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The Jihadist Marketplace: Understanding Competition between al Qaeda and ISIS

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The Jihadist Marketplace: Understanding Competition between al Qaeda and ISIS

by

Hristo Voynov

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Political Science in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Political Science in satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

The Jihadist Marketplace: Understanding Competition between al Qaeda and ISIS

by

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Abstract:

ISIS and al Qaeda are the world's preeminent transnational jihadist organizations. Following a

public schism, the two started competing, even though they previous cooperated to accomplish

their shared goals. This split divided the movement, which was previously united under the

leadership of al Qaeda. Now the two must compete with one another for the limited resources of

the global jihadist movement as the loser of the competition risks losing their standing within the

movement, which may lead to irrelevancy, or even organizational demise, for the loser. This

competition requires study because it is necessary to explain why the two would choose to focus

their efforts on one another as opposed to their shared enemy. In order to expand on this

competition, their actions can be viewed through a marketplace metaphor, where each jihadist

organization acts as a business firm would in trying to monopolize its market. One resource that

requires extra attention is jihadist foreign fighters, as they are a vital feature within the jihadist

movement because of their ability to perpetuate the movement by replenishing loses and spreading

ideas.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Over the last few years ISIS, or the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria brought the first ever challenge to the norms of the global jihadist movement. This is because its rise enabled it to challenge al Qaeda, the previously undisputed leader of the movement, and offer the movement's participants alternative leadership to follow. This sudden *duality* was a sharp change to what was previously al Qaeda's monopoly on the jihadist movement. How was ISIS able to challenge al Qaeda's leadership and what effects did this have on the global jihadist movement?

This must analyzed through analyzing the movement's internal dynamics, because their competition makes little sense when considering both have very similar goals. By actively competing with one another, the two groups are limiting their ability to meet these goals and their greater movement's overall strength because they spend their resources on intra-movement conflict. This internal competition over leadership means the movement is not reaching its full potential, giving its enemies an advantage because a lack of unity means a division of strengths. Al Qaeda and ISIS' competition thus makes little sense in terms of achieving the movement's goals, but makes perfect sense when looking at what they are competing over and how that competition manifests itself.

Looking at this competition through a marketplace metaphor can provide valuable insight as to why it occurs. To do this, the jihadist movement will be approached as a traditional economic marketplace. Different jihadists organizations present themselves as a product in the global jihadist marketplace, and the market's consumers are individuals who chose to actively support a firm through acts such as giving resources or volunteering to fight. Through the collective actions of the marketplace consumers, the jihadist movement effectively chooses which organization best

represents its goals and interests, giving it resources and legitimacy it can use to continue improving its product. In the early days of modern jihadism, al Qaeda had a monopoly on the jihadist marketplace. This changed when ISIS rose in prominence and gave the movement an alternative to al Qaeda's leadership. In a traditional marketplace, this can result in competition over products offered to consumers, where each firm tries to provide a superior product. But in the jihadist marketplace, this led to violence between the two competitors.

One possible explanation of this intra-movement competition is that groups refuse to cooperate because they are fighting over the limited resources of their shared market. The global jihadist movement has a finite set of resources within it because of the limited number of sympathizers willing to invest their personal resources in the movement. Some resources are specific to a particular locality and its local competitors, and so are less applicable to the international movement's dynamics, but others are international resources that likeminded jihadist groups must actively compete over, such as foreign fighters. This is because any movement specific resource one group holds is a resource other groups are deprived of, changing relative capabilities inside the movement. If one group holds a monopoly over the movement's leadership, it has the power to hold and distribute such resources however it decides to. If a competing group tries to take a share of these resources, it creates competition and conflict between the two groups. This conflict can become an existential one for those involved because if one group wins a monopoly on the movement's resources, such as resources and legitimacy, the other risks irrelevancy within the movement, among other possible consequences.

During the era in which al Qaeda was the undisputed leader, it had the authority and legitimacy to dictate much of how the jihadist movement developed. Due to this, being part of al Qaeda's network brought many benefits for groups under its leadership. A prime example of this is ISIS' predecessor, which took on the name al Qaeda in Iraq in 2004 after it became al Qaeda's first

international affiliate and was tasked with organizing the resistance against the US invasion of Iraq. These benefits led to ISIS' later growth, which was locally explosive but internationally restrained as it was initially working under al Qaeda's leadership and so could not fully assert its will on the jihadist movement. When ISIS tried to control the movement in Syria and Iraq, al Qaeda quickly tried to reign it in. To continue its growth and operate unrestrained, ISIS decided to break free of al Qaeda's chains and tried to rewrite the rules of the movement. It decided it would no longer be constrained by the order set by the movement's old guard. Instead, ISIS wanted to create the guidelines and lead the movement in what it thought was the right direction. To do that, it had to overcome al Qaeda through taking over its share of the movement and its resources.

This process of change is still underway within the movement. Even when ISIS appears all but defeated in the conflicts of Syria and Iraq, its leadership still has credibility and resources that it can use to continue the competition. This paper will thus explore how the competition came about, what the dynamics of competition are, and how it plays out within the movement and between its two key actors. The problem with this study is that much of the movement's history, resources, and internal interactions, among other factors, are largely secret. Because of the movement's clandestine nature, any information revealed about a group can be used by its enemies to minimize their capabilities. This should be noted as any attempt to list all the movement's nuances will inherently be incomplete. However, the movement has been studied enough at this point that a detailed picture can be drawn, even if it is not all encompassing.

Particular attention will be given to the appeals of the movement that have enabled it to consistently play a role in global events for multiple decades. This attraction deserves particular attention because joining the movement is a high-risk activity, but it did not deter tens of thousands of individuals from doing so. The reasons why it has been able to successfully appeal to Muslims around the world remains disputed, with theories ranging from economic discontent, adventurism,

and clashing identities. The movement study approach that this paper takes sees effort spent by

jihadists to promote and grow their movement as a key reason for its consistently successful

appeals towards mobilization of the global Muslim population. This includes complex recruiting

and messaging campaigns, retelling of history to promote a narrative of Muslim victimhood that,

and the recontextualization of genuine grievances of Muslims. The reality is that each of these

plays a role in the complex puzzle of foreign fighting and any attempt to find *the* answer can

overshadow the many important nuances of the foreign fighter debate.

In order to explain the jihadist movement, the first section of this paper will focus on its

history to trace how ISIS was able to rise to preeminence within it. This will begin with various

concepts that are vital to understand jihadism and its ideology, along with providing a framework

for analyzing the movement as a global phenomenon with specific aims, as opposed to simplifying

it as a violent branch of political Islam or an irrational terrorist movement. The contemporary

jihadist movement started with the Soviet-Afghan war as the testing ground for the ideas of

transnational jihadism in defense of Muslims at risk, regardless of nationality or locality. Then it

spread throughout the Muslim world, reaching wherever the movement's adherents were willing to

travel. September 11th prompted the invasion of Afghanistan and then Iraq, which again united

global jihadists because of the perceived righteousness of travelling to Iraq to defend a Muslim

country from an invading Christian army. This was followed by a lull in global jihadism, which

was reawaken by the Arab Spring that opened the door for conflict in many of the countries in the

Middle East, including Syria and Iraq, and created the instability that gave jihadists space to grow.

ISIS then used its resources and unique position to expand drastically, leading up to a climax where

it declared itself a caliphate, or an Islamic State. But the caliphate could not last against the global

military efforts against it and has since lost most of its land. Even if ISIS' reign did not last, its rise

and challenge to al Qaeda changed the jihadist movement's dynamics in ways that deserve

attention. This section will then expand on foreign fighters and their role as the movement's core constituents. As an international movement that claims to represent the global Muslim population, the foreign aspect of foreign fighters will be reconsidered. While foreign fighters are foreign to the countries they fight in, global jihadism divides the world along lines that are vastly different from nation-centric identities that are behind the 'foreign' fighter label.

This will then be followed by retelling of the jihadist movement as a marketplace in which the jihadist groups, or in the marketplace analogy, jihadist firms compete with one another for limited space and resources within the movement. This will feature analysis of movement conditions, including resources that firms compete over and threats to firms in the movement. The marketplace metaphor is much more applicable now compared to before ISIS' rise since ISIS' challenge to al Qaeda's monopoly opened the jihadist marketplace to allow for competing ideas, or products, to be sold to the movement's followers, or the marketplace's buyers.

The last section will extend the marketplace analogy to analysis of interactions and comparisons between al Qaeda and ISIS, including how the two firms interact with one another and the greater movement. First will be the battle over legitimacy, as competing firms must be able to justify being competitive. This will look at the main ways that firms can build up their legitimacy within the movement; through having proven their commitment in the past, through being effective jihadist actors in their local conflict, and through advancing the international ambitions of the global jihadist movement. This will be followed by analysis of the messages that the two firms send within the movement regarding a multitude of issues in order to ideologically prove to the base that they are superior to their competition. This will also include analysis of the methods used to distribute these messages in order to expand on key differences in the two firms. Next will be analysis of the jihadist 'affiliate group' phenomenon, where a smaller group pledges allegiance to a larger and more respected group, which has taken a whole new meaning with the rise of intra-

movement competition. Since the two key movement firms began competing, affiliates have become a way of extending a core group's reach to a new terrain, giving better access to that locality's resources and building up credibility through greater reach. Lastly, there will be a look at organizational differences that contribute to the competition. While this is the least direct form of competition, differences such as organizational structure or leadership can change how a group is able to interact with and perceived within the greater movement.

In order to understand the success of a jihadist group, it is important to understand the complex global jihadist movement that has opened the doors for that group to attract so many outsiders to its ranks. This paper hopes to piece together the many different nuances that must be taken into consideration to properly understand the movement's appeal and how it has been able to grow even in the face of a global military campaign against it. Because of this, the paper will dissect the movement to explain how the groups within it function and utilize its norms to their advantage.

CHAPTER 2: From Afghanistan to the Caliphate; a Short History of the Jihadist Movement

In order to understand the relationship between ISIS, al Qaeda, and their movement, it is necessary to understand the history of the contemporary movement to contextualize the developments that brought about the movement's current dynamics. What started out as an attempt to defend Afghan Muslims from the Soviet army transformed into terrorist attacks on civilians far removed from any battlefield. Nearly thirty years have gone by since the end of the Soviet-Afghan war, which marked the start of the modern jihadist movement and foreign fighting phenomenon. Since then, jihadism has appeared in conflicts all over the world that have no similarities aside

from having Muslim actors motivated in part by their Islamic identity. This has allowed the movement to grow by physically spreading its ideas, which has in turn shaped the direction of the movement. This is because new conflicts and actors constantly arose, allowing space for continuous learning and evolution within the movement.

In order to understand the roots of the movement, there are three concepts that first need to be clarified. First is the concept of *jihad*. Jihad is a difficult word to define because its meaning is tied to various principles within Islam whose definitions vary depending on the interpretation of Islam in question. It is directly translated into English as 'struggle', but a more refined definition in Arabic is the struggle to spread Islam, though there are vastly different definitions across ideological and historical contexts in regards to exactly what that struggle is and how it should be done (Knapp, 82). While there are many strains of jihadism, the branch connected with ISIS and al Qaeda is Salafi-jihadism, which will be shortened in this paper to 'jihadism' and 'jihadist' for the sake of simplicity, as it is the only form of jihadism that will be discussed. The main goal of Salafi-jihadism is a return to Islam's early days when Islam was the center of Muslim societies.

The many stages of the global jihadist movement saw various different norms, depending on the conditions at the time. One such norm is when violence is permissible. Islamic jurisprudence deals with the legality of war and when violence is allowed, but many different interpretations of these issues exist, which means that extremists are able to use whichever one best fits their aims. The two forms of jihad that are key to the jihadist movement are defensive jihad and offensive jihad. In the Soviet-Afghan war, jihadists called for a defensive jihad which includes acts such as "defending Muslims who are oppressed but unable to defend themselves; using force to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe, and allowing a Muslim ruler to use force against rebellion" (Shah, 346). The other form of jihad is the offensive jihad. Some Islamic Scholars believe offensive jihad is never permissible, yet it remains an important part of the current global jihadist movement's

doctrine. According to Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, a leading jihadist figure from al Qaeda in Iraq, offensive jihad is "going after the apostate unbelievers by attacking [them] in their home territory, in order to make God's word most high and until there is no persecution" in which persecution means idolatry (Bunzel, 10). The motivation behind this is to spread Islam through acquiring lands and forcing Islam onto the conquered, which was the norm in the period in time that jihadists strive to return to. The terrorist tactics that the movement uses tap into the notion of attacking non-believers in their home society, but are nowhere near enough to meet their highly ambitious goal of violently spreading Islam.

The next concept is the *ummah*. The ummah is also hard to define, as it is similar to but not directly synonymous with 'people', 'nation', 'state', or 'community'. As a word that originated from Islamic tradition, there is no direct translation of the word from Arabic to any other language which captures its entire meaning. A simplified definition would be the global Muslim population, but this misses out on the word's implications of a greater consciousness unified through Islam (Akram, 387). A ummah united through a caliphate was the norm in Muslim lands before the Westphalian nation state 'divided' the ummah. The unity of the ummah is thus used as an appeal to the old glory days of Islamic empires, and when Islam was the key societal force, before globalization and colonial empires changed the Islamic world. The idea of a united ummah is one of the greater goals of the jihadist movement and is a key factor in why the jihadist movement has been able to successful reach so many beyond nation-state borders.

The last concept that needs to be expanded on is social movements. A social movement is "rational attempts by excluded groups to mobilize sufficient political leverage to advance collective interests through non-institutionalized means" (McAdams, 37). The jihadist movement's goals and grievances have often been ignored because of the movement's terrorist tactics, but this does not mean that it falls outside of the given definition. One key jihadists goal that has clearly shown itself

within the movement's actions is to establish a caliphate, an extinct form of state organizing that treats the Quran as the definitive guide on how society should be structured. The caliphate, and jihadism, is inherently incompatible with nation-states or democracy because it sees them as being organized by man-made laws that should be removed and replaced with *sharia*, or laws based in Islam and the Quran. Because of this, jihadists are an inherently excluded group because their political goals are mutually exclusive with the status quo, while their movement is an attempt to 'mobilize sufficient political leverage to advance collective interests' and their tactics, terrorism and violent overthrowing of governments, is a clear non-institutionalized means of doing so.

Classifying global jihadism as a social movement is likely to be disputed by those who see it as a security issue. This is because the loudest form of jihadist activism is terrorism and violence, which when tied to the movement's demands leaves little room for anything but the full capitulation of society or destruction of the movement. While this is a valid critic of the movement itself, it does not mean that global jihadism lacks a clear collective interest it wishes to bring about and a distinct toolkit of tactics it uses in an effort to manifest that change. Regardless of this criticism, global jihad functions in a very similar way to other social movements. For it to succeed, it needs to be able to 'mobilize sufficient political leverage' by growing itself through convincing others to join or invest into the movement and 'advance collective interests' through activism in order to meet its goals. If a movement fails to grow, its range of resources that it can turn into political leverage is relatively limited, leading to ineffectiveness or irrelevancy. If a movement fails to advance its interests, it risks losing its supporters who may grow disillusioned by the movement or its leadership.

If a social movement uses terrorism as its main tactic, the dynamics of building that movement are different from that of building a movement that does not. This is because the movement does not just work to enact change 'through non-institutionalized means', it attacks the

institutions it disagrees with in an attempt to topple them. Extreme tactics create extreme dynamics and so both movement functions listed in the given definition, mobilizing constituents and advancing their interests, can be altered. For example, an extremist movement with limited resources only needs one dedicated individual willing to perform an act of terrorism that will function as activism as far as the movement is concerned. This violent and vocal form of activism will bring attention to the movement, possibly allowing it to grow because the act helps it reach a larger audience of potential supporters, but will also put the movement in the eyes of security services who exist to stop such attacks. Similarly, if a terrorist movement does not accomplish its goals, it can blame its failures on the enemy that it is trying to destroy, projecting any responsibility for its inability to meet its goals on the enemy. As this paper will expand later on, both of these extremist movement dynamics are found within the global jihadist movement, either as an attempt to build the movement through its materially limited but morally unrestricted means or to create a narrative for its inability to successfully leverage its capabilities into lasting societal change.

Early Era Jihadism

The roots of the modern jihadist movement start with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt during the 1920s, as a movement to return Islam to its previous position of social dominance after western influence changed power dynamics within the country (Gunaratna and Oreg, 1047). The Muslim Brotherhood and other ideologically related groups such as the Egyptian Islamic Jihad were able to leave their mark on global Islamist political discourse, even if they were not able to accomplish their local goals of replacing the then Egyptian government with one ruled by sharia. This originally local movement evolved over time and soon developed from a social to a militant movement.

The Soviet army's invasion of Afghanistan was the spark that allowed for jihad to transition

from a local Egyptian movement into one with international goals and tactics. As the conflict could be accurately described as a Muslim country being invaded by an atheist one, jihadists drew parallels to the Crusades and with clever rhetoric were able to repaint the narrative of a local Afghan power struggle to present it to the ummah as a holy war (Gunaratna and Oreg, 1047). This prompted various jihadist actors take action against the invasion, such as funneling money to those fighting against the Soviet army or facilitating the transportation of foreigners into the war effort against the Soviets. Throughout the conflict, thousands of Muslims from different countries travelled to Afghanistan to engage in foreign fighting. This era of Islamic foreign fighters was perceived very different compared to today. This is because back then jihadists were supported by the US as a proxy force to fight the Soviets as part of the Cold War. This meant that the US assisted the movement by providing material support and allowing them to organize within the US, including at least one interesting case of a bake sale organized by jihadists on US soil aimed at funding the Afghan jihad (Malet, 165). This war and its discourse created the ideological framework of a global movement for Muslims to come to the defense of the ummah who are in conflict regardless of geographical location. By the time that the war was over, one major group involved in the effort had developed experience, resources, and networks that it refocused for global jihad instead of demobilizing. This group, now known as al Qaeda, emerged as a key group in the jihadist movement because it proved itself during this era but it did not yet command the authority that it would later achieve.

The Soviet-Afghan war is thus considered to be the beginning of modern jihadist movement and the start of jihadist foreign fighting, and its end led to the next distinguishable phase of the movement, in which the veterans that fought in Afghanistan, as well as those influenced by their ideology, sought different conflicts to fight in. This meant to movement spread to conflicts that were raging in the early 1990s, such as the ones in Bosnia, Chechnya, and Somalia. Much like the

Soviet-Afghan war, this period saw jihadists searching for local conflicts to recontextualize as part of a global struggle, "the common denominator being Muslims who fought non-Muslims" (Gunaratna and Oreg, 1048).

The 1990s wars that the movement tried to enter, such as Bosnia and Chechnya, brought limited accomplishments to the movement, such as defending Muslims, but ultimately failed to live up the movement's prior success in the Soviet-Afghan war. This represented a challenge for the movement because it now had no war it could champion and no way of signaling its commitment to the defense of the ummah. The movement was thus at a lull, but it did have a significant number of already committed followers willing to continue its activism until the next time when the ummah could be mass mobilized. This coincides with the evolution of the movement's doctrine and dividing the movement's enemies into two camps, the near enemy and the far enemy. The near enemy title was given to governments in traditionally Muslims lands that supported the nation state model and were seen as standing in the way of jihadist efforts to reestablishing a caliphate. The far enemy became Western governments, mainly the U.S., that supported the near enemy, ensuring that they are able to withstand jihadists attacks (Steinberg and Werenfels, 407). Osama Bin Laden, then the *emir*, or leader, of al Qaeda decided that it needed to attack the far enemy and weaken it to the point where it cannot help the near enemy in the future (Gunaratna and Oreg, 1050). To continue its activism within its new target framework, the movement set its eyes on performative terrorist attacks. Significant early attacks that show this change in target include the February 26, 1993 attack on the World Trade Center in New York City and the August 7, 1998 bombings of the US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya. Regardless of some successful high-profile attacks, the jihadist movement still had trouble replicating its previous success.

The decision to target the far enemy was intended to be a long-term strategy because of previous lessons learned. The Soviet-Afghan war provided a highly successful model for defensive

jihad. The Soviet Union was ultimately defeated in Afghanistan, and jihadists effort in that war wasted so much of the Soviet Union's resources at a key point in the cold war that it is seen as a key reason the Soviet Union dissolved shortly after. This was key to the tactic that global jihad wanted to replicate with its decision to focus on western targets, as the motivation behind targeting the US was to force it into a costly war and destroy it economically instead of through military means. This culminated in the September 11th attack, which sparked the US invasion of Afghanistan and then Iraq, and in turn resulted in the next uptick of global jihadism and foreign fighting.

The Jihad in Iraq

The 2003 US invasion of Iraq toppled then Iraqi president Saddam Hussein, but his ousting created a power vacuum which put Iraq into a state of chaos. Since the previous state structures were entirely disrupted, new groups started competing for local resources such as wealth and control over the locals. This is where ISIS' roots lay. It was previously based in Jordan and called the "Organization of Monotheism and Jihad" but when the US invasion started, it moved its operations to Iraq and joined the growing jihadist movement fighting the invasion. There, it was able to tap into the movement's support for the Iraqi jihad, including the flow of foreigners who travelled to the country to fight against the invasion, giving it access to valuable networks and skills (Lister 2016C, 16). While some jihadists joined other conflicts during this period, the majority chose to fight in Iraq (International Crisis Group, 5). The movement's focus on Iraq was due to of the perceived righteousness of defending a country in the heart of the Muslim world from Christian invaders, as opposed to alternative conflicts that jihadists could co-opt, such as the local power struggle in Somalia (Hegghammer 2006, 24).

In 2004, the Organization of Monotheism and Jihad become al Qaeda's first international

affiliate, which boosted its credibility and gave it access to al Qaeda's resources. To mark this change, it rebranded itself "Al Qaeda in Iraq" (AQI). Al Qaeda, as the leading jihadist group at the time, was in a position to offer this and other resources to smaller groups that pledged *bayah*, or an oath of loyalty, to its leadership. While the name implies that al Qaeda central had control over AQI, this is misleading. Al Qaeda central had some degree of influence over AQI but because of the need for security measures and AQI's belief in its own righteousness, it could not translate this influence into direct control. Though AQI pledged bayah to al Qaeda central, this decision was not done because it saw al Qaeda as the rightful leaders of the jihadist movement. Instead, AQI pledged bayah at a time of organizational weakness and the pledge resulted in a boost in capabilities because of al Qaeda central's ability to assist its affiliates (Whiteside, 9). As this merger was due to practical reasons and not ideological, the issues that resulted in their schism years later were visible during this period.

AQI spent years involved in the fight against the US army and the newly established government in Baghdad. As it knew it could not compete in a traditional conflict, it worked hard to provoke a sectarian conflict by attacking Iraqi Shia groups in order to increase tension between them and AQI's local constituents, Iraqi Sunnis. In terms of their long-term goals, this was more successful than fighting directly against the US for multiple reasons. For one, the sectarian clashes fed the greater conflict, creating a security vacuum that allowed AQI to act more openly. It was also able to tactically use its resources for sensational attacks instead of engaging in costly direct confrontations with occupational forces (Whiteside, 6). Third, it was able to justify its existence and legitimacy to Iraqi Sunnis, as well as bringing them to its ranks, because it presented itself as a group willing to defend them, regardless of the fact that it was defending them from retaliatory violence that it had provoked. Creating tension between different Muslim sects eventually became one of its main tactics, which upset the al Qaeda leadership because of its brutality and because

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Muslims were dying in conflict with one another, as opposed to uniting to fighting against the US army (Hamming 2017a, 12). AQI thus prioritized building up its own organizational capabilities over fighting the invasion. As the war continued, jihadist efforts to fight the invasion fizzled because they were not able to overcome the US army and its allies, both local and foreign, as well as the global counterterrorism efforts.

This failure heralded another lull within the jihadist movement, much like the late 1990s, where there were no conflicts that attracted widespread attention from the jihadist movement which limited the movement in its ability to organize or call on the ummah to mass mobilize though an easily justifiable defensive jihad. This period had many parallels to the previous lull, where the lack of a physical territory for the jihadists to flock to translated in attacks from the groups who still committed to jihad and willing to perform jihadist activism even when it wasn't a period of high movement activity. While there were still appeals for lone wolf attacks in the West, the jihadist movement was unable to manifest enough attacks to rival the violence of the previous period. For a moment, it appeared that the movement itself was on its last breaths, but this was not the case.

The next opening for global jihad came during the Arab Spring, which started in Tunisia against its then president, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, because of corruption and human rights abuses, among other issues. The developments in Tunisia led to the assumption in the West that the Arab Spring was a wave of pro-democracy and human rights sentiment, but the reality was not so simple. It eventually became clear each country had its own unique conditions and grievances that influenced the local development of the region wide protests, making any effort to generalize the movement inherently flawed. Similarly, the Arab Spring wasn't a unified movement. While there were many pro-democracy activists, Islamists also took part. Some were moderate, seeking to establish an Islamist government within the democratic nation state framework. Others were extremists who had long waited for such an opening.

When the Arab Spring happened, AQI had an opportunity to leverage the massive levels of local Sunni discontent that had been building up for years. Before the Iraqi invasion, Saddam Hussein had treated the Sunni minority in Iraq better than the Shia majority. When he was taken out of power in 2003 and democracy was introduced to Iraq, Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki was voted in by the Shia majority and the previous power dynamics were reversed, upsetting the Sunni population. They felt mistreated and forgotten by the new central government, leaving their grievances open to later exploitation.

Meanwhile the Arab Spring took a different path in Syria. The Assad dynasty had been in power for decades. They are part of the Shia minority, which was able to benefit from President Bashar al Assad's leadership, as opposed to the Sunni majority. When the Arab Spring protests hit the country, the initial protests were in support of reforms instead of Assad's removal, though violence and conflict followed shortly after. The country quickly fell into conflict, and its scarcely populated Eastern region was an easy target for jihadists crossing the Syrian and Iraqi border.

The recent history of Iraq and Syria's Sunnis created widespread discontent and many localized grievances that made radical change a possibility, if not inevitable. Al Qaeda in Iraq was the armed group best situated to exploit these grievances because it spent years learning military skills, building up its resources, and forming networks within the local population. The region wide movement gave it an opening in the form of wide spread conflict and a resulting power vacuum, and so it was able to swiftly take over territory in both Iraq and Syria. Its massive network of previous foreign fighters gave it the ability to reach jihadist movements from around the world, which allowed it to facilitate a large-scale foreign fighter recruiting effort and spread its ideas throughout the jihadist movement's consciousness (Lister 2016C, 16). In Iraq, a country that had suffered years of violence and civil war, many armed actors came and went. This eliminated from the playing field various ineffective or poorly run armed groups and gave valuable learning

experience to the groups that survived. This left ISIS as one of the few capable actors within its relevant territory, which meant that it had little competition over the control of the local population and resources. Meanwhile in Syria, the Arab Spring led to the sudden outbreak of conflict, offering the opportunity for many different armed groups with different ideologies and goals to compete for power. ISIS's history of fighting in Iraq gave it the experience it needed to sweep into the country and take over large swaths of territory with little effort.

The Arab Spring provided an opening for jihadists in other countries that did not materialize the same was as it did in Syria and Iraq. Libya is one such country, which saw its then leader, Muammar Gaddafi, killed within a year of the start of the movement largely because of NATO efforts to stop his violent response to the protests. This created a power vacuum much like post-Saddam Iraq, but the key combatants were Gaddafi loyalists and anti-Gaddafi revolutionaries. Jihadists were also present, but with limited capabilities, and so they couldn't find enough space to breathe in the conflict that saw many different nationally minded groups with foreign backers. More successful jihadist factions arose later in the conflict and were connected to al Qaeda or ISIS, but their success was limited and did not draw the same fervor from the greater jihadist movement that Syria did.

Another country of interest to the movement was Tunisia, the birthplace of the Arab spring. Its month-long revolution saw the ousting of a corrupt regime quickly enough that global jihadism didn't have time to coopt the conflict. This led to the introduction of democracy to the country, which saw Islamists soundly defeated in the polls. There were various major terrorist attacks in the years following the revolution, but much like Libya they were connected to outside groups and ultimately, an effective grassroots jihadist movement failed to appear in the country. While this appeared to be a positive development for the country, it also saw one of the highest global rates of foreign fighters leaving for Syria later on (Neumann, 2015).

In Libya, Tunisia, and the many other countries the Arab Spring progressed, the jihadist movement was slow in capitalizing on the unrest throughout the region. This changed with the success of AQI's efforts in Syria and Iraq. Syria started to attract many jihadist foreign fighters while Iraq's active jihadists were unemployed former soldiers or locals radicalized over the previous decade's violence (International Crisis Group, 16). With how many foreigners travelled to fight to Syria just shortly after the war started, it was clear that it would be the movement's next major battlefield.

The Caliphate Returns

The conflicts in Syria and Iraq saw AQI grow drastically over a short period of time. This presented it with the opportunity to advance to the next step of its organizational blueprints. On June 29th, 2014 in the historical al Nuri mosque in Mosul, Iraq, ISIS' leader Abu Bakr al Baghdadi proclaimed that AQI had become a caliphate and took on the name the Islamic State, installing a caliphate for the first time in a century. A caliphate is the ancient state structure used by Islamic governments that use Quranic Sharia law instead of what Islamists see as corrupt man-made laws. It was used as a form of political organizing from the beginning of Islam with the Rashidun Caliphate in the 7th century up until the 20th century when the Ottoman Caliphate collapsed and the nation state took over as the main form of political organization. ISIS, al Qaeda, and their ideological allies see the demise of the caliphate and the fracturing of the ummah into nation states as the beginning of an era of humiliation. They view nation states as being weaponized state governing structures used against the ummah to divide Muslims to make them easier to subdue, and force them to live under western laws and norms (Rabasa et al., 13).

The declaration of a caliphate had two major ramifications within the jihadist movement. The first is that it unofficially marks the split between the Islamic State and al Qaeda. The

declaration stated that the new Islamic State would include the jihadist group Jabhat al Nusra, which started when AQI sent in cadres to Syria to capitalize on its emerging conflict. Between their entry into the country and the caliphate declaration, Jabhat al Nusra established itself as the al Qaeda affiliate in Syria and fought alongside the more nationalist rebels against the Assad regime. Following the declaration, a power struggle emerged as Jabhat al Nusra did not want to return under Abu Bakr al Baghdadi's command, resulting in a hard split with the newly established Islamic State in Iraq and Syria on one side and Jabhat al Nusra and al Qaeda central on the other. Later on in the conflict, the Jabhat al Nusra rebranded itself into a coalition with other jihadist groups called Jabhat Fateh al Sham and then later Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham to remove the stigma it received from being associated with al Qaeda and being listed as a terrorist group (Lister 2016A, 63). The key period of time and organizational traits of this group that this paper analyses is during its Jabhat al Nusra period, and so for simplicity, the name 'al Nusra' will be used.

The second major ramification was the assertion by al Bagdadi that a key goal in the jihadist movement had been reached. Throughout the movement, goals shifted between targeting both the far and near enemy, with variation depending on a particular group's doctrine and its local setting. The most ambitious of the jihadist goals is the establishment of a caliphate, which still proved to be very controversial when ISIS did it. Even though al Qaeda also sees this as one of its goals, it believes that it should be done only after the far enemy is degraded to the point of being unable to interfere with developments in Muslim lands (Fromson and Simson, 32). One major theological implication of a caliphate is that it comes with a claim to represent the entirety of the Muslim ummah (Hamming 2017b, 71). This means little for the many members of the ummah who do not consider the ummah as a part of their identity. Outside of the jihadist movement, many of the so-called ummah already live within Islamic republics or nation states with strong Islamic principles, so the declaration of a caliphate geographically far removed from them had no impact

on their daily lives. Many Muslims in the West are fully integrated into their home countries and saw no value in such a declaration. Many Muslims did not feel any sort of sympathies to ISIS regardless of other factors, and instead saw them as following a perverted version of Islam that they had no interest in. Even many active participants in the global jihadist movement disagreed with ISIS in fundamental ways and refused to answer its calls for support.

Others took this more seriously. Jihadists from all over the world started immigrating to the newly formed caliphate to fight in its ranks and engage in state building. In the beginning of the Syrian conflict, ISIS was competing with other groups in Syria over these foreign volunteers. ISIS worked hard to win this competition aimed at convincing foreigners to travel to its lands through a coordinated media campaign that eclipsed competing campaigns, both in terms of quality and quantity (Department of Homeland Security, 2017). This success within the movement also drew in massive counterterrorism efforts by nations that were determined to defeat global jihadist terrorism. Its success was short lived, as its rapid growth and ultra-violence resulted in a global coalition against it, losing nearly all of its territory in a matter of years. Nevertheless, during this time it manage to provide the only challenge to al Qaeda's leadership of the jihadist movement and give the movement's constituents an idea of what the movement could be like, if it moved in an alternative direction.

Jihadist Waves

In an effort to condense the history of global jihad into distinct periods, observers have started using the 'waves' metaphor, which helps draw distinctions about movement dynamics and thought at a particular period in its history. For some, the first wave started when the Afghan veterans travelled to fight in other wars, followed by a second wave in the late 1990s that focused on terrorist attacks on western targets, a third wave which was focused on the fight against the US

invasion of Iraq, and a fourth wave which mostly played out in the Syrian civil war (International Crisis Group, 2016; Bildt, 2016). This is listed below as Wave Model A. It is unclear why the Soviet-Afghan war is left out of this wave model, but this is not uniform across all interpretations of the wave model. Wave Model B sees the Soviet-Afghan war as the first wave, followed by a second wave during the 1990s that combines the previous model's first and second wave, seeing the foreign fighters in the earlier half of the decade with the latter half's attacks on western targets as one period of the movement. It then conforms to the previous model's second and third waves in Iraq and then Syria, respectively (Coolsaet, 2016). The last model looks at the Soviet-Afghan war and the conflicts of the early 1990s as one, possibly because of the similarity in foreign fighting between those two otherwise divided waves. This models then combines the terrorist attacks against the West and the resulting Iraq invasion and jihadist activism against it as a second wave, possibly because the tactic and its result were tied together. This model then sees ISIS as a third wave because of the changes in the movement's tactics and dynamics, such as the brutality and inter-movement competition (Fawaz, 2014).

	Wave Model A	Wave Model B	Wave Model C
Soviet-Afghan conflict		Wave 1	Wave 1
Early 90s conflicts	Wave 1	Wave 2	
Late 90s attacks	Wave 2		Wave 2
Iraq invasion	Wave 3	Wave 3	
Syrian civil war	Wave 4	Wave 4	Wave 3

Table 1: Various Jihadist Wave Models

While the waves metaphor provides a great way of describing the movement, it does so at the cost of simplifying the reality, which is that each wave is its own highly intricate phenomenon, affected by developments during the wave. For example, the waves that included large numbers of

foreign fighters also had multiple different mini-waves within them that divide when the foreigners enter the country, depending on the period of the conflict as well as conditions that affect the flow of fighters in both their country of origin and destination country. In the Bosnian conflict the first wave of foreigners were highly motivated but ill experienced. Many were individuals who had no military experience, but still felt the need to help the Bosnians Muslims defend themselves from the Serbian and Croatian forces. This represented the phase of the conflict in which global jihadist trends were closer to a defensive jihad, focused on assisting Muslims in conflict zones. This meant Muslims in the West could fight in Bosnia and return home without being automatically deemed terrorists in their home countries. Soon the Afghan veterans arrived, which marks the second micro-wave and featured more radical and experienced fighters who used tactics such as beheadings and spread radical ideology within Bosnia, causing problems between the foreign jihadists and the locals moderate Muslim Bosniaks (Zuijdewijn and Bakker, 4-5).

Foreign Fighters and their Influence on Global Jihad

One aspect of the history of the contemporary global jihadist movement that requires special attention is that of jihadist foreign fighters. They have consistently appeared in conflicts featuring Muslims fighting for their Islamic identity since the Soviet-Afghan conflict. While the current top down approach to studying foreign fighters looks at the groups they volunteer for, a long term study of foreign fighting across cases that are part of the global jihadist movement would allow for a bottom up approach which can provide insight as to how foreign fighters effect the movement. With this approach in mind, foreign fighter flows, recruitment messages, and other dynamics between foreign fighters and their destinations has the potential to give valuable insight into the internal dynamics of the jihadist movement. Similarly, comparing jihadist groups and their unique traits and positions within the movement can offer information as to why some of those

groups were able to attract massive numbers of foreigners compared to others who attracted few to none.

To understand the phenomenon, it is important to find a working definition for foreign fighters, which is difficult because no definition is not entirely agreed upon by the scholars that study them, which gets further complicated when considering their contexts. David Malet, an expert in the field, defines foreign fighters as "noncitizens of conflict states who join insurgencies during civil conflicts" excluding combatants serving in a foreign army sent into the conflict and employees of private military/security firms (Malet 2013, 9). Thomas Hegghammer, another leading scholar in the field, builds on this definition with the requirements that a foreign fighter (1) operates within an insurgency, (2) is not a citizen of the conflict state and does not have kinship with the parties of the conflict, (3) is not affiliated with an official military organization, and (4) is unpaid (Hegghammer 2010, 57-58). There has been some disagreement over this definition as many foreign fighters have been paid while fighting, joined pro-regime forces, or are members of a diaspora who returned to their country of origin to fight but otherwise fit within the requirements for the 'foreign fighter' label. Mendelsohn simplifies the definition into one who leaves his or her home country to participate within a foreign conflict (Mendelsohn, 189).

Mendelsohn also makes a critical point that academics and locals in a conflict zone can have different ideas of who is a foreign fighter and who is not (Mendelsohn, 193). For example, Iraqi citizens might consider an Arab from Syria that joined the insurgency against the US as less of a foreign fighter than US troops fighting in the same war because of ethnic and historical ties, though a legal or scholarly definition would say the opposite. Because jihadism is a transnational movement and it perceives the ummah as a united group, its 'foreign fighters' are in an unclear position. The movement and groups that these foreign fighters are entering have transnational goals and seemingly no geographical limit for their actions. With this in mind, what does foreign mean

for a group whose ideology sees the entire world as its sphere of operation and a global community as its constituency?

It is also important to look at what role foreign fighters play within the jihadist movement. Foreign fighters help fuel the movement by volunteering militarily and transferring skills from one conflict to another, both of which are major boost in capabilities. Because of the clandestine nature of foreign fighting and groups that receive foreign fighters, there is no definitive data on how many have joined foreign jihadist groups, even with today's highly reported on wave. But even early estimates regarding jihadist foreign fighters in Syria list the numbers in the triple digits, which tells a cautionary tale even if they are not perfectly accurate. The war started in early 2011, and one report published a year and a half later states 11,000 foreigners entered to fight for Syrian jihadists (Zelin, 2013). A different report states 12,000 for mid-2014 (Barrett, 6). The numbers continued to climb, with a reported 20,000 in January, 2015 and 30,000 in December of that same year (Neumann, 2015; Benmelech and Flor, 1). While it is impossible to pinpoint the exact number, what is clear is that this is a significant number of individuals that flowed into the country and jihadist ranks, perpetuating the conflict and giving jihadists an inflated level of representation and capabilities, as far as the local conflict marketplace is concerned.

Another issue with foreign fighters is that they perpetuate the movement, ensuring that it will continue even in the face of significant human losses. While AQI lost fighters during the US invasion of Iraq, it also had an influx of foreigners coming to its ranks, which helped keep it active enough to survive until it had a better opportunity as ISIS. Many jihadist foreign fighters also become shunned from their home countries because their activities turn them into a terrorist risk if they return. They have few alternatives to turn to after they are done fighting, and one of the easiest options is to continue fighting in the jihadist movement, as they have already paid the high entry cost to join the movement, and leaving can prove to be even costlier. This is certainly not the end

result for all foreign fighters, as many will die, become disillusioned with the movement and leave, or a number of other possibilities. But considering that the number of jihadist foreigners to enter Syria during its conflict is in the tens of thousands, many will continue to fight within the movement. It must also be noted that many prominent figures within the movement, including big names such as now deceased ex-al Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden and current al Qaeda leader Ayman al Zawahiri, fall under most if not all given definitions of a foreign fighter. It is highly probable that some of today's jihadist foot soldiers will stay within the movement. This means that after their current conflict is over, they are able to perform effective acts of activist terrorism to ensure the movement is active while waiting for any lull to end, or they can wait until the next conflict they can coopt.

One other major effect that foreign jihadist have within the movement is the fact that many jihadist volunteers bring their knowledge when they travel to fight, which helps jihadist groups learn and grow from the past. This can include civil skills such as engineering or media production, but is often military skills. However, unlike traditional militaries or armed group that grow from their own experience, foreign fighters often bring military experience from other jihadist groups, or their past lives as soldiers in professional armies, which improves a group's capabilities to learn through a widened pool of knowledge to draw from.

Aside from their roles in the movement, one key reason to studying foreign fighters is that jihadist foreign fighters are a litmus test of what direction the movement is headed. This is because jihadist groups compete for foreign fighters in order to convince them that they should volunteer for their group as opposed to another. By volunteering for a group, an individual is buying into the group's ideas and supporting it over other groups within the movement. With this in mind, jihadist foreign fighters should be studied in order to fully understand the jihadist movement itself because they are the grassroots constituents of the movement.

There are two main reasons to make this claim. First, foreigners are often the ideological hardliners of a group as they voluntarily choose to enter its ranks (Gates and Podder, 108). This is opposed to local fighters who often join armed groups because of their material conditions or localized grievances, and so are not as supportive of the ideological underpinnings of a group compared to foreigners. Foreign jihadists can choose which group they join, which makes their support something that jihadist groups must actively compete for. In this sense, their choice tells us important information about which group is 'in' according to the overall mood of the movement. If one group receives many foreign fighters while another receives none, this indicates that former group is much more in tune to the movement's sentiment than the latter.

Second, as a transnational movement with no clear boundaries, 'foreigners' are the largest possible recruiting pool for groups within movement. Were this not the case, each jihadist group's recruiting pool would be largely limited to their immediate civilian population. Since the global jihadist movement is (as per its name) global, it needs globally minded individuals to perpetuate itself. A jihadist group with purely local goals is unlikely to attract transnationally minded jihadists, especially if those jihadists have transnationally oriented groups as alternative options to support. Actors within this movement have recognized this, as evident by the large-scale effort to bring in foreign fighters.

This also leads to the conclusion that an increase in cases of jihadist foreign fighters over an extended period indicates an uptick in the vitality of the movement, while the same can be said in reverse about a decrease in such activity. This is because if there were no transnationally minded group that can capture the transnational movement's attention, there would be fewer cases of such foreign fighters. This is recognized within the literature as the waves metaphor used to show the history of jihadist foreign fighting, as it captures the high levels of jihadist activity with lulls of comparatively little activity in between.

Implications for the Movement

The jihadist movement initially sought to return Islam to its previous level of social dominance. Its early era saw globally minded jihadists fighting to defend Muslims from attacking 'crusaders', such as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. But through the years it evolved and became better known for its use of terrorism, such as the September 11th attacks or the ultraviolent videos of beheadings put out by certain jihadists groups. During this time, the movement evolved and transformed in unpredictable ways due to the changing nature of global events and internal dynamics within the movement.

The traditional movement leaders, al Qaeda, made a name for themselves through organizing the war effort of the Afghan conflict and then spent years as the sole group capable of acting out the movements transnational goals. This de facto turned it into the leaders of the movement and led to other jihadist groups pledging their allegiance. This only changed because ISIS, previously its affiliate known as al Qaeda in Iraq, was able to expand in both strength and skill while organizing the efforts against the US invasion of Iraq. Eventually it became strong enough to openly challenge al Qaeda, which is the first time that the jihadist movement was split between two competing factions. This upset the natural order of the jihadist movement, as now al Qaeda and ISIS had to compete over legitimacy, resources, and followers of the movement. In order to explain how this competition played out, first it is important to look at the movement and the conditions within it that dictate the ways that jihadist groups function before looking at how those rules play out in the dynamics of intra-movement rivalry.

CHAPTER 3: Marketplace Conditions

As an ever-evolving eco-system, the global jihadist movement has specific characteristics that affect the different organizations within it. To remain competitive, each group must act in a way that takes into consideration the entire movement, from its local actions to how other like-minded organizations behave. In that sense, the lens through which ISIS and other jihadist groups are analyzed can be shifted from a political to a market lens, in which each group acts as a business firm to maximize their profits. Under this metaphor, a jihadist firm works to sell itself as a product by engaging potential buyers, or potential supporters. Those who support the firm as a product can buy into the product or support it in multiple ways, such as answering its calls for attacks or providing donating to its coffers. A firm having buyers means that individuals within the jihadist movement believe that the firm's product is worth buying over competing products. This can translate into profit for the firm in the way of resources, and could be used by the organization to further its goals. As an ideological movement, these goals are often political goals, but can include profit in the traditional business sense. Each jihadist group that competes within the marketplace must act as a business firm would in trying to dominate its relevant market. If it doesn't, it risks missing out on profits or going out of business because of more effective competing jihadist firms who can win over its resources.

The Market's Resources

For any political movement or business firm to grow, it requires resources. Such resources can vary, as each unique marketplace has its unique requirements for function and growth. Some resources, such as money, are highly flexible and can be used in most industries. But in

underground markets, such as the jihadist marketplace, even flexible resources such as money can have very different rules. In this example, it would be just as important to have access to skills such as money laundering to be able to safely use the money. Flexible resources within the jihadist market can thus greatly vary, ranging from micro level resources used by a particular group to macro level resources that can affect the entirety of the movement. They can also be tangible and straightforward, such as weapons used for combat, to intangible and trivial to outsiders, such as the need for uncensored access to the internet.

The source of the resources is also highly important. Resources can come to a group from either the local or international marketplace. A particular resources can come from both, but the process of acquiring them can be vastly different. Local recruits, for example, can join a group within their locality with little to no difficulty. On the other hand are foreign recruits often take great risks on their journey to volunteer for a group. Certain means of attaining resources are in their own right an intangible resource for groups because of the difficulty in establishing them. This can come in the form of local routes used to smuggle goods or individuals without being caught, or in the form of international state sponsors that may support the firm out of a common enemy or support for their ideology.

In looking at ISIS' rise, Ligon et al. (2014) discuss the resources that ISIS used to facilitate its rapid growth. The first one they discuss is human resources, including both leadership and lower ranking members (Ligon et al., 18). These are of vital importance, as a firm needs capable leaders to steer it in the right direction and disciplined members who can act out the group's plans effectively. Within the jihadist movement, foreign fighters often become leaders after they have proven themselves. In other cases, domestic jihadists have travelled to different theaters with years of experience they can transfer over. One example of this is the Chechnyan jihadist fighters, whose years of experience fighting the Russian state have given them "an international reputation as some

of the toughest fighters in the world" (Mironova and Sergatskova, 2017). ISIS' 'breaking the walls' campaign was also a notable and effective way of gaining committed local recruits in their ranks through storming Iraqi prisons and freeing individuals who then joined the group (Wyer, 2012). A group must also be able to recognize and utilize the many skills of their rank and file members, as this is the best way to allow its members, and itself, to maximize potential.

The next resource that Ligon et al. consider is the structure of an organization (Ligon et al., 26). Because jihadist firms are in a constant state of threat from competitors and enemies, they must keep their communications and resources clandestine. If they do not, they risk being compromised. If al Qaeda central tried to tightly control or organize AQI's resistance against the US invasion, it would have risked the US spying on its internal communications which could have negatively impacted the organization. Many firms, including al Qaeda, attempt to structure themselves in ways that reflect their goals and plans, but are forced to trade of organizational efficiency for security to prevent infiltration and ensure their long-term survival (See Gunaratna and Oreg, 2010).

The last resource Ligon et al. discuss are physical and financial resources, which can include weapons, munitions, natural resources, and cash (Ligon et al., 18). These are the resources that a firm can use to build itself with, such as weapons to arm soldiers and money to pay and feed them, which is vital to keeping an armed group running. Much of these resources must remain private information within firms, as revealing them would leave them vulnerable. For this reason, firms must be able to find ways of securing these resources and ensuring that they are safe until they are to be used. If an enemy were to know about the resources that a group has, they could work to deny access or limit the effectiveness of these resources, as one dimension of the global counter terrorism movement works to both destroy firm's resources as well as prevent terrorist financing. A state or rival firm with such knowledge could also use this knowledge of what to

expect on the battlefield to prepare to counter the firm's capabilities.

Then there are the movement-wide resources, which are needed to facilitate the entirety of the jihadist movement, and not just for a particular group. That said, a particular group with a well thought out strategy could take advantage of these resources more efficiently than its competitors for relative gains within the movement. Hegghammer (2016) looks at these as an attempt to consider how the future of the jihadism will develop based off certain resources and how efficiently the jihadist movement can utilize them. He sees the spread of jihadist ideology as a product of long-term movement building efforts which were facilitated by favorable conditions. This goes against one common idea that jihadists are motivated by push factors in their society, which are conditions (such as limited economic opportunities or islamophobia in European countries) that would effectively push individuals away from their home societies and into the hands of extremists such as ISIS.

Specifically, Hegghammer believes the spread of jihadism can be linked to resources that jihadists use to engage in movement building, alongside "broader socio-political strains" that affect society and allow for effective resource utilization (Hegghammer 2016, 159). He acknowledges the importance of "economically underperforming Muslim youth" as a resource in the form of a large pool of recruits which are susceptible to recruiting efforts because of their problems within their home countries, but he does not see their economic underperformance as the key reason for their turn to jihadism. Instead he believes other factors are vital for the mobilization of this demographic in the movements. After all, practically all populations include economically underperforming youths, yet few of them resort to terrorism.

The next resource that Hegghammer brings up is persistent conflict within the Muslim world, which degrades states and facilitates the growth of jihadist firms. When there is no conflict, traditional state security services are able to focus their energy on any threat that arises. When there

is conflict, state security efforts are divided and less effort can be placed on emerging threats, allowing new firms to enter the conflict market. This enables the next two resources that he discusses, which are the uncensored access to the internet and the availability of jihadist ideological entrepreneurs. Access to the internet is important as it allows for unfettered activism by a group seeking to put out its messages. While this activism has many similar positive for non-violent movement mobilization, terrorist groups can use it in a similar way to spread their radical ideas to recruit new members. This allows the next resource to be even more potent, as unfettered access to the internet is very useful to the emergence of jihadist ideological norm entrepreneurs who are able to spread their ideas. While these entrepreneurs can be unaffiliated individuals, they can also be members or sympathizers of a particular group and work in its interests.

If these jihadist norm entrepreneurs have restricted, limited, or no access to the internet, their ability to reach and influence the jihadist movement outside of their immediate vicinity is severely limited. Norm entrepreneurs outside of a conflict zone are at risk of being caught by state security services, depending on where they are and how active the local security forces are. Firms with access to all of these resources have the capability of weaponizing their entrepreneurs and ideology, which can result in the form of massive social media campaigns that spread a group's ideology. The importance of all of these resources within the jihadist movement presents the notion that the spread of jihadist ideas is dependent not only how good they are, but on how easily they can be spread.

Macro level changes are also an important feature that must be considered by jihadist firms. These changes are major shifts in the marketplace conditions that can change the rules of the marketplace. Actions taken during critical moments can help a group grow drastically, while inaction may mean that other firms can reap the missed rewards. For example, the US invasion of Iraq offered an opportunity for firms to organize the resistance against it. Al Qaeda's central

command, the leading jihadist group during this time, didn't take direct action of this opportunity. Instead, it worked with ISIS, then AQI, to lead this effort, which effectively laid the groundwork for AQI's later growth. This is because AQI had the opportunity to take control of many local and global resources that were dedicated to the jihadist war effort as well as gaining expertise in relevant fields, including recruiting and smuggling foreign fighters, all while gaining legitimacy within the local population and the jihadist movement (Whiteside, 8). If a group does not adapt to macro level changes within the global movement, it risks relative losses to those groups that are flexible enough in their operations to do so.

As resources can facilitate a firm's growth, each of them can play a role in how successful a group is within the jihadist movement. To explain the power relations within the movement, it is important to look at how each group was able to leverage its diverse set of resources and conditions towards its goals. Some, such as ISIS, were better able to take advantage of their situation than others and this can be used to explain its rapid growth within the movement. This is because firms within the movement are not isolated armed groups, but firms competing with one another for the limited resources of the global jihadist movement. A group's success must be measured by not only how well it positions itself within its local theater but also how well it is able to utilize and project its success outside of its local context to others within the greater jihadist movement.

Threats to Firms in the Marketplace

Ligon et al. also discuss the threats to firms within the global jihadist marketplace that can severely limit the success of any firm if its response to them is inefficient. They focus on threats that affect the market dynamics, focusing on internal threats within the marketplace that arise because of competition between jihadist firms, and not threats to the marketplace itself from actors seeking to fight jihadism.

The first threat discussed is the threat of entry, which can be described as the danger of other jihadist firms entering the market and increasing competition for the existing ones (Ligon et al., 13). This threat is high in the jihadist marketplace, as firms are easy to make. This is evident with Syria, where a sudden security vacuum caused by a sudden conflict prompted the entrance of many competing firms in a short period of time. Firms are also easy to make outside of such extreme conflict zones, as forming a firm is not difficult; as per ISIS' own statement to sympathizers in Europe all that is needed for the simplest level firm is "a knife, a cell phone, and a victim" (Ligon et al., 14). What is difficult is the firm actually operating within the marketplace over an extended period, and so newly established firm will certainly have trouble competing with more established firms. The marketplace corrects this as over time ineffective firms may be swallowed or disassembled by enemies or more efficient rivals. It is important to note that when in local conflict markets, not all firms are like-minded. In the Syrian marketplace, not all of the new firms were jihad oriented, but both jihadist and non-jihadist groups were still competing for the same localized resources such as weaponry and recruits. This is because transnational firms within the same ideological market such as the global jihadist movement must compete against one another, but local firms of any kind compete with one another for local resources.

The next threats that Ligon et al. bring up is the threat of rivalry, which is the ability of competing firms to offer consumers the same product, and the threat of substitution, which is the ability for other firms to offer similar but different products to the same consumers (Ligon et al., 14). These two high-level threats for the global jihadist movement, where many different firms offer similar forms of jihadist products to support. For a group to overcome this threat, it must be able to present higher quality products to the movement's buyers. As the following section will show, firms such as ISIS and al Qaeda work to build up their legitimacy within the movement as a means of making their product stand out against their competitors. Because of these threats, a firm

must also be in tune to what is happening to the rest of the movement so that its competitors do not overshadow it in the eyes of the buyers.

This development is seen in the rise of Islamic governing structures that jihadist firms now have adopted as a governing norm. Earlier in the movement, groups were more focused the military aspects of their operations. Today, jihadist firms are working on developing structures to govern territory they hold according to their interpretation of sharia (Drevon, 55). This shift is because of the success that the tactic brought ISIS and the need for other firms to replicate the tactic in order to stay competitive. Groups that ignore such changes within the movement risk having their supporters defect to other firms who are able to better act out on their beliefs. One other micro level development that has consistently been a source of competition between jihadist groups is that of media production. Like Islamist governing structures, complex media campaigns are not directly used for violent competition with one another but instead over the support of civilians. The majority of jihadist firms have improved their media capabilities over the years and those that have not will have relative difficulty in connecting to the global pool of potential supporters (Baines and O'Shaughnessy, 172).

The final two threats to the market are those of suppliers and buyers. The suppliers within the jihadist movement are the movement backers, such as weapons dealers or sympathetic nation states that can provide material support to a particular firm. Even though firms in the marketplace compete against each other, the suppliers are many and are removed from one another, leaving the threat of suppliers collectively draining the movement through withholding resources to a minimum. While a particular firm losing support from its backers might hurt its ability to compete, as long as the backer shifts its resources within the movement as opposed to pulling them out, the movement will continue, though relative capabilities will be shifted.

Then is the threat of failing to attract buyers who have the option to choose one firm over

another, leaving a particular firm without the resources it needs to remain competitive (Ligon et al., 16). Within the context of global jihadism, there are two groups of buyers that must be considered. The first is the local buyers within a firm's territory. The threat from locals is high, as an armed group requires support from the local population to be able to continue operating smoothly. If the locals do not support an organization, they may assist state security services or competing firms, raising the cost of operating in that theater for a firm. This is especially so since many competing armed groups are mutually exclusive because of their competition. If two firms wish to occupy the same territory, they are in a position of direct competition between themselves and this competition can only end when only one is left in that particular marketplace. If a marketplace has only one active firm, that firm can act with impunity against the locals who do not support the group yet have no alternative to turn to, compelling the local population into support out of fear.

The other buyers are foreign fighters who chose to engage in jihad. These fighters present a low threat to a firm, as an organization that doesn't receive foreign fighters can still engage in its goals. If a firm requires foreign fighters to continue functioning, its capabilities are questionable in the first place. Because of this, foreign buyers are not a threat to an already functioning firm but the benefits from winning this feature of the market are high because of the many utilities of foreign fighters.

The Invisible Hand of the Jihadist Market

As a far-reaching movement with its own actors, norms, and resources, global jihadism can be compared to a marketplace in which firms compete to gain the largest share of profits. Just like typical markets, jihadist firms are competing within the market because a larger share of the market means more resources, power, and legitimacy. While firms can vie for a greater share of the market, their efforts are only one part in the equation of how successful a firm is within the greater

movement. No matter how successful a group is within their immediate context, success within the movement comes through different rules, and understanding these rules is vital for competing with likeminded firms.

The movement's resources are one example of private information that lets outsiders look at the movement's dynamics. Certain resources are locally oriented, such as heavy weaponry, and so they only affect competing groups within the same proximity, regardless of ideology. Other resources, such as access to the internet, do not directly relate to competition because two jihadist groups do not compete over the same internet supply. Such resources speak volumes about a group's local capabilities, while providing scare insight into their competition within the jihadist movement.

However, like-minded firms must actively compete over transnational movement-specific resources. This is because movement-specific resources that one firm holds are denied to other firms. After all, a foreigner may only volunteer for one firm at a time, and a generous government or individual that supports the movement has limited resources to invest into the movement. This competition over resources means that if a firm does not compete to win a share of the transnational resources, it risks being overshadowed by other firms and being limited in any global aspirations. Then there are the threats dynamics within the market, which firms must consider in their attempts to grow. If firms do not take the dangers of the market seriously, the market's invisible hand can turn a firm irrelevant at best or disbanded at worst. With both threats and resources, firms are required to think ahead to factor these many details into their grand strategy in order to negate threats while maximizing access to resources.

Until recently, the jihadist market was monopolized by al Qaeda because its actions throughout the movement turned it into the strongest and loudest jihadist voice. ISIS' emergence disrupted this status quo and led to a never before seen level of intra-movement competition. The

two firms are fighting over the limited resources of the movement, but their fight has centered around leadership and legitimacy, turning narrative control into a large part of their competition. Because of the absolutist nature of the two groups fighting over a single position of leadership, unless the two set aside their differences, only one firm can come out on top. The following section will explore how the two have competed thus far, both within the norms of their movement as well as on the front lines, where the two have faced off militarily in various capacities.

CHAPTER 4: Competition within the Marketplace

Because of their unique history and roles within the movement, al Qaeda and ISIS are the two firms in direct competition for the leadership position of the global jihadist movement. Both are the only two firms within the movement that have reached a high level of preeminence and because of this, they are now in what is the only recognizable case of 'brand competition' within the global jihadist movement. Al Qaeda's leadership evolved over time to the point where it has is often called 'al Qaeda central command' because it stopped engaging in combat on its own in order to better coordinate its global efforts. ISIS started as a terrorist organization that evolved into a quasi-state and is currently in the devolving process because it has lost its territory and ability to govern. Thus, the two function differently in key respects, which directly affects how they interact within the movement.

The introduction of this rivalry drastically altered the balance within the jihadist movement. Al Qaeda routinely preached against *fitna*, or internal discord within Islam (Novenario, 74). This call for unity is a strong theme from Osama Bin Laden's doctrine of a united global jihad, since he saw fitna as a threat to the movement and actively worked to avoid it (Bacon and Arsenault, 5).

During its reign as the undisputed leader of the jihadist movement, al Qaeda calling others to follow its leadership as a means of avoiding fitna is an easy statement, as it is calling on jihadists to support it within the movement's status quo. When ISIS initially started to move against al Qaeda's interests, this doctrine held, as there were at least five known attempts known to reconcile the differences between the two. Each failed, ultimately because of ISIS' belief that the caliphate should not negotiate with other Muslims who are in fact obligated to support the caliphate instead of questioning it (Hamming 2017a, 6). This created a new category within the jihadist target framework; along with the far/near enemy, there is now the internal enemy (Hamming 2017b, 77).

To truly understand the competition within the jihadist movement, it is important to look at the how the firms within it interact with each other under marketplace rules. After all, a firm's success within the marketplace is not only dependent on what capabilities they have, but also how they are able to leverage their capabilities to maximize their position. Firms that are unable to utilize their strengths to advance their organization risk being overshadowed by firms that offer similar products to potential buyers. This new competition means that firms must now engage with the movement in norms that are vastly different from the ones before fitna became a factor. One such way is firm legitimacy. Firms are able to build up their legitimacy within the movement and use it to their advantage in interactions other members of the movement. A firm can also send signals to the movement about its stance on a wide variety of issues. Firms can use these signals to compete, either by denouncing one another or by outbidding one another by presenting their claims to the movement and allowing it to decide which firm's message is more convincing for the movement's constituents. Another aspect of this competition is branching out to other theaters. If one firm allows the other to work unopposed in a particular location, it risks losing all of that area's resources because it allowed a competitor to freely organize in that locality. It should be emphasized that clandestine groups try to keep certain information private in order to prevent

hostile groups from taking advantage of this information. For this reason, much of the competition between the two firms will be private for a long time, possibly even forever. However, because a jihadist group cannot privately communicate to an entire global decentralized movement, there is much open knowledge that gives outsiders a glimpse into the civil war dividing the jihadist community.

Legitimacy as a Battleground

One of the most important aspects of competition within the jihadist movement is legitimacy. Legitimacy in the context of a movement means credibility that a group or individual within that movement has because of their adherence to the movement's norms and goals. Not every firm is able to prove its legitimacy, and firms that cannot are in a position of weakness relative to those that have proven their commitment. A jihadist firm without legitimacy will have trouble competing for movement resources with firms that have legitimacy. That does not necessarily mean they would receive zero percent of the movement's resources, as resource acquisition is complex and legitimacy is only one factor. But a group with little to no credentials would have trouble competing over resources such as foreigners or state sponsorship with more successful jihadist organizations who have already proven themselves in the marketplace. As discussed in the previous section, entry into the market place is easy but standing out in a way that allows for a group to gain credibility is difficult. A jihadist group cannot just enter the marketplace and expect to gain the benefits that established firms receive. A firm that wishes to compete for transnational resources must be able to prove itself worth supporting to those who hold these resources and can choose where to invest them.

When considering legitimacy within the movement, three different aspects must be considered. The first is historical legitimacy, as a firm's legacy of how committed and successful it

was in the past can give it credibility today, as well as insight into how it can be expected to act in today's time. While historical legitimacy is fickle as modern actions can erode a legacy, it can still be an important feature of a particular firm. The next is local legitimacy, which comes from how a firm acts in its immediate territory. It must be able to keep the locals happy, or obedient, while acting on its jihadist ideology. It must also be able to prove its ability to fight for the jihadist movement within a local setting. The last is legitimacy from actions done in accordance to the trends and norms of the global jihadist movement. This means its ability to engage the far enemy, but also its ability to read and act on what appears to be 'in' within the movement at any given time. A firm must be able to prove itself locally but also globally in relation to other competing likeminded firms. Just because a firm is successful locally does not mean it is or will be successful within its ideological movement, as success within a global movement is relative to likeminded firms. For this reason, a firm's legitimacy is based on both its ability to succeed in its local theater as well as be able to stand out from competing international likeminded firms.

Al Qaeda developed movement legitimacy because it had previously led the Soviet-Afghan war's foreign fighter efforts and executed the September 11th terrorist attacks. These two acts, mostly the latter, turned al Qaeda into the leading jihadist group. After that it was been able to conduct multiple other high profile terrorist attacks, but in the recent years, it has had trouble repeating its previous success. The firm still emphasizes its successful September 11th attack in its publications in order to continue drawing legitimacy from it, though this is unlikely to work as a strategy for the long term.

In an effort that started many years ago, ISIS built up its legitimacy within the movement because of its role in organizing against the US invasion of Iraq. The invasion prompted a large amount of jihadist literature and discourse on the importance of jihad in Iraq, creating the theological justification for a jihad in Iraq a decade before the contemporary wave started

(Hegghammer 2006, 24). ISIS' unique role during this conflict gave it credibility which turned it into a significant actor during the third wave of foreign fighting. Continually fighting for the jihadist cause, especially within what the movement saw as a highly important battleground helped it build up its legitimacy.

The battle over legitimacy within the fourth wave of jihadism was much more competitive. When the conflict in Syria started, it did not have the same theological justification as was the case in Iraq because Syria was a new battleground. Once the Syrian conflict erupted, the justification followed shortly after. Early on in the conflict, Al Qaeda's leader Ayman Zawahiri called for "every Muslims and every honorable and free person in Turkey, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon to go to aid his brothers in Syria" in an effort to entice foreign jihadists into the conflict (O'Bagy, 26). Early cues to encourage jihad focused on the Shia government's brutal response to the Sunni civilians protesting the regime. The sudden emergence of conflict divided by sectarian grounds presented the perfect opportunity for jihadists to open up a new front. Because of this, multiple groups began competing for jihadist resources and legitimacy entered the new marketplace.

The main group in competition with ISIS in the Syria theater is al Nusra, which is affiliated with al Qaeda. While it also shares ISIS' long-term goal of creating a caliphate, its pragmatic approach sought to change Syria in a way more familiar to the nation-state framework, at least for the time being. It does have more global ambitions that follow al Qaeda central's strategy, but its immediate strategy sharply differed from ISIS. Instead, it (and other al Qaeda affiliates) turned to what is described by Charles Lister as localism, which he describes as focusing on local issues and building local alliances as opposed to focusing on international actions as a "strategic mechanism for achieving durable roots within unstable societies" (Lister 2016A, 61). This strategy does focus on the local, but it does not entirely forget about the international. Instead, it sees the necessity of building up support within the local theater until the time is right to reemphasize the international.

Al Nusra is not the only al Qaeda affiliate that has gone in this direction. This appears to be a network-wide strategic shift that started in 2011 when many of the affiliates started to lay low in terms of international actions while working to strengthen local bonds and support in an effort to recuperate after years of counter terrorism efforts against them (Lister 2016C, 10). This strategy has helped al Nusra integrate itself within the more moderate Syrian opposition, even becoming accepted one of the most militarily capable members of the anti-government resistance (Lister 2017b, 10). While this translated to local credibility, the caliphate is much more relevant to the global jihadist movement's goals. While al Qaeda central's defense to this is that ISIS' declaration of the caliphate was poorly timed and should have been implemented further down the line, this was not readily accepted within the movement. Following the caliphate declaration, most of al Nusra's foreign fighters defected to ISIS (Bacon and Arsenault, 9) (Lister 2016B, 13). This shows that many of the movement's grassroots believers supported the direction of ISIS' leadership over al Qaeda's.

Early on, ISIS was able to position itself above the competition because of the claim that it reestablished a caliphate, which gave it theological legitimacy within the movement. Because of the theological implications of a caliphate, ISIS was able to create the narrative that Muslims around the world were obligated to support it. Returning the caliphate has long been a goal of the jihadist movement, and so it is understandable that this act brought ISIS legitimacy within the movement, even if a significant number of jihadists were critical of it. Through this, it shifted its messages from the basic and common recruiting message of calling for supporters to join its ranks into a more complex message using the obligation of the ummah to unite under its rule. While not everybody within the jihadist movement agreed, for others it became an important theological justification for supporting ISIS. Theological justification has played an important role successful recruiting campaigns of the global jihadist foreign fighter movement (see Hegghammer, 2006).

There is no reason to assume that it was any different during this fourth wave.

Local legitimacy also applies to the ability to conquer and control large tracts of territory. While many jihadist groups have been able to take over territory in their relevant conflicts, ISIS excelled in showing its ability to control its territory and govern when it took over territory in Syria and Iraq. Holding large amounts of territory allows for multiple benefits for a jihadist group, such as giving room to safely organize or the ability to extract resources for profits. It was able to take over large amounts of territory very quickly, which gives the impression of a competent group that can continue to replicate its battlefield success.

During ISIS' efforts to govern its territory, ISIS used brutal punishments to provide stability to an area where law and order was lacking. One of the reasons that many of the local Sunni populations became firm ISIS' supporters is because they were previously neglected by their national governments. ISIS' brutal security tactics are still better than pure anarchy or warlordism, and for many dissatisfied Sunnis, better than the previous era of Shia majority rule. Al Nusra has had relative success in this regard as well. In its cooperation with local groups, it has gained significant local legitimacy. This success has helped it last as a respected group within the Syrian opposition. However, this also limits its ability to claim success because its accomplishments are not entirely its own. An emphasis on the local level can come at the expense of a de-emphasis on the international level, as appears to be the case with al Qaeda's current strategy. This is justified by al Qaeda's localism as a tool for building up strength and support until a reemphasis on the international level, but it is up to those within the movement to decide whether they want to focus on local conflicts or try to turn the world into a battlefield.

International legitimacy is given to groups that can perform high profile attacks, such as the September 11th attacks or the Bataclan attack in Paris. This is because such acts prove a group's commitment to the cause and its capabilities to act on this commitment. Firms who are either

unwilling or unable to produce high profile attacks risk being overshadowed by those who can. In this sense, terrorist attacks are not only done to advance the war effort, but also to outbid other groups and stake one's claim within the movement. Outbidding in this context is the act of demonstrating a group's capabilities, commitment, and goals relative to other groups within the movement (Novenario, 958). Before, al Qaeda was able to leverage a high level of legitimacy for itself within the movement because it was the only firm able to successfully attack the West on its own turf. Now that ISIS has demonstrated it also holds this capability, and since both firms have spoken much on the importance of attacking the West, they have set a standard for themselves within their movement through their actions and messages; whoever can produce more attacks holds more legitimacy. This has created the need for both groups to close the 'say-do' gap between their words and their actions. This turns a jihadist firm attacking the West into outbidding its jihadist competitor (ICCT Decyphering the Siren, 27).

In recent years, ISIS has started using terrorist attacks as a way of acquiring legitimacy with various high profile terrorist attacks of its own, both at home and abroad. This coincides with a declining number of attacks in the west committed by al Qaeda (Hamming 2017b, 72). Even so, al Qaeda continues to claim as much legitimacy as possible out of the September 11th terrorist attacks through constant textual and visual references to the attack in its contemporary magazines (Novenario, 969). This change in tactic could be connected to its organizational push towards localism, as emphasizing the local level comes at the cost of deemphasizing the international level. While localism has benefits in regards to how locals actors perceive their relevant jihadists, the global jihadist movement's followers represent a different class of individuals with different motivations and interests. Through the fourth wave ISIS was the only jihadist group which was credibly able to have both an effective local strategy and the ability to hit the far enemy, this is yet another aspect of how it stood above its competition.

Internal politics and political infighting within the jihadist movement can also affect the legitimacy of groups involved. At the start of the Syrian conflict, al Nusra was the al Qaeda affiliated group within the conflict, which gave it the international legitimacy it needed to become one of the preeminent jihadist firms within Syria. When ISIS declared itself a caliphate and al Nusra as its subordinate, it prompted a dispute after which al Nusra chose to follow al Qaeda's leadership over ISIS. This resulted in public statements between the leaders of the three organizations in which the leaders of al Nusra and al Qaeda were noticeably angry over ISIS' claim, while ISIS presented itself as pure and righteous in their actions. This helped ISIS' image relative to al Nusra and al Qaeda, as it successfully portrayed its leadership as calm and collected while showing al Qaeda's opposition to the decision as egotistic opposition to any new leadership (Ligon et al., 20). This strategy also included promoting the idea of establishing a caliphate as the natural next move in the jihadist movement, while portraying its competitors as stuck in the past. Considering the previously mentioned defections of many of al Nusra's foreign fighters, many within the movement accepted this narrative (Bacon and Arsenault, 9).

Competing Messages and Messaging

Even though ISIS and al Qaeda are in direct competition with one another, they are also distant from one another physically. ISIS competes with al Nusra for local jihadist resources such as recruits but the two did not share borders for most of the Syrian conflict and so this competition was limited. ISIS and al Qaeda have competing affiliates that fight against one another, but these are in conflicts far away from the core leaders of the two groups. Because of this, the most direct theater for competition between the two is in the form of messages sent out by the firms in order to win the battle for hearts and minds of jihadists around the world. ISIS and al Qaeda have worked hard to engage with the movement's constituents and assert their narrative as *the* narrative within

the movement. The messages sent often promote the firm's ideology or stance on issues, so they deal with not only the other firm but also issues such as the firm's tactics regarding the enemy or stance on certain issues.

Awareness of these messages first started due to publicly released communiques between the two when they were peacefully competing for leadership of the Syrian jihad. The first such major communication was al Qaeda's ruling in May, 2013 that stated ISIS should stay out of Syria and allow al Nusra to continue its work as an independent firm; "Sheikh Abou Bakr al-Baghdadi was wrong when he announced the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant without asking permission or receiving advice from us and even without notifying us" (Atassi, 2013). When ISIS did not respect this verdict, the tone changed and al Qaeda's leader complain about the "sedition that al-Baghdadi and those with him seek to raise among the ranks of the mujahideen ... assigning themselves as guardians of the Muslims without consultation" (Lister, 2015). This message, aimed at third party members of the conflict, can be read as an appeal to the legitimacy of al Qaeda and the need to consult it before taking such a major decision. Later on, the tone was more aggressive; "ISIS was struck with madness in takfir [declaring other Muslims to be apostates] and exceeded the limits of extremism" (Atassi, 2013). ISIS has not shown much interest in debating the righteousness its actions. Instead, its response to these accusations is that al Qaeda is hurting the caliphate and the ummah, dividing the movement by not supporting it (Bacon and Arsenault, 9).

Messages released were not limited to publicly released tapes. Since the two started openly competing in 2014, all magazines published by either have addressed the other, directly or indirectly, in an attempt to minimize the competitor or emphasize why one's successes overcome the other (Hamming 2017b, 65). This has turned into a competition to outbid one another to prove to their readers that they are better than the other. Though both ISIS and al Qaeda use the strategy,

ISIS has focused on it as one of its primary media strategies (Hamming 2017b, 66). This shows its desire to dethrone al Qaeda from its leadership position through questioning its credentials.

The narratives that the two present about one another have become a major battleground for this competition. One common al Qaeda claim is that ISIS is disloyal, having broken its pledge of bayah. It also argues that ISIS' efforts to establish a caliphate were rushed, since America and its allies must first be degraded to the point of an inability to interfere in Muslim lands before a lasting caliphate can be established. It presents ISIS as methodologically unsound for a variety of reasons, such as portraying its extreme level of violence as a risk of alienating many away from the jihadist movement (Hamming 2017a, 12). It claims that the ISIS tactic of targeting Shia is unwarranted violence that spills Muslim blood. ISIS' retort to this is that Shia are not Muslims and therefore legitimate targets. This has even created a shift in the movement where al Qaeda can present itself as a moderate force. It also works in tandem with its shift to localism as it has started encouraging its affiliates to imbed with locals, avoid needlessly targeting Muslims, and to stop planning attacks on the West in order to prevent themselves from being at the receiving end of global counterterrorism efforts. This however creates the risk of al Qaeda becoming outdated, if the future trends within the jihadist movement continue to support the direction that ISIS was leading it in (Hamming 2017b, 66).

Meanwhile, ISIS presents al Qaeda as having failed in their position as the movement's leadership. ISIS sees the desire to wait for America's degradation before advancing to the next stage of the jihadist movement as a sign of weakness. They also see the attempt to divide Syria and Iraq between ISIS and al Nusra as a betrayal of core jihadist beliefs, as the two countries were divided by the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement, a treaty between Western powers that they believe has no relevance to their movement (Bacon and Arsenault, 9). Furthermore, they have created the

narrative that as a caliphate, negotiating with any jihadist organization is below it, as a caliphate should have the ultimate authority within the ummah and jihadist movement (Hamming 2017b, 71).

The two also present competing messages regarding the enemy of the movement that reflect these differences. Al Qaeda presents the notion that its military efforts around the world will bleed the American empire dry by draining its resources and economy in an unwinnable war with the US, ultimately being weak enough that it would no longer be able to meddle in Muslim lands. ISIS presents a similar claim, but within its own tactical framework. It emphasizes the high costs of coalition airstrikes against the caliphate in the form of retaliatory terrorist attacks conducted by ISIS or its supporters, effectively taking the war in Syria to the enemy's homeland (Novenario, 959) (Lister 2016C, 22). Though both present similar messages, al Qaeda's tactic is to play the long game, while ISIS' presents the need for immediate defensive action. Messages appealing for support are also affected by the group's ideological differences. Al Qaeda presents individuals who fail to mobilize as being selfish and ignoring the needs of the ummah, while ISIS presents such inactivity as disloyalty to the caliphate, and thus to Islam (Novenario, 961). Both messages are intended to compel action, but ISIS' messages create a sense of urgency not found in al Qaeda's messages.

The messages that the two firms present to the movement are only half of the messaging competition. While a strong message is important for a compelling narrative, the method of distribution has a large impact on how successful the message actually is. This is because each method of delivery has nuances that affect who will see it and how easily it spreads. A successful messaging campaign will use different techniques side by side, allowing for flexibility depending on the target audience, which maximizes the messages reach.

One of the main messages that the two firms send to the movement are intended for recruitment. The techniques used are often chosen out of security concerns, as groups must find a way to recruit while avoiding detection. There are two opposite recruiting techniques (among many) that have been used in the global jihadist movement that help explain why ISIS' methods have been very successful during the fourth wave of jihadist foreign fighters, especially relative to al Qaeda. It works through an individual infiltrating a network, such as a mosque's congregation or a refugee camp, and spreading propaganda once the infiltration is completed and the messenger is a trusted member of the network (Daly and Gerwehr, 78). This recruiting method is risky because the infiltrator risks detection but having intimate knowledge and a proximity to the small population allows for specific messaging that may increase the chances of a message landing. This technique was often used by al Qaeda during its reigning era when digital recruiting was much more difficult because of technological limitations. Infiltrating digital communities today is also possible, though building up trust is harder when done over the internet instead of face-to-face. However, with the rise of the internet, this technique has lost some of its utility in relation to other techniques that utilize the gap bridging qualities of the internet.

One opposite recruiting model is the net method, in which messages are spread as wide as possible in order to reach as many individuals as possible (Daly and Gerwehr, 77). It focuses not on direct recruitment but on casting a wide-ranging message in the hopes that a few individuals will be caught in the 'net'. This method can be weaker since the messages are less precise to target as wide of a pool as possible, instead of a message that utilizes a specific grievance. This technique has its benefits, mainly the minimal risks when done in the digital sphere, and it has a much greater recruiting potential. It is also important to note that this method is vastly more complex than the term 'net model' implies. While the recruiting efforts target the global Muslim population as

whole, it involves many diverse methods and messages that are used in tandem. One example of this is the fact that ISIS has released modifications for popular videos games such as Grand Theft Auto in which an individual can play as an ISIS fighter in a way that portrays ISIS sympathetically (Ligon et al., 33). ISIS also produces *nasheeds*, or sharia-compliant music, that it spreads online for its followers to listen to. While these aren't strong standalone tools for recruitment, it can normalize the group and its ideas in mediums that resonate with foreigners in ways that direct propaganda cannot. This works side by side more blatant propaganda made by ISIS, which the US Department of Homeland Security described as being "the most innovative and prolific English language messaging capabilities of any designated foreign terrorist organization" (Department of Homeland Security, 2017).

Al Qaeda has also tried some of these tactics, though its ability to spread them appears to be weaker. The same Department of Homeland Security report stated that al Qaeda "has struggled recently to compete with ISIS' daily release of new media products" (Department of Homeland Security, 2017). The exact reasons why this is the case is private knowledge held within the organization, but it is likely due to two factors that work hand in hand; social media is a relatively new concept that requires learning to use and a firm's effective use of social media is based off their ability to effectively utilize their human resources.

There were significant technological limitations for the net recruiting technique during al Qaeda's time as the undisputed leaders of the jihadist movement. The most effective way of using a net model in the early days of jihad were limited to acts such as sending out video communiques to news organizations willing to air them. This was still a major technological development compared to the era before that, but the reach of these videos at the time was still highly limited. The social media networks that ISIS successfully used did not become widespread until around the end of the

Iraqi invasion period, so al Qaeda did not have the opportunity to utilize it for its recruiting efforts when it was the undisputed strongest voice within the movement. However, when the opportunity arose, ISIS was the first to successfully utilize social media's full potential for sending out messages. There are multiple reasons why ISIS was able to surpass its competitors in this regard.

For example, al Qaeda central is not directly responsible for producing media content. They have decentralized this process in two different ways. The first is through media specific affiliates, such as the "As Sahab Foundation for Islamic Media Publication" which is the publicly recognized al Qaeda central media affiliates (Kimmage, 2). It has been used by al Qaeda central to spread its statements by its leaders, as well as documentary and attack videos. A study of its releases in 2009 by Daniel Kimmage finds that a bulk of its production in that year focused on Pakistan and Afghanistan, where al Qaeda central is based. He believes this is because of how interconnected al Qaeda has become with the local Taliban, and that their new messages are not effectively appealing to the more traditional Arab support base of al Qaeda. This limits its reaching ability because the messages being sent out are more local (Kimmage 5). Kimmage also finds that the connection between al Qaeda and as Sahab was slowly deteriorating between this time, since as Sahab has tried to create its own identity, limiting how much control al Qaeda has over its own media wing.

Another way al Qaeda decentralized its media production is through its policy of having its affiliates produce their own media and it encourages them to emphasize media production because it has recognized the importance of information warfare. This shift has worked for some affiliates and not for others. *Inspire*, the most popular al Qaeda related magazine is published by its affiliate al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, or AQIM, is an affiliate that has had trouble effectively using the media side-by-side its military operations, even though al Qaeda central pushed onto it the importance of using media for propaganda. This is believed to be

because it lacked members who knew how to effectively use social media or work with journalists properly (Torres-Soriano, 969). This presents the notion that a group's ability to utilize social media effectively is based solely on its members in charge of media work and the firm's ability to effectively utilize their human resources. It also works with the theory that the success of a recruitment campaign is contingent on how effectively the group is able to get its messages across.

An alternative theory as to why al Qaeda was slow to learn how to game social media in its propaganda is because of how successful its previous media techniques were. Its use of internet forums was revolutionary in the early stages of the internet, as it allowed them to reach a wide audience of sympathizers looking to learn about the organization. The importance of this as a method of spreading their messages then could be comparable to ISIS' current use of social media for the same purpose now. Having such a successful strategy can make a firm less interested in learning about new techniques and methods, as a firm has little incentive to change a successful strategy.

Another possibility is that ISIS, as AQI, had the bulk of recent jihadist enter its ranks, which gave it the opportunity to take in their skills, including social media and video editing. This continued into the Syrian civil war when foreigners were being utilized in their videos for their linguistic skills, imagery (such as foreigners burning passports or performing executions), or in the media production realm. While it is impossible to prove who the ISIS media teams consists of, it is clear that their high quality media products required highly trained professionals. ISIS' foreigners brought in many skills; it is likely that media production was one of them.

Al Nusra's media efforts were also successful, but were still relatively weak compared to ISIS. This could be because of the nature of how al Nusra was started. Early on in the Syrian civil war, ISIS sent a group of seven individuals to form al Nusra in the country with the intention of

maintaining some level of control (Lister 2016B, 5). While these seven individuals were a highly capable task force, a quality media campaign requires consistent safe space and technology that could not be easily acquired until after the original mission was successful and the group's presence was guaranteed. As al Nusra was intended to be a front group, it is not unlikely to assume that ISIS would have planned on keeping the advanced parts of the media production for al Nusra in-house. While al Nusra later had many foreigners join its ranks that could have brought in social media skills, the nature of their early relationship meant that ISIS had a head start that helped it stay above al Nusra in terms of social media and media production.

The last reason that ISIS was able to most successfully use social media as part of its war efforts is because it had the best access to one of the jihadist movement's vital resources for growth; unfettered internet access. Poor use of social media can leave the militants with social media accounts "vulnerable to detection, surveillance, and arrest" (Kimmage, 15). If a group, or specifically the individuals within that group, don't take effective precautions, a simple post on social media can be used to track its location. ISIS, with its large territory, had no reason to fear arrests and was able to hide its media activists within the larger civilian population, keeping it safe from possible efforts against it such as air strikes. While other groups were able to utilize social media effectively, ISIS was simply in the best position to both maximize media production and organize its activists to spread its ideas on social media.

This advantage that ISIS had to spread its messages certainly played an important role in the success of its foreign recruitment campaign. During the Soviet-Afghan conflict, supporters around the West were able to attempt to fund, recruit, or fight with little concern for the legality of their actions (Malet, 165). This is because in this era, jihadists were supported by the U.S. as a proxy force to fight the Soviet Union. Later on when the jihadists started attacking the West, the

ease of recruitment diminished and there were concentrated efforts to prevent the spread of jihadist ideology. This led to smaller numbers of foreign fighters, as recruiting became much riskier, while the current wave in Syria, which utilized social media to diffuse the security threats related to recruiting, rivals the first in its scale. This again supports Hegghammer's idea that the success of a foreign recruitment campaign is connected with how difficult it is for the group recruiting to spread their messages.

Competition through Affiliation

The competition between the two brands also extends to affiliates, as each was able to win support from foreign-based jihadist organizations that decided that it was in their interests to operate under a higher level a leadership. Groups that chose to pledge bayah to either typically renamed themselves to fit the brand requirements of the brand it chose to support. Those that pledged loyalty to al Qaeda would rename themselves in a way that showed its connection to the group, such as Algeria's 'Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat' which became 'al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb'. Groups that pledged support to ISIS became a *wilayat,* or province, of the caliphate, as when the Chechnyan jihadist group Caucasus Emirate became ISIS' 'Wilayat Kavkaz' (Lister 2016C, 7). The name implies a piece of territory held by the group but in reality many of the affiliates are of questionable strength. This is not to diminish their capabilities but to note that their titles can be misleading. Furthermore, not all affiliates follow these naming rules, such as al Nusra and al Shabaab for al Qaeda or Boko Haram for ISIS. The exact reasoning for this is unknown, but could have roots in a desire to have the subordinate group not receive the stigma that comes with being associated with al Qaeda or ISIS that could increase global counter terrorism measures against it.

The India theater is a prime example of direct competition between ISIS and al Qaeda through affiliates. In September 2014, al Qaeda central announced the creation of al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (Karmon, 71). Then there is Ansar-ut Tawhid fi Bilad al-Hind, a group which was formed by pro-ISIS elements of the Indian salafi-jihadist movement in May of 2014 and pledged *bayah* to ISIS, also in September 2014. The fact that both brands announced an affiliate in the same country in the same month means that they are both aware of the need to compete and the dangers of missing out on the competition (Rajakumar, 11). Another theater in which competition through affiliates is occurring is in Yemen. On March 20th, 2015 ISIS' Sana'a Province in Yemen claimed responsibility for the deadliest ever terrorist attack in the country's history which targeted a Shia mosque (Karmon, 73). This is important as Yemen hosts al Qaeda's most significant affiliate, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, and ISIS' efforts in the country must be considered within the regional dynamics. It is also important as the tactic of using mass violence against Shias to unify Sunnis is a tactic that ISIS used in its early days in Iraq. This could be an attempt to repeat its previously successful tactic in a different theater. Similarly, ISIS has set up the 'Khorasan Province' in Afghanistan and has come into direct competition with the Taliban, a long-term ally of al Qaeda. Each of these show efforts by one group to outbid the other through affiliates.

Acquiring affiliates is a peculiar aspect of competition, which shows the transformation of the movement's dynamics. It took al Qaeda years after the Septermber 11th terrorist attack to get its first two affiliates (AQI in 2004 and AQIM in 2006), while ISIS acquired its first nine affiliates within one year of each other (Lister 2016A, 56). One major difference is that when al Qaeda made the organizational decision to take on affiliates, the decision to accept *bayah* from a group was based on simpler considerations, as today either brand must also consider the utility of the affiliate in regards to brand competition. Once ISIS entered direct competition with al Qaeda, the

importance of an allied network of jihadists was more visible, as not competing in a marketplace that is challenged by a rival means a flat-out loss. In the earlier days of the movement, affiliates were taken on when the affiliate was weak and could benefit from the resources that it would gain from its ties to al Qaeda (Lister 2016C, 1). However with a rise in competition between the two brands, there may be less requirements for a firm to take on an affiliate because increased competition means that the brands gets relatively more out of an affiliation now compared to the previous period.

Indirect Competition and Comparison

This competition extends to the organizations themselves, as each firm has features that distinguish it from the other that extends the competition in indirect ways. This is the least direct form of competition, as these attributes tend to be the result of an organization's history or pressing needs as opposed to a conscious decision made to assist in competition. However as market firms, each of these differences can impact how the market responds to the firms, as minor differences in organizational structure or management can become major once other factors, such as competition, are introduced.

One such feature is the importance of a charismatic leader, which has been recognized by many movement outsiders (see Spitaletta, 2015). This was part of the appeal of al Qaeda under the leadership of Osama Bin Laden, and his death is considered a major blow to the leadership of al Qaeda central. For this reason, the two brands still argue over which one is more closely following Bin Laden's vision (see Bacon and Arsenault, 2017). When looking at the leaders, it is important to note that most leaders of public organizations, jihadist or not, often have a carefully crafted personas to keep the leader's public image in line with the organization's branding. It should thus

be assumed that any jihadist group's leadership statements and public appearance are limited and planned out ahead of time, both to fit the group's brand and security needs, as leaders of terrorist organizations are prime targets (Gunaratna and Oreg, 1045). In this sense, little can truly be known about the leaders of such groups, but that does not stop research based off what information is public, such as analysis of released videos.

ISIS' leader, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, fulfills the demand for a charismatic and recognizable leader. His personal history gives him the legitimacy needed to appear as an effective and ideologically committed leader, as he was a religious scholar who took up arms to participate in the fight against the US invasion. His only known pre-ISIS photograph is a mugshot from Camp Bucca when under arrest by the US occupational forces, which adds to his credibility as an individual who is in the fight for the long haul as opposed to a new and unproven entrant into the marketplace.

His direct competitor for the top personality within the movement is Ayman al Zawahiri, the leader of al Qaeda. While Zawahiri worked his way up the leadership and took over al Qaeda's top position after Bin Laden's death, he lacks the combat experience and charisma of his predecessor, and it is believed that there was internal dissent regarding him taking control over al Qaeda's leadership. In a study on his speeches, it was determined that he "exhibited narcissistic, obsessive-compulsive, and paranoid personality traits but not to the degree that would meet the clinical criteria for a disorder" (Spitaletta, 57).

Along with the firm's leaders, the supporting military and governing caste can make a difference regarding how respected the organization is. Both al Qaeda and ISIS are well connected to the global jihadist movement and this has allowed them to fill their ranks with veterans who have proven their long-term commitment to the cause. However, ISIS was able to bolster its leadership with many Saddam Hussein era military and security officials. This is because the US

invasion saw the dismantling and jailing of the state security apparatus alongside jihadists in Camp Bucca, which featured many prisoners from al Qaeda in Iraq, including ISIS' later leader Abu Bakr al Bagdadi. There the jihadists were able to spread their beliefs and make networks that ISIS later utilized. This also let them recruit many military trained men who were unemployed following the US decision to dismantle the entire army, bringing in many soldiers and their expertise into ISIS' ranks. This diverse military caste gave ISIS a local and international level of legitimacy, as well as valuable human resources that can tapped into. Having local military leaders gives ISIS the ability to use their local knowledge to make better informed governing and military decisions. In Syria and Iraq, this specialized local knowledge is best exemplified by tribal dynamics that ISIS was able to manipulate while taking over new lands (Lister 2016C, 15). While al Qaeda has a jihadi-veteran military caste which has proven to be a capable fighting force, ISIS' mix of veteran jihadists and ex-generals offers more potential because it has more diverse backgrounds to draw upon.

One other major feature that differentiates the two firms is the organizational structure. Al Qaeda has a structure that maintains a solid hierarchy even if it does not have any formal territory to organize itself on (Gunaratna and Oleg, 1044). At this point, it has become very experienced in adapting to the situation because of constant efforts against it. While losing leaders is not ideal for any organization, al Qaeda has evolved to be very resilient and replenish its losses. On the other hand is ISIS, which spent most of its history acting as a terrorist group, but later transformed itself into a state-like structure in order to better govern its territory. At its peak, ISIS organized its governing structure in a traditional state form, which gave individuals the opportunity to prove themselves and advance up the hierarchy after having gone through extensive training and proven themselves and their ability to act in accordance to ISIS' goals (Ligon et al., 27). This creates an incentive for capable individuals who can move up the ranks to join ISIS, but more importantly it

gave ISIS the ability to control its territory in a highly centralized way, allowing for greater efficiency, along with the ability to grow new leaders and replenish those that fall in combat.

It remains to be seen if it is able to reorganize itself to recuperate from its current losses. It can survive for a long time if it reverts to its old organizational strategies as a clandestine group, but it will certainly be faced with increased local military efforts to eradicate it. Its long-term survival thus depends on whether its leadership can adapt and survive, or transfer itself to another failed state where it can avoid direct confrontations while it regroups. What remains to be seen is if it will maintain the ability to compete within the jihadist movement, or if it will be forced to focus on ensuring organizational survival.

A key difference that spawns from the organizational structure in response to security concerns is the ease of entrance into a firm's ranks, which surely had an impact on the success of foreign recruitment campaigns. In this comparison, al Nusra presents a firm with tight restrictions on its membership. It has strict requirements for potential recruits, including demanding recommendations from trusted individuals who can vouch for the authenticity of a recruit (Noonan, 69). This is said to be because of its emphasis on the value of its individual fighters as opposed to a wide recruiting campaign (Greenwood, 89). The other extreme approach is characterized by ISIS' practice, which is to accept any member of the ummah with welcome arms, after a background check. This approach is likely motivated by its claim to be an Islamic State, which means that per its own doctrine, ISIS is required to accept all of the ummah. It is also possible that this was a conscious decision in order to attract as many foreigners as possible in order to utilize their numbers or skills.

Little is publically known about the recruiting techniques and requirements of most firms, as groups are likely to try to hide this information in order to limit state security forces from

interfering or disrupting the flow of foreigners. However, ISIS' approach drastically lowers the cost of entry for aspiring foreign fighters, especially compared to the recruiting protocols of al Nusra. Because of its clandestine nature, entry into the jihadist movement is a difficult task, especially for individuals with no previous connection to the jihadist movement. Having a high bar to meet for potential recruits will undoubtedly limit the number of foreign recruits. This harkens back to the theory that the success of a foreign recruitment campaign is closely tied to the ease of the campaign, but in this example, the ease of entry instead of the ease of spreading recruitment messages.

ISIS and al Qaeda are today's leading jihadist groups, but they are not the only ones who compete within the movement. While it would be beyond the scope of this paper to analyze the many second tier jihadist firms, it is valuable to mention at least one other big name to note its failures to rise within the movement in juxtaposition to the success of ISIS or al Qaeda. Al Shabab was founded in 2006, entered the al Qaeda franchise network in 2012 and has remained loyal since, even in the face of recent internal power struggles with pro-ISIS members (Lister 2016C, 9). Al Shabab originally mixed nationalist rhetoric with its jihadist ideas, which limited its ability to effective tap into the global jihadist movement's pool of recruits. This was especially so during its early efforts fighting the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia in 2006 when it presented itself as defenders of Somalia more than defenders of the ummah (Joosse, Bucerius, and Thompson, 820). It recruited foreign fighters but aimed its recruiting efforts mostly towards the Somali diaspora because of ethnic ties that allowed for very precise messaging at an audience that it knew how to connect with, in terms of what messages to use and what language to say them in. Most of its foreigners were thus ethnic Somalis, either from the diaspora or born in neighboring countries, and its true foreigners with no direct links were a small but valuable part of the organization (Joosse,

Bucerius, and Thompson, 818). Eventually, it tried to move away from nationalism and further towards jihadism, possible a conscious decision that the support the global jihadist movement could provide is better than the support coming in from the Somali diaspora. This has led to a successful widening of recruiting efforts geared towards foreigners, including more reliance on social media in a way similar to ISIS, though it still uses nationalist rhetoric when aiming recruiting messages at Somalis (Keatinge, 10). Another important difference is that its leadership is intentionally divided, as it utilizes a cell-based structure (Ligon et al., 29). While this gives its central leadership less power and authority to steer the organization, it also allows for greater security which is important as it does not have a solid hold on territory compared to ISIS or al Qaeda. It also has not been able to act globally, as its attacks outside of its immediate theater were still in neighboring countries involved in the war efforts against it. This shows it to be stuck with its local goals, which limits its ability to push its brand on the international jihadist movement compared to other groups, and explains why it failed to grow even with today's massive uptick in the jihadist movement.

CHAPTER 5: Conclusion

The global jihadist movement is a complex and intricate one that claims roots tracing back to the first days of Islam. With an ideology that has persisted and evolved over many years, the movement has convinced tens of thousands of its righteousness and persisted even in the face of against a global effort to eradicate it. Its supporters include many Muslims who grew up in the West, even though it treats the West as a key target. These individuals form the base of the movement and are one of its most vital resources, as the movement needs to be able to replenish its

human losses and the foreigners add many skills to the toolsets of jihadist groups.

The marketplace analogy is a useful one, because it treats those individuals for what they are within the movement, a resource necessary for its survival. In order to cripple the movement, it is important to limit its ability to reach and influence Muslims around the world. This will be very complex as jihadism paints a picture of a vulnerable ummah taken advantage of by hostile powers bent on destroying it, and it doesn't help that the West's primary response to jihadism has been primarily with tanks, soldiers, and unmanned drones. In order to fight jihadism, it is important to also focus efforts on depleting the movement of all of its resources, be it foreign fighters or state sponsors. It is also important to build up fragile societies into prosperous ones to present an alternative to jihadism, as conflicts and unstable states are where violent ideologies can thrive. This can be done alongside a military response, but one that is precise and does not cause further grievances to the local population that extremists can exploit.

If today's lessons are any indication of what is to come, there are some important issues that counterterrorism policy must to consider regarding future efforts against global jihad. One important note is that the efforts to degrade al Qaeda following September 11th and al Qaeda's resulting decline within the jihadist movement played a key role in creating space for ISIS to grow (Novenario, 963). One prime example of this is the killing of Osama Bin Laden, a widely respected jihadist leader, which weakened al Qaeda's sway over the greater movement and allowed for a radical usurper to vie with his successor for his legacy as this leadership vacuum allowed for other voices to be heard within the movement. This does not mean that attempting to take down violent organizations will always open the door for other extremists to compete in their relevant marketplace, but that counter terrorism efforts should be aware of all the possible side effects of their actions. However, this approach presents hope, as one of the strengths of an extremist ideology is that it presents the world as black and white, with an in and out group, which makes the

narratives that it tries to sell easier to transmit. When the ideology becomes fractured and its leaders argue amongst one another, it loses its ability to maintain the simple narrative of good and evil that it promotes, which may result in it losing some of its appeal. This may not always be the case because today's infighting was also connected with an increase in jihadist activity. Nevertheless, if nothing else this infighting also wastes the movements resources, which can significantly weaken all groups involved, which can make global counterterrorism efforts a much simpler task.

This fracturing also means more groups competing within the movement, so the result might be destructive if ISIS and al Qaeda, or even new firms, escalate their attempts to violently outbid one another in an effort to move up in the movement. This is especially so now that ISIS, the loudest jihadist group of fourth wave, is facing military defeat and another leadership vacuum is imminent. Given the durability of global jihadism, there will certainly be another wave of momentum for the movement. One danger is that the next wave of jihadist foreign fighters, when it inevitably arrives, will have learned from the mistakes and successes of this one. This is especially so since each wave of jihadist conflict utilized the foreign fighters of the previous wave, which means that today's many veterans will have experience to make them better fighters and knowledge that can be used to make the next group they join more capable.

Each wave was more radical than its predecessor, as the newly recruited foreigners were more idealistic and radical compared to those before them. It is hard to imagine a more radical jihadist group than ISIS, but the fact that their messages and techniques were so successful today means that their tactics are not going to be left behind. Groups with transnational goals now have a new standard to live up to, ranging from their media strategies, their governing structures, or their approach to the far enemy. But it is also possible that the next wave will be led by what remains of the movement's current leadership.

Al Qaeda will of course survive the competition between it and ISIS because it has been proven right; it was not time for the return of the caliphate. While its legitimacy has taken a blow with the many attacks that ISIS dealt to its reputation, the fact that ISIS has lost its former glory might mean that those attacks now hold less weight within the movement. It may thus be in a position to grow from this wave, if it can find a way to consolidate its power within the remains of the movement that ISIS rejuvenated.

ISIS on the other hand faces an existential threat. While it has global networks and resources that it can use to continue functioning as a firm, it must also find a way to justify its loss in Syria and Iraq. After all, a caliphate that falls within years can hardly be deemed a success, even if it was the first caliphate in nearly a century. It can blame the crusader coalition for this loss, but this is exactly what al Qaeda warned about, and so this defense is unlikely to help it maintain legitimacy. Its remaining members are likely to shift tactics, such as calling on foreigners to commit domestic attacks as opposed to foreign fighting, much like al Qaeda did when it was put on the defensive by global counterterrorism efforts. One key difference between al Qaeda during that era and ISIS now is ISIS' returnee fighters whose official numbers remain a big unknown. It can be expected that they will be used for terrorist attacks in the future to continue ISIS' legitimacy, if they are still loyal to their chain of command.

What direction global jihadism will go is still highly uncertain, as it has proven to be a highly resilient movement. What is certain however is that the movement has its weak points, and the competition between ISIS and al Qaeda has given outsiders insight into exactly what some of those weak points are, which can be used in tomorrow's counter terrorism efforts. Having multiple macro-cases of foreign fighting also presents the option to compare and contrast recruitment campaigns to see what works for jihadist recruitment and what does not to limit their future successes. One common theme throughout this paper is the success the jihadist movement and its

attempted movement building is tied to how easily it can spread its messages. This can take multiple forms as the ease of sending those messages can be changed through many factors unrelated to the movement itself or creative tactics used by groups for this purpose. Early on in the movement there was no serious effort to limit recruiting by governments unaware of what they were allowing to grow, while today's social media atmosphere allowed for global gaps to be bridged in ways never before seen. For this reason, efforts to counter the movement shouldn't be entirely focused on militarily defeating the groups that are able to grow, but in starving the movement of its facilitating resources and countering the messages that have convinced many to take up its cause.

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