State film, *Şarh al-Khilāfa*.

¹²³² Andrea McKenzie, *Tyburn's Martyrs* and Vic Gatrell, *The Hanging Tree: Execution and the English People*.

¹²³³ *Ibid.*

¹²³⁴ Philip Smith, "Executing Executions," 239.

¹²³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²³⁶ Scott D. Seay, *Hanging between Heaven and Earth*, 14. On the political, eschatological, and legal aspects of punishment in medieval Islamic society, specifically the Saljuqs and Mamluks of Egypt, see Christian Lange, *Justice, Punishment, and the Medieval Muslim Imagination* and "Changes in the Office of Hisba under the Seljuqs," in *The Seljuqs: Politics, Society and Culture*, eds. Christian Lange and Songül Mecit (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 157-181; and Kristen Stilt, *Islamic Law in Action*.

state and the ritualized suffering and punishment of the condemned could serve as a political tool.¹²³⁷ The execution ritual's power relied not only on its publicness but also on its theatricality, that is, the manner in which the executions served as ceremonial performances of the power of the state over its subjects.¹²³⁸ In these aspects, public executions performed by contemporary *jihadi*-insurgent proto-states do not substantively differ in form from other historical examples, despite the Islamized nature of the narrative framing, rhetoric, and justifications. The Bible used in Christian Europe and North America is replaced with the Qur'an and Prophet's *sunna* but the substantive sociopolitical and ritualized contours of the practice remain largely the same.

Historically in Islamic contexts corporal and capital punishment also served as an unmistakable demonstration of the power of the state and its claim to legitimacy in the utilization and implementation of violence. In the early Islamic period under the first ruling dynasty to follow the Prophet Muhammad and the *Khulafā' al-Rāshidūn*, the Umayyads, execution ritual practices were legitimized by the caliphs through references to the Qur'an but drew substantially from earlier execution symbolism from earlier states such as the Roman and Sasanian Empires.¹²³⁹ Political power was also legitimized through appeals to religion and religious scriptures, masking worldly political interests and power dynamics.¹²⁴⁰

¹²³⁷ Katherine Royer, "The Body in Parts," 323.

¹²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 323-332. On the role of the audience as witnesses to the ritual performance of execution and the problems this could cause state authorities and the shift from public to privatized punishment by the state, see Annulla Linders, "The Execution Spectacle and State Legitimacy," 609-616.

¹²³⁹ Marsham, "Public Execution in the Umayyad Period" and Anthony, *Cruxifixion and Death as Spectacle*. There were clear connections and continuities between violence, asceticism, and militant faith between the Roman, early Christian, and early Islamic periods. See: Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity*.

¹²⁴⁰ Wadad al-Qadi, "The Religious Foundation of Late Umayyad Ideology and Practice," in *The Articulation of Early Islamic State Structures*, ed. Fred M. Donner (New York: Routledge, 2012), 37-80; Steven C. Judd, *Religious Scholars and the Umayyads: Piety-Minded Supporters of the Marwanid Caliphate* (New York: Routledge, 2014) and *The Third Fitna: Orthodoxy, Heresy and Coercion in Late Umayyad History* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1997); Mahmood Ibrahim, "Religious Inquisition as Social Policy: The Persecution of the Zanadiq in the Early Abbasid Caliphate," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (1994), 53-72; and Christopher Melchert, "Religious Policies of the Caliphs from al-Mutawwakil to al-Muqtadir, A.H. 232-295/A.D. 847-908," *Islamic Law and Society* 3, no. 3 (1996), 316-342.

Classical Islamic jurisprudence on criminal or penal law did not constitute a single, unified branch of law but rather was separated into various topics regarding the nature of the offense in question, chiefly whether it was an offense against a person, God and His law (these included *ḥudūd* offenses), sinful behavior covered under discretionary punishment rather than the *ḥudūd*, or actions that endangered either public order or state security.¹²⁴¹

Statecraft, as conceived of in the classical Islamic period, granted rulers broad executive and judicial authority including the right to legislate within the bounds of Islamic law.¹²⁴² *Shari‘a* courts and their *qāḍīs* (plural: *quḍāt*) were granted authority by the ruler and served as representatives of state authority rather than fully independent investigative and judicial bodies.¹²⁴³ Government and military officials handled the political aspects (*sīyāsa al-shari‘a*) of the law, that is, the prevention, investigation, and punishment of crime while judges and the courts were specifically tasked with interpreting and implementing legal doctrine.¹²⁴⁴ Political and military officials, including police officials, possessed extensive authority over the prevention and punishment of crime and acted as nodes of state power

¹²⁴¹ Certain offenses, such as those covered under *qiṣāṣ* and the *ḥudūd*, are dealt with quite extensively in the *fiqh* manuals while others, such as offenses falling under *ta‘zīr*, were left to ruling authorities who were granted a great deal of power to determine the appropriate punishments and remedies. Financial payments of blood money (*dīya*) fell under private law, not public, because they dealt with restitution rather than punishment, though its payment could be overseen by the *shari‘a* court.

Classical Islamic penal law was not uniformly rigid in terms of its application and emphasized leniency in many cases, something that bewildered and frustrated European colonial officials who sought to adjust local legal codes to make them more useful as tools for social and territorial control under the rubric of law and order. The enactment of *shari‘a* penal codes and particularly the *ḥudūd* by Muslim states in the modern period served as a means both for authoritarian rulers to claim religious *bona fides* and ward of criticism from Islamists as well as demonstrations of deep cultural and emotive connections to Islam and “traditional” values and practical utilization of Islamic penal codes to regulate behavior. For autocrats such as Libya’s late dictator, the eccentric Colonel Mu‘ammar al-Qadhafi, it also was a symbolic repudiation of the West and, in his case, a part of his self-framing as a champion of the oppressed of the “Third World,” countries historically subjugated by European colonial powers and their successor, the U.S.

See Rudolph Peters, *Crime and Punishment in Islamic Law*, 7-10, 144-146 and Chapter 4, and Chapter Four and Jonathan Brown, “Stoning and Hand Cutting—Understanding the Hudud and the Shariah in Islam.”

¹²⁴² *Ibid.*, 8.

¹²⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

largely independent of the courts in the classical and medieval periods.¹²⁴⁵ In instances where public behavior infringed on the law and the case was undisputed, the market inspector (*muḥtasib*) had the authority to delve out judgment and punishment, though he did not have the ability to initiate formal legal investigations or other proceedings.¹²⁴⁶ Modern *jihadi* rebel rulers have expanded the powers of the *muḥtasib* in a similar way to their expansion of the authority of the state's judicial powers over the private as well as the public realm, not dissimilar to the way in which the modern bureaucratic and sovereign state outside of the Muslim world claims authority over both realms.

In cases of contemporary *jihadi*-insurgent governance, the dynamics at play with regard to the heavy emphasis on the implementation of *shari'a* penal codes and Islamic law more generally are strategic/utilitarian, socioeconomic and political, and ideological. Strategically, Islamic law is the simplest way in which an organization that desires to exert territorial control and governing authority can make a claim that it is a legitimate body since it draws upon pre-existing cultural sentiments about the legitimacy of Islam as a faith tradition, one which has over time been woven into the fabric of Muslim-majority societies and their political systems. Economically, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, Islamic penal codes and particularly the way in which they are interpreted by state authorities, *jihadi* or otherwise, are a straightforward way for governing authorities to crack down on economic and property crimes such as theft, robbery, banditry, and highway brigandage and, as a result, protect and rejuvenate local trade and business. In the case of *jihadi* proto-states, this is a key goal because the stability and wealth of local residents, merchants, traders, and other businesspeople will directly impact the pool from which *jihadi* rulers will draw much if not most of their funding. Ideologically, the emphasis on the implementation of *shari'a* is a clear declaration of a claim to Islamic authenticity and legitimacy as well as a repudiation of the

¹²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

¹²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

secular nation-state order that dominates the international system.¹²⁴⁷ In the former, it is tied to the strategic and cultural dimensions in that the emphasis on Islamic law and justice, however harsh, is meant to tap into wider society's (perceived) deeply-ingrained embrace of Islamic religious as well as traditional, conservative social norms and values with which "Islam" has become intertwined.

In the eyes of the senior leadership of Islamic State, the implementation of their interpretation of Islamic law—legitimized through the twin claims of "commanding the good and forbidding the wrong" and *hisba*—was a sign of God's blessing and an instance of victory. "We [Islamic State] achieved victory the day we established the *ṣalāt*, gave *zakāt*, commanded the good and forbade the wrong," said the group's spokesman, Abu Muhammad al-ʿAdnānī in an audio address released in March 2015. "We achieved victory the day we declared and implemented *al-walāʾ wa-l-barāʾ*,"¹²⁴⁸ smashed the idols, proclaimed *tawḥīd* in every mosque, on every street and place, stoned the fornicator (*zān*), killed the sorcerer (*sāḥir*), amputated the hand of the thief, flogged the imbiber of alcohol, and returned honor to the Muslim women with the *hijab*."¹²⁴⁹ In a retrospective film released by the organization a year after it swept into Mosul and across western Iraq, Islamic State celebrated its implementation of *shariʿa*, which included the destruction of "idols" such as crosses on church roofs and doors, statues of local saints, and Shiʿi shrines as well as the collection and distribution of *zakāt* and the stoning of *muḥṣin* fornicators, flogging of drinkers of alcohol, hand amputation of thieves, execution by beheading with the sword of sorcerers (in accordance with *aḥādīth* reports) and execution of homosexuals by throwing them from the

¹²⁴⁷ Islamic State film *Khayr Umma* (The Best *Umma*), Muʿassasat al-Furqān, 28 May 2014.

¹²⁴⁸ This refers to the concept of showing "loyalty to the believers and disavowal of the disbelievers" (*al-walāʾ min al-muʾminīn wa-l-barāʾ ʿan al-kāfirīn*), which is a key concept of Salafism but is also a principle expressed in similar forms by other Muslims regarding associating and supporting coreligionists over non-believers and avoiding interactions with disbelievers or those hostile to Islam.

¹²⁴⁹ Abu Muhammad al-ʿAdnānī, *Fa-yaqtulūna wa yuqtalūna* (They Kill and are Killed), Muʿassasat al-Furqān, 12 March 2015. The title is taken from Qurʾan 9:111.

rooftops of tall buildings followed by stoning.¹²⁵⁰ The organization also highlighted the governance role of its *dawāwīn*, the other centerpiece to its claim of legitimacy.¹²⁵¹ In implementing official punishments, the publicness of the punishment was the key to its symbolic and demonstrative power as a tool of population regulation and control. The punishments broadcast the organization's claims to legitimate authority and sought after monopoly on the strategic, governing use of violence.

Islamic State's leadership and administrators implemented a literal reading of the *ḥudūd* based upon selected passages addressing the set punishments from the Qur'an and *aḥādīth*.¹²⁵² The *ḥudūd*, its jurists noted, were the set punishments established by God and the Prophet Muhammad in order to set limits in order to prevent behavior that contravenes *shari'a* and is akin to disobeying divine rules.¹²⁵³ The *ḥudūd* offenses were those traditionally identified in classical Islamic jurisprudence: *zinā*, bearing false witness (*qadhf*), *liwāt*, theft, *ḥirāba*, and drinking alcohol.¹²⁵⁴ The associated punishments for each offense were meant to prevent the perpetrator from re-offending and dissuade others from committing the same sins.¹²⁵⁵ This explanation does not differ substantially from explanations of the rulings from other non-*jihadi* Muslim religious scholars and activists, particularly those representing more traditional and conservative views.

¹²⁵⁰ Islamic State film, *Ām 'alā al-Fatḥ* (Year of Conquest/Victory), Maktab al-I'lāmī bi-Wilāyat Nīnawā, 11 June 2015. For stills from the film regarding the implementation of the *ḥudūd* and other aspects of Islamic law, see Figure 35 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/11/18/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation-figure-35/>.

¹²⁵¹ For stills from the film regarding governance activities, see Figure 36 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/11/18/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation-figure-36/>.

¹²⁵² Islamic State pamphlet, *Al-ḥudūd al-shari'a* (Islamic Law's Set Punishments), Maktab al-Himma, December 2015.

¹²⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵⁴ *Ibid.* For one of Islamic State's public proclamations, released by the organization's "Aleppo Province" in December 2014, see Figure 42 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/11/23/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation-figure-42/>.

¹²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

The “wisdom of applying the *ḥudūd*” (*al-ḥikma min taṭbīq al-ḥudūd*) was that in doing so Muslims were recognizing God’s purpose and great wisdom (*ḥikam ‘aẓīma*) in establishing set limits on behavior in the interest of justice (*al-ḥukm al-‘adl*) and enabling the implementation of good governance of great benefit to the *Umma*.¹²⁵⁶ The success of the *ḥudūd*, Islamic State’s ideologists said, was demonstrated by the difference between the punitive system of justice applied by the *kuffār* and the divinely-guided justice of the “caliphate” as well as the low levels to near absence of crime in the latter in comparison to U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) statistics that note a murder occurs every 27 minutes and a rape every 7 minutes.¹²⁵⁷

In the interest of “justice,” Islamic State’s jurists claimed that all legal requirements of case investigation and evidence were followed, though this was in reality untrue. The ideal requirements for investigation and evidence included either obtaining a confession from the accused (*i‘tirāf*), which was a feature in many of the capital criminal cases recorded by Islamic State in films and photographs, or getting testimony from four corroborating witnesses to acts of *zinā*, *liwāt*, alcohol consumption, and defamation/false witness and interviewing all witnesses in the interest of justice including women.¹²⁵⁸ Pregnancy of an unmarried woman accused of fornication and the aroma of wine or alcohol on the breath of the accused consumer of alcohol would, however, constitute proof in such cases according to the organization’s judicial practices.¹²⁵⁹ In addition to witnesses, the organization also touted

¹²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵⁷ *Ibid.* These statistics seem to be based on the FBI’s “Crime Clock” statistics. See, for example, the 2015 Crime Clock Statistics at <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2015/crime-in-the-u.s.-2015/resource-pages/crime-clock>, last accessed 15 September 2017.

¹²⁵⁸ Islamic State pamphlet, *Al-ḥudūd al-shari‘a*. In one robbery and murder case, two young men were convicted by one of the organization’s courts after witnesses testified to their guilt; see Islamic State film, *Batr al-Fasād bi-Ḥukm Rabb al-‘Ibād #2* (Cutting Off Corruption with the Ruling of the Lord of the Servants [Believers] #2), Maktab al-‘Ilām bi-Wilāyat Nīnawā, 9 May 2015.

¹²⁵⁹ *Ibid.* Pregnancy has been used in fornication cases outside of *jihadi*-insurgent contexts including northern Nigeria with the re-implementation of *shari‘a* penal codes in 1999, which came to worldwide attention with the Amina Lawal case in 2002. For the Northern Nigeria *shari‘a*-based penal code, see <https://shariasource.blog/2017/10/10/sharia-penal-legislations-northern-nigeria/>, last accessed 11 October 2017,

its forensic science investigatory capabilities including fingerprinting and lab testing of fluids, another embodiment of the organization's mix of the modern and the medieval in its approach to politics and the law.¹²⁶⁰

Following classical judicial practice, Islamic State's judiciary followed certain conditions (*shurūf*) in applying the *hudūd* including: (1) seeing that legal obligations for the validity of implementing the punishments were established (*taklīf*) and that the accused was deemed by the ruling authorities to be legally responsible (*mukallaḥ*) and not either a minor or not of sane mind; (2) establishing that the offense was committed of the accused's free will (*ikhtiyār*) and s/he was not compelled, since the punishments do not apply in the latter case; (3) and that there is no doubt (*shubha*) that the offense was committed since this, too, would determine whether the *hudūd* should or should not be applied.¹²⁶¹

In some cases, Islamic State's jurists and administrative officials followed these conditions and recognized the different types of punishment in cases of *zinā* and theft by applying the punishment of public flogging in cases of *zinā ḡhayr muḥṣin* (offenders who are unmarried) versus *zinā muḥṣin* and applying *ta'zīr* public floggings in cases of theft where the monetary minimum of stolen property (*niṣāb*) were not met.¹²⁶² Other offenses punished with discretionary *ta'zīr* punishments—usually public floggings sometimes accompanied by public shaming—included drug offenses, smuggling and promotion of forbidden items such as tobacco products, harassment of women, embezzlement, slander and bearing false witness,

and Philip Ostien, ed., *Sharia Implementation in Northern Nigeria, 1999-2006: A Sourcebook* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 2007).

¹²⁶⁰ For photographs from an official Islamic State photographic essay released on 1 April 2016 by the media office of its Wilāyat al-Furāt, see Figure 43 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/11/27/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation-figure-43/>.

¹²⁶¹ Islamic State pamphlet, *Al-ḥudūd al-shari'a*.

¹²⁶² See Figure 37 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/11/19/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation-figure-37/>.

attempted theft, and breaking the Ramadan fast.¹²⁶³ Individuals convicted of bearing false witness were punished with public humiliation and sometimes corporally, noting the seriousness of the offense in classical Islamic jurisprudence and the modern militants' interpretation of it.¹²⁶⁴ In some capital offense cases such as those involving individuals convicted of aiding the “enemies of the Muslims” including the Syrian Ba‘th regime or *ḥirāba*, public execution was preceded by public humiliation (*tashhīr*) and followed by crucifixion or public display of the offender’s body (*ṣalb*) so that all of his neighbors were made aware of his transgressions against them as a community.¹²⁶⁵

Islamic State was perhaps most theatrical in its implementation of capital punishment justified under claims of legally justified retaliation-in-kind (*qiṣāṣ*) of both common criminals as well as offenders accused of posing a security threat to state and society through acts of sabotage, spying, and otherwise aiding the “enemies” of Islam and the Muslims. For common criminals, *ḥadd qiṣāṣ* was implemented in a public space and sometimes involved the use of the same or similar weapons used by the perpetrators, such as the same shotgun or similar stone blocks used in acts of murder in two cases adjudicated by Islamic State

¹²⁶³ See Figure 38 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/11/19/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation-figure-38/>.

¹²⁶⁴ See Figure 39 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/11/19/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation-figure-39/>.

¹²⁶⁵ Islamic State films *Rad‘a al-Jawāsīs* (Deterring the Spies), Maktab al-I‘lāmī bi-Wilāyat Dijla, 16 June 2015 and *‘Ibra li-kul Mu‘tabir* (A Lesson for Everyone to Consider), Maktab al-I‘lāmī bi-Wilāyat Ḥalab, 18 December 2014. The second video documents the capture and public execution of a man accused of being a Syrian Ba‘th regime militiaman (*shabīḥ*) who planted tracking devices later used by the regime to launch air strikes in the city of al-Bāb in northern Aleppo. The accused is shown confessing before he is paraded on a crossbeam “cross” in the bed of a pick-up truck before the local population (*tashhīr*) to his site of execution where an Islamic State official reads out the decision of the organization’s court and details his crimes of aiding the “Nusayri regime” (*al-Tanzīm al-Nuṣayrī*) in the midst of a cheering crowd before his throat is cut and his body displayed. The criminal, because he aided the enemies of the Muslims and helped them kill Muslims, was judged to have apostatized. The video’s introductory narration emphasizes that “God’s ruling was applied on him in front of the Muslim public/people” (*taṭbīq ḥukm Allah fihi amām ‘āmat al-Muslimīn*) who were impacted by his actions.

See official Islamic State photographs and stills from the second film of the use of *tashhīr* and *ṣalb* in Figure 44 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/11/27/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation-figure-44/>.

courts.¹²⁶⁶ In cases of outright revenge that were cast as instances of *ḥadd qīṣāṣ*, such as the executions of members of Iraqi government-aligned militias, Syrian Ba‘th regime forces, and accused spies, the perpetrators were often not punished among locals but instead had their deaths, which were often particularly gruesome, filmed, framed, and published as part of Islamic State’s massive media operations campaign to serve as examples meant to frighten other enemies of the organization and as a message to its internal and external enemies. These punishments included the execution of individuals accused of aiding air strikes against the organization with explosives meant to mimic aerial munitions or amidst the ruins of buildings destroyed in air strikes, running over a captured Syrian regime tank crewman with a captured tank, locking a group accused of taking photographs of Islamic State buildings and sending them to its enemies in the car they used to carry out their crime and shooting it with a rocket-propelled grenade meant to simulate an airstrike explosion, and framing the executions of captured Syrian regime soldiers as retaliation for its continued airstrikes and abuses against Syrian civilians through the use of news footage of the aftermath of such strikes and dramatized scenes of the prisoners being forced to change out of their regime uniforms and into the orange jumpsuits of criminals.¹²⁶⁷ The convicted were sometimes made to reenact

¹²⁶⁶ Islamic State film, *Al-Qīṣāṣ Hayat*, Maktab al-I‘lāmī bi-Wilāyat Nīnawā, 28 July 2015. See also Figure 40 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/11/20/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation-figure-40/>; the photograph has been edited due to obscure some of the graphic imagery.

¹²⁶⁷ Islamic State films *Wahī al-Shaytan* (Satan’s Inspiration), Maktab al-I‘lāmī bi-Wilāyat al-Khayr, 25 June 2016; *Šinā‘at al-Wahm* (The Making of Illusion), Maktab al-I‘lāmī bi-Wilāyat al-Khayr, 11 September 2016; *Qad U’dhira man Andhara* (The One Who Wars is Excused), Maktab al-I‘lāmī bi-Wilāyat al-Khayr, 20 April 2015; *Sahq al-‘Addā* (Crushing the Enemy), Maktab al-I‘lāmī bi-Wilāyat ‘Aden-Abyan, 20 May 2016; *Wa inna ‘Āqabtum fa-‘āqibū bi-mithl mā ‘ūqibtum bihi* (And If You Punish Them, Then Punish with the Like of That wherewith You were Afflicted), Maktab al-I‘lāmī bi-Wilāyat Ḥims, 24 October 2015, the title being a reference to Qur’an 16:126; *Wa inna ‘udtum ‘udnā* (And If You Return, We Will Return), Maktab al-I‘lāmī bi-Wilāyat Nīnawā, 23 June 2015, the title being a reference to Qur’an 17:8 and 8:19; *Shifā’ al-Šudūr* (Healing the Chests), Mu’assasat al-Furqān, 3 February 2015; *Inna Allah lā yuḥibu al-khā’inīn* (Verily God does not love the Treacherous/Traitors), Maktab al-I‘lāmī bi-Wilāyat Dijla, 6 December 2015, the title referencing Qur’an 8:58; *Fa-‘Āqabtum bi-mithl mā ‘ūqibtum bihi* (Punish Them with the Like of that wherewith You were Afflicted), Maktab al-I‘lāmī bi-Wilāyat Dimashq, 11 December 2015, the title referring to Qur’an 16:126; *Tasfīya al-Murtaddīn* (Liquidating the Apostates), Maktab al-I‘lāmī bi-Wilāyat Nīnawā, 30 January 2016; and *Faḍḥ al-Mutanakkirīn* (Uncovering/Exposing the Disguised), Maktab al-I‘lāmī bi-Wilāyat Ḥims, 22 June 2016.

their crimes for the benefit of Islamic State's media campaign.¹²⁶⁸ In some instances, local residents were included as participants both in the role of viewers of the implementation of punishment as well as, on occasion, participants in the actual execution or celebrations for the death of the criminal in its aftermath.¹²⁶⁹ Like Al-Shabaab, Islamic State also recognized the importance of maintaining at least a semblance or façade of public relations with local powerbrokers and preexisting groups, such as tribes and clans, in some cases punishing its own fighters for offenses against local civilians up to the execution of those convicted of stealing money and property from civilians while using the organization's name.¹²⁷⁰

Conclusion

The territorial expansion of *jihadi*-insurgent organizations in Somalia and Syria and Iraq presented their leaders with the challenge of how to implement governance over local populations, economies, and security. In establishing provincial/regional and local administrations and implementing a semblance of harsh law and order through philistine interpretations of Islamic law and jurisprudence—particularly those legal codes that can be classified as constituting Islamic penal law in the modern legal sense—Al-Shabaab and Islamic State concurrently emphasized the economic and ideological impetuses of their judicial programs. Regarding economics, the implementation of *shari'a* and specifically the *ḥudūd* served as a vehicle through which the jihadi-insurgent rulers cracked down on wanton violence in their attempt to monopolize its use for themselves, which in turn led to a

¹²⁶⁸ Islamic State film *Qiṣṣa Naḥr* (Story of a Slaughtering), Maktab al-I'lāmī bi-Wilāyat al-Furāt, 28 June 2016.

¹²⁶⁹ Islamic State films *Taṣfīya Thalātha Ḍubbāt min al-Jaysh al-Nuṣayrī* (Liquidating Three Officers from the Nusayri Army), Maktab al-I'lāmī bi-Wilāyat al-Raqqā, 6 November 2014; *Wa inna 'udtum 'udnā* (And If You Return, We Will Return), Maktab al-I'lāmī bi-Wilāyat al-Raqqā, 21 November 2014, the title being a reference to Qur'an 17:8 and 8:19; *Qiṣāṣ al-Ra'ya min al-Murtaddīn* (Retaliation on a Group of Apostates), Maktab al-I'lāmī bi-Wilāyat Nīnawā, 11 May 2016; and *Qiṣāṣ al-Ra'ya min al-Murtaddīn* (Retaliation of the Public on the Apostates), Maktab al-I'lāmī bi-Wilāyat Nīnawā, 11 May 2016. In one recorded incident, a Syrian Ba'th regime militiaman is beaten by a crowd of civilians before Islamic State fighters eventually stop them before they executed him; see Islamic State film *Ghazwat Abū Mālik al-Tamīmī #2* (Expedition of Abu Mālik al-Tamīmī, Part 2), Maktab al-I'lāmī bi-Wilāyat Ḥims, 8 June 2015.

¹²⁷⁰ Islamic State film, *Batr al-Faṣād bi-Ḥukm Rabb al-'Ibād #1* (Cutting Off Corruption with the Ruling of the Lord of the Servants [Believers] #1), Maktab al-I'lāmī bi-Wilāyat Nīnawā, 6 April 2015.

semblance of stability in a war-time environment and varying degrees of revival for local economies. Reviving local businesses and agriculture was a key interest of *jihadi* rebel rulers because it was from this pool of resources that they relied to fund their organization's political, administrative/social, and military activities. The provision of security for local populations also served as a symbolic challenge to the legitimacy and authority of the internationally recognized governments in these countries. *Jihadi* rebel administrative institutions were given added flexibility in that, while centralized, they also afforded provincial and local officials with varying degrees of independence in overseeing the implementation of the legal code and other regulations.

On the ideological side, *jihadi* rebels viewed the implementation of *shari'a* and Islamized codes of social, political, and economic/business behavior as a key bellwether of their organizational legitimacy, which rested on the claim that their form of governing administration and justice was more historically and religiously authentic than the secular nationalism imposed through colonialism and imperialism. Key nodes of Al-Shabaab's and Islamic State's administrations were thus deeply embedded in the rituals and symbolism of Islam and its sacred history, which were utilized strategically as intellectual and ideological weapons with which to compete against rival Muslim groups such as Sufi mystics, the Shi'a, and government-sanctioned religion. By spreading their vision of Islam and instituting what they believed an Islamic polity should look like, *jihadi* rebel rulers sought to influence the boundaries between authentic and inauthentic Islam in a manner not unlike that of many authoritarian state regimes in the Middle East and other parts of the Muslim majority world. They understood that the conflicts in which they were involved were not only military and political but also ideological and social/societal. The success of their proto-state governance projects, as they saw it, rested not only on military victories but also on (1) the creation of reliable streams of funding that could draw money and other resources from local economies

through various forms of taxation and extortion and (2) the implementation of working administrations and cooperation with segments of local society or, at the very least, their acquiescence to continued insurgent rule.

However, while the mobilization of financial resources and the building of administrative institutions were crucial aspects of the governing projects of *jihadi* insurgents, ultimately it was the legitimacy and effectiveness of the use of strategic and symbolically-framed violence underpinning their governing institutions that played the biggest role in the successes of *jihadi* proto-states. Indeed, *jihadi*-insurgent governance relies, like that of other rebel organizations and many Westphalian states, on the attempted monopolization of violence and its use strategically as a tool of social and territorial control. The institution of a judicial system, which asserts its legitimacy through the symbolism and language of Islam and Islamic law and jurisprudence, is the central component of the implementation of *jihadi* rulers' governance projects. The power and authority of the rulers over the ruled is demonstrated publicly through the ritualized performance of the violence of punishment on individuals deemed to have sinned against the community or against God. The bodies of the criminals and particularly the bodies of those condemned to corporal and capital punishment serve as the main canvases on which *jihadi* rulers' claims of sociopolitical and religious authority are written. Public floggings, amputations, and executions follow set patterns and scripts that are intelligible between the rulers and the ruled through mutually shared religious-cultural backgrounds and identities. The violence of governance and punishment is not senseless but ordered and strategic. It is perhaps the starkest form of communication between the governing authority and those under its control.

Despite suffering setbacks, Al-Shabaab remains a potent force inside Somalia and was, as of the autumn of 2018, enjoying its greatest degree of territorial expanse and stability since its "golden age" in 2009-2010. Islamic State, as of the same time period, continued to

suffer major territorial losses and it remained an open question as to whether the organization would retain any semblance of its territorial governance or shift fully back to its asymmetric guerilla roots of the pre-2012/2013 period. Major changes in the situations of either rebel organization will influence the degree to which profiteering from the war economy will emerge as the primary goal of some or all insurgent leaders and members, as studies on the emergence of greed as a primary motivation of rebel and state actors involved in stagnant civil wars has shown in other cases.¹²⁷¹ If the strain on either of the two groups' finances increases, it may necessitate a shift in their energy and focus to the shoring up of existing revenue streams as well as the discovery of new streams.¹²⁷² Disputes over control of revenue streams will also likely increase if further divisions emerge, which in turn could foster even further fragmentation of either group.¹²⁷³ If internal divisions do occur and competing factions emerge, previous studies on rebel group fragmentation suggest that this will make finding a negotiated solution to the civil wars in the three countries even more difficult and the conflicts more intractable due to the increasing number of factions involved.¹²⁷⁴

Economic concerns were key in the early goal-making of *jihadi*-insurgent leaders and the political economy of their rebellions are, in this way, quite similar if not essentially the same as rebellions involving non-Islamic groups that form the bulk of the existing studies on rebel war economies. The main contours of the political economy of rebellion and rebel

¹²⁷¹ Erik Kennes, "The Democratic Republic of the Congo: Structures of Greed, Networks of Need," in *Rethinking the Economics of War: The Intersection of Need, Creed, and Greed*, eds. Cynthia J. Arnson and I. William Zartman (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2005), 144-146.

¹²⁷² I. William Zartman, "Need, Creed, and Greed in Intrastate Conflict," in *Rethinking the Economics of War*, 268.

¹²⁷³ Karen Ballantine, "Beyond Greed and Grievance: Reconsidering the Economic Dynamics of Armed Conflict," in *Political Economy of Armed Conflict: Beyond Greed and Grievance*, eds. Karen Ballantine and Jake Sherman (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), 270.

¹²⁷⁴ I. William Zartman, "Need, Creed, and Greed in Intrastate Conflict," 268 and 277. It remains an open question if this will impact cases where the rebel organizations involved are already less inclined to agree to a negotiated solution due to their ideological outlook, such as *jihadi* rebels.

groups retains similar characteristics no matter the cultural background of the rebels in question and despite differences in political and religious ideology or ethnic/sectarian composition. The interaction between economic calculations of insurgents' ideological goals may have the effect of shifting group motivations over time.¹²⁷⁵ Further research is needed to test whether Islamic and Islamist ideologies are more resistant to the devolution of rebel motivations into the realm of greed and personal self-aggrandizement when other seemingly equally strong ideologies, such as Marxism, have not been able to withstand the allure of war profiteering under certain circumstances.

¹²⁷⁵ See Keen, "Incentives and Disincentives for Violence," in *Greed and Grievance*.

Chapter Four

Building and Framing *Jihadi* Communities

In their campaign to overthrow and replace the existing government and seize control of the state, insurgent organizations utilize not only material incentives to recruit and win local support or acquiescence to their rule but also deploy symbolic expressions of power to sway local opinion, behavior, and action.¹²⁷⁶ The use of ritual performances and symbolic expressions and demonstrations of insurgent power, though often dismissed as being solely propagandistic, are systematized within a rebel group's strategy to legitimize itself as a governing authority.¹²⁷⁷ In addition to casting insurgent governance and its claims of legitimacy within a specific narrative frame, imbuing it, for example, with religious legitimacy through the inclusion of specific rituals such as communal prayer and religious festivals, the use of symbolic demonstrations of insurgent power—meaning “symbolic processes that effectively reference the coercive power of the regime”—may actually decrease the need for insurgents to utilize actual violence to maintain control over civilians.¹²⁷⁸

Insurgent organizations deploy resources in order to broadcast symbolic power in a process of “symbolic sovereignty,” defined by Mampilly as the “use of symbolic processes to bolster sovereign claims.”¹²⁷⁹ These symbolic processes are an example of Cynthia Weber's concept of “performativity” and “performative states,” that is, the “repeated enactment of coded normative behaviors to produce a specific subject.”¹²⁸⁰ In order to do this, insurgents, like the state governments they are in conflict with, draw upon a repertoire of cultural

¹²⁷⁶ Zachariah Mampilly, “Performing the Nation-State: Rebel Governance and Symbolic Processes,” 75-77.

¹²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

symbols and practices to convince the local population of their legitimacy as an alternative to the internationally-recognized government. Insurgents who seek to govern, in effect, mimic the nation-state despite seeking to supplant it, similar to the bind that global *jihadis* find themselves in as discussed in Chapter One.¹²⁸¹

In order to be successful, the symbols deployed by insurgents must resonate within the society in which they operate. Thus, symbols are selected by insurgent leaders and then manipulated to try and tap into the emotions of the local population, the symbols forming a “symbolic repertoire” which serves as a powerful tool and an alternative to violence or the threat of force for insurgents in their bid to win the active support or acquiescence of locals living under their rule.¹²⁸² Mampilly divides insurgent symbolic processes into two categories: (1) those that reference the “latent coercive and bureaucratic power” of the insurgents’ political authority, or “*referential symbols*,” and (2) those that “strengthen identification between the political authority and the civilian population,” or “*condensation symbols*.”¹²⁸³ Referential symbols include communal events and rallies as well as the use of uniforms and other costumes of authority and military and political power as well as the rituals of governance, from the collection of taxes and the issuing of payment receipts to military parades. Condensation symbols are designed to tap into emotions and include the official flags and songs, and slogans of rebel groups and their production of literature and other media such as videos, radio broadcasts, web sites, and artwork.¹²⁸⁴

Symbolic processes draw upon local symbols and themes that will resonate within the target community, latent nationalist symbols, and symbols that will resonate with

¹²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 77-78.

¹²⁸² *Ibid.*, 79 and 82-83.

¹²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 79.

¹²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

“transnational ideological formations.”¹²⁸⁵ A single symbol may also be multivocal, meaning that it can represent a number of meanings to different target audiences, which allows for flexibility by the insurgent regime in its contest for legitimacy and claims over national symbols and identities with the government and rival groups.¹²⁸⁶ Ambiguous messaging allows insurgents to make distinct appeals to multiple target audiences by addressing issues and using symbols that will resonate with each one specifically, but it also runs the risk of alienating the core audience if it sees the multiple overtures as being harmful to its own interests.¹²⁸⁷ The political culture of the rebel project influences the type of symbols and the way in which they are deployed collectively as a repertoire to advance a governance-seeking rebel group’s project and achieve its goals.¹²⁸⁸

The ultimate goal of an insurgent organization’s use of symbolic power is to transcend mere normative compliance with its edicts by winning increased legitimacy, defined here as the “increased identification and support for the political authority” by the local population.¹²⁸⁹ By advancing its legitimacy, an insurgent governing regime is able to produce compliance less through coercion and more through the symbolic assertions of its power.¹²⁹⁰ Insurgent rulers seek to socialize the civilian population into behaving a certain way, into responding to cues from the rebels in the desired manner without the use of violence.¹²⁹¹

Rebel groups, even those espousing radically different political visions, remain embedded within the societies in which they operate and draw upon preexisting histories and

¹²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 80.

¹²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 80 and 83.

¹²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 83-84.

cultural and political values and identities even if they try to dramatically redefine or syncretize them.¹²⁹² Despite claims that religious/mythical beliefs are relics of primitive societies and that rebel invocations of communal identities are insincere attempts at manipulation of locals, Hoffman, drawing from his study of Congolese Mai Mai rebels, argues that mytho-religious values and communal identities “constitute an epistemological and political basis for legitimate rebel governance.”¹²⁹³ Rebel governance cannot be solely explained through a political economy approach, he argues, but rather by also focusing on the moral economy that shapes the power relations between rebels and the ruled.¹²⁹⁴ Their pursuit of interests is regulated by sociopolitical values and beliefs and the ways in which both rebels and civilians approach their relations are influenced by the “values of communal identity.”¹²⁹⁵ By evoking communal values, rebels may entrench themselves deeper into society and gain material benefits, but civilians can also evoke the same values to resist rebel control.¹²⁹⁶

The cultural values and “norms” deployed by insurgent rulers, though drawing upon common identities and general sets of belief, can also be recast and dehistoricized to create a new identity that claims legitimacy despite its ahistorical characteristics. For example, Hoffman discusses how the Mai Mai rebel government promoted a unified, separate, and unique Batembo ethnic identity and culture of a type that never existed historically because the Batembo shared beliefs and practices with other communities in the region.¹²⁹⁷ *Jihadi*-insurgents such as Al-Shabaab similarly promote the idea of a unified Sunni Muslim culture and view of the Islamic sacred past that never existed historically. Rather than recognize the

¹²⁹² Kasper Hoffman, “Myths Set in Motion: The Moral Economy of Mai Mai Governance,” in Arjona, Kasfir, and Mampilly, *Rebel Governance in Civil War*, 159.

¹²⁹³ Mampilly, *Rebel Governance in Civil War*, 160.

¹²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 160-161.

¹²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 161.

¹²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 166-167.

diversity of religious, political, juridical, exegetical, and scientific thought that characterized every period in Islamic history, *jihadi*-insurgent rulers promote an ahistorical and artificially singular Islamic political idea and social structure, the idealized “caliphate,” just as the Mai Mai under General Padiri “attributed absolute value to the idea of the Congolese nation” as a “universal and trans-historical entity” that encompassed all Bantu tribes and rested on a bipolar division between “foreignness” and indigenous/autochthon identities.¹²⁹⁸

Despite sharing a number of foundational beliefs with rival social groups such as the historically dominant Sunni Sufi orders in Somalia, Al-Shabaab instead promotes a new identity in which Somali-ness is linked to the espousal of a particular form of Sunnism, one which rejects as heretical innovation (*bid‘a*) Somali Sunni Sufi practices. Supporters of the *jihadi*-insurgent group promote an ahistorical linkage between Al-Shabaab and the revered Sufi rebels of the “Mad *Mullah*,” Mohamed ‘Abdullah Hasan, who founded and ruled the “Dervish State” (*Dawlat al-Darāwīsh*, Dawlada Daraawiish) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, using the preexisting social organization of the Somali Salihyya Sufi order to combat British and Italian colonization and the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia, despite the fact that the *mullah* was a Sufi. In doing so, modern *jihadis* prioritize Hasan’s historical identity as a *mujāhid* resistor of Christian European and Ethiopian rule and ignore his Sufi identity so as to link their contemporary struggle to the revered nationalist (or nationalized) and Somali “Islamic” past.¹²⁹⁹

Just as the Mai Mai believed the Congolese government was incapable of defending their idealized Batembo nation, *jihadi*-insurgents believe that existing governments in Muslim majority countries have lost their legitimacy because they are unable or unwilling to

¹²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 168.

¹²⁹⁹ Al-Shabaab supporters, for example, produced a poster casting the insurgent group as the descendants of the “Mad Mullah” and his Sufi Dervish, anti-colonial *jihad* state. See Figure 51 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2018/01/06/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation-figure-51/>.

re-unify the *Umma* as an idealized transnational and trans-historical community and instead ally themselves to modern day “Crusaders” and other forces hostile to Islam and Muslims.¹³⁰⁰ In making their claims regarding the creation of a new moral society and the legitimacy that accompanies it, rebel rulers construct their own new narratives of identity and belief combining both preexisting beliefs and identities with their own unique interpretations and theologies.¹³⁰¹ The rebels’ struggle then becomes not only a temporal struggle for political power but a “sacred mission to restore the natural order,” to restore, as in the case of the Mai Mai, “the Congolese nation [as] a timeless sacred entity” and, in the case of Al-Shabaab, Islamic State, and other *jihadi*-insurgent organizations, specific territories (Somalia, Iraq, Syria) to their “natural” Islamic state of being and, for global *jihadis*, to “reconstruct” the idealized caliphate that transcends modern nation-state boundaries set up by the *kuffār*.¹³⁰² Rebels such as the Mai Mai, Al-Shabaab, and Islamic State seek to enact their founding and guiding myths and their political and social vision for how society should be organized through the implementation of governance over civilian populations.¹³⁰³

Rebel organizations seeking to exercise governing control over territory are, like the nation-state, socially constructed and linked intimately and interactively to the social environment in which they operate and they, like state governments, seek to “aggregate a wide variety of individual agendas and perspectives into a single, purposive coalition.”¹³⁰⁴ Rebel and nation-state governance are interactive projects involving both the rulers and the ruled with the civilian population often having a significant ability to curtail and prevent or aid and push forward the goals of those in power.¹³⁰⁵ The use of symbolic repertoires and

¹³⁰⁰ Mampilly, *Rebel Governance in Civil War*, 168.

¹³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 169-170.

¹³⁰² *Ibid.*, 170.

¹³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 175.

¹³⁰⁴ Mampilly, “Performing the Nation-State,” 83.

¹³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

processes constructed from referential and condensation symbols help bolster insurgent organization and cohesion, territorial control, and recruitment and other outreach and support efforts at relatively low cost.¹³⁰⁶ The rebels, as counterstate/proto-state actors, take over aspects once controlled by the nation-state including the promotion of new official symbols such as flags, political artwork and graffiti, and holidays.¹³⁰⁷ They, in effect, mimic the nation-state. This is the case not only with secular rebel groups but also *jihadi* rebels including Al-Shabaab, Islamic State, and the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban movements whose members adopt their own regalia of power including distinctive flags, slogans, and self-framing as expressed through multi-tiered media operations and public relations campaigns as well as the performance of political rituals on the ground.

Symbolic repertoires consist of sets of symbolic processes that rebels utilize as a means through which to influence the behavior of different social and political actors within the territories they control.¹³⁰⁸ In deploying these repertoires, rebel rulers seek to link rebel claims to legitimate political authority with a specific target audience(s), “thereby providing a recognizable blueprint for interaction.”¹³⁰⁹ Rebel groups resemble in their use of symbolic repertoires not non-violent social movements but the nation-state, including the latter’s claim to the right to monopolize the use of legal violence and coercion. Rebels, in short, deploy symbols and symbolic performances in essentially the same way as the nation-state, using them as a means to broadcast authority, military and bureaucratic force, and link themselves

¹³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰⁹ *Ibid.* Mampilly draws here from Tilly’s work on repertoires and their use by social movements. On how the means by which people protest differs depending on the nature of the regime under which they live, see (and my reference here is different from Mampilly’s) Charles Tilly, *Regimes and Repertoires* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

and their goals to the wider community within which they operate by socializing local civilians to interact with the new rulers in the desired way and identity with them.¹³¹⁰

In essence, deploying a symbolic repertoire is an attempt by a rebel government to performatively legitimate its sovereign claim. Failing to do so can undermine the authority of the insurgent government, rendering it vulnerable to denunciations or even defections by residents within the area of control.¹³¹¹ [...] ...symbolic repertoires provide a collective frame of reference for the core constituency in their interactions with the rebel bureaucracy, as well as providing a tentative roadmap of the future social order that the insurgency seeks to implement. They also serve as visible manifestations of the insurgent claim to speak on behalf of the core constituency, whether or not such claims are warranted.¹³¹²

Rebels, including *jihadi* rebels, who seek to establish political and civil as well as military control over territory and local populations thus seek to transition eventually from predominantly or even solely relying on coercive power to exercising and broadcasting authority somewhat more subtly and organically through the use of symbols that will connect the territorial rebel organization and its goals to various constituent groups.¹³¹³ Rebel groups, Mampilly notes, are faced with more limited abilities than the nation-state and are faced with a much more diverse array of challenges and challengers, which in turn affects the ways in which they must deploy and adjust their symbolic repertoires.

Unlike states, which rely on massive and repetitive inundation of symbolic actions to generate civilian identification with their sovereign prerogative, insurgents operate in a far more heterogeneous social environment riven with internal power struggles and external challengers. As a result, rebel deployment of symbolic repertoires must be attuned to a variety of audiences and contests in order to be effective.¹³¹⁴

In order to understand how rebel groups use symbolic repertoires, one must first understand the sources of the symbolism used as well as the audience(s) to whom it is targeted, which collectively constitutes the “symbolic register.”¹³¹⁵ Developing a successful symbolic repertoire is of key importance to rebels so as to prevent the emergence or

¹³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 83-84.

¹³¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹³¹² *Ibid.*, 85-86.

¹³¹³ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

strengthening of challengers to their authority.¹³¹⁶ The framing of messaging is important because different symbols and sets of framing can be interpreted in diametrically different ways by different audiences, all of whom may be target audiences for the rebels. To overcome alienating one audience while attracting the support of another, rebel leaders make strategic decisions about how to frame their group's goals and claims to political authority, attempting to do both in a way in which to galvanize the most support while engendering the least amount of resistance and alienation among their intended target audiences.¹³¹⁷

Inconsistent rebel messaging runs the risk of confusing potential supporters and thus causing them to remain inactive rather than risk backing a rebel group.¹³¹⁸ Potential challengers who may take advantage of inconsistent or alienating rebel messaging include other rebel and non-state actors as well as government counter-insurgency campaigns, which are sometimes backed, as in Somalia, Iraq, and, in effect, Syria, by international coalitions and foreign states in the name of "security."¹³¹⁹ Audiences who will receive rebel messaging include the government, potential rivals and other opponents, constituencies living in territories not under rebel control or in the diaspora, and transnational actors including NGOs, religious organizations and networks, foreign states, and transnational militant organizations and networks such as Al-Qaeda.¹³²⁰

The sources from which rebels draw to develop their symbolic repertoires are important in understanding how they are shaped by the continuous and interactive processes between the rebel group and communal sources so that they resonate with the target audience(s)'s collective memories and emotions.¹³²¹

¹³¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 85-86.

¹³²⁰ I expand here on a list discussed by Mampilly in *Ibid.*, 86-87.

¹³²¹ *Ibid.*, 88.

Mampilly identifies three sources from which rebels draw upon for their symbolic processes: (1) “local themes and motifs embedded within the memories of a specific community;” (2) “recognized or latent nationalist symbols;” and (3) “transnational ideological formations.” He notes that these sources “generally map onto one of three types of strategic agendas—ethno-nationalist, national reformist, or transnational,” but also recognizes that rebel leaders often shift between them or use two or more sets concurrently to enhance their multivocality or to, more basically, hedge their bets in order to overcome more limited capabilities compared to the incumbent state.¹³²²

The adoption of transnational Islamic identities and Islamism, though often classified as representative of a transnational ideology, also resembles in some cases aspects of ethno-nationalism. *Jihadi* rebel groups whose leaderships and memberships are rooted in local communities and sociohistorical milieus, such as Al-Shabaab, the Afghan Taliban, Pakistani (Tehrik-i Taliban) Pashtun tribal-based militant formations, and some of the Islamist armed rebel groups in the Sahel often bind together Islamic (religious) identity with ethno-national (Somali) or ethno-tribal and regional (Somali clan and Arab, Tuareg, Berber, or Pashtun tribal) identities. In other words, in the eyes of *jihadi* rebel leaders, to be Somali is to be Muslim; the two identities are intertwined and inseparable and are akin in many ways to other nationalist identities. In their promotion of a transnational Muslim superstate, even the most transnational *jihadi* insurgents such as Islamic State define themselves largely against the dominant nation-state and nationalist global system, promoting a vision of a neo-caliphate that resembles much more the modern nation-state than any of the historical caliphates. The use of transnational frames may also be an example of outbidding,¹³²³ though one in which

¹³²² *Ibid.*

¹³²³ Monica Duffy Toft, “Getting Religion? The Puzzling Case of Islam and Civil War,” *International Security* 31, no. 4 (2007), 97-131 and Aisha Ahmad, “Going Global.” For a more general overview of the role of ethnicity and religion as a factor in civil wars and insurgencies, see James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” *The American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (2003), 75-90. Fearon and Laitin argue that ethnic and religious diversity and differences are not more likely to cause civil wars or

local concerns and dynamics remain a key factor in the shaping and strategic utilization of trans-regional and transnational or “globalist” framing and appeals by rebels.

Although there are many similarities between Al-Shabaab’s and Islamic State’s symbolic repertoires and strategic use and performance of strategic power, there are also variations between the two organizations, which can be explained in large part by the different local sociopolitical environments in which each organization operates as well as differences in organizational goals. On the more localized or “glocal” end of the *jihadi*-insurgent spectrum is Al-Shabaab, which is more constrained in its operational activities by Somalia’s clan system and politics and which has limited its immediate political goals to gaining control first of the nation-state of Somalia and then “Greater Somalia,” an imagined state reconnecting Somalia to territories in Kenya and Ethiopia which historically were Somali-majority regions. At the other end of the spectrum is Islamic State, which adopted and professed both a much more grandiose religio-political ideological vision of the ideal state and a greater immediacy as to the necessity to globalize its proto-state-building ambitions and expansion. Though armed with a suitably grand ideological vision and theoretical program of the sociopolitical order, Islamic State eventually found its capabilities and capacity hobbled by local and regional realities on the ground, including major resistance from rival Islamist and non-Islamist movements and organizations. In contrast, Al-Shabaab adopted a more locally-nuanced and gradual approach toward adopting transnational and globalist aspects to its ideology, framing, and organizational identity and—perhaps most importantly—operational strategy.

insurgencies and that rather it is other conditions conducive to insurgency that increase the likelihood of a civil conflict. These conditions include poverty, weak and abusive state institutions, political instability, difficult-to-govern terrain, economic inequality, and lack of democracy or protected civil liberties.

Organization of the Chapter

This chapter examines the symbolic sovereignty claims and practices of *jihadi*-insurgent organizations and their use of both types of symbols discussed in this chapter's introduction—referential and condensation symbols—to frame their claims of legitimate social and political authority to both local/domestic and international audiences. It begins by historically contextualizing the political and religious symbolism of public gatherings and activities such as congregational prayer on Fridays and religious holidays. The multivocal meanings of *jihadi*-insurgent symbols and symbolic processes to different audiences and the role of on-the-ground performances, political and ideological messaging and artwork, uniforms and official flags and other symbols of the ruling organization, and control of modes of education and emphasis on the creation of a culture of self-sacrifice, martyrdom, and sanctified violence will also be discussed in the contexts of wartime societies and periods of intense conflict. Some attention will also be paid to how the advent and expansion of new media technologies and platforms, particularly advances in photography and other visual technology and increased accessibility, has impacted the evolution of jihadism's martyrdom cult, that is the framing of the battlefield martyr as a heroic figure that the living within the insurgent community should emulate. The martyrdom cult is an extension of the communal and publicly narrated violence of the *jihadi*-insurgent rulers discussed in Chapter Three.

Building 'Believing' Communities

The Symbolic Repertoires of *Jihadi* Insurgencies

There are a number of major recurring symbolic themes and narrative frames present in the organizational strategies of Sunni *jihadi* proto-state insurgencies including, but not limited to, those of Al-Shabaab and Islamic State. *Jihadi*-insurgent groups construct and deploy framing that references historical memory and Islamic sacred history. This includes a system of social regulation and "law and order" that is built around the idealized and

perceived exemplary behavior (*sunna*) of the Prophet Muhammad and the Ṣaḥāba, the first several generations of Muslims (the Tābi‘ūn and the Tābi‘ al- Tābi‘īn), and other historical figures viewed as exemplary Muslims and heroic political and military figures.

The charismatic authority of the Prophet Muhammad and these other mytho-historical figures is drawn upon by *jihadi*-insurgent rulers because it builds upon the preexisting reverence and dedication to these persons within the Islamic tradition and among Muslims generally as well as aspects of popular Islamic practice in many local Muslim-majority societies. The *jihadi* proto-state, then, is not attempting to create an entirely new code (*minhāj*; *manhaj*) of normative behavior or ideology but is instead attempting to shape already existing respect and reverence for Islamic historical figures and concepts so as to support and push forward the insurgents’ state-building project.

The specific symbols deployed by *jihadi*-insurgent proto-states includes the privileging of Arabic, often in an “Islamized” form that favors the liberal use of religious terminology and frames and the adoption of specific insignia including uniforms and clothing as well as flags and insurgent state-sanctioned signage and public artwork. These symbols are then deployed at public events and in the public space as part of a *jihadi* proto-state’s system of framing and projection of political, religio-ideological, and military power and claim to authority legitimized by framing an idealized view of Islamic sacred history which is itself shaped by both local and transnational or globalized historical and communal contexts and dynamics. Key examples of the symbols and symbolic repertoires and practices utilized by *jihadi*-insurgent proto-states are discussed and analyzed in the following sections.

The Politics of Prayer: Symbolic Authority and Official Religion in Islamic History

One of the primary ways that *jihadi*-insurgent rulers both invoke and attempt to reframe Islamic sacred history and normative Islamic ritual practice is through communal prayers such as those on Fridays and those performed to mark major Islamic religious

holidays including at the end of the *Hajj* pilgrimage season and the month of Ramadan. Al-Shabaab, Islamic State, and other *jihadi* proto-state organizations use ritualized communal prayer gatherings and religious festivals as a way to connect themselves to the Islamic tradition and sacred history through laying claim to the ritualistic precedence and charismatic authority of the Prophet Muhammad and other mytho-historical Muslim figures. By framing themselves as the legitimate carriers of the mantle of the Prophet Muhammad and these other revered figures, *jihadi*-insurgents seek to connect modern identities with the idealized Islamic past, thus creating a new hybridized identity to compete with the organizational identities—including ethnic, sectarian, or tribe and clan-based ones—of rival groups and the existing state. *Jihadi*-insurgent framing, as demonstrated by the two main case studies of Al-Shabaab and Islamic State, can be particularly successful in civil conflict environments as both a way to differentiate the *jihadi* organization from rival groups espousing more ethnic, sectarian or sectarian-nationalist, or tribe and clan-based identities as well as constructing—together with the building of a system of governance—an image of both “Islamic” as well as operational and administrative proto-state legitimacy and an aura of capacity.

The institution of the requisite congregational prayers, particularly *ṣalāt al-jum‘a* (Friday prayer), has been defined in part by the political symbolism of claims to legitimate communal and religious authority that have been inherent within its performance since the beginnings of Islam. The questions of who led the prayer, in which ruler’s name they were held, the topics discussed in the two short sermons, and indeed whether or not they should be held at all (a major question for Shi‘i Muslims) recurred throughout Islamic history and highlight the political symbolism with regard to claims of legitimate temporal and spiritual authority at play in ritual practices and performances. As religious obligations, the Friday and ‘Eid congregational prayers historically were ideal events during which the governing authorities, whether the caliphs or, in modern times, authoritarian or democratically-elected

politicians, could situate their claim to legitimate social and political power in the ritual symbolism of Islam, giving their worldly claims at least a veneer of divine sanction. In attempting to connect themselves to or control outright public expressions and performances of religion, contemporary *jihadi*-insurgent rulers are claiming for themselves another right also claimed by many of the internationally-recognized state governments that they seek to replace. It is yet another example of how the former's politics closely follow the well-trodden ground of the secular nation-states they in theory reject ideologically and structurally.

The historical form of the Friday prayer in which the preacher (*khaṭīb*) holds a rod, spear, or sword that symbolizes their authority and invokes the name of the ruler in recognition, is steeped in ritual that draws both from the pre-Islamic and early and medieval Islamic periods.¹³²⁴ The political symbolism of the Friday prayer in early Islam was linked to individual and communal identity, marking the belonging of new converts and existing members to the *Umma*.¹³²⁵ As the structure of Islamic politics developed into the medieval period, participation in the prayer was representative of the acceptance of the congregation and the organizers of the authority of the caliph and his appointed governors and officials who oversaw the ritual practice on the ground in the far flung regions of the empire.¹³²⁶ In the modern period, authoritarian rulers in the Muslim world have also recognized the symbolic power of the Friday prayer and have sought to control the sermons and communal gatherings before and after the prayer itself, which present ideal times for organized or impromptu demonstrations not approved by the state.¹³²⁷

¹³²⁴ S.D. Goitein, "Djum'a," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs (Leiden: Brill, 2006). Consulted online on 29 November 2017 at http://dx.doi.org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_2111.

¹³²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³²⁷ I witnessed this first-hand in downtown Amman, Jordan in August 2006 outside of the Husayni Mosque when, following the completion of the Friday prayer, scores of demonstrators, mostly youth, held a demonstration against Israel's bombing and ground invasion of Lebanon in retaliation for cross-border attacks on its soldiers by Hizbullah. The demonstration lasted for only fifteen to twenty minutes before black-

The political importance of the Friday prayer may also explain the legal requirements for its performance regarding a minimum number of participants and incumbent nature on all adult, freeborn men, preferences about its being held at a central location, and recommendations concerning its structure and the composition of the two short sermons that precede the prayer itself, including the physical or symbolic presence, through invocation, of the recognized ruler.¹³²⁸ Changes in the form of the Friday prayer, such as in the invocation of the ruler and sometimes adjustments to the official format in which it was conducted, also characterized historical shifts in political power in Islamic history, for example with the emergence of the Fatimid Caliphate and Safavid dynasty in the tenth and sixteenth centuries respectively and their introduction of changes to ritual practices regarding the official celebrations of ‘Eid al-Fitr and ‘Eid al-Adha and the ruler under whose name and symbolic authority the Friday prayer was held or even if it should be held, the latter being a topic debated among the Safavid-era ‘*ulamā*.¹³²⁹ Earlier Shi‘a also engaged in communal scholarly

uniformed state security forces arrived and began assaulting the participants with batons and throwing them into vehicles and tearing up their handwritten protest signs.

On “official Islam” and its use by authoritarian and democratic states in the name of “security,” see: Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemerrier-Quelquejay, “‘Official’ Islam in the Soviet Union,” *Religion in Communist Lands* 7, no. 3 (1979), 148-159; Michael Robbins and Lawrence Rubin, “The Rise of Official Islam in Jordan,” *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 14, no. 1 (2013), 59-74; Samuel James Rascoff, “Establishing Official Islam? The Law and Strategy of Counter-Radicalization,” *Stanford Law Review* 64 (2012), 125-190; David Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006); Bruce M. Borthwick, “The Islamic Sermon as a Channel of Political Communication,” *Middle East Journal* 21, no. 3 (1967), 304-306; Thomas Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria: The Sunni Ulama from Coup to Revolution*; and Haggay Ram, *Myth and Mobilization in Revolutionary Iran: The Use of the Friday Congregational Sermon* (Washington, D.C.: American University Press, 1994).

¹³²⁸ *Ibid.* and Norman Calder, “Friday Prayer and the Juristic Theory of Government: Sarakhsi, Shirazi, Mawardi,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 49, no. 1 (1986), 35-47.

¹³²⁹ On changes to ritual practices and the symbolism of authority in them under the Fatimid *imam-caliphs*, see Yaacov Lev, “The Fatimid Imposition of Isma‘ilism on Egypt (358-386/969-996),” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 138, no. 2 (1988), 313-325 and Paul E. Walker, *Orations of the Fatimid Caliphs: Festival Sermons of the Ismaili Imams* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009), especially Chapters One and Two.

On debates over the legitimacy and requirement of the Friday prayer and the realm of religious ritual and practice as a site of competition between the Twelver Shi‘i state and its Sunni subjects, see: Rosemary Stanfield Johnson, “Sunni Survival in Safavid Iran: Anti-Sunni Activities during the Reign of Tahmasp I,” *Iranian Studies* 27, no. 1 (1994), 123-133 and “The Tabarra‘iyan and the Early Safavids,” *Iranian Studies* 37, no. 1 (2004), 47-71; Rula Jurdi Abisaab, *Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004); Devin Stewart, “Polemics and Patronage in Safavid Iran: The Debate on Friday Prayer during the Reign of Shah Tahmasb,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 72, no. 3 (2009),

debates about political and religious authority surrounding the question of whether or not they should participate in congregational prayer or work in government bureaucracies under Sunni rulers.¹³³⁰

In addition to changes in the names of which political authority in whose name the congregational prayer was held and in the format of the spoken formulas and ritual motions, sectarian/communal differences and political claims were expressed during certain periods of Islamic history through the ritual (and politicized) cursing of various historical figures, ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib under the Umayyad caliphs and Abu Bakr and ‘Umar under the Safavid *shahs*.¹³³¹ Political and religious authority was central and often bound together in these debates and changes in the performance of religious rituals in the public sphere. One of the clearest ways for a new political authority to implement and broadcast its claim to be the new legitimate governing regime was to institute changes in public and “official” Islam, thereby attaching its claim to legitimate societal and political authority to the sacred past and the faith itself. This was true in the seventh century and eighth centuries as the Umayyad and ‘Abbasid dynasties came to power, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when the Ottoman and Safavid empires reached their zenith, and is still the case today, albeit clearly on a much smaller scale, with *jihadi*-insurgent rulers who seek to claim intertwined religiopolitical (or

425-457; and Andrew J. Newman, “Fayd al-Kashani and the Rejection of the Clergy/State Alliance: Friday Prayer as Politics in the Safavid Period,” in *The Most Learned of the Shi‘a: The Institution of the Marja‘ al-Taqlid*, ed. Linda S. Walbridge (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 34-52 and “The Myth of the Clerical Migration to Safavid Iran,” *Die Welt des Islams* 33, no. 1 (1993), 66-111.

¹³³⁰ See Mohammad Taher Ya’ghoubi and Asghar Montazerolghaem, “The Shi‘a of Baghdad at the Time of the ‘Abbasid Caliphs and the Seljuq Sultanate,” *Journal of Shi‘a Islamic Studies* 6, no. 1 (2013), 53-74; Wilferd Madelung, “A Treatise of the Sharif al-Murtada on the Legality of Working for the Government,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 43, no. 1 (1980), 18-31; Denis McEoin, “Aspects of Militancy and Quietism in Imami Shi’ism,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 11, no. 1 (1984), 18-27; W. Montgomery Watt, “Shi’ism under the Umayyads,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 92, no. 3-4 (1960), 158-172; and Marshall G. S. Hodgson, “How Did the Early Shi‘a Become Sectarian?,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 75, no. 1 (1955), 1-13.

¹³³¹ The Ottomans even made stopping the ritual cursing by the Safavids of Abu Bakr and ‘Umar part of peace treaties with their Iranian rivals during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See Max Scherberger, “The Confrontation between Sunni and Shi‘i Empires: Ottoman-Safavid Relations between the Fourteenth and the Seventeenth Century,” in *The Sunna and Shi‘a in History: Division and Ecumenism in the Muslim Middle East*, eds. Ofra Bengio and Meir Litvak (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 60.

political-religious) authority and legitimacy for themselves against the “apostate” rulers of the Muslim world.¹³³²

In contemporary times, *jihadi*-insurgent proto-state organizations have built upon the historical precedent set by previous Muslim states while also expanding their interpretation and framing of the extent of legitimate state authority that extends, like that of the modern regulatory state, beyond the public and semi-public spheres and much more into the private sphere of individual behavior than was the case in pre-modern Muslim states. In this, the *jihadis*’ framing and utilization of communal prayers and other events as political and ideological performances of governing legitimacy is contextualized historically as evolving from idealized Islamic sacred history while also being retooled to fit the insurgents’ modern view of the proper extent of the (proto-) state’s regulatory and coercive power and legitimate authority.

Projecting and Regulating Islam in Jihadi Proto-States

On July 1, 2014, Islamic State’s flagship media outlet, the Al-Furqān Media Foundation, released a message from the organization’s leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, to mark the beginning of Ramadan, the Islamic lunar month of fasting and prayer when Muslims mark the start of the Qur’anic revelation on *Laylat al-Qadr*. Opening with lengthy congratulations to the *Umma* for the start of the holy month and quoting extensively from the Qur’an, he urged Muslims to take advantage of the increased blessings for acts of worship during Ramadan and unsurprisingly centered his call on the performance of *jihad*, self-sacrifice for the *Umma*, and martyrdom on the battlefield.¹³³³ Muslims should not fear death,

¹³³² Control of mosques, public preachers, and public *da’wa* are some of the most effective ways for a governing authority to assert its influence over official religion. On the role of mosques as public, communal centers in Islamic societies and the key role of preachers, see Asghar Fathi, “The Role of the Islamic Pulpit,” *Journal of Communication* 29, no. 3 (1979), 102-106; Jonathan P. Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001); and Patrick D. Gaffney, *The Prophet’s Pulpit: Islamic Preaching in Contemporary Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

¹³³³ Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, *Risālat ilā al-Mujāhidīn wa-l-Ummat al-Islāmīya fī Shahr Ramaḍān* (A Message to the Mujāhidīn and the Islamic *Umma* concerning the Month of Ramadan), Mu’assasat al-Furqān, 1 July 2014.

he said, because God has already appointed the time for all humankind's passing and their participation in *jihad* will not change that.¹³³⁴ Rather, they can earn the divine rewards for fighting on God's path and thus ensure that they live their lives to the fullest by sacrificing their wealth, lives, and souls for the victory of Islam and the *Umma*.¹³³⁵ "So let the world know that we are living in a new era," he said. "Whoever was heedless now must be alert. Whoever was asleep must now awaken. Whoever was in shock and amazement must now comprehend. The Muslims today have made a resounding statement and [march out with] heavy boots. They have made a statement that will cause the world to listen to and understand the meaning of 'terrorism,' and [our] boots that will trample the idol of nationalism, destroy the idol of democracy, and unveil their inherent deviance [from Islam]." ¹³³⁶ What the Western states label "terrorism," he said, referred simply to the attempts by Muslims to be true to God's law and commands to build a truly Islamic society and state. "Terrorism is to refuse humiliation, subjugation, and subordination," he said. "Terrorism is for the Muslim to live as a Muslim honorably and with power and freedom. Terrorism is to insist on your rights and not surrender them." ¹³³⁷

The new "caliph" closed by invoking an idealized notion of fraternal brotherhood among the world's Muslims in contrast to the social divisions and racism of Western countries, chief among them the U.S. "It is a state where the Arab and non-Arab, the white man and black man, the Easterner and Westerner are all brothers," he said. "It is a caliphate that has gathered the Caucasian, Indian, Chinese, Syrian, Iraqi, Yemeni, Egyptian, North African, American, French, German, and Australian. God has brought their hearts together

An official English translation was also published by Islamic State's Al-Hayat Media Center as *A Message to the Mujahidin and the Muslim Ummah in the Month of Ramadan* on the same day. I have referenced both here.

¹³³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³³⁷ *Ibid.*

and thus they became brothers by His grace, loving one another for the sake of God, standing in a single trench to defend and guard and to sacrifice themselves for one another. Their blood mixed and became one under a single flag and goal in one place to enjoy this blessing, the blessing of a brotherhood of faith.”¹³³⁸

Al-Baghdadi’s framing of his organization’s fledgling proto-state cast it as a direct contrast to the societal cleavages in Europe and North America as well as in Muslim majority countries where *kuffār*, “apostate,” or Shi‘i rulers encouraged divisions among their people along racial, ethnic, religious, and class lines to prevent them from uniting under a single banner. Islamic State at the official level as well as individual rank-and-file members and supporters continued this message throughout 2014 and into 2015 as major protests and riots broke out in U.S. cities such as Ferguson and Baltimore over controversial shootings and arrests of African-Americans by police departments. The underlying message was clear: the new “caliphate” offered to Muslims of all nationalities, ethnic groups, and races the opportunity to unite as a single community pursuing a single goal, with the reference to the “flag” (*rāya*) having both literal as well as metaphorical meanings. The reality, of course, was much more complicated given Islamic State’s rabid sectarianism and puritanical vision of what constituted “normative” Sunni Islam and even the Salafi creed, but it was nonetheless a powerful frame that succeeded in attracting thousands of foreign recruits and their families to Syria and Iraq.

Three days after the release of his Ramadan message, al-Baghdadi made a dramatic appearance in person for the first and so far only time, ascending the pulpit (*minbar*) of Mosul’s iconic medieval Al-Nūrī Mosque with its leaning minaret (blown up by Islamic State in June 2017) to deliver the Friday sermon (*khuṭba*) marking Islamic State’s rapid expansion across western Iraq and large swaths of Syria. The event was carefully choreographed by the

¹³³⁸ *Ibid.*

organization's leadership and media apparatus, containing powerful symbolic references and invocations to Islam and Sunni Muslim identity meant to both tap into the identities of those listening to the sermon as well as serve as a demonstration of the political and religious power and claim to authority of Mosul's new rulers, a resurrected "caliphate." The Friday prayer that day, which was itself a referential symbol of the *jihadi* proto-state's power, also included numerous condensation symbols such as the presence of Islamic State fighters carrying the black-and-white flags emblazoned with the testament of faith that the organization used to link itself to the Prophet Muhammad and the garb of al-Baghdadi himself, which was meant to exude an aura of piety and power by linking him visually to the actual caliphates of old as well as to the Prophet himself.

Slowly ascending the stairs of the *minbar*, al-Baghdadi, after greeting the congregants, sat during the call to prayer (*adhan*) and cleaned his teeth with a *siwāk/miswāk* branch that for Muslims is linked to the *sunna* of the Prophet Muhammad and the first generations of Islam.¹³³⁹ This gesture, though seemingly unimportant, sent an unmistakable message to those at the mosque as well as those who later viewed Islamic State's official video footage of the event about al-Baghdadi's claim to the mantle of the Prophet and his successors. Dressed in black robes with a black turban, he also put forward his claim to be a genetic descendant of Muhammad and thus a legitimate claimant to the position of caliph, a position that is generally considered to be the exclusive right of a member of the Quraysh tribe to which the Prophet belonged, albeit to an originally lesser clan, the Banū Hāshim.¹³⁴⁰ The would-be caliph's bloodline claim was also made in his choice of official name as the founder of the neo-caliphate in which he claimed to be both a descendant of the Quraysh tribe through the Banū Hāshim and, interestingly, specifically through a bloodline running through a number of the Twelver Shi'i Imams through the tenth, 'Alī al-Hādī. Al-Baghdadi's full

¹³³⁹ Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, *Khuṭba wa Ṣalāt al-Jum'a fī-l-Jāmi' al-Kabīr bi-madīnat Mosul*.

¹³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

claimed lineage was: ‘Armūsh ibn ‘Ali ibn ‘Eid ibn Badr al-Dīn ibn Khalil ibn Husayn ibn ‘Abdullah ibn Ibrahim al-Awwāh ibn al-Sharīf Yahyā ‘Izz al-Dīn ibn al-Sharīf Bashir ibn Mājid ibn ‘Aṭīya ibn Ya‘la bin Dawīd ibn Mājid ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥman ibn Qāsim ibn al-Sharīf Idrīs ibn Ja‘far al-Zakī ibn ‘Ali al-Hādī ibn Muhammad al-Jawād ibn ‘Ali al-Riḍā ibn Musā al-Kāzim ibn Ja‘far al-Šādiq ibn Muhammad al-Bāqir ibn ‘Ali Zayn al-‘Ābidīn ibn al-Husayn ibn ‘Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib wa Fatima bint Muhammad.¹³⁴¹ Islamic State’s leader chose as his caliphal name ‘Abdullah Ibrahim ibn ‘Awwād ibn Ibrahim ibn ‘Ali ibn Muhammad al-Badrī al-Qurayshi al-Hāshimī al-Ḥusaynī. In addition to his title as “caliph of the Muslims” and “the *mujāhid shaykh*,” supporters of Islamic State also referred to al-Baghdadi as an “ascetic” (*al-zāhid*), likely referring to his role as one of those at the forefront of the *Umma* to go defend, garrison (*ribāṭ*), and eventually expand the lands of Islam while linking him subtly to the long history of military *jihad* through the ascetic *mujāhid* frontier scholars in early Islamic history such as the revered early *ḥādīth* scholar and compiler ‘Abdullah ibn al-Mubārak.¹³⁴²

In his sermon, al-Baghdadi reiterated many of the messages about Ramadan and the increased blessings for participating in it during the holy month while also invoking his claim to be the rightful new “caliph” to whom all Sunni Muslims (whom to Islamic State are the only Muslims) must pledge allegiance (*bay‘a*) to.¹³⁴³ He also connected himself to the legacy of the Rāshidūn caliphs by drawing upon sermons attributed to ‘Umar and Abu Bakr in which the two Rightly-guided caliphs reportedly told the early Muslims to only obey them if they, as rulers, were following God’s commands and the Prophetic *sunna* but to correct them if they erred. The mantle of caliph, as described in the sermons of all three, casts leadership of

¹³⁴¹ This claimed lineage is based on a report on a pro-Islamic State web site posted in October 2014 at <https://dawaalhaq.com/post/17726>, last accessed 1 December 2017.

¹³⁴² On the career of these scholars and their role in early Islamic history and the history of military *jihad*, see Michael Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History*, Chapter 7.

¹³⁴³ Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, *Khuṭba wa Ṣalāt al-Jum‘a fi-l-Jāmi‘ al-Kabīr bi-madīnat Mosul*.

the *Umma* as being both a weighty responsibility and even a burden (*amāna thaqīla*) and a position of trust between the ruler and the ruled.¹³⁴⁴ In the relationship between the two parties, the ruler, despite his appointment as caliph/*imam*, does not claim to be inherently better than other Muslims but rather serves as a kind of steward for the *Umma* to keep them on the correct path.¹³⁴⁵ Al-Baghdadi, as Abu Bakr and ‘Umar reportedly did before him, called upon his listeners to correct him if they saw him depart from God’s path and to obey him only when and if he remained steadfast in his dedication and obedience to the straight path of authentic Islam.¹³⁴⁶ Al-Shabaab’s leaders, as discussed in Chapter Three, also invoked the authority of the Rāshidūn as successors to the Prophet Muhammad in 2008 and 2009 as they expanded their territorial control and governance project.

These public displays of power and claims to governing legitimacy were multifaceted and multivocal, containing within them a host of different symbols each meant to project a careful set of images constructed by *jihadi*-insurgent leaders. Within these symbolic images were housed different organizational claims and frames drawing upon both historical and contemporary themes as well as the idealized sacred past, the “golden age” of Islam before the degradations of European colonialism and American neo-imperialism. To Sunni Muslim audiences, the ritual performances, regalia, flags, and oratory were meant to harken back to both the days of the early Islamic expansion and the later frontier warrior (*ghāzī*) as well as to the medieval period of imperial state Islam during the Umayyad and ‘Abbasid caliphates and other Muslim kingdoms and states. To the enemies of Islamic State, al-Baghdadi and other organization leaders down to rank-and-file members delivered a stark message that “the Sunnis” had a new defender and champion who would avenge the abuses and other wrongs done to the *Umma* through divinely-sanctioned (and even commanded) retaliatory violence.

¹³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

In Syria and Iraq, Islamic State sent out the message that all other “true” Sunni Muslim groups should join the fold, join the community (usually cast by Islamic State members as the “*jamā‘a*”), and “unite the ranks” (another popular IS mantra), with those who refused being accused of exiting the fold of Islam.

Of Flags and Banners, Names and Places: Insurgent Socialization

Perhaps no single symbolic prop used by Islamic State, Al-Shabaab, and other Sunni *jihadi* organizations has received more public and media attention than the “Black Flag” emblazoned with the Islamic testament of faith to the single, Abrahamic God and the status of the Prophet Muhammad as God’s messenger (see figure below). The flag, which is supposedly based on the Prophet’s seal, is of unclear historical origins since it remains debated how old the copies of the seal, versions of which are contained in the Topkapı Palace museum and nineteenth century books published in Egypt.¹³⁴⁷ Despite the contested origins of the seal on which it is based, this flag design spread in popularity among many, but not all, Sunni *jihadi* organizations and was adopted as an official banner by a number of them including the Islamic State of Iraq, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, and Al-Shabaab. The two colors used in the design, black and white, are based on two of the several colors reported in canonical Sunni *aḥādīth* as those used by the Prophet for his banners. A second version of the flag with a white field and black lettering instead of the reverse is used by Al-Shabaab as a symbol of its civil governing administrations while the version with a black field is used primarily but not solely for military purposes.

¹³⁴⁷ Visual examples of the different seals and a good overview of their origins can be found in the Wikipedia Arabic entry on them, “Risā’il [misspelled as “Risā’il”] al-Nabī Muhammad li-l-mulūk wa-l-ḥukkām” (Letters of the Prophet Muhammad to the Kings and Rulers), at https://arz.wikipedia.org/wiki/رسائل_النبي_محمد_للملوك_والحكام, last accessed 1 December 2017.



The belief that the Prophet Muhammad used black and white cloth for his banners does not originate with Islamic State or other *jihadi* groups and indeed flags of both colors, without writing, even appear in popular depictions of the early Islamic community such as that in film director Moustapha Akkad's landmark 1976 film on the Prophet, *The Message*.

Flags for *jihadi* proto-states and insurgent organizations are, like for nation-states, powerful and simple symbols that represent the collective historical, political, and ideological/religious claims that their governing regimes claim to espouse. The *jihadi* rejection of country flags serves as a symbolic rejection of nationalism, which they see as a competitor to Islam, and the embrace of an identity predicated first and foremost—or so *jihadis* claim—on religious (Islamic) identity. Flags are also symbolic objects that are frequently used by rival groups to represent ongoing conflicts, with Islamic State fighters and members of enemy groups such as state-sanctioned Iraqi Shi'i militias posing with captured enemy banners and photographing or filming themselves tearing down enemy banners before raising their own. Islamic State, for example, frequently recorded its fighters displaying captured enemy flags and particularly those with images of the Twelve Imams and other holy figures and slogans used by Shi'i armed groups while Shi'i militiamen and Iraqi security forces posed with IS flags held upside down to symbolize their rejection of IS' claim to be a

legitimate Islamic authority.¹³⁴⁸ Flags are also of particular importance as symbolic props to Shi‘i non-state armed groups and is an avenue for future research.

In addition to serving as battlefield rallying points and media operations and propaganda fodder, flags and other visual symbols are also a simple way for non-state armed groups to represent their presence and identity in public space to those communities among which they operate or over which they rule.¹³⁴⁹ Visual symbols such as flags, official street graffiti, billboards, signs, and the names of locations such as streets, schools, and mosques also serve as symbolically powerful and multifaceted cultural artifacts through which to broadcast organizational ideology and advance political, religious, and governance claims through the regalia of state power in a manner identical to that of the nation-state they claim to reject.¹³⁵⁰ Naming schools, institutes, and streets after revered figures such as Ahmad ibn Hanbal, al-Shafi‘i, and the Prophet Muhammad’s *ṣaḥāba* or modern day *jihadi* martyrs like al-Zarqāwī, ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam, and Usama bin Laden is in itself a symbolic process in which the *jihadi*-insurgent organization broadcasts its ideology and seeks to influence both a domestic as well as internal/organizational and transnational audiences. The organization’s martyrdom cult is created and framed through its administrative and media activities, which seek to win new recruits and supporters as well as maintain and increase internal group and

¹³⁴⁸ For examples, see Figure 45 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/12/06/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation-figure-45/>.

¹³⁴⁹ For examples of the use of different visual symbols including flags, official paintings and graffiti, and billboards, see Figure 46 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2017/12/08/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation-figure-46/>.

¹³⁵⁰ Flags also have symbolic power among external supporters of groups. For example, individuals who have carried out attacks in the U.S. and Western European countries in the name of Islamic State but with unclear command-and-control connections to the core organization also adopted the “Black Flag” as a symbol of their loyalty to the group’s leadership as well as its principles and calls to attack countries involved in the war against IS. See, for example: Kaja Whitehouse, “NYC Terror Suspect Allegedly Asked to Hang ISIS Flag in Hospital Room,” *New York Post*, 1 November 2017, at <https://nypost.com/2017/11/01/nyc-truck-attack-suspect-faces-terrorism-charges/>, last accessed 1 November 2017. The same “Black Flag” was used by Egyptian protestors in September 2012 in a demonstration at the U.S. embassy in Cairo to protest a film that insulted the Prophet Muhammad. See Associated Press, “Mysterious Anti-Muslim Movie Prompts Protest in Egypt,” *The New York Times*, 11 September 2012, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/12/world/middleeast/movie-stirs-protest-at-us-embassy-in-cairo.html>, last accessed 1 December 2017; the article includes a photograph of demonstrators with the flag as they tear down the U.S. flag at the embassy.

movement unity and cohesion by putting forward a single, official pantheon of battlefield dead who are held up as moral, ethical, religious, and physical examples of those who made the ultimate sacrifice in pursuit of the insurgents' goals, much as nation-states seek to deploy the memories and figures of their own war dead as justifications for the moral legitimacy of conflict, particularly through the frames of defense necessity. In this, non-state armed groups have much in common with the nation-state.



Al-Shabaab flags and official banners at communal 'Eid al-Fitr prayer and celebrations in the Galguduud region in central Somalia in June 2017.

Schools and educational institutions are places where *jihadi* rebel rulers seek to deploy both symbolic repertoires and to steer the construction of their ideal moral economy by influencing the beliefs and attitudes of local populations and particularly the youth. Islamic State, as was discussed in Chapter Three, made a particular effort to reshape local school curriculums in territories under its control through its administrative apparatus by rewriting or restructuring existing textbooks and curricula, forcing teachers to undergo “re-education” sessions. In April 2017, Al-Shabaab also introduced a redesigned curriculum for schools in areas under its control and released a number of new textbooks in subjects including Arabic and Somali language, *fiqh*, Islamic theology and *‘aqīda*, history, and geography.¹³⁵¹ The Somali insurgent group’s interest in reshaping the education sector as part of its governance, however, predated the release of these new textbooks.

In September 2011 the group’s Office of Education and Teaching issued a new comprehensive white paper outlining its ideological goals and proposed changes to existing curricula in its territories, ones in line with its Salafi identity and organizational interests in preparing new generations of supporters and recruits. The Office said that their focus on “reforming” local curricula was made all the more urgent because of the continued focus of the enemies of the organization and of Islam on trying to corrupt the field of education through Orientalism (*istishrāq*) and Christianization (*tanṣīr*) and the failure of the governments of Muslim countries to instill religious faith or piety into the lives of their people, a failure that was due either to military or intellectual/mental occupation by hostile foreign powers.¹³⁵² This failure on the part of Muslim leaders was present, the Office said,

¹³⁵¹ Somali MeMo, “Alshabaab oo soo Bandhigtay Buugaag Waxbarashoo oo Dugsi Hoose ah,” 2 April 2017, at <http://somalimemo.net/articles/6747/SawirroCodad-Alshabaab-oo-soo-Bandhigtay-Buugaag-Waxbarasho-oo-Dugsi-Hoose-ah>, last accessed 2 April 2017.

¹³⁵² Al-Shabaab communiqués, “Bayān ṣādir ‘an Maktab al-Tarbīyat wa-l-Ta’līm li-Harakat al-Shabāb al-Mujāhidīn” (Statement from Al-Shabaab’s Education and Teaching Office), 13 September 2011 and the Somali version released one week earlier, “Maktabka Tarbiyada & Tacliimta ee Xarakada Mujaahidiinta Al-Shabaab: Bayaan Saxaafadeed,” 6 September 2011.

even inside territories it controlled where insurgent officials claimed they had found the presence of a number of problematic beliefs from the spread of deviant and polytheistic creeds (*intishār li-l-minhāj al-kāfira*) well outside of official Islam, as defined by the group.¹³⁵³ Such impermissible accretions (*bid‘a*) to Islam endangered society and must be stamped out.¹³⁵⁴ These deviant creeds that had allegedly seeped into popular religion and the education system included, the Office said: (1) Hinduism (*manhaj li-l-Hindūs*; manhajka Hinduuska), (2) Shi’ism (*manhaj Shī‘ī*; manhajka Shiicada ee Rumaysan 12 imaam), (3) ‘Alawism/Nusayrism (*manhaj Nuṣayrī*; manhajka Nusariyada) with its deification of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, (4) Christianity and the faith of the “slaves of the cross” (*manhaj Naṣrānī*, *‘ibād al-ṣalīb*; manhajka Kirishtanka, Saliibiyada), and (5) deviations from orthodox Islam (*manhaj munḥarif ‘an uṣūl al-‘aqīda al-Islāmīya*; manhaj khilaafsan asalka caqiidada Islaamka) or a general ignorance about key issues of *‘aqīda* and theology including the core pillars of belief (*arkān al-īmān*).

Al-Shabaab, in addition to highlighting ideological goals in reshaping education, also raised concerns about the lack of a single education system from locale to locale, noting that there was not even a uniform language of instruction or school schedules.¹³⁵⁵ In order to be successful, the revamped education sector had to be standardized with regard to its schedule, curricula, and teaching methods.¹³⁵⁶ In this, the anti-system *jihadi* insurgents sounded remarkably like the nation-state that they in theory rejected.¹³⁵⁷ In order to achieve its goal to create a uniform education system, Al-Shabaab announced the launch of a new program to do so, one which would protect (*himāya*) “proper” Islamic *‘aqīda* and method of practice

¹³⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

(*manhaj*).¹³⁵⁸ As part of this program, the insurgent education administration would (1) strictly enforce a ban on all teaching approaches that contravened the “correct methodology” of Sunni Islam (*al-manhaj al-ṣaḥīḥ manhaj Ahl al-Sunna wa-l-Jamā‘a*) and emphasize the teaching of Arabic language through reading and writing skills based on the teaching of a solid grammatical and syntactical foundation of the language so that students from the first level (*al-mustawā al-awwal*) through the sixth of primary education would be able to understand the Qur’an as well as actively use Arabic.¹³⁵⁹ The new curricula (*muqarrarāt*) would be taught to local teachers by the Office’s officials, who would then oversee its implementation throughout rebel-held territory.¹³⁶⁰ This was a divinely-ordained duty, the statement said, citing the final part of Qur’an 5:2 in which the believers are instructed by God to not help each other in sin and transgression against divine commandments but instead in abiding by their duties to God and their religion so as to avoid divine punishment.

The Office urged Muslims to safeguard their children by ensuring that they were taught “correct” Islam and placed particularly heavy responsibility on religious scholars and teachers to educate their followers and congregations in the same while avoiding spreading incorrect belief and *bid‘a*, remembering that they will be held accountable to God on the Day of Judgment.¹³⁶¹ Those individuals guilty of spreading “destructive methodologies” (*al-manāhij al-haddāma*) should repent to God before it was too late and return to the correct path of the *sunna*, here implying that a worldly as well as an afterlife punishment awaited those who refused.¹³⁶²

Despite the fact that it had begun to suffer territorial setbacks following the launch of a new series of AMISOM and Somali government offensives that began in February 2011,

¹³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶² *Ibid.*

Al-Shabaab moved beyond just talking theoretically about implementing its new curriculum by hosting local teachers and notables at sessions designed to introduce it.¹³⁶³ Teachers from universities, institutes, and lower level schools were hosted at these events where they met with prominent insurgent officials including spokesman ‘Ali Rage (‘Ali Dheere).¹³⁶⁴ The goal of these meetings was to highlight the need to ensure that future generations, which included “tens of thousands of students” across insurgent-ruled territory, would be raised with correct beliefs and practices rather than a bastardized religion composed of polytheistic elements from creeds hostile to Islam and Sunni Muslims.¹³⁶⁵ These meetings were one of the referential symbols used to underline the bureaucratic and administrative claims made by the insurgent rulers vis-à-vis local civilian populations.

In addition to reshaping the curriculum into a uniform model that fit organizational insurgent goals, *jihadi* rebel rulers such as Al-Shabaab and Islamic State also deployed condensation symbols that reinforced their core ideological beliefs and sought to inculcate them within students and other locals. These included the naming and renaming of schools and other educational institutions and streets as well as the strategic utilization of flags, propaganda artwork such as official graffiti and street murals, and other regalia at public events including rallies, *da‘wa* sessions, and *shari‘a* courses for local merchants and other members of civil society, illustrating how referential and condensation symbols work in tandem as a part of *jihadi*-insurgent governance efforts. By targeting some of their programs and events at specific segments of the local civilian population such as youth, women, merchants, tribal and clan leaders, teachers, and religious scholars and mosque preachers and

¹³⁶³ Al-Shabaab communiqué, “Maktab al-Ta‘līm ya ‘qada liqā’an ma‘ mas’ ūlī al-mu’assasāt al-ta‘līmīya” (Education Office held a meeting with representatives/officials from the educational institutions), 6 February 2012.

¹³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

imams, jihadi rebel rulers seek to bring about a social shift among locals toward their own ideological positions by influencing local powerbrokers.¹³⁶⁶

In Somalia, Al-Shabaab ran religious educational institutes and programming aimed at specific sub-groups in society such as the youth of specific clans and sub-clans including minority clans like the Ajuran. Insurgent administrators have also regularly participated in pan-clan politics by acting as mediators between competing clans through a combination of their *shari'a* courts and mediation committees headed by insurgent officials including shadow governors. In April 2016, for example, Al-Shabaab's shadow governor of the Lower Shabelle region south of Mogadishu, Mohamed Abu 'Abdullah, oversaw the mediation of a lengthy and ongoing inter-clan dispute between the Habar Gidir/Hawiye and Biyamal (Biimaal)/Dir clans in the area. As a result of the insurgent-organized mediation, leaders of both clans agreed to a truce that would initially last for three months and then be followed up with a new negotiation meeting at which the rival claims would be adjudicated based on the Qur'an and *sunna* of the Prophet Muhammad.¹³⁶⁷ As part of the temporary truce, each clan agreed to remove their checkpoints manned by clan militiamen on the road between the key towns of Afgooye and Baraawe, separate their clan militias from those *murtadd* militias aligned with the Somali government, refrain from bearing arms outside of their traditional areas of residence, and uniformly denounce and act against anyone who violated the truce. Al-Shabaab blamed the renewal of active hostilities between the two clans on the unrest brought back by AMISOM and Somali government forces when they recaptured the area.¹³⁶⁸ Following the expressed dissatisfaction with parts of the mediation process from local notables, Al-Shabaab decided to replace Abu 'Abdullah as the shadow governor of Lower

¹³⁶⁶ Al-Shabaab communiqué, "Ikhtitām dawrat da'wīya li-l-tujjār fī madīnat Wajīd" (Closing of a *da'wa* course for the merchants of Wajid city), 11 May 2012.

¹³⁶⁷ This is based on a report from a *jihadi* media network affiliated with Al-Shabaab published on 28 April 2016 at <https://web.telegram.org/#/im?p=@AlFirdawsChan>, the text of which has been saved in the author's archives.

¹³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Shabelle while deftly ensuring his continued loyalty by both effusively thanking him for his service in that position for the past seven years as well as naming him the new shadow governor of the Middle and Lower Juba regions.¹³⁶⁹ Al-Shabaab, as of November 2018, continued to mediate local clan disputes as well as hold meetings with local *‘ulamā* and notables as part of their governing administration.¹³⁷⁰

Islamic State, in its territory, also placed significant focus on reshaping the curriculum and educational systems at all levels in territories under its control between 2014 and 2017, as discussed in Chapter Three. The organization’s efforts included rewriting existing textbooks, producing and publishing its own *da‘wa* pamphlets, textbooks, print collections, and annotated editions of classical, medieval, and modern Sunni Islamic texts including several books penned by the eighteenth century Najdi Hanbali Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab. These publications were distributed to the general public, given away as “prizes” at insurgent events including Qur’an recitation and memorization competitions aimed at local youth, and published online via the organization’s extensive electronic media networks. Its education and ideological indoctrination programs were pursued both at the public level in local public schools and universities as well as through its own educational institutions that included military training camps for new recruits and courses and programs aimed at children and

¹³⁶⁹ Report from an Al-Shabaab-affiliated social media outlet accessed on 4 May 2016 at <https://web.telegram.org/#/im?p=@AIQAACIDA>, the text of which is saved in the author’s archives.

¹³⁷⁰ These activities included mediating a dispute over grazing lands and livestock between two Rahanweyn sub-clans, the Eelay and Laysan. See: Somali MeMo, “213 Neef Geel Ah Oo Maxkamad Islaami Ah Ukala Wareejisay Beelo Ku Dagaallamay Gobolka Bay,” 8 October 2017, at <http://somalimemo.net/articles/7810/Dhageyso-213-Neef-Geel-Ah-Oo-Maxkamad-Islaami-Ah-Ukala-Wareejisay-Beelo-Ku-Dagaallamay-Gobolka-Bay>, last accessed 8 October 2017. Al-Shabaab’s political bureau chief Hussein ‘Ali Fiidow also hosted a meeting with local religious scholars and clan elders. See: Somali MeMo, “Dowro Diini Ah oo loo Soo Xiray Salaadiinta Beelaha Soomaaliyeed,” 24 March 2017, at <http://somalimemo.net/articles/6698/SawirroCodad-Dowro-Diini-Ah-oo-loo-Soo-Xiray-Salaadiinta-Beelaha-Soomaaliyeed>, last accessed 24 March 2017. Local clan elders from different sub-clans were also gathered by Al-Shabaab’s officials to complete a course on Islam and Islamic texts in the town of Awdheegle in the Lower Shabelle region in July 2017. See: Calamada, “Sawiro Xafad Lagu Soo Xirayay Dowro Loo Qabtay Odayaasha WI Sh hoose Oo Ka Dhacday Degmada Awdheegle,” 21 July 2017, at <http://calamada.com/?p=69620>, last accessed 21 July 2017.

other youth, whom Islamic State leaders dubbed the “cubs of the Caliphate” (*ashbāl al-khilāfa*).¹³⁷¹

Children were targeted for recruitment by Islamic State leaders in order to build from the ground up a future generation of fighters, which they justified as an “Islamic duty” to the *Umma* to defend it from the “Crusaders.”¹³⁷² Child soldiers, as in other conflict zones underwent a process of combat/combatant socialization during which they underwent doctrinal as well as military training from *jihadi*-insurgent leaders and recruiters. By being grouped together separately in their own training camps, programs, and classes, the “cubs of the Caliphate” were encouraged to bond and cohere as a single unit, one which could eventually be deployed on the battlefield by insurgent commanders. Their training often culminated in their participation in executions or other acts of violence, acts meant to solidify their ties to the organization and make it much more difficult for them to defect to mainstream society due to fears of rejection, ostracizing, or retaliatory violence, trapping them in what Della Porta terms a “spiral of encapsulation,” that is, a spiral of violence.¹³⁷³ Recruits are educated to see the rest of society as being legitimate targets of insurgent violence, a sense that is reinforced by the construction of exclusivist organizations.¹³⁷⁴

¹³⁷¹ Islamic State films, *Al-Ta'lim fī Zill al-Khilāfa* (Education in the Shadow of the Caliphate), Maktab al-I'lāmī li-Wilāyat al-Raqqā, 5 March 2015; *Ashbāl al-Khilāfa* (Cubs of the Caliphate), Maktab al-I'lāmī li-Wilāyat al-Raqqā, 15 June 2015; *Ashbāl al-Khilāfa* (Cubs of the Caliphate), Maktab al-I'lāmī li-Wilāyat Dijla, 22 July 2015; and *Mu'askar Ashbāl al-Khilāfa* (Military Training Camp of the Cubs of the Caliphate), Maktab al-I'lāmī li-Wilāyat Khurāsān, 28 January 2016.

¹³⁷² Islamic State, “The Lions of Tomorrow,” in *Dabiq*, no. 8 (March 2015), 20-21.

¹³⁷³ Donatella Della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State*, 12.

¹³⁷⁴ On exclusivist militant organizations and framing as it relates to anti-civilian violence, see Mohammed M. Hafez, “From Marginalization to Massacres.”



**Qur'an memorization institute run by Islamic State for its "cubs of the Caliphate" (*ashbāl al-khilāfa*) in Aleppo governorate, Syria. The "cubs" were usually but not exclusively children of organization members.
[Official Islamic State photograph released in August 2016].**

Young recruits, by being required to engage in acts of significant violence such as executions and rape, are encouraged to come together as a cohesive unit, which in turn provides insurgent leaders with a more reliable fighting unit that is less likely to break apart due to defections or an inability to operate in a unified fashion. Cohen, in her study of rape during civil wars, argues that the type of recruitment has a significant impact on the levels of engagement in sexual violence with rape serving as a means of combat socialization for recruits who are forcibly recruited and, as a result, lack the unit cohesiveness and camaraderie of military recruits who joined in other, less extreme forms of recruitment such as conscription.¹³⁷⁵ In environments of state collapse and the presence of loutable resources, insurgents who have been recruited forcibly are also more likely to commit rape, though this is not the case in ethnic conflicts or genocides despite claims to the contrary.¹³⁷⁶

¹³⁷⁵ Dara Kay Cohen, "Explaining Rape during Civil War: Cross-National Evidence (1980-2009)," *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 3 (2013), 461-477.

¹³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 476.

With regard to child recruits and drawing upon the work of Della Porta, Cohen, and Hafez, other forms of violence, both sexual and non-sexual, are also used by insurgent organizations—here Islamist, but not exclusively so—as a means of internal socialization. Al-Shabaab, by running youth institutes for children and young adults from specific clans and sub-clans, continued, as of November 2018, to seek to build a future generation of supporters and members by introducing their organizational ideology at as early an age as possible. The inclusion of active participation in, including the carrying out of, executions by child recruits in Islamic State’s internal socialization process uses the act of killing in much the same way as Cohen finds with sexual violence, as a powerful means of increasing the level of unit cohesion. The young ages of the Islamic State’s recruits provide the organization’s leadership with both the opportunity of getting a hold of recruits at ages when their minds and behavior are more malleable but also the challenge of building up a willingness of the recruits to participate in often grisly acts of violence. The rigorous, uniform method of training and indoctrination practiced by Islamic State encourages all types of recruits to abandon previously held positions and reorganize themselves physically as well as mentally under the organization’s ideology. The normalization of the recruits’ acceptance of violence is achieved by exposing them to regular, even daily, displays of violence including the implementation of judicial punishments such as executions and floggings in person as well as through the viewing and consumption of insurgent media.¹³⁷⁷

Child recruits into the ranks of Islamic State are made to carry out or participate in executions using a variety of methods including firearms, explosives, and beheadings, some of which are filmed and later released as part of the organization’s media operations aimed internally as well as externally. In one such film, which was recorded in eastern Syria, multiple child soldiers of different nationalities participate in executions that are cast as a

¹³⁷⁷ John G. Horgan, Max Taylor, Mia Bloom, and Charlie Winter, “From Cubs to Lions: A Six Stage Model of Child Socialization into the Islamic State,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 40, no. 7 (2017), 654.

challenging “game” by their instructors, who lecture them about their duty to kill and “take the heads” of Shi‘is and ‘Alawis/Nusayris. The exercise, which is framed as the culmination of their ideological and military training, required them to locate hidden “apostate” prisoners in and among archaeological ruins before executing them one by one. Each child recruit executes their own prisoner but do so as part of a unit, a part of the socialization process and the building of a cohesive body.¹³⁷⁸

Public Events, Language, & Symbolic Power

The coercive power of *jihadi*-insurgent rulers like Al-Shabaab, Islamic State, Ansar al-Shari‘a in Yemen, and the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban groups relies not only on the public performance of physical punishment to safeguard insurgent law and order but also on the public demonstration of governing authority and coercive capabilities. By organizing and hosting public events such as communal prayers and ‘*Eid* celebrations, contests and competitions for locals and particularly youth, and *da‘wa* and *shari‘a* lessons for local merchants and business owners, *jihadi* rebel governing authorities are engaged in a process of claims-making in which they draw upon referential symbols that broadcast their governance claims and capabilities including the ability to utilize violence and coercion. Public social events, classes and courses, and other communal activities in turn draw upon condensation symbols to encourage the governed population to identify more closely with their *jihadi* rebel rulers. These condensation symbols include Islamic theological, creedal, and legal texts used in insurgent-run courses and classes, the adoption of flags emblazoned with the testament of faith in a style that in *jihadi* popular culture is associated with that of the Prophet Muhammad, and the heavy use of Arabic in *jihadi*-insurgent media operations and on-the-ground governance even by non-Arab groups.

¹³⁷⁸ Islamic State film, *Ilā Ibnā’ al-Yahūd* (To the Sons of the Jews), Maktab al-I‘lāmī li-Wilāyat Dayr al-Zūr, 3 December 2015.

The use of classical and formal written and spoken Arabic is one of the most important symbolic demonstrations by *jihadi* rulers of their claims to represent a purified form of “true” or “original” Islam, enabling them to both promote a sense of shared communal identity through religion and ideology as well as advance claims of Islamic legitimacy and historical authenticity.¹³⁷⁹ Language is a particularly powerful symbolic force because it serves to contextualize memorable events and experiences, creating a “cognitive schema or frame for interpreting it.”¹³⁸⁰ The use of specific Arabic theological terminology is meant to engender specific frames of reference for those consuming it, linking a cause to the idealized sacred past.

This heavy emphasis on Arabic is not unique to *jihadis* but is also emphasized as a source of scholarly credentials, gravitas, and pride by many pietistic Islamic movements and intellectual currents including Salafism and scholastic Twelver Shi’ism and even Western popular forms of Sufism, such as that represented by the Zaytuna Institute in California, even in countries where Arabic is not the native language.¹³⁸¹ This use of Arabic as a tool of claims-making regarding Islamic legitimacy takes the form of direct usage in *jihadi*-insurgent communications and at public events as well as the quotation of important and respected Islamic religious sources originally produced in Arabic or, as in the case of the Qur’an, believed to exist only truly in Arabic. The former sources include *aḥādīth*, legal texts, and poetry. It is common to see non-Arab *jihadi* rebel groups such as the Afghan Taliban and the various Pakistani Taliban groups use Arabic sources and quotations, sometimes with accompanying translations into local languages and sometimes through the maintenance of

¹³⁷⁹ On the use of Arabic as a strategic as well as an ideological unifying tool by *jihadi*-insurgent groups, see Alexander Knysh, “Islam and Arabic as the Rhetoric of Insurgency: The Case of the Caucasus Emirate,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 35, no. 4 (2012): 315-337.

¹³⁸⁰ Charles J. Fillmore, “Frame Semantics and the Nature of Language,” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 280 (1976), 26.

¹³⁸¹ Bernard Haykel, “On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action,” in *Global Salafism: Islam’s New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (New York: Columbia University Press), 35 and Footnote no. 5 on 57.

multi-lingual media departments that produce original and translated content in local languages as well as Arabic.¹³⁸²

The symbolic importance of Arabic, though also important for groups founded, led, and composed primarily of Arab *jihadis*, is particularly vital to non-Arab groups because of their additional need to demonstrate their Islamic religious credentials through the utilization and deployment of Arabic as a demonstration of their scholastic, historical, and governing legitimacy. This is especially the case because of *jihadi* rebels' advancement of social and political claims of legitimacy heavily based on their claim to religious purity and soundness of *'aqīda* and *shari'a* bases. In order to demonstrate their "Islamic" credentials, non-Arab groups have an additional hurdle to pass by showing that their leadership or at least key members have the capacity to engage with, utilize, and deploy key sources from the canon of Islamic law and jurisprudence and history as well as in other areas such as poetry. The use of classical and formal Arabic, even if sparing, allows *jihadi* rebels to engage in a claims-making process concerning religious legitimacy, which they claim is one of the main bases for social and political legitimacy. It may also enable them to attract support from important Arab *jihadi* groups or supporters including recruits and funders. The use of Arabic and the embrace of "Islamic" religious clothing and appearances such as beards are meant to support *jihadi* claims to Islamic historical authenticity and legitimacy, tying them to the Prophet Muhammad and the first few generations of Muslims who are considered by contemporary Muslims to have been the best practitioners of the faith who will ever live.¹³⁸³ Unlike Arab *jihadis*, non-Arab *jihadi* rebels cannot fall back on claiming a birthright connection to the

¹³⁸² For examples of non-Arab *jihadi* rebel groups' use of both local languages as well as classical and formal Arabic, see Figure 47 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2018/01/02/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation-figure-47/>.

¹³⁸³ The adoption of "Islamic" dress and physical appearances as part of a social process by certain businesspeople operating in areas controlled by Islamist groups is discussed in Aisha Ahmad, *Jihad & Co.*; see particularly 54-55 and 109-115.

Arabic language and must engage in a social process to demonstrate a significant connection to it as part of their bid for religiopolitical legitimacy.

Given the importance of signaling their connection to the Islamic sacred past through Arabic, it is not surprising that non-Arab *jihadi* rebel rulers such as Al-Shabaab, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, and the various Taliban groups place such an important emphasis on the teaching and use of Arabic. This focus occurs both internally in the form of the education and ideological training of members and in organizational media operations and externally through the use of Arabic and Arabic religious sources in communal events, schools, courses, and competitions directed at local populations.

Writing about the Islamic Emirate of the Caucasus (IEC), an umbrella for *jihadi* rebel groups based in the North Caucasus and engaged in battles with Russia and its regional allies and puppet rulers of regions such as Chechnya, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Dagestan, Knysh outlines a number of symbolic moves by the IEC's leader, Dokku Umarov upon its founding. First, Umarov rejected the geographical division of the North Caucasus by "infidel" rulers and reorganized, at least symbolically and rhetorically, the region by "*vilayat*" (*wilāyāt*), a term used by the Ottoman Empire. He announced the formation of six or seven new *wilāyāt* that generally corresponded to the modern borders of the North Caucasus republics.¹³⁸⁴ On the surface, this would seem to highlight the ridiculousness of *jihadi* rebels but in fact it demonstrates the vital symbolic importance that they place on the symbols, symbolic registers, and symbolic power in their claim to legitimacy as territorial rulers. As discussed in Chapter Three, Islamic State also introduced geographical adjustments to the modern Syrian and Iraqi governorates including introducing new *wilāyāt* that seemed to correspond approximately to geographical boundaries used in earlier periods.

¹³⁸⁴ Knysh, "Islam and Arabic as the Rhetoric of Insurgency," 317.

In their contestation with existing nation-states and regimes for political legitimacy, *jihadi* rebel proto-states recognize the importance of language, seeing the adoption of new Islamized names and terminology as an important part of their program to use symbolism and symbolic processes to bring about changes in local populations and develop what Knysh refers to as a new “political grammar” upon which the *jihadi* rebel proto-state’s legitimacy rests.¹³⁸⁵ This heavy use of Arabic Islamic terminology does not always translate smoothly, both literally and figuratively, since those among the target audiences who are not as well trained in or familiar with the vocabulary as *jihadi* rebel officials often require extensive commentaries or notes to explain its symbolic importance. This is arguably less the case in areas with a closer historical connection to Arabic such as East and West Africa where Islamic religious education has involved the teaching, learning, and use of Arabic for many centuries. Indeed, Somalia’s four historical noble clan families—the Dir, Darod, Hawiye, and the Rahanweyn (Digil/Mirifle)—trace their lineages back to mythical founders from the Arabian Peninsula, such as Samaale (Dir and Hawiye), and have a centuries-long direct connection to Arab lands through kinship and religious ties and trade. This historical presence and use of Arabic as well as linguistic connections between local languages and Arabic, even if limited, may lessen the hurdles faced by *jihadi* rebel groups from regions whose connection to the Qur’anic language is less remote than other areas, such as the now predominantly Russian-speaking North Caucasus.

Al-Shabaab required its members and recruits to undergo not only military but also religious and ideological training with the latter being overseen by the *Maktab al-Da‘wa*. The Somali insurgent group established specific centers and institutes to carry out internal education and other *da‘wa* activities and programs. Recruits underwent significant religious and political education, demonstrating the importance Al-Shabaab’s leadership has placed on

¹³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 325-328.

producing members who were not only trained in military tactics and weaponry but also in the group's particular religiopolitical outlook. Graduates were expected to not only participate in military or domestic police/law and order actions but also to serve as missionary preachers (*du'āt*, singular: *dā'īya*) for the organization.

In April 2010, 209 new recruits, who are referred to as *du'āt* despite graduating from a military training program (*mu'askar*), completed their training and education program and were honored at a graduation ceremony at the Naṣr al-Dīn Mosque in Mogadishu.¹³⁸⁶ The ceremony was attended by senior insurgent officials including Al-Shabaab's spokesman, 'Ali Rage, and the then-shadow governor of the Banaadir region where the city is located, 'Ali Jabal ('Ali Mohamed Hussein).¹³⁸⁷ The religious education component of the course lasted over a period of four months and included the intensive study and memorization of materials from books on the Qur'an and Qur'anic sciences, theology, *aḥādīth* and '*ulūm al-ḥādīth* (*ḥādīth* sciences including classification and use in law), Islamic law and jurisprudence (*fiqh*), the Prophet Muhammad's biography (*sīra*), and classical Arabic grammar, rhetoric, and syntax.¹³⁸⁸ The books used included materials written by Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, Ibn Taymiyya, the contemporary Saudi Salafī religious scholar Muhammad ibn Ṣāliḥ al-'Uthaymīn, the Somali religious scholar Ahmed Baydhabo, Ahmad bin al-Husayn al-Iṣfahānī (Abu Shujā'), al-Juwaynī, Abū Ishāq al-Ilbīrī, and modern texts by Sunni *jihadi* ideologues Ayman al-Zawahiri and Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisī.¹³⁸⁹ The course included the study of the Arabic language through grammar and morphology (*ṣarf*) as well as studying the language through poetry and writings on etiquette (*ādab*) and morality (*akhlāq*).¹³⁹⁰ The

¹³⁸⁶ Al-Shabaab communiqué, "Ḥafl takhrīj li-Mu'askar 'Abdullah 'Azzam al-Da'wī fī Wilāyat al-Islāmīya 'Mogadishu'" (Graduation ceremony from the 'Abdullah 'Azzam Missionary Propagation Camp in the Islamic region of Mogadishu), 2 May 2010.

¹³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

study of Arabic and Islamic texts and sources in Arabic, as discussed earlier in this chapter, was also emphasized in Al-Shabaab's external education and school curriculum in areas under its control. The group's leaders again emphasized the importance of Arabic with the introduction in early April 2017 of new elementary curriculum textbooks that included titles on Arabic language as well as Islamic theology, law and jurisprudence, and creed alongside history and geography.¹³⁹¹ The new elementary curriculum and textbooks were focused on the *jihadi* rebels' program (*manhaj*) centered on Arabic language education.¹³⁹²

In July 2014 the reclusive leader of Islamic State, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who had remained a disembodied voice since assuming command of the *jihadi*-insurgent organization following the April 2010 killing of his predecessor Abu 'Umar al-Baghdadi, publicly revealed himself for the first time during Friday prayer in Mosul's historic Al-Nūrī Mosque during Ramadan. His decision to ascend the mosque's pulpit and claim in person legitimate authority as the new "caliph" of the world's Muslims was carefully planned, with Islamic State's choreographers harnessing the power of communal public events to tap into important and deeply embedded symbols in a bid to attract public support. In addition to the governing power that the controlled public performance in the mosque represented, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's sermon and leading of the congregational prayer also included a number of condensation symbols designed to provoke particular emotional reactions from target audiences¹³⁹³ and to fulfill the rhetorically important duty of connecting the public with the social movement's project by condensing multiple reference points, emotions, and ideas into

¹³⁹¹ Somali MeMo, "Alshabaab oo soo Bandhigtay Buugaag Waxbarasho oo Dugsi Hoose ah" (Al-Shabaab releases elementary school curriculum/education textbooks), 2 April 2017, at <http://somalimemo.net/articles/6747/SawirroCodad-Alshabaab-oo-soo-Bandhigtay-Buugaag-Waxbarasho-oo-Dugsi-Hoose-ah>, last accessed 2 April 2017.

¹³⁹² *Ibid.*

¹³⁹³ Carol Vincent, "Parent Empowerment? Collective Action and Inaction in Education," *Oxford Review of Education* 22, no. 4 (1996), 466

short, digestible phrases and symbols.¹³⁹⁴ From his black robes and turban invoking his claim to be a *sayyid*—a male descendant from the Prophet Muhammad’s family—and speaking style that artificially mimics Qur’anic recitation (*tajwīd*) to his use of a *siwāk/miswāk* to clean his teeth while sitting on the pulpit before the start of the Friday prayer, the Islamic State *amīr* and the organization’s other leaders were keenly aware of the importance of public events as ritualized performances and demonstrations of political and military power and religious/ideological claims-making.¹³⁹⁵

During the height of its power as a *jihadi* rebel organization that ruled over a significant amount of territory between 2014 and 2016, Islamic State continued to utilize public space and communal events as performance spaces in which to advance their claims of religious and political legitimacy. Friday congregational prayers throughout Islamic State-controlled areas of Syria, Iraq, and Libya as well as in territories controlled by the organization’s external “distant provinces”/local and regional affiliates, such as Wilāyat Khurāsān, were particularly important gatherings for *jihadi* rebel symbolic claims-making as were communal celebrations marking ‘Eid al-Fitr and ‘Eid al-Adha. Important Islamic State preachers, ideologues, and leaders often made appearances at these events, for example in July 2015 when the organization’s chief juridical authority (*mufīī*), Turkī al-Bin‘alī, led the

¹³⁹⁴ David S. Kaufer and Kathleen M. Carley, “Condensation Symbols: Their Variety and Rhetorical Function in Political Discourse,” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 26, no. 3 (1993), 201-226.

¹³⁹⁵ There are Sunni *aḥādīth* in which the Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said that all Muslim men, who are obligated to attend the Friday congregational prayer, must bath and clean their teeth with a *siwāk/miswāk*. Other reports say that bathing is required but do not take a position on whether the use of *siwāk/miswāk* or perfume (*‘itr*) is or is not also compulsory. These *aḥādīth* are included in several of the six canonical Sunni *aḥādīth* collections including that of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Ibn Mājah, and Abu Dāwud as well as the *musnad* of Ibn Hanbal.

congregational prayer marking the end of Ramadan and the start of ‘Eid al-Fitr in Raqqa city, then IS’ *de facto* capital.¹³⁹⁶

In Islamic State’s “distant provinces” outside of Syria and Iraq—some but not all of which seemed to operate with significant autonomy despite being connected to the core organization and resembling the core-regional affiliate model of Al-Qaeda Central and its regional affiliates—also used public events as stages for symbolic performances. As with the core organization, these performances served to broadcast the coercive capabilities of the *jihadi* rebel rulers as well as serve as an attempt to invest local residents into the insurgent governing project.¹³⁹⁷ In September 2015, for example, Boko Haram, which had joined Islamic State as “Wilāyat West Africa” in March of that year, held ‘Eid al-Adha congregational prayer in territories in northeastern Nigeria under its control for its own members as well as locals, both men and women.¹³⁹⁸ The communal events included sermons and public statements by Boko Haram members in both Arabic and Hausa extolling *jihad* and the *mujāhidīn* as well as the requisite sacrifice of animals.¹³⁹⁹

In southeastern Afghanistan, Wilāyat Khurāsān publicly burned banned items including hashish and other drugs, destroyed graves and “polytheistic” shrines, and, like the core IS organization, ran schools and centers for locals and particularly for children and youth, whom it sought to indoctrinate and bring into the *jihadi*-insurgent fold at a young age

¹³⁹⁶ Islamic State’s media wing documented the congregational prayer through official photography. See Figure 48 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2018/01/04/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation-figure-48/>.

¹³⁹⁷ The extent to which many of Islamic State’s external affiliates/distant provinces really enacted substantial levels of territorial governance in comparison to the core organization in Syria, Iraq, and to some extent Libya is debated, but in general it seems that many of the distant provinces/regional affiliates only succeeded in establishing lower levels of rebel governance in their respective areas of operation, though this has fluctuated over time.

¹³⁹⁸ Islamic State film, *Ajwā’ al- ‘Īd fī Wilāyat Gharb Ifrīqīya* (‘Eid Atmosphere in Wilāyat West Africa), Maktab al-I‘lāmī bi-Wilāyat Gharb Ifrīqīya, 28 September 2015.

¹³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

as a strategic move to ensure that it would have manpower in the future.¹⁴⁰⁰ Other popular events used by *jihadi* rebel rulers to interact with locals living under their rule included *da'wa* events, *shari'a* courses, and competitions and contests focused on things such as Qur'an recitation and memorization where winners received various prizes including religious textbooks, school supplies, and money.¹⁴⁰¹

Al-Shabaab has long utilized public events as a means through which to broadcast their ideological and political claims to authority and authenticity as well as venues in which to demonstrate its coercive and governing power. Competitions for young adults and children focused on Qur'an recitation and memorization, congregational prayers, communal 'Eid events, and the establishment and running of academies, institutes, and courses for local residents including merchants, women, teachers, and young people are some of the types of public events that Al-Shabaab has used as stages on which to project symbolic power through the invocation of Islamic history, scriptural and legal texts, and identity politics. The *jihadi*-insurgent group has also challenged Somalia's dominant Sufi orders and practitioners by vigorously endorsing a militant form of Salafism and the destruction of graves and shrines seen as polytheistic. The public challenge to Somali Sufis, in addition to serving as a symbolic demonstration of Al-Shabaab's coercive authority, may also have had a strategic motivation in that the insurgents may have sought to undermine the clan-based militias such as those under the loose Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a umbrella that espouse Sufism and have presented the *jihadis* with some of their most vigorous competition on the ground.

Beginning in August 2008 when it began to capture large amounts of territory including major urban centers, Al-Shabaab has organized communal Friday prayers, 'Eid al-

¹⁴⁰⁰ Islamic State film, *Al-Hayāt fi Zill al-Sharī'a* (Life Under the Shade of the *Shari'a*), Maktab al-I'lāmī bi-Wilāyat Khurāsān, 17 February 2017. See also Figure 49 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2018/01/04/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation-figure-49/>.

¹⁴⁰¹ See Figure 49 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2018/01/04/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation-figure-49/>.

Fitr and ‘Eid al-Adha prayers and celebrations, and other public events across its territory that bring together local residents—men and women as well as children and youth—and its own members and leaders.¹⁴⁰² These ‘Eid events were attended by senior *jihadi*-insurgent leaders including the organization’s regional shadow governors such as Mohamed Abu ‘Abdullah (as of November 2018 the shadow governor of the Middle and Lower Juba regions) and Hasan Ya‘qub (as of November 2017 the shadow governor of the Galguduud region) and senior spokesman, ‘Ali Mohamud Rage.¹⁴⁰³ Events targeted at children and young adults allowed Al-Shabaab to instill its religio-political ideology and a sense of connection and loyalty into new generations of potential *jihadi* rebels by tapping into the symbolic power of Islamic scripture, history, and a hybrid identity politics that highlights aspects of both Somali ethno-nationalism as well as pan-Islamism.¹⁴⁰⁴

Conclusion

Jihadi rebel organizations that seek to establish and secure governing control over territory and local populations rely on a combination of different incentives, arguments and narrative framings, claims-making processes regarding sociopolitical and historical as well as religious and ideological authenticity, and displays of bureaucratic and coercive capabilities. As part of their campaign to replace existing governments and take control of the state, *jihadi* rebels deploy symbols and symbolic power as tools with which to both strengthen internal ties within the insurgent organization itself as well as to win support or, at the very least, acquiescence from local residents. Rebel governing regimes incorporate visual, aural, and written/print symbols into their symbolic repertoires to frame themselves and their governing

¹⁴⁰² Al-Shabaab films, both Mu’assasat al-Katā’ib, *Muzāharat dīdd Harq al-Muṣḥaf*, and *Nasamāt min Rīyāh al-Naṣr* (Breezes from the Wind of Victory), 12 November 2009.

¹⁴⁰³ See Figure 50 at <https://ibnsiqillidissertationsources.wordpress.com/2018/01/04/visual-primary-source-references-dissertation-figure-50/>.

¹⁴⁰⁴ On Al-Shabaab’s mix of Somali ethno-nationalism, pan-Islamism, and regional and transnational/global jihadism, see Christopher Anzalone, *Continuity and Change: The Evolution and Resilience of Al-Shabab’s Media Insurgency, 2006-2016*, 29.

programs and actions in a light that aligns the organization's goals with causes and interests supported by local populations. Convincing locals to provide material or human resources support is particularly important for rebel groups operating in environments without significant natural resources or external support. Local support or acquiescence to continued insurgent rule is also important, however, for rebels, who usually have limited manpower, so that they can free up as many members as possible to fight on the front lines. Investing the local population or at least significant or important segments of it in the insurgent project enables rebel groups to reserve fewer members to maintain control of captured territory and shift more forces and resources to the goal of expanding territorially. Rebel governing regimes need not be democratic but it is in their interest to maintain at least some lines of communication and negotiation, if not direct partnership, with key groups within local civil society. These groups include clans and tribes, the business and merchant class, local religious and communal leaders, and other non-state armed groups.

The goal of *jihadi* rebel rulers, like other rebel groups, is to achieve symbolic sovereignty, that is, the use of symbols and symbolic processes to advance their claims to legitimate social and political authority. The processes through which symbolic sovereignty is achieved (symbolic processes) are performative, meaning that they are routinely acted out while following ritualized scripts and drawing upon specific symbolic vocabulary, visuals, and sounds in order to produce a specific type of rebel proto-state resident, a specific kind of local who supports or otherwise abides by the group's edicts and goals. *Jihadi* rebel groups like Al-Shabaab and Islamic State often mimic the very nation-state that they claim to reject, seeking to reproduce its expanded regulatory powers and reach into the private as well as the public and semi-public realms of those living under its control.

Public events such as congregational Friday and 'Eid prayers, holiday celebrations, and organized courses, religious education sessions, and contests play a vital role in *jihadi*-

insurgent claims-making and are designed to imbue the rulers with the air of historical, religious, and political legitimacy. These events are political rituals which are performed according to a specific formula intelligible to both the governing and the governed and with many symbolic references to shared religious culture and historical experiences and narratives. Public events allow *jihadi* rebel rulers to interact with locals while also serving to demonstrate the governing authority and coercive apparatuses of the new proto-state order with the presence and participation of armed insurgents and insurgent group leaders and administrators.

The second key aspect to the creation of the symbolic sovereignty of *jihadi* rebels is their adoption and strategic deployment of Islamic symbols such as the two-part testament of belief on flags, billboards, event banners, and print documents and the very construction of their communications through the regular, if not to say copious and exhaustive, use, quotation, and citation of Islamic religiocultural phrases and scriptural, juridical, and weighty historical texts. The use of classical and formal Arabic is a part of this vocabulary, providing Arab and particularly non-Arab *jihadi* rulers with a tangible example through which to link themselves—or attempt to—with the sacred past, the idealized “golden age” of the Prophet Muhammad, the *Ṣaḥāba*, and the great dynasties of classical, medieval, and early modern Islamic and Islamicate civilization. These symbols are chosen because they are readily and widely accessible to Muslims around the world regardless of their ethnic, linguistic, theological and creedal, socioeconomic, or political differences.

The testament of belief, colors associated with the Prophet Muhammad and his family, and the religious and political regalia of past Islamic dynasties have the power to resonate within different Muslim societies and are multivocal, thus potentially increasing their symbolic power and reach. These symbols and political ritual performances are shaped and honed through continuous interactive relations and social processes involving the rebels

and the local population, as a whole and as sub-groups within it. By claiming religious authenticity as well as social and political legitimacy, a *jihadi* rebel group seeks to not only win the grudging acquiescence of the local population but to increase the latter's personal and communal identification with the group and thus transform mere compliance to active and enthusiastic support and cooperation.

The framing and deployment of symbols and symbolic rituals, performative practices, and institutions by *jihadi* proto-states helps explain the utility of strategic violence by shedding light on how Islamist insurgent organizations cast their violence—whether it be the violence of control or other forms of symbolically-framed violence such as that in narratives of *shari'a*-sanctioned “revenge”—within frames of historical and cultural legitimacy by selectively invoking both Islamic sacred history and more localized identities, histories, and practices. While the use of symbols, symbolic repertoires, and symbolic power does not in and of itself explain the levels of *jihadi* proto-state violence, it does cast some predictive light on when in a *jihadi* organization's organizational trajectory and evolution that it will begin to adopt and more regularly and publicly implement certain forms of violence—chiefly the violence of control associated with state construction, expansion, and implementation of “law and order,”—and start developing and deploying sustained framing to support its political, state-building project.

Conclusion

In the context of the emergence of a wide range of global *jihadi* movements and *jihadi*-insurgent proto-states, this dissertation has examined the topical and analytically important question of why some Islamist rebel organizations achieved greater success, in relative terms, than others in establishing locally legitimized and operational, albeit violently contested and of varying capacity and durability, forms of governance over large swaths of territory. Drawing on social movement theory, the scholarship on civil wars, and the emerging literature on rebel organizations and governance, this study has sought to examine and explain the extent to which variations in the political, ideological, and strategic objectives of *jihadi* rebel proto-state organizations are rooted in three inter-related factors: the social, political, and conflict environments in which these organizations operate, their accesses to organizational resources including social and economic endowments, and, most importantly, the ways in which their respective use of violence is framed, contextualized, performed, and legitimized as a tool of social and political regulation and control.

Utilizing the cases of Al-Shabaab and Islamic State, I have more specifically argued that variations between organizations in the nature and contours and levels of success in building governing institutions and establishing territorial control is dependent on how an Islamist insurgent proto-state's use of high levels of violence and coercion is framed by insurgent leaders and administrators, how it is implemented and deployed, and the extent to which it resonates or is otherwise accepted at the communal level. To be sure, throughout this dissertation I have acknowledged that the origins of these organizations are rooted in socioeconomic and political factors and conditions. However, I have also argued that the extent to which there are *variations* in the success and efficacy of *jihadi*-insurgent organizations in pursuing proto-state-building projects and establishing a monopoly on the use of violence within territories they control is intimately connected to and determined by

the ways in which they frame their ideology and political projects. The framing of these organizations takes place in both their unprecedented use of new and social media as well as integration of their online and digitized media and information operations campaigns with on-the-ground mechanisms of governance and more localized media operations and framing processes. *Jihadi*-insurgent proto-state media campaigns seek to solidify and deepen internal organizational solidarity among existing members and networks of supporters as well as to attract new recruits locally, regionally, and globally.

In theoretical terms, this study contributes greatly to the literatures on social movements, political violence, and, most importantly, the emergent literatures on rebel governance and *jihadi* politics and governance-seeking, proto-state insurgencies in new and critically analytical ways. Specifically, while much of the existing academic literature on the subject has sought to explore the origins and nature of militant Islamist violence, this dissertation has developed a framework for assessing the role played by culture and specifically the framing of particular beliefs, “Islamic” symbols, idioms, and symbolic repertoires, and the deployment of symbolic power to explain the underlying reasons behind the pattern and evolution of *jihadi*-insurgent violence and why this violence has served as a key strategic and symbolic tool and method, with different degrees of effectiveness and durability, in these organizations’ efforts and campaigns to establish and monopolize social and political control.

The role of culture, symbols, and symbolic power in shaping violence as a strategically deployed tool of social, political, and territorial control is one of the most important analytical insights developed in this dissertation. Indeed, approaching culture as not only being composed of societally-embedded units for analysis but also as being part and parcel of a social process of performances, rituals, identity formation, and claims-making, this study has analyzed the “toolkit of culture” as being part of the symbolic processes

undertaken by *jihadi* rebel rulers to advance specific governing projects. The lens of the cultural “toolkit” and symbols and understanding their deployment as repertoires sheds significant analytical light on *how* violence by *jihadi-insurgent* organizations is shaped, performed, and strategically implemented as part of the organizations’ broader ideological and political goals.

By deploying symbolic repertoires and framing, relatively small militant organizations with limited resources and operational capacities in comparison with most nation-states, are able to amplify their organizational resources, power, and influence at the local/regional and transnational/global level through sophisticated media operations, framing processes, and on-the-ground and mediatized performances of violence and (proto-) state authority and claim to legitimacy. In doing so, these organizations have harnessed the projective and framing power of methods and technologies previously unavailable to such an extent to social movements and clandestine organizations and unanticipated by earlier social movement studies. Technological advances and the greater accessibility to new media software and hardware and social media platforms has enabled militant organizations to pursue different lines of narrative messaging and framing aimed at multiple and different audiences simultaneously while also allowing existing and potential members, recruits, and supporters to shape this organizational messaging in ways that increases internal solidarity and broadens *jihadi* appeals for support.

In the case of *jihadi* organizations, the reformulation of the concept of framing as a narrative process that draws on the cultural “tool kit” is extremely helpful in understanding their strategic and symbolic uses and framing of violence. This is because it allows us to analyze how symbolic repertoires are created, shaped, and deployed as strategies of action within broader social movement and strategic and goal-oriented organizational processes involving political opportunity structures and cultural environments. In addition to individual

symbols such as flags, uniforms, or specific religious objects or references, this research project has also examined certain types of public events and performances of governance including acts of violence as frames themselves, drawing on the “contentious performances” concept of social movement action. These ritualized performances are an integral part of *jihadi* rebel proto-state projects in that they are designed to fundamentally challenge the political, historical, and religious legitimacy of outwardly “Muslim” governments.

Understood as processes of framing, violent acts carried out by *jihadi* rebel rulers become more analytically intelligible as strategic political demonstrations rather than random or “senseless” actions. Indeed, very little if any of the violence perpetrated by *jihadi* rebels is senseless despite its often grotesque, macabre, and otherwise callous performative elements.

Performative violence as enacted by *jihadi* organizations pursuing state-building projects is not “senseless” but is rather a carefully framed sociocultural and political process in which the ruling militants advance specific claims to legitimacy and demonstrations of capability and capacity to utilize force as a tool of governance and social control. This violence—which takes different forms including the violence of control, for example in the implementation of the *hudūd* to maintain “law and order—is imbued with specific symbols and couched within particular symbolic repertoires by the organizations’ leaders and frame-constructors in an attempt to deepen the resonance of this framing within local/regional and transnational target audiences. Revenue extraction, the implementation of physical and capital punishment for infractions of the *jihadi* proto-state’s desired social and political order, and other forms of violence are legitimized through the use and invocation of specific symbols—visual, performative, and linguistic—by *jihadi*-insurgent rulers. By culturally framing their actions, and specifically their use of violence, through local cultural and “Islamic” symbols, *jihadi* proto-state insurgencies attempt to claim a greater degree of legitimacy for political projects and operations as well as decrease the level of actual violence

and resources necessary to successfully establish territorial control and monopolize the use of force through strategic demonstrations of power.

In the case of Al-Shabaab, the organization's leaders have invoked aspects of both Somali ethno-historical and "Islamic" and global *jihadi* identity as part of their state-building enterprise, framing themselves as being more capable, less corrupt and beholden to specific clan and, to some degree, ethnic identities than their rivals and the internationally-recognized government. Islamic State, too, sought to "erase," to a certain extent, ethnic, national/citizenship, and socioeconomic differences among its members and supporters by reframing "Muslim" identity as resting solely on religious identity and the degree to which "proper" and "pure" Sunni Islam was practiced at the individual level. In its attempt to create a new and idealized caliphal "citizen," Islamic State proved much more willing to engage in a greater level of violence against other Sunnis and even other militant Islamists who did not embrace their ideology and organizational claims to political authority over all Muslims. The organization's much broader geographical focus and set of active operational spaces also presented it with problems not faced by Al-Shabaab with its more restrained geographical and operational focus.

Though jihadism claims to reject outright the secular nation-state system that defines the contemporary international system, *jihadi* theorists and theologians are unable to fully escape the existing global order. *Jihadi* political thought and statecraft, such as it is, is neither solidly original nor particularly well defined. Instead of offering a new approach, they draw piecemeal from the Islamic idealized, sacred past and modern notions of the state as a political and governing entity. The political model—that of a neo-caliphate—proposed by both non-violent and violent Islamists is one that is defined primarily against the "unbelieving" secular nation-state with its emphasis on national or ethnic instead of "religious" identity. The chief irony in *jihadi* political theorizing is that they end up

endorsing not only an ahistorical and highly reactionary state model but also accept a much broader array of powers for the state than existed in Islamic history, powers that are in many ways identical to those claimed and exercised by the modern bureaucratic state. In their bid to claim historical and religious authenticity, *jihadi* political theorists have instead embraced many of the definitions and processes regarding politics and the state that they claim to reject.

However, as I have demonstrated in this dissertation, the relative success of *jihadi* proto-state organizations vis-à-vis their respective projects at building capable and legitimate governing structures has been crucially dependent on their respective framing of what is, in their view, an “ideal” Islamic state and “proper” interpretation and utilization of Islamic sacred history as well as on their own internal divisions as reflected in inter-*jihadi* debates, and, most significantly, shifting local, regional, and global politics and conflict dynamics. The success of each *jihadi*-insurgent governance project is determined by several factors: the coherence of their ideological critique of the nation-state system, the actionability of their political theorizing with regard to an alternative model of governance—which can vary across time and space according to local, regional, and international and global contexts—and the nature of the internal inter-*jihadi* rifts that have even resulted in organizational splits and infighting between rival *jihadi* groups on the ground as well as in cyberspace. With the advent and expansion of new media technologies and social media, these internal rifts have grown in intensity and severity, demonstrating that these new media capabilities and platforms have constrained and even harmed *jihadi* activism while also enabling it to reach new levels of production, dissemination, and influence.

The mass demonstrations, uprisings, and conflicts that emerged during the “Arab Spring” movements that roiled the Arab Middle East beginning in late 2010 provided Al-Qaeda and other *jihadi* as well as non-violent Islamist activists with their first real opportunity to achieve substantial political power or, for *jihadi* rebels, significant territorial

control. Official responses from *jihadi* theorists and leaders to these opportunities was at first confused and inconsistent, though groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, a myriad of groups in North Africa and the Sahel, and East Africa succeeded in taking advantage of local and regional unrest to establish territorial administrations. Most of these were short-lived and managed to only exercise a limited level and type of governance and control over local populations.

Nevertheless, despite their intellectual and administrative limitations, *jihadi* organizations have demonstrated themselves to be both adaptable and adept at adopting strategies that take into account shifting local, regional, and international environments and dynamics. Organizations which are more deeply embedded in local, domestic and regional milieus such as Al-Shabaab and other Al-Qaeda regional affiliates have also shown themselves to be more robust in terms of their ability to weather periods of military setbacks and other pressures, in part because they choose to operate within a more localized or regionalized paradigm.

This is not to say that they do not also espouse transnational, pan-Islamist ideological commitments or to deny the importance of these commitments in organizational behavior, framing processes, strategizing, and actions nor to deny the impact of local dynamics on Islamic State. Rather it is to note several key points and findings: transnational and globalist frames such as pan-Islamism can serve many functions; transnational framing—for example, placing a heavy emphasis on the *Umma* concept—can be undertaken by a group for primarily localized or regionalized purposes; frames and sets of belief (ideology) motivate action but are not by themselves directly causal; social movements are diverse entities and include individuals who have an array of sometimes conflicting views and the framing processes of these movements and organizations is subject to interpersonal relations and negotiation; social movement organizations can also differ from the broader social movements in which

they are situated; and, finally, a group's adoption of transnational or globalist frames may vary across different periods of the organization's history and evolution, at times being more rhetorical and strategic than illustrative of the its leaders' real driving motivations and interests.

Even the most globalist organization—that is, an ideal type organization composed of “true believers” seeking to fully subsume all local, irredentist conflicts under a truly global paradigm, as called for in ideal terms by Usama bin Laden—will find itself subject to a host of local and regional factors specific to the area(s) in which they are based and primarily operate in, which in turn can temper or obstruct attempts to fully globalize and force them to enter into negotiations with local populations or local actors who favor a more hybridized or even a more local/regional or glocal approach toward political action. The “global jihadism” of Al-Qaeda and even Islamic State is profoundly shaped by the interaction of international geopolitics and local and regional dynamics and these globalist groups have at times ceded some ground to more localized or regionalized irredentist militant Islamists so as to expand their sphere of influence, in name if not fully in practice. Local and regional *jihadi*-insurgent groups in turn may favor affiliating with a transnational or globalist organization such as Al-Qaeda Central or Islamic State for a variety of non-mutually exclusive reasons including obtaining additional resources or access to new pools of recruits or funding sources or as part of an outbidding and framing process in which they attempt to gain advantage over other local, non-state competitors by adopting a seemingly more globalist, pan-Islamic identity. The latter may come in to play when a splinter organization that has defected from a larger preexisting and territorially dominant group or umbrella organization is attempting to create a separate identity.¹⁴⁰⁵ Outbidding, though it provides useful insights into the strategic uses of

¹⁴⁰⁵ This was one of the dynamics at play in the decisions of some of the organizations that affiliated with Islamic State beginning in 2014 including a faction of the Tehrik-i Taliban Pakistan umbrella. This is the subject of future research that I intend to pursue.

certain types of framing, can also obscure cases where ideological hybridity (“born hybridity” or otherwise) or tensions between domestic and transnational identities, interests, and ideologies exist.

Jihadi organizations are shaped by their respective environments and arenas of operation, finding their ideologies and strategies shaped, aided, or constrained by local social and political dynamics, economic needs, conflict environments, and political goals. In areas of civil conflict where existing groups are dominated by specific ethnic, clan/tribal, or political/ideological and organizational identities, Islamist organizations can differentiate themselves by embracing global or glocal *jihadi* ideologies and identities which, through well executed framing, may enable them to present a more attractive option for locals as well as foreign fighters and supporters. For example, Al-Qaeda Central and its regional and, in many cases, more localized affiliates are shaped by several key dynamics including their leadership and overall organizational composition, ideological and strategic political goals, and the specific environments in which they are based and operate from.

Al-Shabaab, growing out of a Somalia-centric context and conflict environment despite the globalist ideological affinities of its founders, has continued to use elements of global jihadism and pan-Islamic (Sunni) identity as part of its insurgent strategy to both expand locally at the expense of local rivals, in part by invoking a unifying “Islamic” identity over the more ethno-nationalist, regional, or clan-specific identities of other groups. In contrast, Islamic State and the core of Al-Qaeda Central have sought to instead transform more localized irredentist militant Islamists and convince them to invest in their significantly more globalized campaign in which local identities and interests will, ideally for global *jihadis*, be abandoned in favor of a unifying and solely “Islamic” identity and set of ideological and political motivations. However, even global *jihadi* “true believers” can be inconsistent, with some of them unwilling or unable to abandon whole cloth all but their

“Islamic” identity, in part because they still seek to forge alliances and partnerships, either formally or informally, with more localized or “glocal” militant Islamists. These inconsistencies and internal tensions vary from organization to organization as well as from individual to individual, with some global *jihadis*—including even Al-Qaeda Central chief Ayman al-Zawahiri—retaining a special interest in their countries of origin. Differences in the role of globalism in shaping organizational ideology constantly change and are not static, but what characterizes global *jihadi* organizations from more glocal militant Islamists is the organization’s approach operationally as well as ideologically toward pursuing military and militant action beyond defined geographical boundaries. Thus, *jihadi* organizations differ with regard to their ideological embrace, or skepticism, of “global *jihad*” as well as operationally in terms of their primary strategic military and political goals.

Sunni *jihadi* organizations can be classified according to their engagement, or lack thereof, in territorial governance, following definitions of rebel governance discussed in the Introduction and Chapters Three and Four. Territorial expansion, particularly in areas with significant civilian populations, presents governance-seeking *jihadi* rebels with a significant new challenge, that of setting up a functioning civil administration that is capable of linking the insurgent leadership and its military wing with the local population and, most importantly, key local notables and influential subgroups within it such as merchants and the business class, religious leaders, and clan/tribal elders. The establishment of a governing administration requires *jihadi* rebel leaders to demonstrate both their administrative and coercive capabilities and it is in this that symbols and symbolic repertoires are drawn upon to advance the claims of insurgent governing regimes through the utilization of influential sets of symbols and ritualized performances. The latter includes the performance of justice in the implementation of a semblance of law and order.

The invocation and application of Islamic law and jurisprudence, usually in a particularly anemic interpretation that primarily emphasizes penal law and the *hudūd*, allows *jihadi* rebel rulers to ground their use of violence in religious and historical symbolism and, on the surface, authenticity while also providing a judicial operating structure for social control. A *hudūd* and punishment-obsessed interpretation of *shari‘a*, in addition to providing *jihadi*-insurgent proto-state administrators with a historically and religiously grounded symbolic code or system with which to legitimize the violence of control, also serves an important economic function by cracking down on property crimes and destabilizing and wanton predation and violence, instead monopolizing the legitimate use of violence in the hands of *jihadi* proto-state governing regimes. For *jihadi* rebels, the *shari‘a*, in its narrow sense, serves ideological and strategic purposes, acting as both a form of symbolic framing as well as a governance tool and method of projecting legitimacy and authority, particularly with regard to differentiating between “legitimate” and “illegitimate” violence. The performance of violence, in turn, is highly symbolic and performed according to an intelligible and highly context-specific format that is both a claims-making process as well as a symbolic demonstration of insurgent bureaucratic and coercive power. By understanding the key role of framing in the organization and deployment by *jihadi* organizations of different types of violence in the context of state-building projects and how the performance of violence is intimately tied to and shaped by the framing process, we are able to more clearly see how this violence is shaped and utilized to further specific ideological, political, and strategic goals at different times in an organization’s history.

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