See You in New York

ISIS and the Strategic Evolution of the Jihadist Movement

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FOREWORD

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS, was held in the US-administered Camp Bucca detention facility in Iraq. It is claimed that as he was being released and was about to leave the camp, the jihadist leader (later known as Caliph Ibrahim) patted his American guard on the shoulder, saying 'See you in New York!'[1]

What should one make of this? Was al-Baghdadi already a megalomaniac early in his career, or was he so firmly convinced of the rightness of his cause that he could self-confidently declare that his future is tied to a world revolution? Maybe he remembered a film that he had seen as a young man in Saddam Hussein's Iraq and was trying to make friends with the young American soldier.

Either way, the same al-Baghdadi who wished to meet his guard in New York gained a global reputation during 2014 that many of the less prominent jihadist commanders could only dream about. Uttering the name of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi also evokes fear among those who view the thinking of such figures as Osama bin Laden as a justified violent response to the foreign policy aspirations of the United States. In fact, al-Baghdadi and his cohorts are fully aware of this, and rely on the power of their deterrence and ideological message to paint the world in black and white.

None of the earlier salafi jihadist organisations has achieved the success of ISIS. Osama bin Laden himself probably did not believe that there were any prospects of the caliphate being established during his lifetime. However, as a state-like actor, ISIS is on the way out and it is unlikely to have the resources to take the global jihadist social movement any further.

Maybe it is more a question of what we want to see. We are unwilling to see the jihadist movement as the threat that it actually is. It is easier to imagine that the acts of terrorism with jihadist connections are not part of our reality because they have taken place in distant locations such as Brussels, Paris, London, St Petersburg and Stockholm. Instead of recognising the cross-border nature of the threat, we want to cling to our own sense of superficial security, which is natural and understandable because that is how humans think. However, at the same time it is also dangerous as it shows that we fail to take the threat seriously.

In global scale, the measures taken to counter this threat are an important part of the use of military force. The war against terrorism declared by the United States has evolved and changed over the decades. Despite having different names, the operations against the threat posed by the global jihadist movement have not ended; in fact, it seems that these campaigns are continuously justified. These activities have provided Western nations a reason to make their own contribution to global security. The current war against ISIS will probably be scaled down to occasional air strikes and special forces operations aimed at keeping 'ISIS 2.0' in check so that it cannot play any concrete role as a perpetrator of further acts of terrorism in the West.

The war against ISIS is not, however, the last of the battles against the global jihadist movement. Al-Qaida is still alive and is building up its capabilities. At the same time, new movements identifying with the jihadist ideology are continuing their efforts to achieve a dominant position in different parts of the Islamic world

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[1] Moubayed, Sami: *Under the Black Flag: At the Frontier of the New Jihad*, I.B.Tauris, London, 2015, p. 104.

and they will definitely also strive to use violence against the West and its interests. Thus, the resources of the Western countries capable of using military force will probably remain tied to this war for decades to come.

This conflict can of course be fought on many fronts. In this war, armoured corps do not play the same role as information experts. The struggle against the global jihadist movement requires more inputs from intelligence agencies and military intelligence services than from anti-aircraft units or from commanders of attacking army corps. This conflict is increasingly a global war of small footprints and battles fought in the shadows.

For this reason, I dedicate this study to all those anonymous men and women working in Western civilian and military intelligence agencies that are doing their utmost to make our world safe for our children.

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Antti Paronen

ABSTRACT

In this study, I will discuss the phenomenon of global jihadist movement focusing on the grouping that has its origins in Iraq and Syria and that has achieved global attention and that characterises itself as the flag-bearer of its ideology. This organisation, known by the acronyms ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and Levant) and DAIISH or DAESH (Dawlat al-Islamyya al-Iraq wa ash-Sham) has also made itself painfully well known as a security threat in Europe and the Western world as a whole.

The main aim of this study is, by reviewing the history of ISIS, to identify potential future trends and developments in the global jihadist movement that the organisation represents. This is done with the help of an analysis of the strategic thinking in the movement. The results of this analysis will be made into a synthesis through which the future of the global jihadist movement is assessed.

This is done by examining the evolution of ISIS on the basis of the writings of Abu Bakr Naji, the jihadist theorist associated with the strategic thinking of ISIS. His book *Management of Savagery* helps in understanding how ISIS has developed and the strategic choices made by the organisation. To complement the analysis, the alternative models set out in the strategies of Abu Musab al-Suri, Muhammad al-Hakaymah and Abu Jihaad ash-Shaami are also examined. The synthesis resulting from these analyses contains an assessment of the principles on which the future strategy of the global jihadist movement will be based.

In this, the establishment of a state governed in a 'truly Islamic' way remains an end in itself. This also applies to the requirement that the movement must be superficially united regardless of which organisation positions itself as its flag-bearer. This movement is always capable of a dynamic shift between phases of insurgency, allowing it to recreate itself again and again. The movement also strives to exploit the information dimension with maximum effectiveness, and there will be jihadist propaganda sites on the Internet for decades to come. It is also possible that when facing countermeasures, the movement will increasingly move to the virtual world where the on-line reality also gives rise to off-line events.

This study is intended for citizens interested in the subject as well as for decision-makers and parties tasked with combating the threat of the global jihadist movement. This requires in-depth understanding of the enemy and forecasts about how it will evolve. This study has been prepared to meet this urgent need for more information.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tämä tutkimus käsittelee globaalin jihadistisen liikkeen ilmiötä Irakin ja Syyrian alueelta maailmanlaajuisen huomion kohteeksi nousseen ja aatesuuntauksensa lipunkantajaksi itsensä profiloivan ryhmittymän kautta. Tämä lyhenteillä ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and Levant) ja DAIISH tai DAESH (Dawlat al-Islamyya al-Iraq wa ash-Sham) tunnettu järjestö on piinaavalla tavalla tehnyt itsensä tietoiseksi modernina turvallisuusuhkana myös Euroopassa ja koko läntisessä maailmassa.

Tutkimuksen keskeisenä tavoitteena on tunnistaa ISISin kehitystä tarkastellen sen edustaman globaalin jihadistisen liikkeen mahdollisia tulevaisuuden suuntauksia ja kehityskulkuja. Tähän tavoitteeseen pyritään liikehdinnän parissa esiintyvästä strategisesta ajattelusta tehdyn analyysin kautta. Tämän analyysin tuloksista kootaan synteesi, jonka kautta globaalin jihadistisen liikkeen mahdollista tulevaisuutta on pyritty hahmottamaan.

Tavoitteeseen päästään tarkastelemalla ISISin kehityshistoriaa ISISin strategiseen ajatteluun yhdistetyn jihadistisen teoreetikon Abu Bakr Najin tuotannon kautta. Hänen teoksensa *Management of Savagery* - Kaaoksen hallinta, antaa useassa yhteydessä mahdollisuuksia ymmärtää ISISin historiallista kehitystä ja sen strategisia valintoja. Tätä tarkastelua on täydennetty Abu Musab al Surin, Mohamed al-Hakaymahin ja Abu Jihaad ash-Shaamin strategioiden antamien vaihtoehtoisten toteutusmallien kautta. Näiden tarkastelujen kautta tutkimus on synteesissään tunnistanut arvion siitä, millaisten periaatteiden varaan tuleva globaalin jihadistisen liikkeen strateginen suuntautuneisuus rakentuu.

Tässä "aito-islamilaisesti" hallitun valtion luominen on edelleen itsetarkoituksellista. Samoin on liikkeen näennäisen yhtenäisyyden vaatimus, huolimatta siitä mikä organisaatio sen lipunkantajaksi milloinkin asemoituu. Tällä liikkeellä on aina kyky nousevaan ja laskevaan toiminnallisuuteen, jonka kautta sen on mahdollista luoda itsensä aina uudelleen ja uudelleen. Liike pyrkii myös hyödyntämään informaatio-ulottuvuutta tehokkaimmalla mahdollisella tavalla ja sen propagandaa tullaan näkemään internetissä vielä vuosikymmeniä eteenpäin. On myös mahdollista, että vastatoimia kohdatessaan liike siirtyy yhä enemmän virtuaalimaailmaan, jonka on-line todellisuus poikii myös off-line tapahtumia.

Tutkimus palvelee aiheesta kiinnostuneita kansalaispiirejä, päättäjiä ja tahoja jotka torjuvat globaalin jihadistisen liikkeen uhkaa. Tämä vaatii syvällistä ymmärrystä vastustajasta ja ennusteita sen mahdollisista kehityskuluista. Tämä tutkimus on laadittu osaltaan vastaamaan tähän akuuttiin tietotarpeeseen.

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

The global jihadist movement is in a state of flux. Occasionally, there are major changes in this movement, which has achieved global dimensions. One of these changes culminated in the rise of the grouping calling itself the Islamic state. The sudden appearance of this organisation in the media headlines in spring and summer 2014, and the fact that it became staple news was also a surprise to many of those familiar with the subject. The organisation known by its acronym ISIS was able to exploit the lawlessness in Syria and the huge waves of political discontent in Iraq in a way that did not go unnoticed by anybody.

However, the reality behind the headlines on ISIS is more fascinating than any single actor or organisation. The global jihadist social movement is not the same thing as ISIS or al-Qaida. It comprises a broad range of different organisations, thinkers, theologians and ultimately individuals who, for various reasons, are attracted by the explanation of the world offered by the jihadist ideology, and who identify with its goals even though they are not devout members. This is despite the fact that to outsiders, embracing this ideology may seem a form of escapism, to say the least. However, even though jihadism may be a way of escaping reality, there is also strategic and systematic thinking behind the movement's ideology and appeal. The terrorist attacks in such places as Paris, Brussels, Nice, Berlin and Stockholm have made the whole world aware of the capacity of the jihadists to carry out well-planned external operations. In other words, there is also concrete action behind the impressive headlines, and this action involves strategic planning, declared intentions and recognition of the huge challenges facing the movement. By analysing the movement's goals and publicly available plans, we can also prepare future scenarios based on how the phenomenon has evolved over the years.

This study discusses the phenomenon with focus on a grouping that has its origins in Iraq and Syria, that has achieved global attention and that characterises itself as the flag-bearer of the global jihadist ideology. This organisation, known by the acronyms ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and Levant) and DAIISH or DAESH (Dawlat al-Islamyya al-Iraq wa ash-Sham) has also made itself painfully well known as a security threat in Europe and the Western world as a whole.

The main aim of this study is, by reviewing the history of ISIS, to identify potential future trends and developments in the global jihadist movement that the organisation represents. This is done with the help of an analysis of the strategic thinking in the jihadist movement. The results of this analysis will be made into a synthesis through which the potential future of the movement is assessed. The main question is how the future of the global jihadist movement can be assessed by examining how its strategic thinking is reflected in how ISIS operates.

The jihadist organisation with a multitude of different names (ISIS, ISIL, DAIISH or DAESH) is referred to as ISIS in this study. This is for purely practical reasons: the term is well established in both domestic and international public dis-

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[2] Antti Paronen (b. 1983) Captain, Doctor of Military Sciences works at the National Defence University as a student officer at the General Staff Office Course.

course. For example, the term ISIL used by the US Government is correct but it would not add anything to the factual value of this study. This also applies to the term DAESH, which has become more widespread as Western countries have become increasingly involved in the anti-ISIS coalition. All these terms are quite useful but the fact that they are used inconsistently has also made it more difficult to understand the workings of ISIS. This is also connected with the wish not to refer to the organisation with terms combining the words 'Islamic' and 'state'.

However, the Islamic state is also integral to Islam as a religion. A state administered with Islamic law is essential to the identity structure of this world religion.[3] Calling ISIS the Islamic state or caliphate is problematic or even offensive because only a small number of world Muslims identify with the Islam that this organisation represents or with its interpretation of the Islamic law.

There are good grounds for this but at the same time we may easily find ourselves in a situation where we are expected to refrain from using the name that an organisation has adopted for itself. One could think that if we take this to its logical conclusion we should stop referring to the Baader-Meinhoff terrorist group as the *Rote Armee Fraktion* (RAF; Red Army Faction), the name it used itself, because conventional armed forces do not consider themselves terrorists, and the term 'army' is thus an offensive reference to the organisational structure of conventional armed forces?

However, in this study ISIS is not examined as a state representing Islam and its structures and ideology are not considered a true interpretation of the religion. The focus is on the organisation as an actor that represents a wider social movement within which there is strategic thinking. With this, the aim has been to identify factors in the history and activities of ISIS that help to forecast the future of the organisation and the movement as a whole. In its clearest form, such reasoning is the best way to examine the science-based world, as described by Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis, Adrian Thornhill and others. In such deductive reasoning or in theory-based content analysis, the validity and applicability of a theory is examined on the basis of the selected empirical material and in relation to it.[4]

In other words, deductive reasoning works in reverse order to inductive reasoning (material-based content analysis), in which the researcher can pick potential themes from the selected empirical material, and which may then be developed into a theory. Abductive reasoning, the third type of reasoning, can be placed between the two other methods referred to above. It involves a continuous dialogue between the material and potential theory or hypothesis, and provides a basis for interaction during the research.[5] The inductive and abductive approaches serve as useful analysis structures and research strategies in the examination of the global jihadist movement. However, in order to ensure concise presentation, the focus in this study is on a small number of interpretations of ISIS' activities and alternatives concerning the future of the organisation. These interpretations and alternatives are based on the original theory applicable in this context.

The thoughts of Abu Bakr Naji on global insurgency serve as the deductive basis for this study. The work *Management of Savagery* by Naji is significant in several

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[3] Read more about this debate and its significance in Feldman, Noah: *The Fall and Rise of the Islamic State*, Princeton University Press, Princeton/NJ and Oxford, 2008, pp. 1–15.
[4] Saunders, Mark, Lewis, Philip, Thornhill Adrian: *Research Methods for Business Students*, Pearson Education, Harlow, 2012, pp. 145–148.
[5] Ibid.

respects. Its role as a doctrine for military action is repeatedly highlighted in the reviews and assessments in which leading researchers discuss the strategies applied by the supreme ISIS leadership.[6]

Naji's work, which is discussed below, is justifiably highlighted as the central model explaining the strategic direction of ISIS. The author examines regional administrative power and how to maintain it, focusing on gaining power through social chaos. An example of this is the comment by Brynjar Lia in an interview in the newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat*. Lia has analysed and examined the works of Abu Musab al-Suri, another important jihadist strategist. In the interview, Lia suggests that Naji may be the person providing ISIS with the inspiration for its strategic thinking.[7]

This study deals exclusively with ISIS as an organisation and a representative of the global jihadist movement. The other jihadist organisations are not discussed in this study even though they have played an important role in the conflicts in Iraq and Syria, and still constitute a terrorist threat despite the attention given to ISIS. In making this demarcation, the author is fully aware that many other organisations and their distinctive organisational characteristics are left outside the scope of the study. This demarcation can, however, be justified because focusing on an actor like ISIS, which aims to become the flag-bearer of the global jihadist movement, can help to explain many other trends and developments. Ultimately, this organisation, which provides a focal point for more opportunistic jihadist actors, makes its strategic choices in the prevailing situation. Studying ISIS helps us to understand how and why a jihadist organisation shifts its focus to international terrorism.

Focusing on strategic warfare serves the core purpose of the study as we are examining how terrorism is used as an instrument for exerting influence in the near future. In other words, in this study, terrorism is considered a strategy and a way of waging war. In this study, individual acts of terrorism are classified as strategic-level events. When carried out by ISIS, they are considered effects-based external operations or activities that have an impact outside the geographical boundaries of the state declared by the organisation. When making this demarcation, the author is aware of the controversy that it may generate. The choice can, however, be justified because when forecasts of the nature of the operations are prepared, terrorism must be examined from the perspective of ISIS, and it must be considered a form of warfare and a way of influencing external enemies from within their societies. At the same time, remaining at strategic level can be justified because, despite their one-off nature, acts of terrorism can be considered acts of war. This is because they attract media attention and have a foreign policy impact. Even though examining the regional activities of ISIS at operational and tactical level might provide more insights into the organisation, such a broader-based approach would require a substantially longer timeframe than what is possible in this presentation.

Abu Bakr Naji's work *Management of Savagery*, which is known to be avidly read by people in middle ISIS leadership, becomes an important source. Other important strategic thinkers in the jihadist movement that have influenced ISIS include Abu

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[6] There are a number of references in the works of leading experts supporting this argument. See for example Hassan, Hassan: *Isis has reached new depths of depravity. But there is a brutal logic behind it*, The Guardian, 8 February 2015*, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/08/isis-islamic-state-ideology-sharia-syria-iraq-jordan-pilot*. 30 September 2016.

[7] Huusko, Jukka: *Kaaoksen arkkitehdit – jihadistit eivät toimi sokean vihan vallassa* (Architects of chaos: jihadists are not guided by blind hatred), Helsingin Sanomat, 15 May 2016,
http://www.hs.fi/ulkomaat/a1463196054730?ref=hs-etusivu-luetuimmat-#, 30 September 2016.

Musab al-Suri, Muhammad al-Hakaymah and Abu Jihaad ash-Shaami. In addition to attaching importance to a regional insurgency, they also emphasise the role of individuals and terrorism as a strategic application of a global insurgency. The difference between al-Suri and Naji is that in the view of the former, the global jihadist movement is on the defensive on more fronts than in Naji's model. In fact, al-Suri puts individual acts of terrorism into a wider context by linking them with an ideology, and not with the organisational leadership. Even though there are good grounds for considering Naji's work as an ISIS manual that helps us to understand the activities of the organisation ISIS is not strictly committed to a specific type of insurgency. This is because it is an organisational representative of the global jihadist social movement. Thus, in chapter four, there is discussion on the potential strategic models on the basis of which we could make conclusions about the future of ISIS, and the global jihadist movement that would otherwise be overlooked. In other words, the author of the study has recognised the limitations of the deductive approach, and has supplemented an analysis-based synthesis by comparing Naji's writings with potential strategic options presented by other thinkers.

Research literature discussing the history of ISIS is quite recent and it mainly consists of what is already known and its application to the current situation. This means that this study is based on fairly recent material, and the author is fully aware that future research on the subject may put the findings presented in this document into new light. The author is also fully aware that he is examining the situation from the current perspective, and that his findings may be questioned when it becomes possible to assess the correctness of his predictions. At the same time, in the name of conducting research and its self-correcting nature, this may also act as an incentive to study this important phenomenon and its threat potential in the future.

2. STRATEGIC THINKING IN THE GLOBAL JIHADIST MOVEMENT: MANAGEMENT OF SAVAGERY AS SEEN BY ABU BAKR NAJI

Abu Bakr Naji is claimed to have been a Tunisian or possibly Jordanian jihadist thinker and strategist. According to William McCants, who has analysed and translated into English the *Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Islamic Nation Will Pass* (ārat at-Tawaḥḥuš: Akhṭar marḥalah satamurru bihā l 'ummah), Naji's most important work, Naji may be the collective pseudonym of a group of jihadist theorists.[8] In a number of arguments, Naji is also called Muhammad al-Hakaymah, which would make him the important jihadist thinker referred to above.[9] This claim and its role from the perspective of the strategic thinking in the global jihadist movement will be discussed below.

There are good reasons to interpret Naji's writings as representing the views of the original core organisation of the jihadist movement in issues concerning its strategic direction. In 2004, at the time of the publication of the *Management of Savagery*, this meant that Naji was defined as the interpreter of the thinking of the supreme al-Qaida leadership, and possibly also as the adviser of the organisation's top echelons. At the same time, Osama bin Laden considered himself the leader and source of inspiration of the global jihadist movement, and viewed his al-Qaida organisation as the core cadreship of this social movement.

From the perspective of an insurgency, Naji is a strategist in the very sense of the word, as far as his main writings are concerned. However, it can also be said that in many of his texts, his focus is on the operational aspects of war.[10] When this argument is examined, it should be emphasised that for strategists of asymmetric warfare such as Naji, war is primarily a series of conflicts and operations that may only constitute a single activity in his own thinking. It should be kept in mind in this consideration that even though these events have seemingly nothing in common, they can be combined into a strategic-level entity of war that, according to the core message of the jihadist ideology, remains part of the eternal armed struggle between good and evil.

The *Management of Savagery* was published in 2004. In the view of Jim Lacey, who has written a summary of the book, providing instructions on how to create regions of savagery, and to exploit the media attention and the increase in the number of jihadist recruits arising from the control of these regions are the core messages of the publication. At its best, Naji's thinking combines a regional approach with a global jihadist strategy. In his view, continuous strikes against economic targets in particular will undermine the self-determination of the nation-state controlling the region to such an extent that the administrative districts located in them will sink into a state of savagery. In Naji's view, by creating security in such power vacuums

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[8] Lacey, Jim (ed.): *The Canons of Jihad: Terrorists' Strategy for Defeating America*, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis/MD, 2008a, p. 48.

[9] Al-Arabyya Institute for Studies: *From Agassi to Al-Nusra.. Assad experience in jihadi investment!*, 6 June 2013, *http://estudies.alarabiya.net/content/agassi-al-nusraassad-experience-jihadi-investment*, 31 October 2016.

[10] Shultz, Richard H.: *Strategic Culture and Strategic Studies: An Alternative Framework for Assessing al-Qaeda and the Global Jihad Movement*, JSOU Report 12-4, The JSOU Press, MacDill Air Force Base/FL, 2012, p. 43.

and by capturing administrative legitimacy, jihadists can thus establish bases for a holy war waged in global scale.[11]

Michael Ryan who has studied the strategic thinking of the jihadist movement takes Lacey's arguments further. He suggests that for Naji, both the waging of war and the aims of the war in the struggle between the global jihadist movement, and the Western coalition led by the United States are of asymmetric nature. While an organisation like al-Qaida would be happy with a situation where the United States withdraws from the Islamic world, and where the regions of savagery increase in both size and number, the United States must, in order to defeat the enemy, destroy the whole organisation and its strategic posture, and also ensure that its followers reject the ideology.[12]

Naji bases his conclusion on recent history. In his view, in the period following the Second World War, nation-states formed alliances with the United States or the Soviet Union in return for political, economic and military support. According to Naji, the jihadist movement was weak during the Cold War because the great powers were able to use the media to convince the world that they are militarily invincible.[13] In other words, for a thinker like Naji, that power did not represent a real capability to harm the enemy as the failed attempts of major powers to wage counter-insurgencies are still seen in the jihadist movement as evidence that there is a limit to the major powers' performance, and that the *mujahidin* – the holy Islamic warriors – are always in a stronger position, because they are fighting for a just cause.

In the global jihadist movement, making this choice has not meant taking an exclusively anti-Western position. According to John Turner, the jihadist movement has only positioned the United States as its enemy after the end of the Cold War. He argues that because the global hegemony of the United States is a relatively recent phenomenon, it is clear that it has only become possible for the jihadist movement to focus on the struggle against the perceived global threat after this hegemony had arisen, and that the jihadists are fighting this war on the basis of their own social and legislative traditions.[14] Turner forgets, however, that the immoral and sinful nature of the West in general, and the American society in particular, has been a central theme in the jihadist ideology since the time of Sayyid Qutb, considered an inspiration for the movement. It can therefore be argued that the jihadists have always had an ideological enemy ready for the period after the Cold War.[15]

As a military solution in the prevailing situation, Naji proposes a series of provocative acts against the United States, the winner of the Cold War. Their purpose would be to prompt it to make a direct military attack against the Middle East and the Islamic world.[16]

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[11] Lacey (2008), p. 48.

[12] Ryan, Michael W.S.: *Decoding Al-Qaeda's Strategy: The Deep Battle Against America*, Columbia University Press/NY, 2013, p. 158.

[13] Naji, Abu Bakr: *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Umma Will Pass,* 2004, translated by William McCants, John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, Harvard University, 2006, p. 8.

[14] Turner, John A.: *Religious Ideology and the Roots of the Global Jihad: Salafi Jihadism and International Order*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York/NY, 2014, p. 3.

[15] See Qutb, Sayyid: *'The America I have Seen': In the Scale of Human Values*, 1951, in *America in An Arab Mirror: Images of America in Arabic Travel Literature: An Anthology*, edited by Mona El-Kahla, Palgrave Macmillan US, New York/NY, 2000, available in:
https://archive.org/stream/SayyidQutb/The%20America%20I%20have%20seen_djvu.txt, 6 May 2017.

[16] Naji (2006), p. 8.

According to Naji, respect for the United States can be destroyed and self-confidence among Muslims strengthened by revealing that the might of the United States is exaggerated in the media. At the same time, the jihadist movement can take advantage of the situation by forcing the United States to attack Islam directly as a religion instead of waging war through proxies (its current method). In that case, the human waves arising from the anger felt by Muslim masses towards the United States will allow the jihadist movement to replace the human losses that it has suffered over the past few decades. At the same time, jihadism will be transformed into a genuine popular movement as it can exploit the surprise that arises as masses realise that jihadists have taken up arms against the occupier. Such exploitation of the weaknesses of America's centralised and bureaucratic system of government will show both secularised Muslims, and the US occupiers that it is impossible to control important regions that have sunk into chaos.[17]

The statement by Paul Kennedy quoted by Naji in his book sums up these goals: '*If America expands the use of its military power and strategically extends more than necessary, this will lead to its downfall.*'[18] In its descriptiveness, the quotation is a clear example of the thoughts of a global jihadist strategist.[19]

It is characteristic of such thinking that the United States in particular and the West in general, the two main enemies, are elevated into a position where influencing events takes place at several operational fields simultaneously. In fact, it is easy to agree with Jarret Brachman and William McCants, who believe that the Kennedy quotation shows that Naji acts with consideration, and is familiar with the political history of the Western world and the theory of international politics when trying to understand the weaknesses of the United States.[20]

In addition to being familiar with political realities, Naji is also well aware of the realities of war when he argues that the planning of war should never be solely based on religious law but should primarily be founded on verified practices. In Naji's view, relyingexclusively on *hadith*, the accounts of the Prophet Muhammad's life passed down as tradition, is not only wrong but it may also be dangerous.[21]

Despite the fact that his work was published one year after the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, Naji does not emphasise this military operation as a vindication of his theory.[22] He does, however, consider it when urging jihadists in Iraq to remain calm and be prepared to quickly exploit the security vacuum resulting from the withdrawal so that they can create a new region of savagery, and take advantage of the weakness of the neighbouring countries. Naji instils confidence into the troops waiting the withdrawal of the United States as follows:

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[17] Ibid., pp. 9–10.
[18] Ibid., p. 7.
[19] See for example Shultz (2012), pp. 31–32.
[20] Brachman, Jarret M. and McCants William F.: *Stealing Al-Qa'ida's Playbook, CTC Report,* Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, West Point/NY, 2006, p. 6. Other Western genres of literature that in Naji's view should be studied by jihadists include books on administration, works discussing the operating practices applied by military forces and sociological literature. All this general knowledge literature is recommended so that the jihadist movement could make use of global rules in warfare, administration and the establishment of communities.
[21] Ryan (2013), pp. 149–150.
[22] Brachman and McCants (2006), p. 7.

'By the permission of God, with the exit of America from Iraq, what remains of its deceptive media halo will collapse and every regime which supports it will fall. The noble people in the states will renounce the regimes and restore the rights of the Umma that these collaborating regimes had snatched away. The masses of these states will open their arms to the conquerors, by God's grace and beneficence. [23]

Naji divides his insurgency into four stages, which are connected and which interact with each other:

1. vexation and exhaustion
2. administration of savagery
3. the power of establishment:– establishing the state
4. stages of the remaining states.[24]

In the first stage of the insurgency, separate groups and operational cells carry out attacks in all Islamic countries until the long-awaited savagery breaks out in one of the regions. Jim Lacey interprets Naji's texts so that after this, the region or regions driven into savagery will logically proceed towards the stage of the administration of savagery while at the same time, the rest of the Islamic world will split into two: regions supporting the administration and regions where the stage of vexation and exhaustion is continuing.[25]

It is essential to understand that in Naji's view, the events of this stage take place in the Islamic world, and that they continue to play a central role when one or more geographic regions have already sunk into savagery. Naji identifies four main goals for the stage of vexation and exhaustion:

1. exhausting the forces of the enemy and the regimes collaborating with them,
2. dispersing their efforts, and working to maintain one's own operational momentum,
3. attracting new youth to the jihadi work by undertaking qualitative operations that will grab peoples" attention, dislodging the regions of savagery from the control of the secularised Muslim regimes and the influence of the enemy, and
4. advancement of operational groups and cells so that they will be prepared psychologically and physically for the stage of the management of savagery.[26]

For the best case scenario, in which the vexation will lead to a situation where contiguous regions sink into savagery, Naji lists twelve interlinked goals for the management of savagery. They are all population-centred, which is also typical of Maoist strategy of insurgency. In this strategy, the population is of central importance to the insurgent party, and only by winning over the masses can the insurgents achieve their goals.[27]

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[23] Naji (2006), p. 61.
[24] Ibid., pp. 14-16.
[25] Lacey (2008), p. 55.
[26] Naji (2006), pp. 16–17.
[27] Read more about this comparative setting at Paronen, Antti: *Globaali jihadistinen liike kumouksellisen sotataidon kehittäjänä* (Role of the global jihadist movement in the development of insurgency), National Defence University, Series 1: Research Publications No. 3, doctoral dissertation, Juvenes Print; Tampere, 2016, pp. 303–317.

During the management of savagery, the jihadists must focus on the establishment and maintenance of internal security, providing food supplies and medical assistance, defending the region of savagery against external threats, establishing sharia courts as organs of justice, and using the region of savagery for training jihadist youth and improving its combat capability. According to Naji, other important goals include the promotion of sharia studies, establishment of an intelligence agency, improvements in the living conditions of the population both economically and morally by means of sharia justice, prohibition of hypocrisy and suppression of heresy. Naji adds that preparations must also be made for the moment when the region of savagery can be used as a base for direct attacks against the enemy. He also considers it important to establish alliances with people who in principle are sympathetic towards the jihadist movement, and who have not yet pledged allegiance to the regime that the jihadists are opposing. In Naji's view, in the stabilisation of savagery, it is also essential to create administrative groups and organisations that will assume responsibility for the administration when the Islamic state is established to replace the savagery.[28]

According to Naji, the administration of savagery and the simultaneous vexation and exhaustion taking place in other regions will culminate in terrorist operations aimed at supporting, and expanding the region of savagery. The two main stages of his insurgency strategy can thus be combined at strategic level. In other words, for Naji his insurgency model provides a strategy for waging war against the United States, while at the same time it is also a way of fighting the secularised regimes of the Islamic world. The aim of the strikes carried out in other regions is to establish operational strongholds, and to create opportunities for terrorist activities against the West. In other words, as external operations, the terrorist attacks are a way of directly impacting the enemy, while by administering and expanding the region of savagery, the jihadists can carry out their insurgency against Islamic regimes. In Naji's opinion, during the first stages, the attacks and operational activities must be directed at economic targets. He proposes that the global jihadist movement should select petrochemical facilities as its main target. In Naji's view, oil is the main resource and source of power of the enemy and critically important to it.[29]

According to Naji, the distant enemy will soon put pressure on the regimes allied with it urging them to protect economic targets, especially in countries where the stage of vexation and exhaustion has already continued for some time. Secularised Islamic regimes will have to disperse the resources of their security authorities to such an extent that citizens view this as a weakening of the security situation, which in turn will plunge the countries into a state of savagery. This approach, in which the strikes are carried out to force the enemy and the troops allied with it to protect their economic interests, is central to Naji's thinking. By protecting their static targets and by committing themselves to such activities, the security authorities of the countries in question will surrender the initiative to jihadists. However, not everybody in the jihadist movement thinks that Naji's vision should be adopted as the general jihadist strategy. As Jarret Bachman notes, the idea of striking at petrochemical targets does not necessarily enjoy universal support as it is suggested that

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[28] Naji (2006), pp. 17-18.
[29] Ibid., p. 19.

such activities could harm the Islamic countries' most important source of revenue in a way that does not serve the interests of the jihadist movement.[30]

Naji is fully aware that not all countries have a strong jihadist movement that would be able to start administering savagery and take over the region at once. However, he believes that the jihadists could quickly take advantage of the situation provided that they have adequate resources for the purpose.[31] Thus, it is understandable that in Naji's view, attacks against petrochemical facilities, which are important as economic targets, will create uncertainty and worsen the chaos the exploitation of which is vital for the jihadist movement.

Alejandra Bolanos highlights an interesting aspect in Naji's writings. She points out that in Naji's view, during the stage of vexation and exhaustion (the stage when the right operating conditions are created), the global jihadist movement should refrain from carrying out large-scale strikes, and operations such as the attack on 11 September 2001 should require the authorisation of the supreme leadership.[32] This policy is of course in keeping with Naji's opinion that the administration of savagery is easier with small and medium-sized strikes than with strategic strikes in the West.[33]

In addition to emphasising military action, Naji also states that the media plays a central role in the achievement of the insurgents' goals. In this, he is most likely referring to the importance of strategic communications in the conveying of the global jihadist message. Through this action, the jihadist message can reach the masses and the troops of the secularised Muslim regimes, which after understanding the message will then join the *mujahidin* or at least desert their own units. The purpose of the media activities is also to inform the masses of the reasons for the strikes and their justification under sharia law. According to Naji, the masses are the most important target group for the media operations but popular support should never be taken for granted. In his view, the global jihadist movement can never fully rely on public support and the approval of the Islamic masses. This is because Naji considers the masses essentially unreliable, and says that the living conditions will only improve after the jihadist movement has achieved final victory.[34]

Even though Naji takes a critical view of the role of the people or the masses as the ultimate determining factor, his insurgency model is, nevertheless, closely tied to popular support and the efforts to achieve it. This can partially be seen as the need to consider the development of the jihadist movement towards a more governance-centred civil society during the administration of savagery. It remains unclear whether Naji has been influenced in his thinking by the failure of the Taliban administration (which he uses as an example) to create a workable central government but the need for a just government is nevertheless highlighted in his writings. According to McCants and Brachman this is because Naji is quite worried about the

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[30] Brachman (2009), p. 98.
[31] Lacey (2008a), pp. 57–58.
[32] Bolanos, Alejandra M.: *Al-Qaeda's Revolution in Military Affairs*, UMI Dissertation Publishing, Ann Arbor/MI, 2010, p. 106.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Lacey (2008), p. 59.

earlier groups' activities that helped to alienate the Islamic world from the jihadist movement as they were carrying out attacks against other Muslims.[35]

This principle is also evident when Naji is writing about the regions of savagery where stabilisation should be a priority. In fact, he calls for the establishment of administrative guards or organs that can take responsibility for the regions of savagery, and guarantee the achievement of the goals set out for this stage through social action and popular support.[36]

Even though administration plays an essential role in the management of savagery and, consequently, in the gaining of popular support, Naji emphasises that the goals can only be achieved if force is used. With this he means the activities based on the general tactical principles of warfare and that, if necessary, the jihadists should also resort to extremely brutal violence when for example carrying out revenge strikes. This will show the enemy the real power of the movement, and that the enemy can be punished for its action whenever and wherever necessary. In fact, the ability to engage in cross-border violence is the movement's main asset when it carries out revenge attacks. When discussing a situation where the enemy launches an operation necessitating countermeasures against it, such researchers as Michael Ryan are of the view that in the global operating environment, the combination of terrorist strikes, and a clear programme help to stretch the security organisations of the enemy, as described by Naji, to the limit.[37] Thus, it can be concluded that in Naji's opinion, terrorism can help to tie the enemy forces elsewhere so that they cannot respond to the security threat arising from the regions of savagery.[38]

The dualism of Naji's model is evident in his attitude towards politics. Use of force, military action and excessive violence play an important role in his thinking but he also emphasises the need to focus on administrative challenges and the actual work of governing a state. In Naji's view, the leaders of the jihadist movement must be equally skilled as military commanders as users of political power.[39]

Thus, Naji does not make any distinction between political and military action; in fact they are connected to each other. As an example, Naji mentions the strikes carried out by earlier jihadists, which in his view were both religiously and politically justified but which were not adequately explained to the people.[40]

In a criticism towards the jihadist movement, Naji says that some circles are prepared to use the democratic process to achieve revolutionary goals, while other jihadists would like to launch a quick military coup in order to avoid bloodshed and fighting. Naji considers such options, aimed at achieving the revolutionary goal in a nation-state located in a specific territory, as heretical and condemns them. In his

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[35] Brachman and McCants (2006), p. 8. The authors highlight a phenomenon that they call the Shayma effect. With this they refer to Shayma, a 12-year old girl whose death in a strike against the Egyptian prime minister in the 1990s was a heavy blow to the popularity of the jihadist movement. Ayman al-Zawahiri also refers to this incident in his memoirs and its repercussions reverberated throughout the early years of the 2000s. Thus, when these strategies were being written, the leadership of the global jihadist movement was well aware of the importance of gaining popular support for its insurgency.

[36] Lacey (2008), p. 60.

[37] Ryan (2013), pp. 176-177.

[38] Naji calls the terrorism carried out in international scale the method of revenge strikes or the method of making the enemy to 'pay the price'. With this he refers to attacks aimed at forcing the enemy to disperse its resources outside its area of operations. As an example, Naji mentions the enemy operations in the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq, to which the jihadists should respond by attacking enemy interests in Morocco, Nigeria and Indonesia. See Naji (2006), pp. 32-33.

[39] Ibid., p. 37.

[40] Ibid., p. 42.

view they give an excessively rosy picture of jihad. Naji is strongly opposed to using democracy or similar civic action as an instrument for introducing sharia: how could divine legislation be even interpreted by humans?[41]

Naji rejects a coup as unworkable, emphasises the central role of armed action in the achievement of the goals, and stresses that political and military means must be combined at all levels of the movement, including the leadership. In other words, in his view the stages of vexation and exhaustion are essential for administering savagery, and for establishing the Islamic state. Justifying an offensive jihad, Naji explains that it serves as an instrument for spreading the jihadist message among Muslims in an unhindered and effective way. This message is not a new one as it was already conveyed by Abdullah Azzam who organised the flow of voluntary fighters to Afghanistan in the 1980s. In a well-known statement he referred to jihad as a reaction to the Palestinian question: '...*jihad and the rifle alone. no negotiations, no conferences and no dialogue.*'[42]

As a strategist, Naji has been able to justify global jihadism and connect it with the dire reality that the movement was facing at the time of the publication of his main work. Naji is an interpreter of the thinking of the supreme al-Qaida leadership, and it can also be read between the lines of his writings that he wants to combine his message with the idea of the original jihadist movement established in Afghanistan, and how it wanted to portray itself as a defender of the Muslims and a potent military force.

[41] Ibid., p. 73.
[42] Azzam, Abdullah: *The Lofty Mountain*, Azzam Publications, London, publisher's characterisation, p. 13, *http://www.hoor-al-ayn.com/Books/lofty.pdf*, 20 January 2013.

3. CREATING THE RIGHT OPERATING CONDITIONS FOR ISIS DURING VEXATION AND EXHAUSTION: THE LEGACY OF ABU MUSAB AL-ZARQAWI

It is clear that the ability of ISIS to capture information space for itself and its message by carrying out unspeakable atrocities means that for observers of current events, it is extremely difficult to examine the movement as a rational actor. As an organisation, ISIS could never have been successful in its operations in 2014, in which it managed to occupy large areas of land if it had merely been a group carrying out random and increasingly brutal acts of violence. This study also offers fresh insights into this issue by examining ISIS through its strategic-level thinking.

Many leading researchers highlight the work of Abu Bakr Naji referred to above, describing it as a reliable 'layout' of the principles applied by ISIS. These presentations repeatedly culminate in the fact that the strategy of the Jordanian-born jihadist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the founder of the organisation, which was based on stirring up sectarian violence in Iraq from the early 2000s onwards, resembled, and was strongly founded on Naji's ideas on how a jihadist insurgency should be waged in each region of savagery.

This is the conclusion made by such experts as Hassan Hassan and Michael Weiss in their clearly structured work *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*. Going to great lengths to emphasise the importance of Naji's writings, the authors have even titled an entire chapter as 'Management of Savagery', highlighting its central role in the creation of the Islamic state.[43] These thoughts are also shared by Joby Warrick, who in his work *Black Flags: The Rise of ISIS*, suggests that the theoretical basis of al-Zarqawi's idea of stirring up violence in Iraq can be found in Naji's work.[44] At the same time, Jessica Stern and J. M. Berger are of the view that Naji's work provided al-Zarqawi with an ideological backbone. Such a rational approach played a central role when in 2005 the supreme al-Qaida leadership expressed its concern over the increasing brutality shown by al-Zarqawi against the Shia population of Iraq. The leadership of the parent organisation feared that the bloodshed would ultimately make the global holy war pursued by al-Qaida less popular in the Islamic world.[45]

William McCants sees Naji's influence behind the strategic thinking of ISIS, and highlights the Management of Savagery as one of the documents that in his view served as an inspiration for the framework of the strategic plan initiated among jihadists in late 2009/early 2010. McCants has translated this document into English (*Strategic Plan for Reinforcing the Political Position of the Islamic State of Iraq*).[46]

Murad Batal al-Shishani, a researcher of jihadist movements, sums up this strategic plan in five points the purpose of which was to help the predecessor of ISIS, which was fighting for its survival at the time, to again become an important player in Iraq:[47]

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[43] Weiss, Michael, Hassan, Hassan: *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, Regan Arts, New York/NY, 2015, pp. 40–47.

[44] Warrick, Joby: *Black Flags: The Rise of ISIS*, Doubleday, New York/NY, 2015, pp. 135–136.

[45] Stern, Jessica, Berger, J. M.: *ISIS- The State of Terror*, Harper Collins, New York/NY, 2015, p. 23.

[46] McCants, William: *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*, St. Martin's Press, New York/NY, 2015, pp. 79–84.

[47] Al-Shishani, Murad Batal: *The Islamic State's Strategic and Tactical Plan for Iraq, Terrorism Monitor, Volume: 12, Issue: 16, https://jamestown.org/program/the-islamic-states-strategic-and-tactical-plan-for-iraq/*, 18 October 2016.

1. Nine bullets against apostates and one against crusaders. Al-Shishani links this with the requirement set out in the programme that the jihadists must '*increase the rate of fear amongst Iraqis who join the army and security forces*'.[48] This point also shows that the predecessor of ISIS wanted to shift the focus of al-Qaida's global strategy and fight explicitly the secularised regimes of the Islamic world instead of waging war against the distant enemy. The goal was to exploit simmering sectarian conflicts between religious groups in order to further the organisation's own aims.

2. Cleansing. This refers to activities in which the jihadist movement carries out well-publicised strikes against locations occupied by Iraqi security authorities. The purpose is to tie down government troops in wide areas so that they would have to fight secondary battles, and to allow the jihadists to seize the military initiative elsewhere.[49]

3. Formation of jihadist councils. With this al-Shishani refers to the recognition granted by jihadists to the 'awakening' movement in the Anbar province. The movement prompted several influential Sunni tribes to turn against the violence of the then Islamic State of Iraq and jihadist groups. The groups viewed this as a successful way of countering their own gains, and considered that they could also take advantage of it in their own activities. Under this approach, local Sunni tribes have been encouraged to reject the presence of the police and military forces in their own areas and to establish independent religious courts.[50] With such activities, the predecessor of ISIS tried to create a fertile ground for itself and for its power aspirations.

4. **Political symbolism.** In the plan, this mainly refers to the overall influence of the leading figure of the jihadist movement. As al-Shishani has shown, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (who subsequently appointed himself as the caliph) had not yet been elected as the head of the organisation at the time when the plan was prepared. However, the organisation was going through leadership crises and it was aware that all power should be in the hands of a single person.[51]

5. **Assuring non-Muslims.** This refers to campaigns the aim of which is to show the non-Islamic population of the target society that the jihadist movement can also take care of its security. This can be interpreted as a counter-information campaign with which the jihadist movement tries to deal with the misrepresentations of it created in the global media. In the case of ISIS, the protection of the non-Muslim population has meant that the Christian residents of the city of Mosul have been given the choice of paying *jizyah* (a religious levy) or die.[52]

The plan described above shows that the strategic thinking of ISIS' predecessor and the groups on whom Naji relies when presenting his ideas of the management of savagery are clearly based on the same principles. Dividing the plan into a set of stages, which combines the principles into an operational package is central to the process. It shows that, especially in Iraq, the jihadist movement is capable of long-

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[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.

term and large-scale planning in a situation where it was under heavy pressure as an organisation.[53] The plan has more stages than the one set out by Naji but there are also similarities between the two. In both plans, the focus is on the state of insecurity created through a sectarian cycle of violence during the establishment of the right operating conditions, use of violence to show the powerlessness of the local security authorities, consolidation of the activities and the creation of a jihadist society.

Based on what is said above, the following aspects can be highlighted in the study of ISIS: the stages set out in Naji's thinking, the need to create states of savagery highlighted in them, the need for the administration of savagery and the population-centricity in Naji's thinking.

The American invasion of Iraq was not the first series of events that led to the creation of a jihadist movement in the country even though its role in the domestic-policy chaos and its escalation into a conflict inside the country cannot be ignored. Such experts as Joel Rayburn suggest that there were wider issues in the minds of the Iraqi people that gave rise to the jihadist movement, and that in the framework of contemporary history these can be traced back to the rule of Saddam Hussein. Being aware of the potentially dramatic nature of the threats posed by external factors and domestic instability to his own power, he started an Islamic faith campaign in Iraq in the early 1990s. In the campaign, which was officially launched in 1993, the secular Ba'ath regime in power embraced central Islamic values and aspects of confessional religious life. The most visible sign of this policy was the adding of the phrase '*God is great*' to the Iraqi flag. However, the campaign also included more practical incentives for more religious life, such as state-sponsored pilgrimages to Mecca, tax cuts to individuals that provided funding for the building of mosques and economic rewards to religious scholars.[54]

Such activities could even be considered to contribute to social stability. However, the main reason why Saddam Hussein supported the salafi Sunni Islam to consolidate his power was that in his view this interpretation of the religion provided a counterweight to the Muslim Brotherhood, which had Egyptian origins, and which had been gaining ground in Iraq. The Islamisation campaign was also extended to intelligence agencies and political organs whose members were sent to pray and study in the new salafi mosques. The result was that over a period of ten years, many important public officials rejected the ba'athist ideology, and became increasingly attracted by the strict religious values emphasising salafi religious purity. Not everybody in Saddam Hussein's inner circle was happy with these developments. According to Joel Rayburn, one of these persons was Barzan al-Tikriti, whom he describes as the third most influential man in Iraq at the time. Al-Tikriti's diary entries show that he had met Saddam Hussein to express his concern over the possible polarisation of the Iraqi society arising from the growth in Sunni Islam influence. At the time, there were signs that the country's Shia population was increasingly worried about this trend. After the US invasion and the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003 it became clear that the ba'athist-salafis took up arms as the power was increasingly shifting to the Shia population. The military officers and former

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[53] See for example Lister, Charles R.: *The Syrian Jihad: al-Qaeda, the Islamic State and the Revolution of an Insurgency*, Hurst & Company, London, 2015, p. 46. Lister shows that ISI, the predecessor of ISIS, lost a substantial proportion of its leadership over the years. By early 2010, a total of 34 of its 42 leaders had been killed or captured and the organisation had only managed to replace a small number of these figures.

[54] Rayburn, Joel: *Iraq After America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, Stanford/CA, 2014, p. 101.

members of the intelligence agencies that Saddam Hussein had sent to the mosques played a central role in the establishment of these Sunni resistance organisations.[55]

The Jordanian jihadist Ahmad Fadil Nazzam, better known as Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who had moved to Iraq, also based his influence on this distrust between population groups. He was born in the industrial town of Zarqa in Jordan in 1966 and already became a petty criminal in his youth. The challenges he was experiencing in his own life prompted al-Zarqawi to seek answers in jihadism and militant Islam, which is quite typical of an individual going through a radicalisation process. According to David Kilcullen, al-Zarqawi had several encounters with the Jordanian police because of his criminal career, and he also travelled to Afghanistan during the final moments of the anti-Soviet resistance in 1989.[56][57] He was arrested soon after his return from Afghanistan as he was trying to establish a terrorist organisation.[58] He was, however, released in a general amnesty in 1999 and returned to Afghanistan where he established the first real predecessor of ISIS under the name 'Monotheism and jihad' (*Jama'at al-Tawhid wa-al-Jihad*).[59]

Through his organisation, al-Zarqawi established contacts with the top al-Qaida leadership operating in Afghanistan, which provided him with a small sum of money for organising his force and for establishing a training camp.[60] Loosely connected with al-Qaida, the group took part in the resistance against the American occupation, which started in 2001. After the collapse of the Taliban, al-Zarqawi, wounded in the chest, escaped to Iran, and from there to Iraq where he started preparations for the US occupation by organising troops capable of resisting the Americans. According to David Kilcullen, there is conflicting information about the closeness of the cooperation between al-Zarqawi and the Iraqi regime before the American invasion. Kilcullen is convinced, however, that al-Zarqawi and his grouping were only engaged in real operational collaboration with the ba'athists after the invasion.[61]

It is clear that al-Zarqawi and his cohorts were of the view that the sectarian and domestic policy division between religious groups in Iraq could be exploited in the creation of the region of savagery, as envisaged by Naji. It is difficult to believe that the action taken by al-Zarqawi against the Shia population of Iraq was purely opportunistic. In fact, his deep-seated hatred was probably genuine and the result of

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[55] Ibid., pp. 102-104.

[56] Burke, Jason: *The New Threat from Islamic Militancy*, The Bodley Head, London, 2015, p. 61. Burke suggests that the world view of al-Zarqawi, who had served time in prison for violence and a sexual offence, had been greatly influenced by a conservative local preacher and the propaganda of Abdullah Azzam, an Islamic religious scholar who had organised the flow of Arab volunteers fighting the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. This conservative preacher was not, however, the important radical preacher Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, who has lived in Jordan since 1992 and who has also collaborated with al-Zarqawi. The view is that the early radicalisation process may have begun in a mosque in Amman that al-Zarqawi's mother had urged her son to visit after he had been released from prison. To read more about the problematic relationship between al-Maqdisi and al-Zarqawi, see for example Wagemakers, Joas: *A Quietist Jihadi: The Ideology and Influence of Abu Muhamed al-Maqdisi*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012, pp. 41–45.

[57] Kilcullen, David: *Blood Year: The Unraveling of Western Counterinsurgency*, Oxford University Press, New York/NY, 2016, p. 21.

[58] With this Kilcullen probably means the organisation 'The faithful of the Iman' (*Bay'at al-Imam*), in which al-Zarqawi and al-Maqdisi recruited a group of young men to study the writings of al-Maqdisi and, in practice, become radicalised with each other's support. Wagemakers (2012), p. 42.

[59] Kilcullen (2016), p. 21. This discrepancy is also clear from the document released by the CIA, according to which the Iraqi regime already knew in 2002 that al-Zarqawi was in the country. However, according to the Jordanian intelligence agency, al-Zarqawi was in Syria at the time, and only moved to Iraq at a later stage.

[60] Burke (2015), p. 62.

[61] Kilcullen (2016), p. 21.

a consistent radicalisation process. In 2004, in a letter to bin Laden and his deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Zarqawi described the Shias as an '*insurmountable obstacle, the crafty and malicious scorpion, the spying enemy and the penetrating venom*'. In the same letter, the Jordanian jihadist also pledged allegiance to the supreme al-Qaida leadership. He made his strategic position clear by stating that Shias had infiltrated the Iraqi economy and its national security organs. Thus, in his plans, al-Zarqawi gave priority to attacks against Shias over attacks against the American occupiers. Al-Zarqawi was of the view that the strikes against the Shias would prompt them to reveal their true nature, and cause the conflict to escalate into an open civil war. The aim in this was to provoke resistance among the Sunni tribes and encourage them to join the jihadists in the holy war. According to al-Zarqawi, there should also be strikes against the Americans but as the US troops were in the process of leaving the country, they were not the main target of the organisation.[62]

Al-Zarqawi gave bin Laden a clear choice: accept my strategic plan or I will never pledge allegiance to you as the head of al-Qaida.[63] After bin Laden had accepted the pledge of allegiance (allegedly he did this with considerable reluctance), al-Zarqawi's organisation was renamed the 'organisation base of jihad in the country of the two rivers' (*Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn*).[64] This organisation is somewhat erroneously also known as the Iraqi al-Qaida.

Al-Zarqawi could justifiably consider the start of this new superior-subordinate relationship as a moment when his organisation received the right to use the al-Qaida 'brand'. Osama bin Laden was probably well aware of the risks he took but he undoubtedly also realised the opportunities the situation involved in a country, which al-Zarqawi described in his letter to the al-Qaida leadership as '.... *a battle-ground that could not be found anywhere else in the world, a stone's throw from the land of the two holy places (Saudi Arabia) and the Al-Aqsa mosque.*'[65]

The acts of violence carried out in 2004 and 2004 and the inciting of population groups against each other caused the supreme al-Qaida leadership to become worried about the tarnishing of the image of the global jihadist movement and the danger of losing popular support. The letter sent by Ayman al-Zawahiri to al-Zarqawi in 2005 is considered one of the best-known demonstrations of this concern. In the letter, al-Zawahiri expresses his concern over the terrorist acts against the Shia population and the loss of support among the Muslim population that might result from them:

> '...*people know the extent of danger to Islam of the Twelve'er school of Shiism. It is a religious school based on excess and falsehood whose function is to accuse the companions of Muhammad of heresy... The collision between any state based on the model of prophecy with the Shia is a matter that will happen sooner or later... We must repeat what we mentioned previously, that the majority of Muslims don't comprehend this and possibly could not even imagine it. For that reason, many of your*

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[62] Kepel, Gilles, Milelli, Jean-Pierre (ed.), Ghazaleh, Pascale (translation): *Al Qaeda in its Own Words*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge/MA, London, 2008, pp. 252, 253-258, 261, 262-267.
[63] Warrick (2015), p. 245. Warrick suggests that after receiving bin Laden's approval for his pledge of allegiance, al-Zarqawi publicly declared that he would obey sheikh bin Laden, but on the other hand he also stated that the noblest brothers in the supreme al-Qaida leadership had understood the fundamental thinking behind his strategy.
[64] Burke (2015), p. 64.
[65] Kepel, Milelli (2008), p. 251.

Muslim admirers amongst the common folk are wondering about your attacks on the Shia.'[66]

One example of the anti-Shia attitude of al-Zarqawi and his troops, and their need to incite sectarian violence was the bombing of the Golden Mosque, an important Shia shrine, on 22 February 2006. The mosque, which is located in the city of Samarra, is one of the four most important holy sites of the Shia Islam in Iraq. A total of twelve Imams recognised in the Shia Islam are buried there. Shia Muslims also believe that Imam Mehdi, the twelfth Imam, went into hiding in the basement of the Golden Mosque in 878. Mehdi is considered a saviour figure by Shias and he is supposed to return to the Earth to bring justice before the Day of Judgment.[67]

Even though there were no fatalities in the bombing of al-Askaria, hundreds of people were killed in the ensuing violence between religious groups. This attack also demonstrated the impact of terrorism in a politically sensitive situation. In practice, it annulled many of the achievements of the successful elections held in December 2005 by plunging religious groups into an accelerating cycle of violence.[68]

In his letter, al-Zawahiri urged al-Zarqawi to establish an Islamic emirate in Iraq, but at the same time warned him from doing this without the support of the Sunni population because '*in the absence of this popular support, the mujahidin movement would be crushed in the shadows*'.[69] With the benefit of hindsight, al-Zawahiri was painfully right in this. In fact, for a moment it seemed that al-Zarqawi would accept the strategy imposed by the supreme al-Qaida leadership under which the Americans should first be forced out of Iraq and the Islamic state should only be established after that. But as noted by William McCants, the Jordanian jihadist changed his mind in 2006. When al-Zarqawi was killed in a strike carried out by American troops on 7 June 2006, the Iraqi al-Qaida acted in accordance with the wishes of its dead leader. Before his death, al-Zarqawi had established a cooperation body with five smaller jihadist groups. The body, named the mujahidin shura council of Iraq (*Majlis Shura al-Mujahidin fi al-Iraq*) was expanded in October of the same year, and declared the Islamic State of Iraq, known by its acronym ISI (*ad-Dawlah al-ʿIraq al-Islāmiyah*). Abu Omar al-Baghdadi was appointed the nominal head of the body and he received the honorary title 'Commander of the Believers'.[70]

The Iraqi al-Qaida, the largest single group in ISI, was led by Abu Ayyub al-Masri, who had succeeded al-Zarqawi as the emir. With the subsequent information disclosures, William McCants considered al-Masri to be the real leader of the group despite his official position as the ISI's minister of war.[71]

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[66] Al-Zawahiri, Ayman: Letter to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, dated 9 July 2005, *https://www.ctc.usma.edu/ v2/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Zawahiris-Letter-to-Zarqawi-Translation.pdf*, 17 February 2015.
[67] Roggio, Bill: *Dome of the Golden Mosque Destroyed*, FDD's Long War Journal, 22 February 2016, *http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2006/02/dome_of_the_golden_m_1.php*, 26 May 2017.
[68] *http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/iraqi-shrine-bombing-spurs-wave-of-sectarian-reprisals-1.575444*, 26 May 2017.
[69] Ibid.
[70] McCants (2015a), pp. 14–15.
[71] Ibid., pp. 32-33. McCants presents a disclosed statement by al-Masri on the basis of which the emir probably used his influence in the selection of the 'Commander of the Believers'. Likewise, McCants refers to the statement by Abu Sulayman al-Utaybi, the former legal expert of ISI, according to which he was disappointed with the religious grounds of ISI's statehood. McCants emphasises, however, that al-Utaybi never claimed that Abu Omar al-Baghdadi had acted deceptively in his earlier organisation, or that he had made excessive use of violence. This is because he considered al-Masri to be the real leader of ISI.

With the establishment of ISI, al-Zawahiri's warnings about the loss of Sunni sympathies started to materialise between 2006 and 2010. According to Joel Rayburn, the Iraqi al-Qaida made a major strategic error when it established ISI. In his view, the decision was made because the popularity of the group had been on a steady decline for some time. Rayburn's argument can be considered a fairly correct interpretation of the state of affairs but it ignores the fundamental goal of statehood described above in the adoption of which the organisation had been influenced by the thinking of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Rayburn is right in pointing out that the role of statehood was central to the confrontation with other Sunni and ba'athist groups taking part in the resistance.[72]

For ISI, statehood meant subjugation of all other groupings. The clearest evidence of this was provided by the clashes with Jaysh al-Islam, the largest salafi jihadist group, which accused ISI of killing Muslims and appealed to Osama bin Laden so that the group would be brought under his command.[73] The acts of violence perpetrated by the Iraqi al-Qaida targeted the population that it claimed to protect. However, this is an understandable continuation of the feeling of superiority connected with the establishment of ISI; after all, in the organisation's own view, it was a state.

The arrogant and uncompromising approach of ISI meant that, in terms of its own operating conditions, it quickly found itself in a dead end. As shown by Kilcullen, several Sunni tribes had already tried to rebel against the arbitrariness of al-Qaida and the forced imposition of its interpretation of Islam in 2005. Al-Qaida responded to these attempts with violence that did not escape anybody's attention. The group killed heads of Sunni tribes resisting it, raped women, beheaded children and cut their stomachs open in the presence of their mothers and burned families alive in their homes.[74]

Despite these atrocities and undoubtedly also because of them, the Sunni tribes decided in 2007 that they had had enough. This period in the modern history of Iraq has been called the 'awakening' or the 'awakening of the Anbar province'. In general, it meant an open uprising of the Sunni tribes against the arbitrary rule and senseless violence carried out by al-Qaida and ISI militants. Joel Rayburn also points out that al-Qaida and ISI attacked important smuggling routes to Jordan that had been used by Sunni tribes. The tribal sheikhs had been importing products through these routes allowing them to maintain a comfortable lifestyle.[75]

David Kilcullen[76], who was following the awakening and the strengthening of the US troops from a prime observation point, has shown that the 'awakening' as such was not a new or extraordinary event. Before the United States gave its support to the revolt, there had already been four uprisings aimed at expelling the militants of al-Qaida and ISI from the Sunni areas.[77] On the fifth attempt, however, the strengthening of American ground troops in Iraq, and the substantial increase in their operations helped to decrease support for ISI and al-Qaida among young men who had constituted the main recruiting base of the groups in Iraq. This was also

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[72] Rayburn (2014), pp. 121–122.
[73] Ibid., p. 123.
[74] Kilcullen (2016), p. 41.
[75] Rayburn (2014), p. 122
[76] Kilcullen served as an adviser to General David Petraeus during his term as the commander of US troops in Iraq.
[77] Kilcullen (2016), p. 41.

connected with an active media campaign against al-Qaida. According to Joel Rayburn, it even involved the media house Sharqiyah, which had links with the Sunni rebellion, and which in its messages pointed out that ISI was destroying the cultural heritage of Iraq and that the members of its top leadership were anything but Iraqis.[78]

William McCants argues that the decline in deadly ISI violence between 2007 and 2008 was a clear indication of the state of the organisation. In the early part of 2007, it killed about 2,700 people each month, but the figure had dropped to 500 during the last months of 2008. Even though the figures are high, it is clear that during this period the capability of the organisation was slowly eroding. The erosion also affected the internal morale of the organisation and pessimism was gaining ground in ISI towards the end of the first decade of the 2000s. The catastrophic rule of al-Masri and al-Baghdadi as heads of al-Qaida and ISI, which had been characterised by excessive violence, lost successes and authoritarian leadership, ended in the home of al-Masri south of the city of Tikrit. American and Iraqi troops killed[79] both men in a joint operation in April 2010. In the ensuing months, a total of 34 ISI leaders were killed or captured in a large number of operations.[80]

As pointed out by Patrick Cockburn, it is noteworthy that this was not yet the end of ISI. He gives an example from Baghdad where the organisation showed its power soon after the death of al-Masri and al-Baghdadi by carrying out a car bomb attack in the well-guarded Shia district of Sadr City. The attack killed 72 people.[81] In fact, bomb attacks in Baghdad have also become the hallmark of ISIS whenever the organisation is generally considered to be on the retreat, and soon expected to disappear from the map of jihadist movements.

The methods of al-Zarqawi and his successors in the creation of the right operating conditions closely resemble what Naji describes as the first stage of his strategy (vexation and exhaustion). In a regional insurgency, which the Iraqi al-Qaida and ISI can be considered to have fought, the different stages overlap. It is, however, impossible to prove that al-Zarqawi had built his strategy by studying Naji's works and thinking. In general, it can be said that Naji's ideas of the necessity of terror, violence as an end in itself, and the strong psychological impact of mass killings closely resemble the thinking of al-Zarqawi and his successors.[82]

If the activities of the Iraqi al-Qaida and ISI summed up above are examined on the basis of the goals set out by Naji for the stage of vexation and exhaustion, it is clear that the insurgency that al-Zarqawi tried to wage in Iraq is slightly different from the model described by Naji, despite the similarities between the two.

The first goal for this stage set by Naji is *exhausting the forces of the enemy and the regimes collaborating with them, dispersing their efforts and working to maintain one's own operational momentum*. It is undisputable that al-Zarqawi and his successors have managed

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[78] Rayburn (2014), pp. 124-125. For example, the claims by Abu Omar al-Baghdadi that he is a native of Baghdad were questioned by reading excerpts from his statements that he had issued in the Najdi dialect of the Arabic language. It is widely spoken in the Najdi region of central Saudi Arabia.

[79] There is also conflicting information about the deaths of al-Masri and al-Baghdadi as some sources claim that the two killed themselves so that they would not have to surrender. See McCants, William: *The Believer: How an Introvert with a Passion for Religion and Soccer Became Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, Leader of the Islamic State*, 1 September 2015, *http://csweb.brookings.edu/content/research/essays/2015/thebeliever.html*, 24 October 2016.

[80] McCants (2015a), pp. 42 and 45.

[81] Cockburn, Patrick: *The Age of Jihad: Islamic State and the Great war for the Middle East*. Verso, New York/NY, 2016, p. 181.

[82] Weiss and Hassan (2015), p. 41. See also McCants (2015a), p. 83.

to create a social situation that he described in his letter to the supreme al-Qaida leadership.[83]

His sole aim was to create a state of civil war in Iraq in which every Sunni tribe would be forced to join his grouping or remain passive and suffer retaliation at the hands of Shia groups. In other words, the aim of al-Zarqawi was to create societal demand for his own group as a guarantor of security. In contrast to the general thinking of Naji, the groupings led by him and his successors have given priority to stirring up conflicts between population groups, instead of launching attacks against an external threat.

The assumption is that Naji meant the following when justifying extreme violence in the creation of managed savagery:

> 1. the ability of a jihadist group to demonstrate its capability in relation to the inability of the regional security authorities to ensure security for citizens and
> 2. creation of the prerequisites for strengthening war potential and for capturing the region of savagery to the jihadist organisation.

One can present a broad range of different assumptions why the groupings of al-Zarqawi, al-Masri and al-Baghdadi never managed to achieve the popular support that would have been required in the social state essential for administering the savagery, as envisaged by Naji. However, these assumptions culminate in two important factors. On the one hand, al-Zarqawi never agreed to put his troops under the strategic control of his parent organisation and focus on attacking the American occupation. Apparently, however, this was a source of strength for the insurgency because as Ayman al-Zawahiri described the situation in 2004:

> '*The resistance turned the American (strategic) plan on its head. God willing, the defeat of America in Iraq and Afghanistan is only a matter of time. In both countries, the Americans are between a rock and a hard place. If they continue to fight, they will bleed, if they retreat, they will lose everything.*'[84]

Because of his implacable hatred towards Shias, al-Zarqawi may never have seen his own situation from the perspective of his commanders, and was captivated by a superficial idea of his own chances. In the end, this drove the organisation that he had founded to a near defeat strategically.

The second important factor was that in the end the excessive violence perpetrated by al-Zarqawi was at no point correctly proportioned to the situation prevailing in the Iraqi society. As an outsider, he probably saw Iraq as only another platform on which to wage his holy war. Al-Zarqawi was convinced that the United States would withdraw from the country after which there would only be two options, which he described as follows:

> '*Either we fight against them (Shias) even if this may cause disagreements between us and the population. We must fight against their cousins and sons. As soon as the Americans have withdrawn from the country and take with them the prerequisites of their power, we must seize the opportunity. The alternative is to leave Iraq and con-*

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[83] Kepel, Milelli (2008), pp. 263–266.
[84] Kilcullen (2016), p. 22.

tinue our struggle elsewhere. This same sad story has repeated itself on earlier fronts of jihad as the knowledge and skills of our enemies are growing all the time. In the name of God, I swear that we will be suffocated if we take that road. The fact is that people practise the same religion as their rulers. [85]

This demonstrates that al-Zarqawi took an authoritarian approach to an insurgency. His goal of establishing an Islamic state also shows the same approach. The establishment probably took place without consultations with the supreme al-Qaida leadership.[86] The status of ISI as a state gave al-Zarqawi a false sense of rightness of his cause, which was more important than the anger felt towards ISI by bin Laden and al-Zawahiri.

One concrete sign of this was the demand issued by the ISI spokesman in 2007. In this demand the organisation declared that the other armed Sunni organisations had two options: either join the front of the Islamic state or lay down your arms. In order to underline the message, the grouping started killing leaders of other Sunni groups. For example, it killed a total of thirty members of the Islamic Army, an important insurgent group.[87] As a result of such arbitrariness and violence, ISI found itself in the margins of armed resistance immediately after its establishment.

The second goal set by Naji for the stage of vexation and exhaustion is *attracting new youth to the jihadi work by undertaking qualitative operations that will grab peoples' attention.* Al-Zarqawi and his successors were skilful in using violence to attract the attention of the masses. The attacks also helped the organisation to achieve notoriety, which served as a useful recruitment tool. The attacks attributed to the organisation can be considered an excellent idea from the perspective of the strategic posture described above. One of them was the bombing of the Canal Hotel in Baghdad in 2003, which also claimed the life of Sérgio Vieira de Mello, the UN special representative to Iraq.[88]

The conclusion is that with such strikes and continuous operations, al-Zarqawi aimed to reshape his battlespace. On the one hand, his goal was to drive international organisations (whose authority he did not recognise) out of Iraq, and in this way deny the right of the regime in power and the occupation troops to build a new Iraq. On the other hand, more operational importance can be attached to the major series of strikes in different parts of Iraq, with which al-Zarqawi and his cohorts tried, guided by his strategic thinking, to exacerbate the social situation so that it would increasingly resemble a civil war, and in this way to recruit fighters despite large-scale countermeasures. One of such series of strikes took place in Baghdad in September 2005, when a series of bomb attacks killed more than one hundred people. Most of the victims were Shia civilians.[89]

Citing Johann Most, a German anarchist, Jason Burke notes that the purpose of such shocking violence was to *capture popular attention and force the public to face the real*

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[85] Kepel, Milelli (2008), p. 264.
[86] McCants (2016), pp. 16-17.
[87] Ibid., pp. 33-34.
[88] Filkins, Dexter: Oppel, Richard A. Jr.: *After The War: Truck Bombing; Huge Suicide Blast Demolishes U.N. Headquarters In Baghdad; Top Aid Officials Among 17 Dead*, The New York Times, 20 August 2003, *http://www.nytimes.com/2003/08/20/world/after-war-truck-bombing-huge-suicide-blast-demolishes-un-headquarters-baghdad.html?_r=0,* 21 October 2016.
[89] Oliver, Mark: *Scores killed in Baghdad blasts*, The Guardian, 14 September 2005, *https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/sep/14/iraq.markoliver,* 21 October 2016.

political problems. Most presented this thought in his pamphlet 'The Philosophy of a Bomb'.[90]

Based on his work in Iraq as an adviser, Joe Rayburn has provided insights into the recruitment base of al-Zarqawi. He remembers a police commander who, when stepping out of his home in Habbaniyah on Christmas Eve in 2007, saw young men celebrating, shooting fireworks, drinking alcohol and dancing with their girlfriends. The police commander was amused and said to the boys that as far as he remember, one year ago you were all members of al-Qaida. The young men just laughed, saying '*al-Qaida!? That was last year!*'[91] In other words, the young men behind Naji's thinking were searching for roles and had no problem rejecting an organisation that based its capability on the notoriety arising from its attacks.

There is no doubt that the Iraqi al-Qaida and its successor organisations have exclusively used violence to achieve the *dislodging of the regions of savagery from the control of the secularised Muslim regimes and the influence of the enemy,* the third goal of the stage of vexation and exhaustion envisaged by Naji. Naji intended this goal for a specific geographic area or a part of an urban centre but it could also be examined from the population perspective. While the Iraqi al-Qaida and ISI tried specifically to create a situation resembling a civil war, the organisations stated that they had a highly authoritarian attitude towards the Sunni population they were defending. According to a tribal leader in the Diayala region, the al-Qaida operating in his area was a group of street gangs consisting of fatherless young men who were led by twenty-year old Jordanians or Fallujah 'Imans'.[92]

Even though this characterisation of the local al-Qaida cells between 2003 and 2009 probably cannot be generalised to cover all military units of the grouping, it shows why the threshold of extreme violence could be exceeded so easily in those days. No wonder then that when such groups of young men led by radicals were given the task of administering a region or imposing a bigoted interpretation of Islamic law, unbelievable coercive measures were applied, stretching the limits of morality in ways that could be described as imaginative, to say the least.

It is therefore quite logical that in this situation, the punishment for all activities that al-Zarqawi interpreted as violations of his ideology was brutal. Jason Burke gives an example from 2005. That year, the heads of the Sunni tribes in western Iraq decided that they should take part in the parliamentary elections to be held in the country. This caused a near-open state of war between jihadists and the Sunni tribes. For the first mentioned, taking part in the democratic process was the greatest possible violation of the sovereignty of the divine law. The elections and the open conflict resulting from them were an important step in the process leading to the 'awakening' in the Anbar province. Amidst the violence, Sunni tribes approved American troops as guarantors of security during the elections.[93]

In other words, misunderstandings concerning the nature of the population and the regions to be ruled meant that al-Qaida or ISI could at no point isolate the areas under its rule so that it could have established its own pseudo state. That only happened years later, when ISIS, the successor of ISI, was able to acquire sufficient

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[90] Burke (2015), p. 52.
[91] Rayburn (2014), p. 124.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Burke (2015), pp. 68–69.

strength to occupy large areas of Iraq and to exploit the domestic policy fragmentation in the country.

According to Naji, the fourth goal of the stage of vexation and exhaustion is the *advancement of operational groups and cells so that they will be prepared psychologically and physically for the stage of the administration of savagery*.[94] In his work, Naji does not specify this goal as it serves as an introduction to the presentation of his objectives for the management of savagery. Many of them refer to the control of society, gaining popular support and meeting the immediate needs of the people. For the Iraqi al-Qaida or ISI, it was never a question of actual preparedness for this.

As suggested by Sami Moubayed, the death of al-Zarqawi and the inability of his successors to change the nature of the organisation's hierarchical leadership led to a situation where the entire chain of command collapsed, a result of the isolation of al-Masri and al-Baghdadi. As a result, in the semi-independent cells at the lower echelons of the organisation, people took justice in their own hands, which further deepened the gap and distrust between the grouping and the local population. Moubayed shows that the successors of al-Zarqawi could at no point provide the population under their rule with such fundamentals of organised society as policing or regulation of trade. This led to more plundering and chaos in the areas controlled by ISI.[95]

With the benefit of hindsight, it can be asked whether ISI actually understood the character of the Iraqi society that it tried to rule. Richard Shultz and Andrea Dew characterise it as a tribal society where loyalty towards the family and the tribe are the determining factors in both social and political life.[96] As stated above, ISI did not try to control this society, which was based on patriarchal attitudes and a code of honour, by gaining the trust of potential key figures. Instead it attempted to control communities through fear and violence and tried impose its own interpretation of Islamic law and codes of rules on them.

It can be argued that al-Zarqawi and his successors failed to establish a fertile basis for the creation of the region of savagery, as described by Naji. However, this does not mean that the chances of waging an insurgency in Iraq are lost. This failure culminates in the uncompromising approach that is also causing the collapse of ISIS. Entire population groups will ultimately rise up against a movement that unilaterally declares itself as a messianic ruler and the punisher of criminals.

Despite many failures, a loss of a substantial number of its fighters and leaders, loss of popular support, tarnishing of the public image of the global jihadist movement and even the loss of the ability to launch a guerrilla war in Iraq, ISI did not disappear. The ensuing years brought the Arab Spring, the political upheavals resulting from it, a state of chaos in many of the parent societies of the jihadist movement, a civil war in Syria, withdrawal of the American ground troops from Iraq and a new ISI leader, known by his nom de guerre Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. His approach showed that al-Zarqawi was not necessarily wrong when taking advantage of the opportunities created by the weak security situation that had arisen from a sectarian cycle of violence.

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[94] The four goals written in italics can be found in the work: Naji (2006), pp. 16–17.
[95] Moubayed (2015), p. 95.
[96] Shultz, Richard H. Jr., Dew, Andrea J.: *Insurgents, Terrorists and Militias: The Warriors of Contemporary Combat*, Columbia University Press, New York/NY, 2006, p. 203.

4. MANAGEMENT OF SAVAGERY AND THE CIVIL WAR IN SYRIA: TOWARDS THE GREAT ATTACK

William McCants has given a fitting title to his essay on Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi: *The Believer*. The real name of al-Baghdadi is Ibrahim al-Badri, and he was probably born in 1971 in the city of Samarra. He is known to have been very religious since his youth. Reserved, quiet and even shy, al-Baghdadi was nevertheless quick to remind people close to him of the restrictions imposed by the dogmas and codes of conduct that they were studying. He did this when in his view they behaved in a non-desirable manner. Al-Baghdadi followed in the footsteps of his father to the local mosque where he taught children to recite the Koran. He received a Master's degree in the Saddam University for Islamic studies in Baghdad in 1999. In his thesis, he discussed the recital of the Koran, his main interest. Immediately after graduation, al-Baghdadi continued his studies in the doctoral programme of the same university.[97]

In 2007, when al-Baghdadi defended his dissertation, he had already spent time at the Camp Bucca detention facility administered by the Americans. Encouraged by his uncle, al-Baghdadi had joined the Muslim Brotherhood after his studies and was inspired by the movement's literature, in which Muslims were encouraged to start a holy war. Ultimately, he became involved in underground activities. He helped to establish the insurgency group Jaysh Ahl al-Sunna wa-l-Jamaah. Associated with this group and persons that were already on the Americans' most wanted list, al-Baghdadi was arrested in February 2004. During his captivity, he built up his charisma and expanded his contacts at Camp Bucca, to which the roots of many of the ISIS commanders can be traced. During his imprisonment, he achieved a reputation as a conciliatory religious scholar who led prayers and taught his fellow inmates at religious events. However, he also demonstrated his skills in football, which he had been playing since his youth.[98]

Soon after his release, al-Baghdadi became involved in the activities of al-Qaida and he was recruited as a member of the organisation. After the death of al-Zarqawi and with the establishment of ISI, al-Baghdadi was entrusted the role of the religious leader in a number of areas in Iraq controlled by the organisation. In practice, this meant the task of a propaganda officer because ISI as such did not have any important regions of Iraq under its control.[99]

Based on the research of Jessica Stern and J. M. Berger, it seems that the Americans failed to realise the jihadist leadership potential of the person they were holding in 2004. Unlike McCants, Stern and Berger claim that al-Baghdadi was in prison in 2005 but their evidence shows that the authorities, who characterised al-Baghdadi as a 'dirty little street thief', failed to understand that the knowledge of the religion had made him a highly respected figure in jihadist circles.[100]

Al-Baghdadi rose rapidly through the ranks of ISI after al-Masri has recognised his capabilities. McCants shows that it was the conciliation skills that helped al-Baghdadi to become the member of the organisation's council of the eleven men, which served as advisors to Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, the emir of ISI. However, ac-

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[97] McCants (2015b).
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Stern and Berger (2015), p. 34.

cording to McCants, the council was controlled by al-Masri and its Iraqi members were increasingly worried about their own influence. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi continued as a conciliator within the group, trying to resolve the conflicts between Iraqi and foreign jihadists that had arisen in ISI. With such skills, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi also found favour with Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISI, who appointed him to the three-member ISI advisory council.[101]

The diplomatic approach of al-Baghdadi may also have been a mere public relations exercise and his role in the group of religious scholars where experts on Islamic theology were relatively few in number provided him with a genuinely strong base to enhance his position. After the death of al-Masri and Abu Omar al-Baghdadi in 2010, it was time to elect a new man to head ISI. The choice fell on Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, even though the trust he enjoyed was not necessarily the only reason. Colonel Samir Abd Muhammad al-Khlifawi, who had served as an intelligence officer under Saddam Hussein, and who is better known by his nom de guerre Haji Bakr, was probably behind the choice.[102]

Bill Roggio suggests that Haji Bakr played a central role in ISI in the efforts to persuade the other leaders of the organisation to support the election of al-Baghdadi as the new emir.[103] McCants speculates why Bakr wanted al-Baghdadi to become the head of ISI. One of these reasons was his loyalty towards the regional organisation and potential ability to resist the condemnation that the parent organisation al-Qaida had issued because of ISI's excessive violence.[104] Be that as it may, it soon became clear that al-Baghdadi and Bakr rapidly implemented the measures that Charles Lister calls the Iraqisation of ISI. With this he means the transfer of influence and command tasks from foreign fighters and commanders to Iraqis.[105]

The civil war in Syria, which broke out in 2011, provided an excellent opportunity for al-Baghdadi to exploit the state of savagery described by Naji. Based on an analysis of the extensive material found at the home of Haji Bakr in connection with his killing, Christoph Reuter a journalist in the Der Spiegel magazine, suggests that Bakr played a key role in the building of the influence of ISI in Syria. In Reuter's view, Bakr played an important part in the activation of ISI in Syria as the former intelligence officer knew how to organise networks of informants, saboteurs and opinion leaders. According to Reuter, this activation culminated in the ISI's plan to capture areas in Syria and Iraq. A soldier may not see this plan as a campaign of mobile operations in which areas and population centres are captured but it worked.[106]

The plan is described in the documents found at the home of Haji Bakr and they detail the structure of an insurgent organisation and thus also its goals. The purpose of Bakr was to first capture as much territory as possible for ISI with his

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[101] McCants (2015b).

[102] Reuter, Christoph: *Secret Files Reveal the Structure of Islamic State*, Der Spiegel, 18. April 2015,
http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/islamic-state-files-show-structure-of-islamist-terror-group-a-1029274.html, 24 October 2015.

[103] Roggio, Bill: *ISIS Confirms Death of Senior Leader in Syria*, Long War Journal, 5 February 2014,
http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/02/isis_confirms_death.php, 24 October 2016.

[104] McCants (2015b).

[105] Lister (2015), p. 57. 'Transfer' of power within ISI is a fairly tactful way of expressing the real state of affairs because as described by Roggio (2016), this development was also accompanied by violent purges.

[106] Reuter, Christopher: *Secret Files Reveal the Structure of Islamic State*, Spiegel Online, 18 April 2015,
http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/islamic-state-files-show-structure-of-islamist-terror-group-a-1029274.html, 25 October 2016.

core troops with whom he moved to Syria. In the second stage, the aim was to use the areas captured in Syria as a bridgehead for conquering Iraq. According to Reuter, Bakr settled in the small town of Tal Rifaat located north of Aleppo where he set up the Syrian ISI, which may have had hundreds of fighters. Bakr always launched his plan in the same way. He established an Islamic missionary centre in the locality, recruited local people to attend lectures and courses in which the participants were taught how to live a good Islamic life. A member of this audience was recruited to collect extensive information about his own area, its political dynamics as well as important events and personalities. This information included people's attitudes towards the civil war, the jihadist movement, details of influential families, information on rebels and government troops as well as anti-sharia practices.[107]

In other words, Bakr's information-gathering networks collected all possible information about the population in the Syrian area of operations that could be used in the capturing of towns and villages and for exploiting their vulnerabilities that helped ISI to further its cause. Targets for assassinations and acts of violence the elimination of whom could quickly frighten the local population and cause it to accept ISI's rule were among the key points detailed in the documents. Reuter uses the city of Raqqa as an example of ISI's campaign. The city, which was later made the capital of the Islamic state, was captured by Syrian rebels in March 2013. As in many other cities and towns, offices of *da'wa* (Islamic missionary work) were established in Raqqa as the first stage in the process and through these offices Bakr was able to quickly get an idea of a potential enemy network. In the next stage, ISI started assassinating potential opponents and individuals that remained opposed to the organisation. Hundreds of people disappeared in summer 2013. Sometimes their bodies were found but many of the people disappeared without a trace. After a meeting of government officials and clan elders in October 2013, this atmosphere of uncertainty and fear prompted the heads of 14 Sunni clans to pledge allegiance to the grouping of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.[108]

The ruthlessness and organisational skills of Haji Bakr have been important in ensuring the success of the Islamic state in Syria. However, as Charles Lister points out, there are also other factors at play. According to Lister, the expansion of ISI to Syria was Bakr's radical idea, which he presented to al-Baghdadi. Al-Baghdadi acted in accordance with the recommendation of his closest circle and sent a trusted and well-known ISI commander to Syria to establish a presence in the country as early as summer 2010. Accompanied by six other trusted ISI fighters, a jihadist commander, known by his nom de guerre Abu Mohammed al-Golani, arrived in Syria only a few months before the establishment of the largely secular opposite force Free Syrian Army.[109] According to a second interpretation, the initiative to form the Syrian unit came directly from the supreme al-Qaida leadership, which ordered ISI to set up a new organisation in Syria.[110]

Irrespective of which of the interpretations is correct, al-Golani created the basis for his organisation by travelling around the western parts of Syria, setting up contacts with organisations sympathetic towards ISI, which had started to emerge

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[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Lister (2015), p. 56.
[110] McCants (2016), p. 85.

during the social upheaval in the country.[111] Amidst the civil war in Syria, al-Golani was able to establish contacts and recruit members in such a scale that his organisation could make its presence felt for the first time by carrying out a suicide bombing in Damascus a day before Christmas Eve in 2011. Soon after the attack the grouping publicly named itself as Jabhat al-Nusra li-Ahl al-Sham (support front for the people of greater Syria). It was commonly known as Jabhat al-Nusra. Even though the name was a bombastic attempt to gain popular support, the early activities of al-Nusra did not bear the hallmarks of an insurgency where consideration is given to the needs of the people. As noted by Charles Lister, one reason for this probably was that from the outset, Jabhat al-Nusra relied on experienced jihadists when building its personnel base. In his view, this was because a large number of imprisoned jihadists had been pardoned in Syria in spring and early summer 2011. These experienced cadre jihadists later took key positions in organisations such as al-Nusra.[112]

The strike in Damascus marked the start of a major series of violent attacks, which did not prompt people to flock to the organisation as al-Golani had hoped. However, according to McCants, this would soon change. This was mainly due to the fact that after expanding its operations to northern Syria, the organisation changed from a terrorist group into an actor waging an insurgency and relying on popular support. McCants suspects that this change in strategy was prompted by Abu Khalid al-Suri, an influential jihadist. Al-Suri emphasised that it was more important to gain popular support instead of relying on an uncompromising approach and harsh punishments favoured by ISI. In this, al-Suri echoed the views of al-Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri.[113]

The most visible result of the change in al-Nusra's strategy was that it soon put the organisation on a collision course with the parent organisation ISI. While ISI was uncompromising in emphasising its status as a state, al-Nusra tried to establish good contacts with the Syrian opposition and to overthrow the al-Assad regime. The confrontation caused a row between the heads of the organisations and the vagueness of the chain of command resulted in an irrevocable rift between the two groups. Al-Golani rejected al-Baghdadi's repeated demands that his organisation should accept subservience to ISI leadership, while al-Baghdadi tried to erode al-Golani's leadership by encouraging his field commanders to rise up against their emir. The split between al-Nusra and ISI occurred on 9 April 2013 when al-Baghdadi publicly declared that al-Nusra is under his command and that a new state actor has been established. This new actor was named ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham, *Dawlat al-Islamyya al-Iraq wa ash-Sham*). Al-Golani sent his response to the head of the renamed organisation the following day. His response caused an unprecedented split in the global jihadist movement. Al-Golani announced that he would not accept the declaration of al-Baghdadi and pledged allegiance directly to Ayman al-Zawahiri.[114]

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[111] Lister (2015), p. 56. See also Weiss and Hassan (2015), p. 150. According to Weiss and Hassan, it took about six months for al-Golani to build his organisation and support networks in Syria.
[112] Lister, Charles: Assessing Syria's Jihad, in: *Middle Eastern Security, The Us Pivot and The Rise of ISIS*, edited by Toby Dodge and Emile Hokayem, Routledge, New York/NY, 2014, pp. 71 and 78.
[113] McCants (2016), p. 86.
[114] Ibid., p. 91.

The combined effect of the pledges of allegiance and rifts prompted the head of al-Qaida to intervene. He sent a letter to both jihadist leaders[115], in which he criticised them, taking a fatherly approach to the conflict. He accused al-Golani of abandoning ISIS and of making al-Qaida as his own staff without consultations. At the same time, al-Baghdadi was criticised for declaring himself as the ruler of Syria and Iraq without consulting the parent organisation. All this meant that ISIS was ordered to retreat to Iraq with its demands while al-Golani was to assume responsibility for Syria.[116] Al-Zawahiri also sent Abu Khaled al-Suri, one of his confidants, to the region. He and his entourage were tasked with persuading al-Golani and al-Baghdadi, two former allies, to achieve reconciliation and correct the mistakes that al-Zawahiri characterised as 'utterly wrong' in his message.[117]

Despite this policy statement, al-Baghdadi made his views about the matter known by issuing a recorded statement. His message was clear and, from the perspective of the contemporary jihadist movement, revolutionary: there was no need for any unification negotiations as he had sent al-Golani to Syria as a commander and organiser and he and his organisation had paid al-Golani's salary and other expenses each month. Al-Baghdadi had thus taken a clear and public position against his superior in a way that was unprecedented in al-Qaida. Al-Zawahiri's response, which he sent from his hideout in Afghanistan or Pakistan and in which he dissociated himself from the acts of his former subordinate, did not leave any room for interpretation: '*The Islamic state of Iraq and greater Syria is not a member organisation of al-Qaida and the leadership of al-Qaida is no longer responsible for its actions and there is no coordination between the groups.*'[118]

This meant that there was now an irrevocable conflict between the former parent organisation and the rising sub-organisation within al-Qaida. Abu Khaled al-Suri, the negotiator sent to Syria by al-Zawahiri, was killed on the orders of al-Baghdadi, which made the position of the ISIS leader absolutely clear. The status of the flag-bearer of the global jihadist movement has been up for grabs ever since. As noted by David Kilcullen, it is clear that from that moment, the allies, sub-commands and member organisations of ISIS and al-Qaida have been at loggerheads in such places as Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria.[119] It is equally clear, however, that the dispute that started in spring 2013 did not remove ISIS from the battlefields of Syria; this had been ensured by Haji Bakr with his plans and cohorts. In fact, in a relatively short time, ISIS managed to capture areas in northern Syria and significant parts of the important oil-producing areas in western Syria.

According to William McCants, the capture of land areas amidst the chaos in Syria, which can also be interpreted as an effort to make things more difficult for al-Nusra, put Ayman al-Zawahiri as the head of al-Qaida in a situation where he had to end all cooperation with ISIS despite its potential performance.[120]

In early 2014, ISIS had also managed to gain a foothold in western Iraq. In these developments, al-Baghdadi again showed his ability to exploit existing political conflicts as he had already managed to do in Syria where the organisation was con-

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[115] See for example Atassi, Basma: *Qaeda chief annuls Syrian-Iraqi jihad merger*, Al-Jazeera, 9 June 2013, *http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/06/2013699425657882.html*, 26 October 2016.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Moubayed (2015), p. 119.
[118] Ibid., p. 120.
[119] Kilcullen (2016), p. 79.
[120] McCants (2015b).

solidating its rule in the areas under its control. A number of Sunni tribes in Iraq had started an open revolt against the Shia dominance of the central government and the perceived injustices arising from it. Al-Baghdadi and his cohorts took advantage of this situation and joined the armed uprising with his group, which had already acquired combat experience. In winter and spring 2014, ISIS had managed to gain a foothold in the Sunni-dominated Anbar province in western Iraq, especially in the cities of Fallujah and Ramadi. McCants argues that the brutal executions of security officials in these cities and the dissemination of the videos of the killings among the Iraqi armed forces and security organs helped to break the morale of the defenders of Mosul in June 2014.[121]

The victory also sealed ISIS' position in its home country Iraq. This means that, in accordance with Haji Bakr's strategic thinking and helped by the civil war in Syria, which had started in 2011, ISIS had managed to create a region of savagery where it was now able to act in the way envisaged by al-Zarqawi. It had achieved this by infiltrating the target societies, by engaging in an active terror campaign and by carrying out sizeable psychological operations.

Sami Moubayed shares McCants' view of the defenders of Mosul even though he also emphasises that the commanders in charge of the defences did not possess adequate motivation or will to lead their troops in the battle against ISIS' attack. The attack against Mosul was clearly the main operational direction of the organisation in June 2014. However, it also carried out other operations in the western parts of Iraq and as described by Moubayed, these sowed confusion among the defenders. On 5 June, the columns of ISIS entered the city of Samarra and when the Iraqi government troops reacted to the operation, the next attack targeted Ramadi, the capital of the Anbar province. When reacting to the invasion, the Iraqi troops were told that ISIS had attacked the city of Baquba, which was only 50 kilometres northwest of Baghdad.[122]

The attacks near Baghdad were a clever move by ISIS and they helped the organisation to consolidate its strongholds in the Anbar province while also heightening the threat against Baghdad posed by ISIS' presence in Fallujah. Above all, they served as an excellent diversion from the attack against Mosul, which was launched simultaneously with the other operations in central and western Iraq. In a situation where the Iraqi armed forces were stretched to the limit in a large country and the atrocities carried out by ISIS had instilled fear into the population, the battle of Mosul was over in less than a week. Three of the commanding Generals fled and according to Moubayed this caused a total collapse of the morale among the troops.[123]

This explanation sounds credible, especially when the overall situation in Iraq at the time is considered. Undoubtedly, the Iraqi government troops had for a moment believed that ISIS is everywhere, defences against it do not work and the victors will administer harsh justice in the areas that they have captured. It is clear that in such a situation, the collapse of the morale and the will to fight was a natural course of events among troops whose fighting capacity was weak to start with. There is no other explanation to this defeat in a situation where the defenders of Mosul had up to fifteen times more troops than the attacker.[124]

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[121] Ibid.
[122] Moubayed (2015), p. 113.
[123] Ibid.
[124] The Economist: *Terror's new headquarters*, 14 June 2014, *http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21604160-iraqs-second-city-has-fallen-group-wants-create-state-which-wage-jihad*, 31 October 2016.

The effectiveness of Haji Bakr's conspirational thinking had now also been demonstrated in Iraq. ISIS had collected all available information, exploited political problems and above all, quickly seized the initiative in a favourable situation. This was a practical example of the process of creating a region of savagery and making it governable. It should be noted, however, that ISIS had already been active in Iraq before 2014. For example, as a result of the terrorist strikes carried out by the organisation, June 2013 was the bloodiest month in the country since 2008. The early years of the 2010s in Iraq were marked by a series of escalating events, even though the social upheaval brought about by the Arab Spring prompted the international media to focus its attention on other parts of the Middle East.[125]

Even though ISIS is basically an Iraqi organisation, it can only be considered to represent one sectarian group in the country as it builds the administration of savagery. This is in line with Naji's idea of the people even though it does not represent the idea of the management of savagery in its purest form. While Naji has a fairly sceptical view of the willingness of the people to sacrifice themselves in a real jihad, ISIS believes in its ability to take advantage of ongoing political conflicts, ultimately relying on its brutal rule.

As described above, Naji rejects a coup as unworkable, emphasises the central role of armed action in the achievement of the goals and stresses that political and military means must be combined at all levels of the movement, including the leadership. In other words, in his view, the stages of vexation and exhaustion are essential for administering savagery and for establishing the Islamic state. One can therefore ask whether the ISIS ruled by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has been able to achieve something that is not in keeping with the insurgency strategy created by Naji. Not necessarily, when the matter is examined from the perspective of warfare.

Naji's rejection of a coup is also reflected in the way he views the regions of savagery, the stabilisation of which should be one of the main goals of the jihadist movement. In fact, he calls for the establishment of administrative guards or organs that can take responsibility for the regions of savagery and guarantee the achievement of the goals set out for this stage through social action and popular support.[126] This thinking is in line with ISIS' operating approach and may also be the main reason why Naji's thinking is considered an important inspiration for ISIS in its strategy and direction. William McCants points out, however, that in principle, ISIS has entered into statehood in an impromptu way, and emphasises its role in its project as a whole.[127]

Such short-term aims to achieve statehood may also be seen as the organisation's weakness and they provide tools for countering its overall message. In Naji's view, the stage of vexation and exhaustion as well as the goals set for it should primarily be understood positively. In that stage, the aim is to establish genuine operating conditions for defeating the untrustworthiness of the existing system, and to give the local population a chance to govern its area in a morally correct way. At the same time, ISIS can be considered to be so tied to the legacy of al-Zarqawi that it is unable to stop using violence for its own sake applying it as a deterrence and to present itself as an actor with the genuine ability to gain the trust of the people, as it claims in its propaganda. This does not necessarily mean, however, that applying

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[125] Moubayed (2015), p. 114.
[126] Lacey (2008), p. 60.
[127] See for example *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4AM1AZB88o*, 7 May 2017.

harsh rule in the areas under its control, makes ISIS unable to reshape itself as a real state actor that is determined to supress any sings of popular discontent by creating a climate of fear and by blaming the external enemy.

As described in the previous chapter, Naji lists a total of twelve different goals for the management of savagery. During the administration of savagery, jihadists should pay attention to the following: establishing and maintaining internal security, providing food supplies and medical assistance, defending the region of savagery against external threats, establishing sharia courts as organs of justice, using the region of savagery for training jihadist youth and improving its combat capability, promoting sharia studies, establishing an intelligence agency, improving the living conditions of the population both economically and morally by means of sharia justice, prohibiting hypocrisy and suppressing heresy, preparing for the moment when the region of savagery can be used as a base for direct attacks against the enemy, establishing alliances with people who in principle are sympathetic towards the jihadist movement and that have not yet pledged allegiance to the regime that the jihadists are opposing, and creating administrative groups and organisations that will assume responsibility for the administration when the Islamic state is established to replace the savagery.[128]

Even though Charles Lister is not specifically analysing the process envisaged by Naji, based on his expertise he suggests that ISIS has largely acted in accordance with the goals described above. In Lister's view, ISIS has been able to establish its own administrative model in the areas of lawlessness that it has created and captured and he adds that in the absence of other alternatives, this model has occasionally proved effective. According to Lister, in the areas under its control, ISIS has assumed responsibility for policing and administration of justice, provided free schooling, created its own administrative-bureaucratic system, participated in the maintenance of local infrastructures and provided social programmes, while maintaining contacts with influential local tribes. In some cases, the organisation has also managed to maintain public transport services, promoted the interests of consumers and organised assistance for the poor, which has included soup kitchens and vaccination programmes for children. For example, according to Lister, the ISIS administration was described as 'efficient and smoothly functioning' in northeastern Aleppo in August 2014. In September of the same year, the view in Raqqa was that '*they (ISIS) have introduced many institutional reforms, which has been impressive*'. Lister, however, reminds us of the true nature of ISIS. In his view, ISIS controls its areas like a criminal organisation, applying the 'carrot and stick' principle. On the one hand, the organisation provides basic social programmes and assistance in an otherwise chaotic environment, while on the other hand, it is prepared to impose quick and severe punishment on those violating against its rules.[129]

The strategic direction of ISIS cannot be formulated solely through the stages envisaged by Naji. In fact, at least for the organisation's actions, alternative models can also be found. For example, Aaron Zelin, a well-known expert on ISIS, divides the organisation's activities into two phases: pre-territorial control and post-territorial control. As such, this is not in accordance with Naji's thinking but Zelin clarifies his theory by saying that both of the main phases contain five sub-phases. These are the intelligence phase, military phase, *da'wa* phase, *hizba* phase and gov-

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[128] Naji (2006), pp. 17-18.
[129] Lister (2014), pp. 272–274.

ernance phase. The first of these sub-phases described by Zelin resembles the administration of savagery described in the subchapter above and the activities envisaged for it. In Zelin's own words, during this phase the jihadists create a 'Stasi-style' network of informants the main task of which is to create the operating conditions for the military phase, which in turn greatly resembles the guerrilla war stages during the administration of savagery. The ensuing phases also have similarities with the stage of the administration of savagery envisaged by Naji. During *da'wa* (Islamic missionary activities) and *hizba,* information on ISIS is disseminated, contacts with important local figures are established, religious centres are set up and propaganda work is carried out. *Hizba* can be translated as 'duty'. This means the duty of each Muslim to observe Islamic rules and the duty of the rulers to ensure that the rules are observed. According to Zelin, during *hizba*, the controls imposed by ISIS apply to everything, including social issues and the religious life of individuals. During this phase, ISIS also probably controls that citizens receive an adequate supply of good-quality foodstuffs and medicines from the parties selling them. Zelin describes the fifth phase as the general governance phase. This phase involves the establishment and operations of courts, taxation, contacts with tribal leaders and basic social services, such as the distribution of food and medicines to those in need of them.[130]

When examining the goals for the second stage of the insurgency envisaged by Naji, both Lister and Zelin make surprisingly similar observations of ISIS' activities. This despite the fact that in its stage-by-stage approach, ISIS has not applied every aspect of Naji's strategic thinking. At the same time, Naji, too, views his insurgency from a local perspective. Naji's thinking can be interpreted so that for him, each of the separately created regions of savagery is a distinctive place and a specific chain of events. These areas will then be expanded into large entities through several stages of vexation and exhaustion. In other words, in Naji's view, the vexation and exhaustion taking place in other regions simultaneously with the administration of savagery will culminate in terrorist operations aimed at supporting and expanding the region of savagery. Thus, the two main stages of his insurgency strategy can be connected at strategic level.

One example of this connection is the role of terrorism in Naji's thinking. Terrorist strikes can be considered an essential part of the stage of vexation and exhaustion. In Naji's thinking the strikes can in principle be divided into two types. On the one hand, he emphasises that small and medium-sized attacks are more effective at maintaining the stage of the administration of savagery than strategic strikes against the distant enemy on its own soil.[131] However, there is no need to avoid large-scale strikes as Naji considers them essential. However, before any such attacks are launched, the leadership of the jihadist movement must be consulted (with this, Naji probably means the supreme al-Qaida leadership).[132]

In other words, as a form of external operations, terrorist strikes are a way of directly impacting the distant enemy. At the same time, the administration of the region of savagery and its expansion mean the encounter of the Islamic regimes through an insurgency. ISIS has adhered to this principle, especially in attacks against the West, but at the same time, it has also tried to keep such places as Bagh-

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[130] *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X11Dsp5gs8Y*, 8 May 2017. Zelin took part in a panel discussion on the Islamic state, which was held in the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) on 8 September 2015.
[131] Naji (2006), pp. 17-18.
[132] Bolanos (2010), p. 106.

dad under constant threat of terrorism. By doing this, it has made itself a multifaceted actor, which uses terrorist campaigns as a prolonged preparation of fire. The senseless violence resulting from them helps to create an impression of an operational momentum so that the organisation can avoid being seen as a spent force as it suffers defeats at the hands of the Western coalition. Thus, ISIS has understood the importance of operational areas and local conflicts in different stages to its caliphate project.

5. REMAINING AND EXPANDING: FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CALIPHATE TO STATEHOOD

On 4 July 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, wearing a black robe and turban, ascended the pulpit of the Great Mosque of al-Nuri in Mosul. As pointed out by Toby Warrick, there was probably a great deal of carefully considered symbolism in his action. With the black robe and turban, al-Baghdadi referred to the Prophet Muhammad who, according to tradition, was similarly dressed when holding his last sermon. The calm gait was also in imitation of how the Prophet ascended the pulpit. Before the sermon, al-Baghdadi cleaned his teeth with a *miswak* (a small twig used for this purpose). This custom can be traced back to the *hadith* documenting the life of the Prophet according to which he encouraged regular use of *miswak* as it '*cleans your mouth and pleases the God*'.[133]

The caliphate established by ISIS had been announced a few days earlier, on 29 June 2014, but only now did al-Baghdadi, in his capacity as a caliph, made it official. The new leader of the faithful – *emir al-mu'minin* – that adopted the name Caliph Ibrahim, declared that he had been given a heavy responsibility as the leader of all Muslims. In his speech, the new caliph emphasised that he was not above any of those living under his rule. At the same time, al-Baghdadi also urged his followers to obey him if he was right, and put him on the right path, if he strays from that path.[134]

The establishment of the caliphate is not a static event for ISIS. Remaining and expanding (*baqiyya wa tatamaddad*) has become the central motto or slogan of the organisation. The phrase can also be connected with the history of ISIS described above. The different stages, starting from the legacy of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and ending with the establishment of the caliphate, represent a continuous existence for the organisation. Expansion (*tatamaddad*), the second word in the slogan, has its basis on the aspirations of the affiliate organisations and the efforts to establish ordinary administrative structures, which are discussed in this subchapter. In accordance with its motto, ISIS has systematically worked to make itself a state-like entity throughout its existence.[135]

The event held in the Great Mosque of al-Nuri in Mosul, which was laden with a great deal of symbolism and in which al-Baghdadi, who had declared himself the caliph, publicly assumed power in the areas under ISIS' control, represented a strategic turning point in this examination. After summer 2014, ISIS has, in its core regions, clearly evolved into an actor moving towards the two final stages envisaged by Naji in his insurgency thinking: establishment of the state and the stages of the remaining states. In the important work referred to above, Naji does not detail how the state should be established, what would be the most appropriate time to establish it or what the stages of the remaining states are. In this Naji is not different from traditional revolutionaries and insurgency strategists who, by producing ideas for their wars, focus on the war aimed at achieving the revolution and its organisation. As such, this choice is understandable, especially when Naji's thinking is exam-

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[133] Warrick (2015), p. 415.

[134] *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R09FmLnWC8E*, 27 June 2017.

[135] Warrick, Joby McCants, Will and Zelin, Aaron Y.: *The Rise of ISIS: 'Remaining and Expanding'*, The Washington Institute, 12 October 2015, *http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-rise-of-isis-remaining-and-expanding*, 17 May 2017.

ined against the background of his own time (early 2000s) and the difficulties faced by the core cadres of the jihadist movement as the global war on terrorism led by the United States was advancing. In such an environment, the thought that somewhere in the Islamic world, it would be possible one day to bring down a regime with terror and violence and replace it with a state ruled on the basis of Islamic law is truly revolutionary. This means that Naji was well ahead of his time when stating in the chapter on the management of savagery as follows:

> '*We must make use of books on the subject of administration, especially the management studies and theories which have been recently published, since they are consonant with the nature of modern societies.*'[136]

There is fragmented information available on ISIS administration. It is largely unstructured and future research may lead to revised interpretations of how it functions. However, if we approach the subject from the perspective of leading researchers who rely on primary sources and on the information provided by ISIS itself, we can get a fairly comprehensive picture of the statehood and shed light on its role in the strategic development of the jihadist movement.

Aaron Zelin divides ISIS' strategy into pre-territorial control and post-territorial control. In an address videoed in September 2015, he suggested that in the caliphate, such state-like entities or entities with administrative capacity only existed in Iraq, Syria and the town of Sirte in Libya, where ISIS militants were in *de facto* administrative control at the time. Discussing this statehood on the basis of the phases described in the subchapter above, Zelin suggests that with the broad range of different spying programmes used, the intelligence gathering phase increasingly resembles the activities of the security apparatus responsible for the internal security of a totalitarian state. At the same time, in the military phase, ISIS' way of waging war increasingly resembles the operations of the conventional armed forces of a state. Zelin reminds, however, that ISIS has only been able to mobilise its troops for conventional military attacks in Syria and Iraq. During *da'wa* (Islamic missionary work), ISIS focuses on ensuring the systematic nature of its propaganda work in the areas under its control. The organisation distributes Islamic literature, erects permanent propaganda billboards, maintains ethics-based education programmes, carries out propaganda work among troops engaged in fighting and shows its own video material at community events. Zelin emphasises that in areas where a state-like ISIS entity exists, the *hizba* phase culminates in public punishments and graphic documentation of them. Evidence of mutilations and other unspeakable execution methods is part of this phase and these methods are more widely used in areas where ISIS has been able to strengthen its presence and establish a state-like entity.[137]

The last phase in Zelin's classification is the governance phase in which ISIS, now in control of land areas, makes its presence felt by raising its black flag everywhere. ISIS also renames public spaces and roads. During this phase, the organisation also implements social programmes, such as road construction and maintenance projects, maintenance of power lines and construction of a commercial infrastructure. This may also include landscaping work, building of mosques and extensive projects aimed at starting industrial and agricultural operations. ISIS does not

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[136] Naji (2006), p. 23.
[137] *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X11Dsp5gs8Y*, 8 May 2017.

build factories or production plants itself as its aim is to make use of the existing industrial and agricultural infrastructure. Zelin sums ups his weightiest argument by suggesting that ISIS really tries to build a *de facto* state in the areas under its control.[138]

In his argumentation, which is based on the cogency of his primary sources, Zelin provides evidence of the fundamental theme in ISIS' thinking, which is also envisaged by Naji. Both emphasise the importance of the Islamic state to the jihadist movement. This is connected with the historic developments in the Islamic region where the spreading of this world religion is tied to the state ruled by a just caliph through sharia. On the other hand, it is clear that from the perspective of expansion-oriented military campaigns, the state serves as a base from where the armed forces launch their operations.

ISIS itself has emphasised its statehood status and particularly the orthodox governance of its state on an English-language video *Structure of the Caliphate*, which is available on its social medial channels. It is declared on the video that the supreme decision-making power has been given to Caliph Ibrahim who is responsible for defending and spreading Islam, defending the homeland, controlling the borders, equipping the military forces and the functioning of sharia justice. He also approves the penalties used in the caliphate (*hudud*). In this, the caliph is assisted by the shura council consisting of righteous and learned persons, which can be interpreted as the most important group of advisers to the caliph. The organisations of the Islamic state are supervised by a delegated committee, which can be considered the government and which is authorised to make administrative decisions. The provincial administrations of the Islamic state (*wilyat*), the administrative department or office (*dawawin*) and an organ titled "offices and committees" come under this body.[139]

According to the video, the caliphate has a total of 35 provincial or regional administrations. Nineteen of them are located in the territory of Iraq and Syria, while the remaining 16 are outside the so-called caliphate. The video only deals cursorily with the administrative regions, focusing on the administrative achievements of the Islamic state and the organisational structure that has made these achievements possible. However, it is briefly mentioned that each of the administrative regions is ruled by a protector appointed by the caliph or a governor meeting the requirements of the Islamic law (*wali*). The direct conclusion from this (as stated by ISIS) is that the administration itself is on a legal basis and just and the needs of the citizens are considered if the chain of governance is founded on Islamic law.[140]

If the provinces listed on the video are analysed against the background of Naji's thinking, particular consideration should be given to the sixteen administrative regions outside Iraq and Syria. They play a central role in the expansion efforts of ISIS. At the same time, they also fit into Naji's thinking about the expansion of the region of savagery by means of vexation and exhaustion. However, as Naji does not set any geographic boundaries for his regions of savagery, one can ask whether ISIS has overextended its administrative ambitions. Naji himself talks about the geographic scope in connection with the carrying out of terrorist strikes[141] even

[138] *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X11Dsp5gs8Y*, 8 May 2017.
[139] The Islamic State: '*The Structure of the Caliphate*', *http://jihadology.net/2016/07/06/new-video-message-from-the-islamic-state-the-structure-of-the-caliphate/*, 11 May 2017.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Naji (2006), p. 19.

though in his thinking, the regions of savagery can rather be considered to refer to centres located close to each other.

This question cannot be simply answered by relying on the hypothesis of the fragmentation of ISIS and the overextending of its forces. ISIS as such is not a monolithic actor as groupings in many different parts of the Islamic world have pledged allegiance to it. Many of the organisations that have joined ISIS are important actors of the global jihadist movement in their own regions. According to an analysis of the video, the title or recognition of *wilyat* has been granted to those organisations that are playing an important role in the expansion of ISIS' activities or in its ideology. This does not necessarily mean that all these organisations would have the same administrative capacity as the regions in western Iraq where ISIS was able to act like a state, shaping the area's societies in accordance with its wishes.

Organisations granted the status of administrative regions include wilyat Khorasan (Afghanistan/Pakistan), Caucasus (parts separated from the Caucasus emirate), Sinai, Arab Africa (Boko Haram), three separate administrative regions in Libya and the wilyat of Saudi Arabia. They are all actors with highly distinctive features even though such organisations as ISIS of Saudi Arabia have not been able to raise their operational activities to a significant level.[142]

At the same time, according to Aaron Zelin, the ISIS cells operating in Libya were occasionally able to demonstrate administrative and military performance that was almost comparable with that of the parent organisation in the Iraqi and Syrian areas under its control.[143]

In other regional administrations and their previous organisational structures, the alliance with ISIS has even caused serious internal splits. In the groupings referred to above, this is clearly seen in the ISIS administrative region in Caucasus. As shown by Gordon M. Hahn who has studied the jihadist movements of the region for many years, the Caucasus emirate used be the most important jihadist actor in the region.[144] This organisation then split into two groups: to those who continued their war in the forces of the emirate and those who pledged allegiance to ISIS under Rustam Asildarov, the head of the Dagestan regional administration of the Caucasus emirate. This jihadist leader, known by his nom de guerre Abu Muhammad al-Kadarski, declared on 21 May 2015 that the jihadist regional administrations of Ingushetia, Dagestan, Chechnya, Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachay-Cherkessia had pledged allegiance to ISIS leadership. ISIS accepted these groups into its ranks in a notification issued two days later.[145]

The dynamics of the groups in the Caucasus have also been greatly influenced by the flow of foreign fighters from the region to Iraq and Syria. There are various

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[142] The Saudi Arabian sub-organisation of ISIS is mainly a terrorist grouping. Despite having declared itself an administrative region, the cell still remains in the stage of vexation and exhaustion, when examined against the background of Naji's thinking. However, in reference to the religious and ideological significance of Saudi Arabia, the group has been given an ambitious name. Of ISIS' activities in Saudi Arabia, see for example, Al Jazeera,: *ISIL claims deadly attack on Saudi forces at mosque: At least 15 killed in blast inside mosque in southwestern province of Asir, bordering Yemen*, 7 August 2015, *http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/08/suicide-attack-mosque-saudi-arabia-southwest-150806110739697.html*, 15 May 2017.

[143] *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X11Dsp5gs8Y*, 8 May 2017.

[144] Hahn, Gordon M.: *The Petersburg Jihadi Attack in Context: Recent Developments in Jihadism in Russia*, 2014-2017, *https://gordonhahn.com/2017/04/07/the-petersburg-jihadi-attack-in-context-recent-developments-in-jihadism-in-russia-2014-2017/*, 15 May 2017.

[145] Bowen, Andrew S.: *ISIS Comes to Russia: Defectors from a homegrown jihadi insurgency in the Caucasus are now on Team Caliphate. Here's what that means*, 7 October 2015. *http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/07/10/isis-comes-to-russia*, 15 May 2017.

estimates of the number of the fighters but the statements leaked to the public suggest that there are several thousand Russian fighters in the jihadist ranks.[146] Most of them are from northern Caucasus or they have at least links to the region. The organisation of the foreign fighters operating in the conflict zones of Iraq and Syria has remained heterogeneous. They form alliances with important groupings in the region while at the same time many of them have also remained independent, providing home to many other foreign fighters.[147]

The second example of ISIS' regional administration is Libya where, according to Zelin, there were already signs of a state-like entity and the governance phase in 2015.[148] According to Mohamed Eljarah, a number of different groups were established in Libya in the chaos following the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi. Jaysh al-Islam (the Islamic army of the young) operating in the town of Derna in eastern Libya was the first of these groupings to pledge allegiance to ISIS (in October 2014). The strategic approach of ISIS in Libya is closer to Naji's thinking than to the situation in Caucasus. The supreme ISIS leadership probably realised at an early stage the opportunities provided by the bridgehead in Libya and recognised the strategic importance of the front opening there. This manifested itself in active efforts on the part of ISIS to establish a state-like entity in the country. According to Eljarah, ISIS probably sent to Libya its own competent field commanders and leaders possessing organisational skills to build resistance, which subsequently resulted in a pre-state entity of short duration. The efforts were particularly successful in the towns of Derna and Sirte where sharia courts, a religious police and other administrative organs were quickly established. They all tried to influence the lives of the local population through the obligatory *da'wa* activities, other sanctions and unimaginable methods of public punishment.[149]

The approach used in Libya shows that ISIS wants to invest in the development of an important *wilyat* and the quick achievement of statehood. Such an approach can be considered to reflect Naji's thinking because in it the central leadership plays an active role and success is supported.

The third distinctive example of an administrative region of ISIS is from Yemen. It differs from the two above-mentioned cases in that in Yemen, al-Qaida of the Arabian Peninsula is indisputably the most important representative of the global jihadist movement in the country. In Katherine Zimmerman's view, this is exactly why ISIS feels that it must have a presence in Yemen. This is essential for an organisation that aims to be the flag-bearer of the global jihadist movement. Zimmerman lists a number of reasons for this and the fact that the area of the present-day Yemen is mentioned in one of the *hadiths* describing the life of Prophet Muhammad is not the least of them. In this text, the Prophet is said to have predicted that an army of 12,000 men will rise from the region of Aden-Abyan in southern Yemen and bring victory to God's troops. In addition to this prediction, the ongoing power struggle in the region is also central to the influence of ISIS. A presence in the Arabian Peninsula is a central prerequisite for global dimension and impact. American air strikes have weakened the al-Qaida of the Arabian Peninsula. This has provided

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[146] See for example МИД: более трех тысяч россиян уехали в Сирию и Ирак воевать на стороне террористов, 21 November 2016, *https://www.gazeta.ru/social/news/2016/11/21/n_9357503.shtml*, 15 May 2017.
[147] Read more about the topic in *http://www.chechensinsyria.com/*, 15 May 2017.
[148] *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X11Dsp5gs8Y*, 8 May 2017.
[149] Eljarah, Mohamed: *Islamic State in Libya*, in *Beyond Syria and Iraq: Examining Islamic State Provinces*, edited by Katherine Bauer, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Washington DC, 2016, pp. 7–8.

an opportunity for ISIS to fill the resulting power vacuum. However, as in Iraq, the organisation has adhered to its violent and uncompromising approach when dealing with influential local figures and as a result, it has been unable to establish a sustainable administrative entity in the region.[150] This has been a fairly heavy blow to the organisation because of the great symbolic value of the region but it has also shown that ISIS is unable to adjust its own strategic approach in accordance with Naji's programme when attempting to administer existing savagery.

Soon after the release of the video referred to above, Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, a researcher specialised in the administration set up by ISIS, published a quick analysis of the video's content and how its message corresponds to what is known and what has been made public about the administration built by ISIS. In an analysis published on 6 July 2016, in which he discussed the number of administrative regions outside Iraq and Syria and the list of them, al-Tamimi emphasised that even though ISIS had already made extensive propaganda preparations with the aim of declaring a *wilyat* in the Philippines, no declaration was issued, despite the other statements on the video. According to al-Tamimi, this may have been because ISIS had already made administrative competence the key criterion determining whether a region could be called an emirate or a regional administration under the flag of ISIS.[151]

At the same time, al-Tamimi provides evidence to support his argument about the existence of an administration and statehood for their own sake by suggesting that even though ISIS has taken responsibility for strikes in Somalia, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, these attacks merely prove that terrorist cells exist and they do not demonstrate the organisation's capability to act as a state.[152]

When examined against the background of Naji's thinking, the matter is not so clear-cut. It is typical of ISIS to declare an administrative region and it has even done so in areas mentioned by al-Tamimi where it is impossible to prove that such entities exist. However, it is in the interest of ISIS to have a highly concrete presence in the areas that it considers strategically or symbolically important. The vexation and exhaustion envisaged by Naji does not preclude a situation where a state could be responsible for this stage in the management of savagery. In fact, the declaration of an administrative region proves that the areas that are amidst the first stage of the insurgency envisaged by Naji (creation of prerequisites for the war) and that ISIS has declared its *wilyats*, are of great importance for ISIS' strategic direction and ideological basis. This also makes it possible to predict where ISIS feels that it is best placed to operate in the future.

According to al-Tamimi, ISIS has shown interest in Southeast Asia and this trend has also continued after summer 2016 despite the defeats and territorial losses suffered by the organisation in the region. Based on an interactive map maintained by Intel Center, a private company specialising in intelligence analysis, there are seven groups affiliated to ISIS in the Philippines and Indonesia alone. The Philippines-based groups that support ISIS or have pledged allegiance to its supreme leadership are known in the international media as Abu Sayyaf, Ansar al-Khilafah, Bangsamoro

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[150] Zimmerman, Katharine: *Islamic State in Yemen*, in *Beyond Syria and Iraq: Examining Islamic State Provinces*, edited by Katherine Bauer, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Washington DC, 2016, pp. 24–27.
[151] Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad: '*Observations on the new Islamic State video 'Structure of the Caliphate*', 6 July 2016a, *http://www.aymennjawad.org/2016/07/observations-on-the-new-islamic-state-video*, 15 May 2017.
[152] Al-Tamimi, Aymenn: *Governance*, in *Beyond Syria and Iraq: Examining Islamic State Provinces*, edited by Katherine Bauer, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Washington DC, 2016b, pp. 30–35.

Islamic Freedom Fighters, Bangsmoro Justice Movement and Jemaah Islamiyah. Jemaah Anshorut Tauhid and Mujahideen Indonesia Timor are the groups operating in Indonesia.[153]

For example in spring 2017, the *Rumiyah* magazine, used by ISIS for its external communications, presented in one of its infographs achievements of the 'holy warriors' of east Asia that had 'pledged allegiance to the leader of the faithful'. The number of heretics killed, attacks against Christian churches and violence directed against the authorities were highlighted in the graph. Capture of territory and freeing of prisoners, both of which had taken place in the Philippines, were specifically mentioned.[154]

All this raises the question why ISIS has not yet declared Southeast Asia a separate *wilyat*? In the way shown above, Aymenn al-Tamimi argues that it is no longer in the interest of ISIS to declare territories separate administrative regions if they do not have any prerequisites for functioning as state-like entities. It can therefore be argued that one reason why ISIS has refrained from announcing the establishment of new *wilyats* after summer 2016 is that maintaining administrative structures in its core areas in Iraq and Syria has become increasingly difficult, a result of military defeats and territorial losses. Thus, statehood as an end in itself can also work in the opposite direction. The supreme ISIS leadership may have realised that it is destined to shut itself off and that administrative efficiency is not the area where it can play an active role.

This is unlikely to mean that ISIS does not attach importance to Southeast Asia and local organisations that have pledged allegiance to it. In fact, empirical evidence suggests the opposite. The choice may also indicate that as ISIS' own core area is under threat and as it is ultimately a very Iraqi organisation, it does not want to prioritise any other region over its own core area, despite the potential benefits of such a decision in terms of the overall attractiveness of the organisation.

On the video discussed above, ISIS spends considerably more time on describing its administrative activities and their successes than on characterising its regional administrative entities. There are two main reasons for this: administration and the services provided by it are of central importance to the organisation when it tries to prove itself as a state, and this helps ISIS to distinguish itself from other jihadist organisations competing with it for regional influence. Even though the video is intended for external ISIS communications, it proves that for the organisation, establishing a state is an end in itself and that its strategic goal is to win the regional struggle for power.

Of the organs under the ISIS 'government', the administrative department/office (*dawawin*) is described on the video as a system of organisations whose task is to safeguard citizens' rights. *Dawawin* has offices in each administrative region

[153] *https://intelcenter.com/maps/is-affiliates-map.html#gs.Yzy1JL4*, 16 May 2017. Intel Center's interpretation of the situation can be considered fairly accurate. Its credibility is strengthened by the interactive, and thus to some extent self-corrective, nature of the listing and the fact that Intel Center classifies organisations as supporters of ISIS and organisations that have pledged allegiance to it. The figure differs from the information provided by ISIS on its video in 2016, according to which a total of 16 *wilyats* outside Iraq and Syria had been granted the status of administrative regions. It also differs from the figure that ISIS gave at the end of 2015. According to ISIS, there were a total of 31 organisations outside Iraq and Syria at the time that had pledged allegiance to it. ISIS may intentionally refrain from naming specific groups as its member organisations because of the difficult security situation the groups in question.

[154] Al-Naba: *Rumiyah* issue 8, Rajb 1438, *https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2017/04/rome-magazine-8.pdf,* 16 May 2017.

and their main tasks include the maintenance of public facilities and responsibility for the security of citizens and practising of religion. There are a total of 14 of these offices (*diwan*). The first of them is the office handling judgements and grievances. This body deals with issues concerning sharia law, especially disputes involving marriages and family relationships. The second *diwan* is named *hisba*. This office can be characterised as the sharia police, and it is responsible for supervising the religious life of citizens. *Da'wa* and *masajid* is the third *diwan*. This can be understood as the body responsible for Islamic missionary activities and religious facilities, with particular responsibility for training and appointing religious scholars working in the Islamic state. *Zakat* is the fourth *diwan*. The name can be traced back to the Islamic alms tax, the payment of which is one of the five religious obligations of each Muslim. This office is responsible for collecting the alms tax and for distributing it fairly among those in need of it. The *diwan* of the soldiery is the fifth *diwan*. In state scale, this body can be characterised as the ministry of war or defence. It is responsible for administering wars, equipping the front-line troops, preparing military operations, establishing troops and supplying them with equipment as well as organising military training. The office responsible for public security is the sixth *diwan*. It is responsible for counterespionage and the elimination of all internal threats that endanger the existence of the Islamic state. This organ can be characterised as the security service of the Islamic state. *Diwan* of the treasury is the seventh *diwan*. It can be characterised as the ministry of finance of the Islamic state.

The *diwan* of the media is the eight *diwan*. This office is one of the responsible authorities of the Islamic state and it is responsible for all public material produced by the state. The *diwan* responsible for education in the Islamic state is the ninth *diwan*. It can be characterised as the ministry of education. The tenth *diwan* functions as the health agency. It is responsible for administering and coordinating the hospital and health care system. The eleventh *diwan* functions as the ministry of agriculture of the Islamic state. It is responsible for producing enough raw materials for foodstuffs and for ensuring the security of food supply in the Islamic state. The body name *rikaz* functions as the twelfth *diwan*. Literally, this term means 'something that is hidden (underground)'. Within the framework of the Islamic state this means the actor responsible for raw materials. It is responsible for exploiting the oil, gas and mineral resources located in the areas of the Islamic state. The *fay'* and *ghana'im* is the thirteenth *diwan*. As its name suggests, it is responsible for using and distributing all material captured by the Islamic state as war booty. The *diwan* of the services is the fourteenth *diwan*. This body can be understood as the technical services agency of the Islamic state. It is responsible for distributing water and electricity as well as the maintenance of roads and other public infrastructure.[155]

The third group of organisations coming under the government of the Islamic state is simply described as offices and committees. These five actors are characterised fairly generally as bodies that '*deal with various matters and are comprised of specialised personnel*'. The first of these is the *hijra* committee. As its name suggests, this body receives all persons immigrating to the Islamic state and assigns them to appropriate *diwans*. The second of these bodies is the committee caring for Muslim prisoners and martyrs' family members. The purpose of this committee is to liberate persons that have been imprisoned as Muslims, irrespective of where they are kept, while at

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[155] The Islamic State: '*The Structure of the Caliphate*', *http://jihadology.net/2016/07/06/new-video-message-from-the-islamic-state-the-structure-of-the-caliphate/*, 11 May 2017.

the same time, it is also responsible for looking after the family members of martyrs that have lost their lives in the battles fought by the Islamic state. The third of these bodies is the committee focusing on research work. It is responsible for researching issues concerning sharia law and delegating the practical implementation of its decisions to relevant Islamic state actors. The fourth of the organisations in this structure is the administrative department, which is responsible for distant administrative regions. This means the sixteen areas that are located outside Iraq and Syria. The fifth of these separate organisations is the agency responsible for maintaining contacts with the most senior and respected representatives of the tribes in the Islamic state. In other words, the existence of this office shows that the Islamic state is aware of the traditional tribal structures in the areas under its control and their firm hold on different sections of society.[156]

Brian Fishman, a researcher specialised in the Iraqi al-Qaida and later in ISIS, has also provided insights into the importance of state to ISIS and its predecessor. He discusses the topic on the basis of a strategic plan, which can be traced back to the period of ISI and is aptly named as the *Master Plan*. The plan on which Fishman bases his argumentation is, as such, not particularly new or unknown to researchers. However, it gives a good idea of the grand scale of ISI's strategic thinking and the organisation's ability to take a long-term perspective.[157]

The author of this study has made use of the plan in another context by explaining that it originates from the biography of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi written by Fu'ad Husayn, a Jordanian journalist. The plan presents a time line for creating the Islamic state over a period of twenty years. Husayn bases his views of the plan on his discussions with al-Zarqawi and Sayf al-Adil, the then security chief of the Iraqi al-Qaida. The 20-year plan is divided into seven stages, starting in 2000.[158]

> ### Stage 1: The Awakening: 2000-2003
> This stage began with the planning for the September 11 attacks, which were carried out, according to Husayn, in an effort to trigger an American attack on the Islamic nation. Al-Qaida strategists wanted the United States to move closer to their strongholds and operating areas so that the organisation could wage war against it. This stage is considered to have ended with the American occupation of Baghdad.
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> ### Stage 2: The Eye-Opening: 2003-2006
> In this stage al-Qaida and the jihadist ideology become popular. It is characterised by a conflict with Israel, strikes against oil production in the Arab countries to the detriment of the West, war in the electronic media, establishing centres of power in different parts of the Islamic

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[156] Ibid.

[157] Fishman, Brian H.: *The Master Plan: ISIS, al-Qaeda and the Jihadi Strategy for Final Victory*, Yale University Press, New Haven/CT, 2016. The periodic division used by Fishman is different from what is presented in this study. In Fishman's model, the sixth stage is to end in 2018, while stage seven is to last from 2018 to 2020. This difference is noteworthy but with it Fishman probably wants to characterise the dynamic nature of the last stage and not merely the finality brought about by the victory.

[158] Springer Devin R., Regens James L., Edger David N.: *Islamic radicalism and global jihad*, Georgetown University Press, Washington D.C., 2009, p. 76. The authors use the following series of articles published in the newspaper *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* on 28 and 30 May 2005 as their source: '*Al-Zarqawi…The Second Generation of Al-Qa'ida*' All seven stages of the strategy are carefully detailed in these two articles. See the author's analysis of the topic: Paronen (2016), p. 199.

world, using Iraq as a base to build an Islamic army, and the shaping of the interpretation of Islamic law to achieve popularity and support.

Stage 3: Reawakening and Standing Upright: 2007-2010
In this stage, major changes will take place in the land areas surrounding Iraq. *Mujahidin* fighters that are committed champions will focus their attention on the Levant and Turkey. The confrontation with Israel will begin and strikes against the Jewish population of Turkey will be launched. After destroying the Jewish clique of Turkey, which had control over the country's economy and military, the *mujahidin* will have obtained a large number of young men to carry out the fourth stage.

Stage 4: Recuperation and Possession of Power: 2010-2013
Continuing destruction of the oil resources of the Arab countries will undermine economic stability in the Western world. Direct confrontations between the West and the Islamic fighters will contribute to the destruction of the global powers of the West. According to Husayn, al-Qaida has recruited economic experts to prove that neither the United States nor any other global economies coordinated by the Jews have backed up their substantial cash reserves with gold. Jihadist ideologists will simultaneously start disseminating the message stressing the importance of backing up national currencies with gold. As a result, the world markets will return to gold standard, which will cause a strong devaluation of the American dollar. This in turn will undermine trust in the American economy and will prompt other countries to withdraw their investments from the US market. The worsening economic situation in the United States will prompt the American people to question the Jewish-led idea of printing money without being backed up by gold, which will ultimately cause Israel to lose American support.

Stage 5: Declaring an Islamic State: 2013-2016
During this period, Western influence over the Arab world will start to fade, while India and China will develop into major powers. The British, seeing Anglo-Saxon superiority crumble, will take action resulting in the halt of the unification of Europe. At the same time, there will be a considerable weakening in the Israeli power and the country will lose its ability to carry out pre-emptive strikes. Finally, an Islamic caliphate is established.

Stage 6: All-out Confrontation: 2016-2020
The world is divided into two camps. The final war between faith and atheism ensues, which will lead to the seventh stage.

Stage 7: Final Victory: 2020
The end of falsehood will be achieved. With the final victory, the Islamic caliphate will once again lead humanity.

According to an analysis, the plan is important because it demonstrates rational thinking, provides a framework for the organisation of the masses and, above all, shows that ISIS is capable of state-level planning, encouraging recruits to join the organisation. If the plan is examined against the background of ISIS' activities (as Fishman does), it is clear that there are surprising similarities between the plan and how ISIS has evolved. For example, the caliphate was established in 2014, exactly as set out in the plan. Brian Fishman reminds, however, that the successes of ISIS are not merely the result of a plan containing accurate predictions but that the plan nevertheless shows that ISI is capable of understanding extensive social dynamics, from demography to simmering social conflicts.[159]

Fishman discusses the administration of ISIS during stage six of the plan. This is a natural choice because it functions as the strategic culmination of ISIS as a state. By the time it has reached stage six, the Islamic state must be capable of acting like a state and thus also of initiating the final confrontation.

From the perspective of the governance of the Islamic state, Fishman's analysis, which covers several years, shows that ISIS' bureaucracy or the structure of its administration already existed during ISI. In fact, his argument is that ISIS' administration is largely similar to that of ISI in 2006. Major changes have, of course, taken place and the number of personnel has increased but the virtual organisations set up during ISI have continued to exist after the establishment of the caliphate. However, for Fishman, all changes in the administrative organisation of ISIS are only a process of natural operational developments, which was put into motion in the early years of the 2000s when the organisation made the crucial decision of striving for statehood.[160] This supports the argumentation of Aymenn al-Tamimi that the basic structures of ISIS' administrative organisation already emerged before the 2010s. According to Al-Tamimi, one of the major achievements of these actors, which he calls ministries, was the establishment of an organisation that was able to link the funding obtained from local sources by criminal means to the maintenance of the organisation. In his view, this was one factor that helped the organisation to become an economically independent actor.[161]

Katherine Bauer suggests that such regional networks are a major reason why, especially in 2014 and 2015, ISIS was justifiably considered the wealthiest terrorist organisation of the world. ISIS created its funding channels many years ago and they helped the organisation to build a yearly budget of about two billion dollars (2014). The revenue came from a broad range of different sources, the most important of which was the seizing of oil and gas resources for the organisation's own use. ISIS was able to convert these resources into money by using existing smuggling networks. Local population has been the second important source of revenue for ISIS. According to Bauer, it has taxed the population in the areas under its administration so that the taxes collected from the local population, companies and production plants have accounted for about one half of the budget referred to above. These activities have their origins in the extortion and protection money networks built by

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[159] *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I2yAWBN4X54*, 17 May 2017. The link will take you to a videoed discussion arranged by the New America Foundation on 17 November 2016 in which Brian Fishman is talking about his new book and the development of ISIS.
[160] Fishman (2016), pp. 218–219.
[161] Al-Tamimi (2016b), p. 31.

ISIS, which have allowed the organisation to convert the small amounts of revenue collected from local sources into a government-level funding channel.[162]

However, Bauer does not believe that ISIS' *wilyats* would be able to copy the funding model of their parent organisation. The main reason for her argumentation is probably that each of regional ISIS organisations is significantly different from its parent organisation and that despite the same ideology, the regional organisations must base their activities on the social realities prevailing in their areas. Thus, in her view, it makes these regional organisations potentially more economically dependent on their parent organisation (which is already hard-pressed). This is one of the potential conflicts that may cause the fragmentation of ISIS' administrative structure and lead to internal conflicts in the jihadist movement.[163]

One of the most important trends in the global jihadist movement should also be briefly discussed in this context. It is central to the future of ISIS and jihadist terrorism. The movement of foreign fighters generated by the rise of ISIS has been unprecedented in recent history. Even though it is impossible to draw a clear parallel between the movement of foreign fighters and terrorism, there is no doubt that there is a connection between the two. Juha Saarinen has analysed the subject in a way that deserves to be quoted:

> *'...the phenomenon of foreign fighters exists separately from international terrorism. Foreign fighters can play an important role in conflicts in which they take part, as we have seen in such places as Iraq and Syria. However, the consequences of the flows of foreign fighters may also be felt outside the conflict zones... through global jihadism as we have seen on several occasions over the past fifteen years. For many individuals, the experience as a foreign fighter has served as a stepping stone to radicalisation and the most extreme forms of political violence. Many of the jihadists that have joined al-Qaida over the past ten years have started their careers as foreign fighters. This has blurred the distinction between the phenomenon of foreign fighters and international terrorism.'[164]*

As described by Saarinen, ISIS is part of the linear development of the global jihadist movement and, as al-Qaida, it benefits from the movement of foreign fighters and the social movement that has arisen around it. Almost all foreign fighters have social networks in their own countries that may provide the potential recruits with active support. Such networks have their own reasons for being active or passive supporters and the potential of these networks as instigators of terrorist strikes should not be underestimated.

Even though foreign fighters are not a new phenomenon in the framework of the Islamic world, it is now occurring in unprecedented scale. For Edwin Bekker and Mark Singleton, the phenomenon is a natural consequence of the civil war in Syria and the groups that have arisen as a result of the conflict and that became increasingly attractive to foreign fighters between 2013 and 2015. The observations

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[162] Bauer, Katherine: *Financing, in Beyond Syria and Iraq: Examining Islamic State Provinces*, edited by Katherine Bauer, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Washington DC, 2016b, p. 48.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Saarinen, Juha: *Vierastaistelijailmiö islamilaisessa maailmassa Afganistanista Syyriaan* (Phenomenon of foreign fighters in the Islamic world from Afghanistan to Syria) in *Vihatkoot kunhan pelkäävät – näkökulmia terrorismiin ilmiönä* (Let them hate, so long as they fear: perspectives to terrorism as a phenomenon), edited by Antti Paronen and Olli Teirilä, National Defence University, Department of Strategic and Defence Studies, Series 2: Research Reports No. 51. Tampere, 2014, pp. 69–70.

made by Bekker and Singleton are based on an analysis of quantitative material on the basis of which they show that there has been a steady increase in the number of foreign fighters. It was estimated in 2012 that between 700 and 1,400 people had travelled to the conflict zone. There was a significant increase in the number of foreign fighters by mid-2013. At that time, it was estimated that there were 11,000 fighters from at least 70 countries in the region. According to Bekker and Singleton, these fighters were motivated by the determination to '*fight the regime of Bashar al-Assad*'.[165]

The declaration of the ISIS caliphate in 2014 encouraged more foreign fighters to join the organisation's ranks. However, just before the rise of ISIS to global publicity in June 2014, some estimates put the number of foreign fighters in the region at 12,000. These individuals came from a total of 81 different countries.[166] The figure was provided by Soufan Group, a private company providing strategic intelligence services. In December 2015, Soufan Group published a new study on the subject, in which it again analysed the number and countries of origin of the foreign fighters in the conflict zones of Iraq and Syria. This time, the analysts of the company suggested that the actual number of foreign fighters in the region is between 27,000 and 31,000 and that they come from 86 different countries. Of this total, 5,000 are from Western Europe. It might also be added that the number of foreign fighters from Finland is put at 70, which according to Soufan Group is a figure provided by the Finnish authorities. Furthermore, the number of individuals that had returned from the conflict zone was estimated at more than 25.[167]

The flow of foreign fighters to Iraq and Syria has, however, dried up after 2015.[168] This is confirmed be a number of studies, including the report on trends in the foreign fighter phenomenon published by the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT) in December 2016. In the report, Tanya Mehra, the author of the study, argues that the operational losses suffered by ISIS in its military campaign are the main reason for the drying up of the flow of foreign fighters. By the end of 2016, it had lost 61 per cent of the Iraqi territory and 24 per cent of the Syrian terri-

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[165] Bakker, Edwin and Singleton, Mark: *Foreign Fighters in the Syria and Iraq Conflict: Statistics and Characteristics of a Rapidly Growing Phenomenon*, in *Foreign Fighters under International Law and Beyond,* edited by Andrea de Guttry, Fransesca Capone, Christophe Paulussen, Springer, New York/NY, 2016, pp. 13–14, 16.

[166] Ibid.

[167] The Soufan Group: *Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq*, December 2015, *http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf*, 18 May 2017. Since then, there has been an increase in the number of foreign fighters originating from Finland. As this study was being written, the Finnish Security Intelligence Service put the number of individuals that have travelled from Finland to the conflict zones of Iraq and Syria at about 80. It is estimated that about 20 of them have returned to Finland and that more than ten have been killed. This would mean that there are a few dozen Finns or individuals that have travelled from Finland in the conflict zone at the moment. However, the characterisation of the activities or combatant status of these individuals is outside the scope of this study and for this reason, the subject is not examined in any greater detail. Read more about the topic at Juntunen, Marko, Creutz-Sundblom, Karin and Saarinen, Juha: *Suomesta Syyrian ja Irakin konfliktikentälle suuntautuva liik-kuvuus* (Mobility between Finland and the conflict zones in Iraq and Syria), Publications of the Government´s analysis, assessment and research activities 43/2016, October 2016*http://tietokayttoon.fi/documents/10616/2009122/43_Suomesta+Syyrian+ja+Irakin+konfliktikent%C3%A4lle +suuntautuva+liikkuvuus.pdf/c3211f98-4522-4972-8867-8ece7664d9ec?version=1.0*, 19 May 2017.

[168] For example, Washington Post reported on this in spring 2016. At the time, the top US military leadership estimated that by May of that year, the flow of foreign fighters had been reduced by about 90 per cent. The number of individuals trying to reach Iraq and Syria had fallen from 2,000 to 200 each month. Read more about the topic at Gibbons-Neff, Thomas: Number of foreign fighters entering Iraq and Syria drops by 90 percent, Pentagon says, April 26, 2016, *https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2016/04/26/number-of-foreign-fighters-entering-iraq-and-syria-drops-by-90-percent-pentagon-says/?utm_term=.0d444a3b4af2*, 19 May 2017.

tory that it had captured in 2014. There had been a substantial decrease in its oil revenue and taxation capability and it was no longer able to provide its fighters with the salaries that it used to pay in the past.[169] Thus, the direct military action taken against ISIS has played a major role in the drying up of the flow of foreign fighters. It has forced the organisation to withdraw to the areas around the population centres under its control and to its core areas in Iraq and Syria and ISIS has also lost a large proportion of its personnel, heavy weaponry and vehicles in the fighting.

Mehra also highlights a second important factor contributing to the reduction in the flow of foreign fighters: the change in the Turkish attitude towards fighters travelling to Syria. The profiling teams that Turkey has set up at airports have managed to pick a substantial number of individuals that may have been on their way to the conflict zone. Mehra gives an example of this: in July 2016 alone, Turkey expelled a total of 3,500 individuals it suspected of being foreign fighters and between early 2015 and summer 2016, it had prevented 2,200 potential foreign fighters from entering the country.[170]

The figures are only rough estimates and they are based on the information provided by Turkey. However, even if they only give an indication of the actual trends, they confirm what has been clear since the end of 2015: for a variety of reasons, the flow of foreign fighters to Iraq and Syria is now only a fraction of what it was in the peak years. This means that we can now expect a large proportion of the foreign fighters to return to their countries of origin. This is a realistic prospect because according to a number of estimates, up to 30 per cent of the foreign fighters that had travelled to Iraq and Syria since the start of the conflict has returned to their countries of origin or moved to third countries. The role of returned foreign fighters in terrorist strikes in such places as Brussels, Istanbul and Paris shows that the phenomenon of foreign fighters serves as a catalyst that may also prompt radicalised networks to carry out such attacks in the future.

The report published by the UN Security Council in February 2017 supports Merhra's assessment. According to the document, there has been a significant drop in the number of foreign fighters travelling to the conflict zones of Iraq and Syria. The report lists two main reasons for this trend: stricter attitudes among member states towards the travelling of foreign fighters and the diminishing appeal of ISIS as it finds itself increasingly hard-pressed amidst military countermeasures. In the report containing the assessment, it is also highlighted that many of those still in the conflict zone are probably planning to stay there and those wanting to get out have already left. At the same time, it is also estimated that when returning, the foreign fighters staying behind pose the highest risk in their countries of origin or in other countries where they can travel with their travel documents. These people are estimated to be committed jihadists and well-prepared to carry out or facilitate terrorist strikes.[171]

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[169] Mehra, Tanya: *Foreign Terrorist Fighters: Trends, Dynamics and Policy Responses*, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, ICCT Policy Brief, December 2016*, https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/ICCT-Mehra-FTF-Dec2016-1.pdf*, 19 May 2017, p. 5.

[170] Ibid., p. 6.

[171] United Nations Security Council: *Fourth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat*, Distr.: General, 2 February 2017, S/2017/97, *https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N17/024/61/PDF/N1702461.pdf?OpenElement*, 18 May 2017.

Thus, based on the arguments presented by Saarinen above, it can be concluded that where many of the al-Qaida militants started their careers as foreign fighters and adopted the global jihadist ideology in the fields of jihad, the UN Security Council assumes that this will also be the case with ISIS combatants. Individuals that may be able to leave the conflict zones are basically classified as security threats in such Muslim countries affected by terrorism as Saudi Arabia and Tunisia.

The valid assumption presented by the UN Security Council referred to above shows that, in terms of terrorism, ISIS has moved away from Naji's thinking and adopted a different approach. Naji does emphasise the essential role of terrorism but, in accordance with the classic teachings of insurgency, he thinks that it should only be applied in regional scale and actually considers terrorism and violence as a necessary evil. Naji is of the opinion that in international context, terrorist strikes have a role to play but he views them differently than ISIS. Naji thinks that terrorism should primarily be used as a recruitment tool that encourages young Muslims to join the jihadist movement. He emphasises that such strikes (qualitative operations) bring the best results when carried out as medium-scale attacks, such as the strike on Bali in 2002.[172] The strike was directed at the Kuta tourist resort on the Indonesian island of Bali and it claimed a total of 202 lives.[173] Naji also refers to major qualitative operations, stating that the strikes carried out on 11 September 2001 were of such type. Such strikes should be avoided or, if they are planned, it is essential that the supreme leadership of the jihadi movement is consulted in advance.[174]

Naji also encourages terrorist strikes outside the region of savagery when the aim is to retaliate against attacks directed at the jihadist movement. He discusses these attacks when expounding the principle of 'paying the price'. This is Naji's way of referring to retaliatory attacks against parties that choose to wage war against the jihadist actor administering a region of savagery. Each such strike should be justified separately and linked to the retaliation against a specific attack. There should be no excuses for not carrying out such strikes as in Naji's view, the enemy must 'pay a price' even if the planning and execution of the revenge attack took a great deal of time. The main purpose of such strikes is to drive the enemy into a state of desperation.[175]

It can be said that ISIS has followed this advice, but the organisation has also taken the idea of terrorism further than what was envisaged by Naji. Terrorist attacks are used as a remote strategic instrument, and they can be considered a type of special operations. It has also been credibly demonstrated that the decisions on such operations are made in the upper echelons of the ISIS leadership, which also steers them. Information about ISIS' shadowy external operations branch has leaked to the public at regular intervals. The article on ISIS' external operations branch written by Rukmini Callimachi and published in the New York Times in late summer 2016 has attracted particularly great attention in the public debate on the subject. Callimachi who has followed developments in ISIS and jihadism for many years used an interview with an ISIS defector to show that the organisation possesses the

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[172] Naji (2006), pp. 16-17.
[173] Of the news coverage of the Bali attack, see for example *http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/2778923.stm,* 19 May 2017.
[174] Naji (2006), p. 17.
[175] Ibid., pp. 32-33.

capability to mobilise terrorist strikes in foreign countries and that they are a clear strategic choice on part of the organisation.[176]

Based on the interview with an ISIS defector, Callimachi suggests that in spring 2016, ISIS wanted to expand its external operations to Britain and Germany as, according to the organisation's recruiters, ISIS did not have enough well-prepared and strongly committed networks in these countries. The recruiters also reported that in France the situation was different and in that country, the networks were ready.[177]

Jean-Charles Brisard and Kevin Jackson have examined the impact of French-speaking terrorism and/or foreign fighters in more detail, suggesting that ISIS has tried to infiltrate its operators into many European countries using a variety of different means. If the aim has been to form new cell structures, recruits may have been sent quickly back from such countries as Turkey so that their visits would seem as ordinary holiday trips. Likewise, Brisard and Jackson show on the basis of their findings that ISIS has made active efforts to use the flows of refugees and their routes when sending its operators to Europe. As an example, they give the Balkan route used by ISIS on which detailed intelligence was provided by a young Algerian man to whom Brisard and Jackson simply refer as Bilal C. He was sent to his mission by Abdelhamid Abaaoud, one of the chief architects of the terrorist strike carried out in France in November 2015. The Balkan route had opened in 2015 when Macedonia allowed the large number of refugees that had built up as a result of the migrant crisis affecting Europe at the time to pass through the country in 72 hours. This provided an unprecedented opportunity to infiltrate experienced jihadist cadres into Europe despite the fact that they might have been listed as terrorists by different authorities.[178]

One could claim that ISIS is simply making more extensive use of the principle of 'paying the price' as set out by Naji and has tried to infiltrate potentially capable individuals into European countries. Instead of carrying out attacks in Europe with the sole purpose of recruiting young Muslims or retaliating against attacks directed at rulers of regions of savagery, ISIS has established these attack networks and cells to actively influence events. In accordance with the age-old rules of war, the aim is to attack the enemy wherever possible and where the attacks have the greatest impact on the enemy societies. ISIS has also used a different code of terrorism principles. It has actively combined its propaganda message, operational instructions and inspiration typical of a social movement in a way that is not organisational leadership but a way of demonstrating encouragement-based leadership.

In this respect, ISIS has made a conscious choice. Harry Safro (the ISIS defector interviewed in the New York Times) told Callimachi that he was approached by ISIS' external operations branch on several occasions. This body is widely known by its Arabic name *Emni*. Callimachi characterises the branch as the actor responsible for ISIS' external operations and internal security whose main task is to infiltrate ISIS fighters into other countries to carry out terrorist strikes on their soil. New

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[176] Callimachi, Rukmini: *How a Secretive Branch of ISIS Built a Global Network of Killers: A jailhouse interview with a German man who joined the Islamic State reveals the workings of a unit whose lieutenants are empowered to plan attacks around the world*. New York Times, 3 August 2016, *https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/04/world/middleeast/isis-german-recruit*-interview.html?smprod=nytcore-iphone&smid=nytcore-iphone-share&_r=0, 22 May 2017.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Brisard, Jean-Charles and Jackson, Kevin: *The Islamic State's External Operations and the French-Belgian Nexus*, Combating Terrorism Center Sentinel, 10 November 2016, *https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-islamic-states-external-operations-and-the-french-belgian-nexus*, 22 May 2017.

light was shed on its operating principles after the strikes carried out in Paris in November 2015 when it gradually became clear that the branch had probably started planning external operations at the time when the caliphate was being established.[179]

As suggested by Bridget Moreng, the agency responsible for external operations is also known as *Amn al-Kharji*. Despite the variety of different names, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, who served as the official spokesman of ISIS and who was killed in August 2016, was always named as the head of the agency.[180] The regional heads of external operations were subordinated to him. According to Safro, the strikes in Europe were the responsibility of a separate operational office.[181] It can be assumed that the organisation is further divided into persons responsible for individual countries and regions and that these persons already have contacts and networks in these countries. Thus, it can also be assumed that in principle, ISIS is capable of having a direct chain of command extending to the fighters it has sent to Europe and/or their networks.

Based on open sources, it is difficult to prove a direct link between the perpetrators of individual terrorist strikes and ISIS' external operations branch. If it really was Emni that approached Safro and if the aim was to recruit him to establish cells in Germany capable of carrying out terrorist strikes[182] and this is compared with the story of Salman Abedi, the suspect in the suicide bombing in Manchester on 22 May 2017, it can at least be assumed that ISIS' methods have remained more or less unchanged after spring 2016.

According to the US authorities, Abedi had probably spent three weeks in Libya, which is amidst a civil war, before the strike in Manchester and returned from there only a few days before the attack.[183] According to the openly available information, there is no proof that Abedi had met with any ISIS officials responsible for external operations even though the timetable and the presence of ISIS in Libya suggest this. His visit and the attack immediately after it suggest that Abedi had been to the country to receive training, orders and instructions for the attack.

Even though similar assumptions can be made of many of the attacks carried out after 2014 it is clear that ISIS has urged its followers to carry out strikes without any organisational contacts with the main group or the regional organisation. The clearest indication of this is the speech by al-Adnani in May 2016. In his address the then official spokesman of ISIS (and possibly the head of the organisation's external operations) declared that even the smallest violent attack carried out on enemy soil is more significant than a major attack in the area administered by ISIS and that

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[179] Callimachi (2016).
[180] Moreng, Bridget: *ISIS' Virtual Puppeteers: How They Recruit and Train 'Lone Wolves'*, Foreign Affairs, 21 September 2016, *https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2016-09-21/isis-virtual-puppeteers*, 24 May 2017.
[181] Callimachi (2016).
[182] Ibid. Safro says that he was approached by recruiters on two occasions. On the second occasion, his friend asked the representatives of Emni about the situation of the French networks as these are trying to recruit attackers and facilitators in Britain and Germany. The representatives of the external operations branch had laughed in a relaxed way and stated that from their perspective, the situation was particularly favourable in France.
[183] Starr, Barbara: *US officials: Manchester suspect spent 3 weeks in Libya prior to attack*, CNN, 24 May 2017, *http://edition.cnn.com/2017/05/24/politics/manchester-attacker-libya/*, 25 May 2017.

such an attack would be more beneficial to ISIS and more harmful to its enemies than a military operation in the area controlled by the caliphate.[184]

This call can be interpreted as an inspiration for independent attacks, instead of acting within the organisation's chain of command. Thus, al-Adnani, in his capacity as the official representative of the supreme ISIS leadership, empowered the social movement associated with the organisation and provided it with an opportunity to show its allegiance to the organisation by using violence. This plan, in which ISIS wanted to increase its operational momentum for its own sake, also meant that the speech by al-Adnani served as the definite proof that ISIS had developed a novel application of Naji's strategy, despite the areas under its control.

What can then be said of this new strategic thinking and how can it be explained when examined against the background of the thinking that has emerged in the already known jihadist movement? Even though the model presented by Naji explains a great deal of ISIS' behaviour and its strategic choices, it is essential to examine the cyclical nature that explains the evolution of the strategic thinking of the global jihadist movement. This is particularly important when we are making forecasts about the future.

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[184] Prince, S. J.: READ: ISIS Spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani '*That They Live By Proof*' English Speech Translation, 23 May 2016, *http://heavy.com/news/2016/05/new-isis-islamic-state-al-furqan-media-audio-message-that-they-live-by-proof-egyptair-flight-ms804-804-mp3-read-english-translation-text-download/#comments*, 26 May 2016.

6. STRATEGIC CYCLICALITY OF THE GLOBAL JIHADIST MOVEMENT

Hussein al-Taee, the expert on Iraq in the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), which continues the mediating work initiated by Martti Ahtisaari, predicted on the eve of the massive attack against Mosul that ISIS will sink to the level of al-Qaida.[185] Al-Taee's prediction is a multifaceted analysis but it is above all a clear sign of how the experts on the global jihadist movement and the regions where it operates outline the evolution of this actor. Most of the members of the al-Qaida central leadership have been driven underground and the group's operational capability is largely dependent on the performance of its regional affiliate organisations. Over the past ten years, al-Qaida has changed shape in many ways and the view is that in its current strategy it is more interested in cooperating with the local population than in concentrating on terrorist strikes against the West. This does not mean that al-Qaida would refrain from using terrorism as a local deterrent or that it would be unwilling to incite its followers to carry out well-planned and effective terrorist strikes in the West[186]. However, the lack of visibility for its activities has meant that since 2014 when ISIS skyrocketed into publicity, the public debate on al-Qaida has decreased into occasional reporting on its activities.[187]

The sinking of ISIS to the level of al-Qaida may thus primarily mean that when suffering increasingly severe losses and when becoming increasingly hard-pressed in Iraq and Syria, it must rely on its own regional actors. This may also mean that the regional actors must momentarily refrain from carrying out terrorist strikes against the West. The model offered by al-Qaida lends credibility to this argument. The research on ISIS' terrorist activities shows, however, that already before its external operations branch was uncovered, the organisation was determined to carry out terrorist strikes in the West. According to Thomas Hegghammer and Peter Nesser, two well-known researchers on the subject, ISIS had from the outset relied on the power of its own social movement, sympathisers and followers.[188]

In 2015, at the time of the publication of their article, which was based on a quantitative approach, Hegghammer and Nesser were – understandably – unaware of the ISIS' external operations branch. Muhammad al-Adnani had not yet issued his call to attack enemy countries if a Muslim had been unable to make a journey to the caliphate. Nevertheless, the quantitative analysis of the actual and planned ISIS-linked terrorist strikes produced by Hegghammer and Nesser shows that already at the time ISIS was determined to encourage its followers in the West to carry out

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[185] Kähkönen, Virve: *Mosulissa pelätään koston kierrettä – suomalainen järjestö lähtee rakentamaan rauhaa vallattavaan kaupunkiin* (A cycle of revenge is feared in Mosul: a Finnish organisation will help to build peace in the city), Helsingin Sanomat, 17 October 2016, *http://www.hs.fi/ulkomaat/a1476676200275*, 20 October 2016.

[186] Joscelyn, Thomas: *Hamza bin Laden offers 'advice for martyrdom seekers in the West'*, 13 May 2017, *http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/05/hamza-bin-laden-offers-advice-for-martyrdom-seekers-in-the-west.php*, 31 May 2017.

[187] Kilcullen, David: Keynote address at the discussion event the *Age of Islamic Militancy* at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs in Helsinki on 23 May 2017. Notes in the possession of the author. Kilcullen also reminded his listeners that in accordance with its prevailing strategic approach, al-Qaida refrains from terrorist strikes carried out by its affiliate organisations against the West. In this context he referred to the instructions issued by Ayman al-Zawahiri, the emir of al-Qaida, to Abu Mohammed al-Golani, the head of its affiliate organisation in Syria. According to al-Golani, in these instructions, al-Zawahiri prohibited the regional leadership in Syria to carry out terrorist strikes in the West.

[188] Hegghammer, Thomas and Nesser Peter: *Assessing the Islamic State's Commitment to Attacking the West*, Perspectives on Terrorism, Vol. 9, no 4, 2015.

terrorist strikes in their home countries. In accordance with what is said above, this is in conflict with Naji's thinking and shows that ISIS does not solely rely on Naji's strategic approach in its international terrorist strategy.

What does Naji's model tell us about the future of the strategic direction or thinking of the global jihadist movement? It is clear that interpreting ISIS and its history through the thoughts of a single theorist cannot be generalised to comprise all possible future scenarios involving a social movement based on global jihadism. In the way described above, Naji's strategic model has been presented as an explanation of the methods of ISIS and the organisation's strategic foundation. However, as this report was being written, ISIS was still losing territory and it was suffering a series of major defeats. Thus, it cannot be assumed that it could endlessly keep its areas under its control and continue the administration of savagery. The organisation will probably revert to the state that Naji would describe as the stage of vexation and exhaustion. At the same time, however, ISIS is unlikely to give up its determination to carry out terrorist strikes in international scale because this goal alone means that it can claim to be the flag-bearer of the global jihadist movement.

As argued by al-Taee, ISIS may thus well sink to the level where al-Qaida was after losing its strongholds in Afghanistan in 2001–2002. At the time, the jihadist cadres led by Osama bin Laden really started to court the Islamic world to win support among Muslims and they also continued the process of strengthening their influence through acts of terrorism. In fact, we are now in a situation where ISIS must, like many other insurgent groups, admit that it is on the defensive and move back to the stage of vexation and exhaustion. At the same time, it will try to maintain its influence over its affiliate organisations and mobilise its followers to carry out new terrorist strikes in the West and elsewhere in the world. When we are examining the strategic choices in such a situation and thus also the future of the global jihadist movement, we must look beyond the model envisaged by Naji.

However, we can say something about this possible future scenario because an actor waging a regional insurgency and relying on asymmetric military methods is historically destined to observe certain rules. Such an approach is aptly called by Janne Mäkitalo as dynamic shift between phases of insurgency. With this, he means the ability of the insurgent party to flexibly adjust its level of activity in accordance with different stages of its strategy. Likewise, the same insurgent actor can deploy troops in different stages of the conflict in different regions while at the same time aiming to achieve its overall strategic goal.[189]

The principles of dynamic shift between phases of insurgency are also present in strategic military thinking. In this connection, we should take a closer look at the claim presented above that Abu Bakr Naji and Muhammad Khalid al-Hakaymah are the same person. As shown by Brian Fishman, there is no certainty of this but he adds that the suggestion has been made by Imam al-Sharif, the founding member of the Egyptian Islamic jihad represented by al-Hakaymah. This view is shared by Hani Nasira, an Egyptian expert on jihadist groups, who lists three main reasons to support his claim. Firstly, he refers to the claims presented by al-Sharif and the circles close to the family of sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, the founder of al-Gamaa al-Islamiyaa, that these two men are the one and same person. The second argument put forward by Nasira relates to the way Naji and al-Hakaymah express themselves.

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[189] Mäkitalo, Janne: public examination of the dissertation 25 May 2012, the report prepared on the event is in the author's possession.

They are both analytical in their writings, make references to Western literature on strategic matters and prefer short argumentative sentences. Both Naji and al-Hakaymah also use phrases that are known in the Arabic dialects in North Africa. The third reason is that Naji stopped publishing his writings at the same time when al-Hakaymah died in an air strike in Pakistan in October 2008.[190]

Despite being comprehensive, these arguments nevertheless leave open the possibility that Naji is not al-Hakaymah. However, if we accept a certain degree of uncertainty and assume that these two strategic thinkers are the same person, it allows us to examine the trends in jihadist strategic thinking from an interesting perspective. While Naji ties his thinking to a war against the United States in the territory of the Islamic world, creation of the regions of savagery through the stage of vexation and exhaustion and the stabilisation and expansion of the regions of savagery, al-Hakaymah examines the issues from a slightly different angle. Even if he was not Naji, the work presenting the fundamentals of his strategy was published so long after Naji's main work that it can be considered to be part of new strategic application and ideas at the time when the jihadist movement was hard-pressed.

The pamphlet presenting the ideas of al-Hakaymah, which was probably published in September 2006,[191] represents fresh new thinking in the global jihadist movement. His main argument in *Toward a New Strategy in Resisting the Occupier* is largely based on the military principle of violence used by individuals. Al-Hakayamah categorises the military methods of an insurgency depending on whether the territory in question is occupied or not. He reminds his readers that acts of violence carried out by individuals have long traditions in Islam and points out that jihadists do not necessarily have to commit themselves to hierarchical structures or rely on traditional secret organisations that are unable to accept all persons willing to join them. Al-Hakaymah also wants to make it clear to his readers that in the current situation establishing open fronts against the enemy is challenging and with its military capacity, the jihadist movement is unable to wage an open war or establish regional administrations.[192]

If we accept the assumption that Naji and al-Hakaymah are the same person, it is clear that his strategic thinking has changed and the new way of waging an insurgency is now also supported by Naji, who in his previous writings emphasised the control over a territory. This change culminates in the situation where the jihadist leaders operating at different levels of the movement lived in the early 2000s. The movement simply was not in a position to maintain control over its territory and in order to survive, it had to ensure an operational momentum for the sake of operations that could be sustained by launching terrorist campaigns and by reverting to being an organisation relying on terrorist methods. In the words of al-Taee, the situation of the movement resembled the situation currently faced by ISIS. It is being forced to withdraw from the territories it is occupying and to become again an organisation fighting with terrorist means. However, it had established the capacity to carry out external operations in its heyday and for this reason a change in the strategic setting can be expected. The strategic thinking of the global jihadist movement

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[190] Fishman (2016), pp. 38, 138–139 and 278.

[191] Lia, Brynjar: *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of Al-Qaida Strategist Abu Mus'ab al-Suri*, Columbia University Press, New York/NY, 2008, p. 25.

[192] Al-Hakaymah, Khalil Muhammad: *Toward a New Strategy in Resisting the Occupier*, in *The Canons of Jihad: Terrorists' Strategy for Defeating America*, edited by Jim Lacey Naval Institute Press, Annapolis/MD. 2008a, pp. 150–153.

has turned a full circle and the jihadists are now in a situation for which Abu Musab al-Suri, one of the best-known strategists of the movement, developed his own model of waging a global insurgency.

Al-Suri is one of the most innovative developers of insurgent warfare and terrorist strategists of our time. For example, the ideas of al-Hakaymah are surprisingly similar to the thoughts of al-Suri even though he does not make any specific references to al-Hakaymah's writings. Brynjar Lia, a well-known Norwegian researcher of jihadism, who has studied the life and thinking of al-Suri, has described al-Hakaymah's works as pure copies of al-Suri's writings. Nevertheless, there is also an article on al-Hakaymah's pages where due credit is given to al-Suri.[193] An extensive review of the strengths and weaknesses of the US intelligence agencies and security authorities has also been produced in the name of al-Hakaymah. In the review, the focus is on the vulnerabilities of these systems and organisations and according to al-Hakaymah, the aim is to present facts and detail the artificial sense of security that the attacks of 11 September managed to erode.[194]

As his nom de guerre suggests, Abu Musab al-Suri is a Syrian veteran and theorist of global jihadism. His real name is Mustafa bin Abd al-Qadir Setmariam Nasaria. In a book of 1,600 pages published at the end of 2004/in early 2005, al-Suri details his thoughts about the formation of a global Islamic resistance movement against the Western occupier. He draws heavily on his negative experiences arising from the failure of the Syrian Islamic movement and on his participation in the resistance movement fighting the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. It should be noted that even though Abu Musab al-Suri is considered the strategist of al-Qaida, he was not on particularly friendly terms with such persons as Osama bin Laden. On many occasions, he heavily criticises the al-Qaida leader for his eagerness to present himself as the media face of the global jihadist movement.[195]

Jim Lacey, who has produced essays on a number of jihadist thinkers, gives a different interpretation of al-Suri's position as the strategist of the jihadist movement. Before the publication of his massive work, al-Suri had strengthened his position as an ideologist in al-Qaida, even though he criticised the supreme leadership of the organisation and occasionally also its strategic choices.[196] Brynjar Lia echoes this claim by suggesting that even though al-Suri had in his own words ended cooperation with Osama bin Laden in 1992, he never severed links with the key figures of al-Qaida during the 1990s.[197]

One example of the policy differences between al-Suri and central al-Qaida leadership is the criticism of the events of 1998 when the US missile strikes carried out in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in Kenya had an impact on al-Qaida training activities in Afghanistan. In that connection, al-Suri criticised the fact that al-Qaida was maintaining static training camps in the country. This happened at a time when the United States already had a clear military superiority. Al-Suri strongly questioned the stationary Tora Bora mentality of bin Laden (named after a well-known mountain stronghold) and the fact that as a result, al-Qaida was tied to a

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[193] Lia, (2008), pp. 24–25.
[194] Al-Hakaymah, Muhammad Khalil: *The Myth of Delusion: Exposing the American Intelligence*, al-Maqreze Center Site, 2006.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Lacey, Jim (ed.): *A Terrorist's Call to Global Jihad: Deciphering Abu Musab al-Suri's Islamic Jihad Manifesto*, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis/MD, 2008b, p. ix.
[197] Lia (2008), pp. 76–77.

specific region. As a counterweight to such thinking, he developed a number of operating models for insurgent units that may not be connected to each other or any particular area or stronghold. His military model for combat units can be summarised in one phrase: '*nizam la tanzim'*: a system, not an organisation.[198]

Al-Suri emphasises that the model mainly originates from the lessons learned by the jihadist movement. In his view, it was prompted by practical necessities and observations. He sets four strategic goals for the global jihadist insurgency, which are similar to those envisaged by Naji in his thinking:

1. expelling American-led crusaders and Jews from Islamic countries,
2. destroying the forces assisting the enemy,
3. overthrowing the regimes and monarchs supporting the enemy and
4. establishing sharia on the ruins of these regimes.[199]

Al-Suri differs from Naji in that he determines three main models of jihadism, which he compares with each other and examines their feasibility in various revolutionary environments. The models are as follows: insurgency fought by secret military organisations, insurgency based on guerrilla war and guerrilla operations, and insurgent terrorism carried out by individuals and small groups. This comparison between operating approaches on the basis of the operating areas seems to have been adopted by al-Hakaymah almost word by word. In the first model, the insurgent organisation is typically tied to a hierarchical organisation and works towards the revolutionary goal at regional level. When analysing the achievements of this type of movement, al-Suri concludes that it has always suffered a military defeat, failed in terms of security, failed to foment a popular uprising, failed to organise the training and suffered a total political defeat.[200]

Al-Suri considers the 11 September 2001 the starting date for this model. The series of terrorist strikes that took place on that day changed the operational freedom of the jihadist movement to such an extent that it was no longer possible to continue an insurgency based on the above-mentioned hierarchical organisations. He is, however, of the view that an insurgency organised on this basis had already reached the end of the road in the 1990s. Al-Suri thinks that the capabilities of the anti-terrorist forces increased so much throughout the 1990s that underground terrorist organisations with no interaction with the people had little operational freedom. As a result, they disintegrated and their members quickly became intensively hunted criminals in both East and West.[201]

If this is compared with the ISIS' way of carrying out terrorist attacks, especially in Western Europe, there are clear similarities between its operating principles and the model presented by al-Suri. On the one hand it is clear that with its organisation responsible for external operations, ISIS endeavours to take part in the strikes, send potential attackers to European countries and coordinate the strikes. On the other hand, however, it also wants rely on the genuine willingness of its followers to carry out strikes requiring only a low level of skills and little preparation. By taking credit

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[198] Lia (2008), pp. 6–7.
[199] Springer (et al. 2009), p. 71.
[200] Al-Suri (2008), p. 350. In these references to al-Suri, the following work by Brynjar Lia is used as the source: *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of Al-Qaida Strategist Abu Mus'ab al-Suri*. Lia is one of the foremost experts on jihadism, and he has translated the main parts of the magnum opus of al-Suri for his own aforementioned book.
[201] Ibid., p. 352.

for such attacks, the organisation can show that it can act with impunity despite the efforts of security authorities.[202]

Al-Suri assesses each of the organisational and operational models on the basis of four points: military success, organisational security, propaganda work and training. On account of operational failures in all four points, al-Suri concludes that the days of militant jihadism, in which a secret organisation is fighting an insurgency, are numbered. For this reason, he concludes that

> '*The times have changed and we must design a method of insurgency that is in accordance with the demands of the present security environment. The main weakness in our earlier organisations was not the organisational structure itself but the fact that it was not suitable to present conditions.*'[203]

When referring to an insurgency waged as a guerrilla war and as guerrilla operations, al-Suri means conflicts where the insurgents, relying on the classic model of guerrilla warfare, endeavour to achieve their goals. He mentions such conflicts in the Islamic world as the struggle against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the jihad in the Caucasus region as examples. He details the tactics for this model as follows: '*Paramilitary forces carried out guerrilla attacks against an enemy stationed in static bases.*'[204]

For al-Suri, insurgent terrorism carried out by individuals and small groups means acts of violence carried out by individuals and small groups. Al-Suri considers this model a military success, which is due to the fear instilled into the enemy. When assessing this operating model, al-Suri sees strikes and terrorist activities as a success from the perspective of trying to gain popular support. This is because, when highly visible, these acts help to mobilise the Islamic world to a common struggle. He emphasises, however, that the model is not ideal from the political perspective because in the absence of a common programme and a set of goals, individual acts of violence will never trigger mass movements.[205]

It goes without saying that his own model for global Islamic resistance is exactly the programme and the set of goals that al-Suri has in mind. In principle, claiming credit for attacks and active capturing of the information space by ISIS can also be considered such a model, and a common organisation-based programme: There is no doubt that by pledging allegiance to ISIS, individuals will achieve a state where by carrying out acts of violence, they become members of the global Islamic resistance in general and ISIS in particular. When this is connected with al-Suri's thoughts about a guerrilla war and an overt confrontation, ISIS will, at least in its propaganda messages, probably link its future external operations to the regional guerrilla war and terror campaigns, which the organisation can be expected to emphasise after continuous territorial losses.

Alejandra Bolanos, who wrote her doctoral thesis about the strategic position of al-Qaida, suggests that the thinking of al-Suri differs from the al-Qaida strategy that she has interpreted and found from open sources in three ways, which all stem from individual-centred terrorism. Al-Suri does not emphasise the role of the central

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[202] Read more about these instructions in ISIS' propaganda publication *Rumiyah* no. 5 (published in October 2016). *http://clarionproject.org/factsheets-files/Rumiyh-ISIS-Magazine-2nd-issue.pdf*, 2 June 2017.
[203] Al-Suri (2008), p. 359.
[204] Ibid., p. 350.
[205] Ibid., p. 351.

leadership in the coordination of individual attacks. Furthermore, in his view, independent funding and logistic systems are central to successful operations. These factors lead to the third point highlighted by Bolanos: the groups train independently in their own operating areas without relying on training centres located in open fronts.[206]

Increasingly vigorous presence of ISIS networks in the Balkans is an example of such activities. The German current affairs magazine *Der Spiegel*, whose journalists have extensively studied the phenomenon of foreign fighters, has highlighted the phenomenon by emphasising that especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina there are entire villages where sermons reflecting the radical interpretation of Islam are held and from where substantial numbers of foreign fighters have travelled to the conflict zones of Iraq and Syria to join the ranks of jihadist organisations. It is known that in some of these communities, ISIS flags have been openly displayed.[207] Based on publicly available information, there is no evidence that these Bosnian salafi villages are serving as jihadist training centres but it is nevertheless clear that as potential radicalisation zones and independent shadow administrations, they are exactly the type of areas that al-Suri urges jihadists to establish so that they can improve their operating conditions.

When we examine the model envisaged by al-Suri, it soon becomes clear that he discusses his strategy for an insurgency in global scale. Like Naji, al-Suri gives the credit for the globalisation of the jihadist insurgency to its opponents. In his view, the crusade directed by the West against the Islamic world is one factor allowing the unification of the Muslim youth under the ideology of the Islamic nation. This means the growth of the military campaigns carried out as part of the jihadist insurgency into regional conflicts and a global insurgency mobilising individuals.[208]

One of the instruments created to promote the last-mentioned ISIS operations has been the quick claiming of credit for terrorist strikes. ISIS is quick to claim credit for a strike if it has been carried out in the name of ISIS or it can be interpreted as a response to the appeal delivered by the leadership of the organisation to its followers to carry out terrorist strikes in their home countries. This time span has varied but the attacks are usually reported by al-Amaq, which is known as ISIS' news agency. The strikes are usually reported a few hours or one day later but never more than a few days after they have taken place. With this approach, the organisation can keep the public in the West guessing who is behind the attacks and after the information space has been filled with scattered guesses about the responsibility of ISIS, the group claims credit for the act. By doing this, the organisation can exploit the uncertainty created by the uncontrolled media hubris and the debate taking place in the social media and ultimately consolidate the situation advantageously, by claiming credit for the strike or by appreciating the work of the attackers (for example by referring to them as 'soldiers of the caliphate').

When presenting the military insurgency model of the global jihadist movement, al-Suri states that it is primarily based on two manifestations of an active approach: operations carried out by individuals and autonomous terrorist cells as well as regional guerrilla conflicts wherever conditions for them exist.[209] As such, this

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[206] Bolanos (2010), p. 103.
[207] Meyr, Walter: *Sharia Villages: Bosnia's Islamic State Problem*, Spiegel online, 5 April 2016, *http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/islamic-state-presence-in-bosnia-cause-for-concern-a-1085326.html*, 5 June 2017.
[208] Al-Suri (2008), pp. 368–370.
[209] Ibid., p. 371.

would seem to be in accordance with the relationship between the administration of savagery on the one hand and vexation and exhaustion on the other, as envisaged by Naji. However, al-Suri's strategic approach, in which the emphasis is on individuals and operational freedom, makes his thoughts more radical than the model presented by Naji.

If the matter is examined from the perspective of ISIS, it can be suggested that especially after the call issued by its official spokesman Muhammad al-Adnani to carry out strikes where each of the follower is, the organisation has gradually shifted from the creation and administration of savagery as well as the strikes coordinated by the supreme leadership, as envisaged by Naji, to ideologically oriented strikes carried out by individuals, as envisaged by al-Suri. As ideological applications, these strikes require a commitment to a model that ISIS offers as an organisation and the flag-bearer of the jihadist movement. However, this does not make the ISIS organisation responsible for external operations meaningless. It actually helps to boost its performance in a situation where it is in an increasingly tight spot militarily and must rely on actors that do not necessarily have direct organisational links with the organisation. This provides the organisation with the opportunities described by al-Suri to sustain an operational momentum for its own sake through which ISIS can fill a vital information space and present itself as more capable and stronger than it actually is.

In itself, al-Suri's model is an important example of the current strategic thinking in the jihadist movement. The focus on violent activism in global scale that is solely driven by an ideological commitment is particularly important in this model. Like Naji, al-Suri emphasises the role of the media as the creator of the situation picture. In line with Naji's ideology based on the regions of savagery, al-Suri provides his readers with the following insights into his thinking:

> '*The importance of terrorist jihad fought by individuals or cells is essential for wearing out the enemy and forcing it to retreat, God willing. At the same time, an open-front jihad allows the liberation and occupation of territory with God's support. Terrorist jihad fought by individuals allows the launching of a guerrilla war with a view to establishing an Islamic state because that is our ultimate goal.*'[210]

Unlike Naji, al-Suri emphasises that the security environment has become fundamentally more difficult after the 2001 terrorist attacks and he understands the challenges arising from the situation, especially from the perspective of capturing land areas. He describes the situation by issuing the following clarification:

> '*...the terrorist struggle fought by individuals is the fundamental military basis of the global jihadist insurgency. The main thrust of the this struggle must be directed against the United States and its allies. Individual fighters and small cell-based organisations are vital for sustaining an active struggle and for making it possible. However, the jihadist movement must, without hesitation, make extensive use of guerrilla tactics and capture Islamic territory to establish a stronghold for a state.*'[211]

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[210] Al-Suri (2008), p. 371.
[211] Ibid., p. 373.

On the basis of this, al-Suri reaches the following conclusion: '*Terrorising enemies is a religious duty and assassinating enemy leaders is a tradition dating back to the time of the Prophet.*' This is partially explained by referring to justified terrorism against the enemies of Islam. In al-Suri's opinion, a fighter that resorts to terrorism when defending and protecting the oppressed can always be viewed as a terrorist towards his enemies.[212]

In fact, according to Alejandra Bolanos, the resistance considered leaderless by al-Suri is actually not. One reason why Bolanos reaches this conclusion is that there is not enough reliable information on whether the autonomous groups carrying out attacks have followed the ideas of al-Suri.[213] It can also be asked how faithfully Naji's thinking is actually followed within ISIS. However, such thinking is of academic value because on the one hand we know that both Naji and al-Suri have written the works that are widely read in jihadist circles, while on the other hand, their thinking has influenced ISIS' operating approach. As both thinkers have prepared their models as general operational guidelines and a basis for strategies, it is clear that real events always differ from the codes of guidelines. However, they help to identify the potential trends in the jihadist movement, and at best they allow us to make predictions about the strategic choices of the future.

One of the most important innovations in al-Suri's insurgency thinking is the organisational structure and making it more open, more decentralised and more indefinable. It is therefore no coincidence that al-Suridevotes an entire subchapter in his book to the theoretical examination of an organisation. Michael Ryan emphasises the same phenomenon though not necessarily from the perspective of warfare. Having analysed the Arabic-language works of al-Suri, he makes an interesting observation in the PDF version of this massive work in which the following section is written in bold:

> '*I call young men to start individual resistance so that as a phenomenon it would no longer be dependent on structures and networked hierarchical organisations where the arrest of one person will lead to the collapse of the whole network.*'[214]

In other words, Abu Musab al-Suri calls for a horizontally built organisational structure. When discovering three different ways of organising and waging an insurgency, al-Suri produces two conclusions in support of his new theory. In the first of them, he states that it is no longer possible to wage an insurgency based on the organisational model of the old jihadist movement. With this model, al-Suri refers to the above-mentioned hierarchical, regional and closed (secret) organisation. Al-Suri is of the view that such insurgent organisations were already at a dead end in the 1990s, and he emphasises that the global security environment that arouse in the aftermath of the events of 2001 made it impossible for these organisation to operate; above all it made their operations extremely ineffective.[215]

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[212] Al-Suri (2008), pp. 382–390. Al-Suri refers to the Koran verse 8:60 of the spoils of war as legal justification for terrorism: '*And prepare (Muslims) against them whatever you can of military power and of war-horses, to frighten thereby the enemy of Allah, and your enemy, and others besides them, whom you do not know but Allah knows them. And whatever things you spend in the way of Allah shall be repaid to you in full, and you will not be dealt with unjustly.*'
[213] Bolanos (2010), p. 105.
[214] Ryan (2013), p. 210.
[215] Al-Suri (2008), p. 443.

In a second important observation, al-Suri suggests that there is a need to closely examine the individual as an insurgent and the concept of total resistance (*al-muqawama al-shamila*). The purpose of this is to form a valid theory for the insurgency carried out by the jihadist movement. The formation of the theory takes place by examining the two most successful approaches, and the practical application should take place by studying the lessons learned from history. In accordance with what is said above, the methods are the regional insurgency fought as a guerrilla war and the model based on terrorism carried out by individuals and small groups. In fact, for al-Suri, the combination of these two models also forms the organisational basis for his global jihadist insurgency.[216]

In al-Suri's view, there are four main reasons why relying on individuals is essential:

1. After the failure of the secret and hierarchically organised militant groups to create a military model for an extensive insurgency, it has become necessary to develop a strategy for a jihadist insurgency in which individuals are not extensively subjected to a manhunt conducted by the security authorities.
2. Hierarchical organisations are incapable of mobilising Islamic youth, and providing alternative operating models for those individuals who have been unable to take part in the work of centralised organisations.
3. The scattering of the enemy forces over a wide area, the diversity of its goals and its presence in many different locations make it almost impossible to set up fronts and establish centralised resistance organisations.
4. The technological superiority of the enemy has made it almost impossible to wage a conventional battle from fixed positions.[217]

In other words, al-Suri puts a strong emphasis on asymmetry as a strength in the global operating environment. He presents an organisational analysis by comparing the traditional hierarchical organisations with the organisations within the global jihadist movement. In a lecture in Peshawar in the 1990s, he identified the following components as fundamentals of traditional organisations:

- programme (*al-manhaj*) or ideology, which defines the goal of the organisation, serves as its driving force and motivates its members.
- leadership (*al-qiyadah*) or the decision-making process comprising the emir, shura council and the administration of the movement.
- the strategy (*mukhattat*; al-Suri uses the word roadmap) or programme, which combines the different methods so that the goal can be achieved.
- funding (*al-tamwi*) or economic and material components that are required to implement the strategy.
- loyalty or pledge of allegiance (*al-bay'ah*). With this, al-Suri means the organisational entity comprising the leadership and the actors subordinated to it. [218]

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[216] Ibid., pp. 366-367.
[217] Ibid., pp. 391-392.
[218] Ibid., pp. 440-441.

In his own organisational modelling, al-Suri uses the term 'sphere'. According to him, there are three organisational spheres in the global jihadist insurgency. This is in itself noteworthy. An operational organisation is often examined on the basis of level thinking. In such thinking, the examination suddenly becomes locked in a state where the activities are seen as a system functioning in accordance with hierarchical chains of command and rules and there is an automatic reduction in the role of self-steering. The three organisational spheres in al-Suri's model are the central leadership, sphere of the coordinated units and the sphere of the general resistance units. It is the last-mentioned units that are in the centre of his thinking. Even though, at best, they are only capable of carrying out small one-off operations, they play a particularly important strategic role as creators of confusion and destruction in the enemy's home territory in a situation where the jihadist resistance has grown into a global phenomenon.

Centralisation is typical of the first sphere in al-Suri's sphere-based organisational model. This is because of the ideological role of the central leadership and the fact that religious justification is the highest principle guiding the operations. According to al-Suri, this sphere is also tasked with creating the central military leadership in areas where an open guerrilla war is waged. The central leadership is also responsible for establishing cooperation and coordination contacts with non-centralised Islamic resistance units that are operating in complete organisational disunity.[219]

According to al-Suri, the name, goal, training and operating methods are the only factors that the units on the second sphere have in common. In fact, nothing should connect these units with each other as they are expected to operate completely independently in their areas. This helps to ensure adjustment to a difficult security environment and that the jihadist circles can receive adequate training. These individuals and units have been sent to their tasks by the central leadership, which, to a certain extent means that they serve as an important military coordination tool and help to ensure that sufficient fighting skills can be provided.[220]

The name, goal, operating models and a thorough training programme offering all required information ensuring action in accordance with the joint strategy are the factors connecting the actors on the third sphere with the rest of insurgent movement. Thus, the individuals that join the general group of resistance units are only required to believe in a common programme and goal and be willing to train themselves as actors that are aware of the goals and the ways to achieve them.[221]

This has been the way ISIS has operated. Even though not all perpetrators of attacks have acted like Anis Amri who pledged allegiance to ISIS after running over people with a lorry on the Berlin Christmas market in 2016,[222] the organisation has, in the way described above, been quick to capture information space in the aftermath of attacks.

From the perspective of ISIS and thus also from the perspective of the strategic future of the global jihadist movement, it can be argued that while overt conflicts in

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[219] Ibid., pp. 443-444.
[220] Ibid., p. 444.
[221] Ibid., pp. 444-445.
[222] Prince, S. J.: WATCH: *Anis Amri, ' Berlin Attacker', Pledges Allegiance to ISIS*, 23 December 2016, *http://heavy.com/news/2016/12/anis-amri-isis-islamic-state-bayat-allegiance-pledge-video-berlin-christmas-market-attack-milan-italy/*, 5 June 2017.

the Islamic world are aimed at taking control over a territory, the global jihadist movement is aware, more or less collectively, that in the current security situation, its representatives will never be allowed to freely control a territory with the characteristics of a state. The terrorist strikes carried out in the Western countries using this territory as a base are too great a security risk for these nations.

In fact, al-Suri himself also emphasises in his model the role of the third-sphere actors to global Islamic resistance. The open fronts referred to above would thus not only function as important jihadist fields but as inspiring chains of events for individuals that would ultimately not require strategic steering for their operations, as they are guided by a strong fatalistic identity. This is exactly the application that Muhammad al-Adnani had in his mind when calling for terrorist strikes.

The fact that such theorists as al-Suri and Naji have been able to create models explaining resistance is of importance to Western parties examining the matter from a military and security-oriented perspective. The theory, which is rhetorically clear and provides clear models, is the strongest possible presentation of the operational nature and actual capability of the movement to parties that consider these factors a natural precondition for the functioning of an organisation. The West is facing challenges when attempting to outline the security threats facing it as it basically considers them well organised or originating from state actors. As the irregular party is becoming even more irregular and the actors are solely relying on their own fragmentation, it is difficult for states to take countermeasures without unreasonably restricting the freedoms of their citizens.

The situation is different when viewed from the perspective of the military strategy of the global jihadist movement. The war aimed at managing savagery, as envisaged by Naji, is also a unique combination of an insurgent guerrilla war, the demands for social reforms and the strikes carried out in foreign countries to create chaos. In al-Suri's thinking, these activities, named as external operations, and the units responsible for them play a central role as a force helping to sustain its operational momentum.*[223]*

Naji does not examine the concept of organisation in any great detail, focusing instead on the operating principles that it should apply when waging war.[224] He probably does this because he, too, emphasises military asymmetry as an organisation's strength during the early stages of the conflict.[225] Naji probably refers to the leadership of al-Qaida when talking about the supreme jihadist leadership and he discusses the organisational touches of his insurgency strategy largely against the background of leadership. For him, the organisation as such is a tool, but unlike in al-Suri's writings there is no particular emphasis on systemic factors in his thinking. At the same time, influenced by the history of the earlier jihadist movement, Naji describes how arbitrary operations without a commitment to the decisions of the supreme leadership will only lead to failures. For him, the jihadist campaigns in Algeria and Egypt in the 1990s are prime examples of this.[226]

In fact, it can be interpreted that Naji intentionally wants to emphasise leadership when he says that 'large operations' and decisions on retaliatory strikes should

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[223] Al-Suri (2009), pp. 446—447. Al-Suri argues that in the distant future, the global jihadist movement will be able to form troops waging a conventional war but when writing the strategy, he was of the view that effective action is only possible in the units of the first and third sphere.

[224] Naji (2006), p. 30.

[225] Ibid., p. 28.

[226] Ibid., pp. 26-27.

be left to the supreme leadership. This may be case, considering the situation picture prevailing at the time when he was preparing his strategic model. Leadership in an organisation is clearly more important to Naji than to al-Suri, who is of the view that an ideological framework provides adequate opportunities for identifying with the global jihadist goal. Naji on the other hand, considers it essential that terrorist strikes are tied to the overall operations through centralised leadership.[227]

When we are examining the thinking of Naji and al-Suri, it is essential to remember that their ideas are built on the challenges faced by the jihadist movement in the early 2000s and the reality faced by al-Qaida in the aftermath of the strikes in September 2001. The strategies envisaged by the two authors have naturally been produced against the background of the opportunities and challenges that fell on ISIS in the ensuing years in the form of the sizable victories of 2014 and the turning of the tide that followed them. In fact, to make a more detailed assessment of the future of ISIS and the global jihadist movement as a whole, we should also take a look at the thinking of a third strategist. He is the American-born Omar Hammami who put his thoughts on paper in the early years of the 2010s under the nom de guerre Abu Jihaad ash-Shaami.

Omar Hammami presented himself as Abu Jihaad ash-Shaami when publishing his memoirs in 2012 under the nom de guerre Abu Mansoor al-Amriki. On the first page of the memoirs, there is a footnote in which Hammami states that he has published a collection of writings on strategic thinking that have been inspired by the works of Abu Musab al-Suri.[228]

As suggested by Christopher Anzalone, Hammami was one of the most important media faces of the Somali Islamic movement of al-Shabaab and its most important foreign fighter until spring 2012. At that point, he fell out with the jihadist organisation. Abu Muhammad al-Somali, the 'public relations representative' of Hammami that in Anzalone's view may be Hammami himself, claimed that the split was caused by the conflict within the organisation that had taken a violent turn.[229] Hammami was killed in a strike in Mogadishu in 2013 carried out by al-Shabaab as he was hiding from his former organisation after the split.[230]

However, we will not focus on his biography but on the two works in which he discusses the strategic thinking of the global jihadist movement. They are *The Vision of the Jihaadi Movement & the Strategy for the Current Stage* and *A Strategy for the Land of the Gathering (Syria): An Attempt to Pinpoint the Pivotal Aspects*, in which he covers the situation in Syria.

In his writings, Hammami combines strategy on the control of a territory based on the thinking of Naji with the thoughts of his ideological mentor al-Suri on ideologically driven violence by individuals. In his first-mentioned work, Hammami highlights his idea of the grand strategic goal or, as he himself says, the vision. Through his definition, Hammami also positions himself in the global jihadist movement by aiming to get into the group of its strategic thinkers. For Hammami,

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[227] Ibid., p. 28.
[228] Al-Amriki, Abu Mansoor: *The Story of an American Jihaadi Part One*, 16 May 2012, *https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/omar-hammami-abc5ab-mane1b9a3c5abr-al-amrc4abkc4ab-22the-story-of-an-american-jihc481dc4ab-part-122.pdf*, 6 June 2017, p. 1.
[229] Anzalone, Christopher: *The Evolution of American Jihadi: The Case of Omar Hammami*, 21 June 2012, *https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-evolution-of-an-american-jihadi-the-case-of-omar-hammami*, 6 June 2017.
[230] For the news reports on the killing, see for example *http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-24060558*, 6 June 2017.

the strategy is a plan to achieve the goals laid out in the vision. This vision is une-quivocally the establishment of the caliphate and, consequently, bringing the whole Earth's sphere under the rule of God. Hammami warns that regional dynamics and sub-strategies may blur the overall vision and provide the jihadist movement with a chance to settle for more modest goals.[231]

After defining the difference between his great objective and strategy, Hammami takes up his second central theme: offering a new argument to the strategic discussion within the global jihadist movement.[232] This is an interesting approach and it also shows that a person in an important position within the movement is aware of the fragmented structure of the actor he represents and its nature as a social movement. At its most typical, the debate on strategy called for by Hammami is carried out on an equal basis and in a social movement anybody can take part. Hammami makes it clear, however, that in his view the main goal of such a movement is to consolidate its position by concentrating the power in the hands of a single person to be chosen as the caliph.[233]

Hammami bases his new strategic innovation on a multidimensional critique of earlier operating approaches. For example, he criticises al-Qaida's early strategy, in which attacking the United States and its global interests were the main goals of the organisation. With this strategy, the aim of al-Qaida was to expel the world power from the Middle East and in this way bring about the collapse of the foreign policy influence of the countries it supports and turn them into power vacuums that would then be filled by the jihadist movement. Hammami praises this strategy, calling it an innovative invention of its time. However, he emphasises that in 2009 (when he wrote his work) it had become necessary to revise the strategy of the movement so that it would better serve the goal of establishing the caliphate he was describing in his vision.[234]

Hammami also emphasises that the establishment of emirates should not be an end in itself because for him, the creation of the caliphate is an absolute necessity.[235] In other words, Hammami emphasises that a region functioning as a state and its ruler should have priority over other regional administrations.

This means that to a great extent, the operating approach taken by ISIS represents what is fundamental to Hammami's thinking: the caliphate must be established without delay. However, with regard to the activities of ISIS, Hammami is half-way between Naji and al-Suri. He sums up his thinking of the jihadist strategy in a few core themes. For Hammami, the main purpose of the strategy in the efforts to achieve the vision is to establish safe havens where an infrastructure for a more extensive insurgency can be built. Hammami emphasises guerrilla operations and terrorism as the methods of warfare. In his view, terrorism is a particularly important operating approach in the external operations carried out on the enemy's home soil. Hammami underlines that a conventional war should only be waged to defend the territory of the Islamic state. A conventional attack must be thoroughly prepared.[236]

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[231] Ash-Shaami, Abu Jihaad: *The Vision of the Jihaadi Movement & the Strategy for the Current Stage*, 2009, *https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2010/11/abu-jihad-al-shami-the-vision-of-the-jihad-movement-the-strategy-for-the-current-stage.pdf,* 9 June 2017, pp. 1–10.
[232] Ibid., p. 4.
[233] Ibid., p. 30.
[234] Ibid., p. 11.
[235] Ibid.
[236] Ibid., p. 30.

This does not show particularly innovative military thinking, especially when Hammami, acting diplomatically, leaves it to the discretion of regional commanders to decide which tactical methods to use.

Despite this vagueness, Hammami's core message is clear: the jihadist movement must be united and this obliges all those within the movement to remain united and to work for a common goal.[237] Likewise, this does not add anything particularly new to such matters as al-Suri's ideological dogmatism or his strategic presentation, which is substantially more comprehensive. Unlike al-Suri, Hammami takes a prophetic view with regard to ISIS: in his strategy pamphlet published in 2009 he makes repeated calls for the establishment of a caliphate in Yemen or Iraq and for selecting the caliph from the family of Qurayshi.[238] With the declaration of the caliphate in 2014 and the selection of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as the caliph, both these demands were met.

Based on the above, Hammami cannot as such be considered a particularly innovative strategic thinker. In fact, at best his work *The Vision of the Jihaadi Movement & the Strategy for the Current Stage* simply repeats al-Suri's core message about four years after the publication of his magnum opus and gives it a slight regional touch. This can be considered to be the result of the revered status of al-Suri's writings (which Hammami himself also points out) and his experience in the ranks of the Somali al-Shabaab movement.

If one wants to assess the basic character of Hammami's writings, it can be argued that he wants to place himself among military thinkers. His thinking provides a synthesis of the thoughts of al-Suri and Naji or al-Hakaymah. As a disciple of al-Suri, he could be expected to put less emphasis on the role of centralisation and organisations in a global jihadist insurgency. Instead, with his calls for establishing the caliphate he is closer to the original thinking of Naji.

The practically oriented work *A Strategy for the Land of the Gathering (Syria): An Attempt to Pinpoint the Pivotal Aspects*, which also discusses tactical level issues, represents an attempt by Hammami to give a more practical content to the debate on warfare in the global jihadist movement. Hammami has signed this literary product on 24 July 2011.[239] The timing, the situation in the Syrian civil war and the chaos prevailing in the country partially explain the structure of Hammami's argumentation and the fact that it places emphasis on the preparation of an operating area and the planning of war. Hammami makes this particularly clear with the division of the work into four parts:

1. finding a safe haven
2. preparation stage
3. planning stage
4. execution stage.[240]

In the first stage (finding a safe haven), Hammami mainly analyses Syrian terrain and its neighbours as possible strongholds.[241] He divides the Syrian terrain into

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[237] Ibid.
[238] Ibid.
[239] Ash-Shaami, Abu Jihaad: *A Strategy for the Land of the Gathering (Syria) – An Attempt to Pinpoint the Pivotal Aspects*, *https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2011/09/abc5ab-jihc481d-ash-shc481mc4abs-a-strategy-for-the-land-of-the-gathering-syria-an-attempt-to-pinpoint-the-pivotal-aspects.pdf*, 11 June 2017, p. 51.
[240] Ash-Shaami (2011), p. 7.
[241] Ibid.

mountains, urban regions and desert. He uses the experience documented by Abu Musab al-Suri and urges Islamic resistance fighters to avoid combat in large cities and find safe havens in small population centres outside Damascus, Homs and Aleppo.[242] He is also aware of the air threat in the desert and emphasises mountainous areas as potential safe havens. Hammami also urges jihadist resistance fighters to seek safe havens in the neighbouring countries (such as Lebanon) but he warns the 'brothers' of possible military countermeasures taken by the Lebanese armed forces or armed groups operating in the country.[243]

Even though Hammami occasionally refers to the experiences and theories of T. E. Lawrence on guerrilla war against the troops of the Ottoman Empire[244], he examines the role of the region, terrain and the neighbouring countries in more or less the same way as Mao Zedong in his works about guerrilla insurgency. His thinking also resembles the structured and analytical approach of David Galula, a French theorist on counterinsurgency warfare.[245] In other words, it can be assumed that while Hammami has favoured the teachings of Lawrence, which originate from the First World War, because they describe this particular operating area, he has probably also studied other classics of insurgency and counterinsurgency warfare.

The division of the insurgency into four stages by Hammami can nevertheless be condensed into three highly typical structures of insurgent warfare and stages that are well-known from the history of such military thinking. These stages are the establishment of the operating conditions, guerrilla war and conventional war. Hammami has slightly stretched the boundaries of each stage; for example, in his second stage (which he calls preparation) he discusses the movement's leadership, wealth, weapons and military training.[246] When discussing leadership, Hammami simply repeats al-Suri's views of the differences between decentralised and hierarchical leadership, emphasising that the organisation created for an insurgency must be able to identify what the movement's strategy requires of its leaders.[247] At the same time, he also shows that he is able to link the writings of al-Suri to its contemporary context even though in his own thinking he uses its message almost unilaterally.

When talking about the wealth of the insurgent fighters, Hammami makes a clear commitment to the financing of the guerrilla war. For example, he discusses the gas and oil production in Syria and recommends the exploitation of these reserves with the help of *ghaniimah* operations.[248] With this, Hammami refers to the capture of war booty, rather than on the permanent seizing of the companies using these natural resources. When we are comparing this thinking with ISIS' activities, it can be concluded that, possibly due to its own strategic choices and with the help of a better situation picture, the organisation was able to quickly capture the oil production facilities on the border between Iraq and Syria for its own needs. According

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[242] Ibid., p. 12.
[243] Ibid., pp. 7–9, 12.
[244] For example, ibid., p. 7.
[245] Read more about the analysis of these authors' works at Paronen (2016).
[246] Ash-Shaami (2011), p. 13.
[247] Ibid., pp. 13-19.
[248] Ibid., p. 21.

to some estimates, with the revenue generated by these resources, the organisation was able to spend tens of millions of dollars each month to finance its operations.[249]

In the purchasing of weapons, Hammami urges the fighters in Syria to rely on the brothers in Iraq.[250] He also emphasises this when discussing leadership in an insurgency.[251] This is an interesting point, which through the purchasing of weapons, provides the concrete need for a close link between the jihadist violence about to be launched in Syria and the insurgency in Iraq, which had already continued for several years at the time of the writing of the book. In this respect it is not simply a question of infantry weapons and ammunition, which Hammami describes in a plenty of different ways but of an overall situation, which greatly resembles the infiltration of ISIS into Syria during the early stages of the civil war in that country. There are also similarities between this thinking and Haji Bakr's network of secret agents which help to establish a situation picture that can be put into quick use.

When talking about the planning stage, Hammami describes the relationship between the vision (great objective), the strategic goal and tactical methods by making references to his own work presented above. He puts particular emphasis on the establishment of a global caliphate and the central role of the caliph selected as its leader. In his view, the jihadists fighting in Syria should rely on guerrilla operations as their prime strategic choice and on decentralised grouping of troops and mobile warfare. The fighters must also avoid static groupings and inputs must be made in missionary and media work to spread the overall message. Hammami also suggests that terrorism should be used in population centres when the jihadists want to show the inability of the regime to ensure security. However, in his view, any harm to bystanders should be avoided.[252]

Even though Hammami frequently emphasises the central role of the Iraqi brothers in the Syrian insurgency, he is either unaware of the strategic legacy of al-Zarqawi or, when writing his work, he is closer to the thinking of the al-Qaida central leadership on how terrorism should be used in an insurgency in population centres. In a number of contexts, Hammami quotes Naji and it may be that he puts himself above Naji as a thinker when urging Islamic fighters to avoid excessive bloodshed. This is because he understands that this would quickly reduce the support enjoyed by the jihadist movement among the local population.

When talking about the execution of his insurgency, Hammami refrains from discussing themes that he considered in connection with the selection, preparation and planning of the safe havens. He stresses that the holy war is a religious duty of each Muslim, calls for brotherhood and unity among the fighters and emphasises the importance of patience and perseverance in a successful struggle. Hammami also urges the fighters to avoid self-delusion. With this he means the intoxicating effect of routines on the fighters. Hammami urges fighters not to be held captive by habits, by reactionary measures or by a specific strategy, not to change strategic emphasis too early, and not to forget the grand vision. He also reminds the fighters not to

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[249] Of the same subject, see for example, Hendawi, Hamza and Abdul-Zahra, Qassim: *ISIS is making up to $50 million a month from oil sales*, Associated Press, 23 October 2015, *http://www.businessinsider.com/isis-making-50-*

million-a-month-from-oil-sales-2015-10?r=US&IR=T&IR=T, 14 June 2017 and Solomon, Feliz: *Oil and Gas Sales to the Syrian Regime Are Now ISIS's Largest Source of Funds, Report Says*, 20 January 2017. *http://fortune.com/2017/01/20/oil-gas-isis-syria-assad/*, 14 June 2017.

[250] Ash-Shaami (2011), p. 22.

[251] Ibid., p. 13.

[252] Ibid., pp. 30-41.

trust other groups that have deceitful and wrong objectives and warns against all types of external spying.[253]

When analysing Hammami as a jihadist strategist, Christopher Anzalone fittingly emphasises two factors. He suggests that the core of Hammami's writings can be found in the arguments based on religious justification and the strategic recommendations derived from them.[254] As such this is a common feature of strategic jihadist thinking but Anzalone can be considered to give added emphasis to this argument by highlighting the global direction emphasised by Hammami. Hammami strongly relies on religious justification when emphasising the global aspect of his jihad. Moreover, unlike Naji, he does not make a distinction between military principles and the tradition of Islam.

In Anzalone's view, this manifests itself as an emphasis on the vision or the grand strategy but that Hammami also shows this by pointing out that several local jihadist organisations have falsely committed themselves to local goals only and forgotten the role of the global revolutionary jihad in their own struggle. Anzalone's interpretation is that Hammami is fairly sceptical that a local insurgency could directly benefit the efforts to achieve a global goal. Hammami reminds that local emirates may even weaken the global jihadist social movement because in the worst case scenario, they fail to commit themselves to a global goal and only erode the unity of the movement.[255]

Generally speaking, Hammami's ideas are not particularly innovative in terms of warfare, but he has strong religious grounds for his thinking and he bases it on the ethical codes accepted in the jihadist movement. In his writings, Hammami often quotes al-Suri and occasionally also Naji and/or al-Hakaymah. Even though he untypically gives them credit for their works, Hammami is no more than a 'thrower of ideas' who is only important as a generator of debate and not as an innovator of military strategy and tactics. He is, however, important as a thinker, because his conclusions indicate how the strategy of the global jihadist movement is evolving in the different situations facing the movement. Hammami's thinking shows that the strategic evolution of the global jihadist movement is ultimately not a matter of creating new models for insurgency warfare but of differences between priorities and of the call for unity within an actor that is organised as a social movement.

The fact that much in Hammami's writings may remind us of the way ISIS operates is not necessarily because the supreme ISIS leadership had slavishly followed Hammami's thinking and theses on insurgency, the establishment of safe havens and the crucial role of the caliphate when seeking justification for such warfare. In fact, the way ISIS operates proves that by analysing the strategic thinking of the global jihadist movement it is possible to foresee the overall strategy that the movement will follow or favour in the future.

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[253] Ibid., pp. 41-51.
[254] Anzalone (2012).
[255] Ibid.

7. SYNTHESIS: STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES OF THE GLOBAL JIHADIST MOVEMENT

Military Professor Janne Mäkitalo has made the following conclusion:

'There is no single, jointly agreed and recognised Western military theory or strategy. However, certain concepts and contents have become generally accepted among Western military theorists and writers. However, even these have been subject to a great deal of debate.'[256]

Based on this, it would be strange to think that the global jihadist movement, which is not committed to any single leadership and which is organised as a social movement, would in this respect be different from the situation in the West. The wish expressed by Hammami that there should be a strategic debate is a strong indication of this. There is no specific requirement that the debate on strategy should be characterised by consensus. In its most classic form, such a debate taking place among the jihadists can serve as a catalyst for developing the movement. The debate also serves as a call for unity among members of the movement and, in the difficult situation currently faced by the jihadists, it is a reminder that despite defeats and splits, the movement can also find opportunities for military action.

Determining the concrete link between the activities of the global jihadist movement and the debate on its strategic direction is an entirely different matter. As such, this question has its merits but it may not be particularly relevant. If the above quotation of Mäkitalo were reversed, it could be argued that the fragmented debate on military strategies and theories taking place in the West is useless and thus of little relevance. As we know, nobody argues in this way because it is recognised that public debate helps political decision-makers and military commanders to develop their strategic thinking. For this reason, it would be strange to assume that the works of such writers as al-Suri and Naji are of little value because they only discuss issues on general level or because there is no clear evidence that such organisations as ISIS rely on a specific jihadist strategy and act accordingly. A social movement simply does not function like that. Different thoughts, ideological priorities, the debate on different operating approaches and at times sharp internal conflicts shape strategic thinking and how it affects individuals and organisations as a whole.

This means that it is impossible to demonstrate a clear link between military thinking and strategic priorities in the global jihadist movement. Even if a researcher trying to prove this would have access to all intelligence information, it is impossible to analyse the thoughts of individual field commanders of ISIS or the person responsible for the organisation's external operations and show that this particular person has been inspired for example by Naji's thinking. In fact, this poses a major challenge when we are assessing the possible strategic priorities in the jihadist movement in the coming years. It is clear, however, that despite its limited scope,

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[256] Mäkitalo, Janne: *Partisaanisodasta alueelliseen puolustusjärjestelmään – jugoslavialaisen sotataidollisen ajattelun kehittyminen toisen maailmansodan jälkeen* (From partisan warfare to territorial defence: development of the Yugoslav military thinking after the Second World War), National Defence University, Department of Military History, Series 1, No. 16, Juvenes Print Oy, Tampere, 2012, pp. 15–16.

the issues covered in this study can be used as a basis for assumptions of the possible future direction of the global jihadist movement.

It can be assumed that because the global jihadist movement can be divided into spheres, as categorised by al-Suri, the debate on military strategies within the movement takes various forms. Based on this and as shown in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that the strategic thinking of the global jihadist movement follows a cyclical trend. On the one hand, the vision or the great objective of the movement is based on the idea that there must be a global state founded on Islamic law and ruled by a just caliph and that to achieve this goal, the first emirate must be established at some point.

The strategists described in this study ultimately disagree on when this state should be established and what role it should play in the revolutionary holy war fought in global scale. Al-Suri is especially well-aware that the potential for creating open confrontations and for ruling over land areas is challenging to say the least. This is because of the impact of the enemy's weapons and its superior intelligence capabilities. In fact, when talking about the waging of the global insurgency, he emphasises the first sphere involving the core leadership and the third sphere of activating independent cells and individuals. Even though al-Suri wrote his work in the early years of the 2000s, it is clear that the most faithful members of the jihadist movement that are able to think globally are able to transfer these thoughts of al-Suri into the situation where ISIS is forced to fight for the survival of its statehood in a conventional war.

When we compare al-Suri's thematisation with Naji's regional-centred strategy, it can be considered a revolutionary way of accepting the catastrophic nature of one's own situation and evading the enemy in global scale. For al-Suri, this means that in all activities, it should be possible not to become committed to any specific territory. If we accept, in the described above, that Naji and al-Hakaymah are the same person, it is clear that Naji has been prepared to adjust his strategic priorities in accordance with the challenges posed by the prevailing security environment. In other words, the trends in the strategic thinking (and thus also the strategic direction) of the global jihadist movement are of cyclical nature. This means that the movement recognises the need to capture an area that it can govern, to establish a state and to use the state as a base for its own territorial ambitions and for its terrorist campaigns (which it calls external operations).

At the same time, the movement is also aware that by establishing a state, it will, in the worst case scenario, subject the operating conditions of the global movement to the impact of the military might of its enemy. Against the background of the example set by ISIS and the writings of Hammami, it can however, be said that the movement will proceed on both paths simultaneously. Even though, as in the early 2000s, the strategic thinking advances cyclically from statehood to fragmentation and back, ISIS has shown with its external operations and Hammami with his thinking combining the teachings of Naji and al-Suri that a state with a territory is an absolute prerequisite for international terror campaigns.

Thus, ISIS has, in the way shown in this study, travelled a path on which we can recognise the influence of Naji's strategy. However, like any actor thinking in a genuinely strategic way, it is not committed to a single dogmatic strategic model. Not all operating principles of the organisation are in accordance with the framework of Abu Bakr Naji's thinking, as they also have ingredients of al-Suri's ideas of

how to carry out terrorist strikes in foreign locations. However, we are nevertheless witnessing a unique event in the history of the global jihadist movement. States have been established and coups carried out in the name of the movement in the past but none of them has been in the same scale as the caliphate set up by ISIS. Against the background of such strategic thinking in the jihadist movement, interpretations of history have tended to lead to analyses in which more weight is attached to Naji's thinking. In the way described above, the analyses have also given rise to arguments that this strategist is the potential military theorist of ISIS, instead of such figures as al-Suri.

Does this mean then that ISIS has abandoned the chances of adopting the strategic approach envisaged by al-Suri by dismantling its state and by investing in terrorism carried out by individuals and small groups? Absolutely not! In fact we could claim that ISIS leadership is aware of the effectiveness of this strategic priority in such campaigns as the urban insurgency in Baghdad and its suburbs. Operations by small groups are equally highly valued in external operations, which in the view of ISIS are important in its warfare aimed at achieving territorial expansion. In fact, from the perspective of the strategic thinking in the global jihadist movement, ISIS represents an actor that combines existing ways of waging war and that can be expected to be prepared to introduce important organisational changes so that it can sustain its operational momentum for its own sake in the core areas of the caliphate and (as terrorist strikes) in Western Europe.

Even though ISIS is justifiably considered a very Iraqi organisation in which few Syrians have reached top positions, it is a foreign actor in Iraq as well. Thus, it can be argued that ISIS is ready to continue the battle where the organisation considers it appropriate, and where it considers it possible. An example of this is the threat scenario mentioned by al-Zarqawi in his pledge of allegiance to Osama bin Laden that a sufficiently authoritarian regime exercising control over the whole country could be established in Iraq. In that case, the jihadist movement would have to pack its '*bags and break camp for another land in which we can resume carrying the banner or in which God will choose us as martyrs for his sake.*'[257]

While ISIS' organisational character and culture can be understood to stem from the legacy of al-Zarqawi and his tough guy approach, it would be strange to think that the Iraqisation of the organisation that took place during the rule of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi would be in conflict with the original need to wage a holy war for its own sake using a state as a base. In fact the statehood and the aim to achieve statehood will continue to determine the attitude of ISIS towards its insurgency. The organisation will definitely also carry out terrorist strikes in Western countries and actively encourage them as part of its strategy the purpose of which is to ensure that ISIS will again become the dominant player in a region where it feels that the right operating conditions exist.

It would be naive to think that ISIS would be destroyed together with its state and that it would be unable to adopt a new operational strategy in accordance with the principle of dynamic shift between phases of insurgency. It would also be strange to think that if the Iraqi ISIS is destroyed, there could not be a similar coup in the name of the Islamic state in such countries as Afghanistan, Yemen, Libya, the

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[257] US Department of State: *Zarqawi Letter*, *https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/nea/rls/31694.htm*, 21 June 2017.

Philippines or Egypt. In all these regions there are active ISIS cells that are striving for regional dominance and aiming to become part of the global caliphate.

The theme, structure and scope of this study were steered by the question how the future of the global jihadist movement can be assessed by comparing the development of ISIS with the movement's strategic thinking. In the way described above, this has meant a review of the history of ISIS using the thinking of Abu Bakr Naji as a basis. This analysis has been supplemented with the alternative models based on the strategies of Abu Musab al-Suri, Muhammad al-Hakaymah and Abu Jihad ash-Shaami. The four points below provide a short synthesis of the principles on which the future strategy of the global jihadist movement will be based.

1. State is an end in itself. The need for a stronghold has been central to the thinking of ISIS and the writers discussed above. ISIS and these thinkers view the operations in the stronghold and the nature of the area differently. It is clear, however, that the global jihadist movement of the future will, if not in the short term then at least in the medium term, try to establish a state in a territory somewhere and use it as a base for its expansion ambitions. This means that the Islamic state will remain an end in itself in the strategic core of the global jihadist insurgency.

It is clear that people within the global jihadist movement realise that, as a result of the losses suffered by ISIS and its collapsing statehood project, the chances of success for such a state are low. For this reason, it can be assumed that the organisation striving to become the next flag-bearer of this social movement will keep the statehood project under wraps as long as possible. This will mean that violence will only be used to the extent that international news threshold will not be significantly exceeded.

It will also mean regional implementation of religious law so that outside observers can be convinced of the cultural willingness of the local population to accept such changes in society. The same applies to the movement's external operations. Acts of terrorism will continue to play a central role in the movement's ideology and in the strategy steered by it but the focus will probably be on quality rather than quantity. Likewise, the independent actors on the outer sphere described by al-Suri may start linking their own strikes to more abstract theses and they may no longer claim to act on behalf of organisations. These theses might include 'defence of the faith', 'religious obligation', 'punishing heretics' and 'revenging the blood of the innocents'. This will not mean that the core organisation ceases to function as the driving force of the movement. However, it provides a basis for self-victimisation, which follows on the potential military intervention in the areas controlled by the organisation. At the same time, such activities can be considered to feed the overall ambition of the movement as it seeks a global confrontation.

The state will also retain its role, as the global jihadist movement is defining its enemy image and seeking justification for its existence. The remaining parts of ISIS can be assumed to exploit the destruction of their state in their propaganda message. This message will probably be linked with the claim that, as a world religion, Islam is facing an attack. This means that self-victimisation will probably be used as a basis for renewed justification for the goals set by the ideology and thus as an instrument for attracting more followers.

2. Call for unity will remain at the core of the strategic thinking of the global jihadist movement. How different organisations will incorporate this principle in their own activities is a different matter. From the outset, ISIS has made it clear, by emphasising its own status as a state and ideological structure, that it will not tolerate any other claims for the status of the jihadist cadre organisation. As ISIS has lost some of this status, it can be expected that the organisation or the group of organisations taking its place will also accept actors in its ranks that are committed to what Hammami describes a vision and that should be generally understood as the great objective of the movement.

From the perspective of the movement itself, this means that it will become increasingly split into regional actors, which in their strategic choices are guided by their own local objectives. In the short run, this may mean that the global jihadist movement will lose some of its unity and thus also some of its operational capability. However, this would give a false impression of the nature of a social movement. It is built around an ideology and despite its fragmentation, it operates as an entity, striving to achieve its great objective, which it describes as a vision. Such an actor can turn an organisational split into its advantage, relying on an ideology guaranteeing strategic-scale unity on the one hand, and on suborganisations with seemingly low threat potential on the other. In the future, these suborganisations can be assumed to be tasked with strengthening their own regional influence by combining violence and efforts to achieve popular support.

The supreme leadership is central to the unity of the movement. While the organisational structure of ISIS is similar to a state, as stated in its own propaganda, the status of the supreme leadership will become increasingly ideologically driven. This leadership provides religious justification for a broad range of different acts, calls for ideological unity among its holy warriors and ties its ongoing war to the golden Islamic past where there are also creative examples of great victories in the battlefield. However, the leadership will not publicly issue direct orders to specific organisations as its statements are mainly directed at individuals and organisations identifying themselves as members of the movement as a whole.

It is extremely unlikely that the split between ISIS and al-Qaida will heal in the near future. The split will deepen the ideological rift in the global jihadist movement to which al-Qaida will probably respond with rational and long-term strategic planning, while ISIS tries to encourage its followers to carry out acts of violence against potential rival organisations. For this reason, appealing for unity in the movement will play a central role, not only in the propaganda of the jihadist movement but also in the strategic thinking stemming from it. This thinking is built around the religious justification of this argument, the importance of the holy war and the grand strategy.

3. Dynamic shift between phases of insurgency will remain an important part of the military capability of the global jihadist movement. In global scale, this means that the movement will keep itself in the consciousness of its potential followers by relying on continuous terrorist strikes by carrying them out and by reporting on them in a broad range of different media. At regional level, this means a flexible shift from conventional warfare to guerrilla war and further on to the use of terrorist methods. Correspondingly, for the global jihadist movement, this shift in the nature of activities means the requirement to exploit the opportunities at any given time to move from terrorist activities to a guerrilla war and further on to con-

ventional war with the aim of bringing an area under its control and establishing a state or a part of it.

However, the example of ISIS has probably shown to many organisations and individuals identifying with the movement that open and even conventional warfare will attract the attention of an enemy coalition possessing a clear military superiority. Thus, it can be expected that a gradual shift to a more intensive insurgency will in the future take place over a significantly longer period. This is because the jihadist movement is able to hide itself in the information flow and remain a superficially moderate organisation that occasionally may even present itself internationally as a source of regional stability. In this, global social injustice will be a central theme exploited by the movement. For example, like groups using the leftist rhetoric, it tries to portray itself as a victim of imperialistic aggression. At the same time, it ties its own military operations to the narrative of defending oppressed Muslims and the correction of this injustice.

Such activities are an important part of the operations carried out for their own sake, which will play a more central role as the movement will have to take an increasingly defensive position. As none of its organisations will any longer be able to actively wage a conventional war, it is a natural strategic choice to exploit local social divides creating conflicts and to globally show that the movement is ultimately nothing more than a reactive response to military campaigns against the Islamic world. In that case, the operational momentum sustained through terrorist strikes will serve as an instrument for creating destruction but at the same time, it is mainly a propaganda tool marketed by the organisation itself so that it can demonstrate its strength and attract new followers.

4. The need to exploit the information space was already understood by the early strategic thinkers of the global jihadist movement.[258] Especially the social media and the almost unlimited dissemination of information through it have provided actors like the global jihadist social movement with entirely new opportunities for information warfare. This has given the supreme leadership an almost real-time capacity to address the enemy societies and a chance to convey a propaganda message to the movement's own followers in all parts of the world. Correspondingly, the social media has provided the followers of the movement with an opportunity to take part in the holy war in a way that would have been unthinkable in the past decades. The decentralised nature of the social media has not, however, meant that the content of the message spread as part of ISIS' information operations and psychological warfare would have become fragmented. ISIS has been able to capture information space with its own terrorist violence, multiply its message in the international and social media and make this message much more vocal than would have been possible with ordinary propaganda devoid of these channels and platforms.

It is therefore clear that ISIS or the flag-bearer organisation of the global jihadist movement succeeding it will try to capture the information environment so that it can spread its message as effectively as possible. This requires an organised media campaign and a large number of followers in the social media. This uncon-

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[258] Al-Qurashi, Abu-Ubayad: *The War of the Ether*, Majallat al-Ansar, the Arabic-language text was published on 20 November 2002. The English translation is in the possession of the author. Al-Qurashi's golden era as a jihadist strategic thinker fell on the early years of the 2000s. In many of his writings he emphasises the role of the information warfare and the turning of the enemy propaganda against it.

trolled and faceless group of user accounts can evade the countermeasures of the security authorities simply by flooding the information environment with a jihadist message. At the same time, moving from one user account to another, it tries to avoid the attempts of service providers to block the propaganda.

Today's information environment provides the global jihadist movement with a guerrilla marketing channel where the jihadist actor can operate on equal terms with its enemy. For example each user profile in the social media has equal chances of obtaining followers and likes. This means that on such a platform, every jihadist actor can tell its story in a way that would have been impossible in the past. At the same time, this information environment also provides opportunities for sending encrypted information and it even allows hidden operational information to be sent through different types of email and text messaging services.

How can such a strategic future be combated? Even though the focus of this study is not on the combating of the global jihadist movement or on the best set of options for doing it, the basis for combating the strategic potential of the movement can be derived from the principles presented above.

1. The jihadist state may not be allowed to come into being, it must be destroyed. This is quite possible in the situation where an organisation representing the global jihadist movement captures a land area and establishes on it a social entity resembling a state. Despite their bureaucratic nature and the lack of flexibility arising from their hierarchies, the Western military coalitions are built to repel military attacks by potential great powers, while at the same time they are also designed to destroy societies.

The nature of the jihadist movement is, however, different from a nation-state. Like ISIS, the organisational actor of the movement may come from outside and it is able to exploit existing social tensions, drive the society into a state of savagery as envisaged by Naji and capture at least part of the conflict. Destroying such an actor requires excellent intelligence about the sites and individuals to be targeted and destroyed but it also requires that the local-level authorities are capable of assuming responsibility for their own societies. In fact, destroying the jihadist state may also mean an obligation to build an entirely new state.

It is difficult to determine the land area required for a jihadist state. It may mean the occupation of a town district or village or the capture of a nation-state through an insurgency or a coup. More important than the size of the land area is the ability of the organisation representing the global jihadist movement to use a specific territory. This will determine the time-sensitivity and the extent of the countermeasures. Capturing land areas or town districts on the one hand and having a simultaneous impact in the territory of a nation-state with such instruments as multinational air operations on the other are ultimately two different things.

Despite the challenging nature of the destruction of the jihadist state and the construction of the new state, there has never been a situation where the movement has controlled a state or a comparable territory and no terrorist strikes have been carried out against enemy societies or their foreign interests from the territory of this state or using the state as a stronghold. It can be argued that even if the jihadist movement could spread propaganda showing that it represents a statehood creating stability, the escapist goal of creating a global power will sooner or later also lead to terrorist strikes in the West.

2. The movement's ideology must be combated with a counter-ideology. This means that we need to understand that the jihadist movement possesses a narrative that is built on an approved moral code. It is impossible for the Western coalition or an individual state to deny the rightness of the entire moral code or the right of the people to believe in the structures of the code. The propaganda message of an actor like ISIS can, however, be collected and analysed and the narrative countering it be put into motion. This does not necessarily mean a counternarrative based on freedom and democratic values because it would be extremely easy for the jihadist movement to attack them with a counternarrative of its own by referring to the casualties arising from the war. There must be more than one narrative and they must be prepared by experts familiar with the local conditions and they must be guided by the grand narrative.

The narratives should never be harshly critical of the Western society or victimise the West. They must be based on the need to launch an attack against the global jihadist movement threatening Western societies. When producing the narratives, the nations involved must also understand that they are at war. Each nation or coalition that is committed to taking military action against organisations such as ISIS must accept that it is fighting a legitimate war. Thus, an offensive grand narrative can also be justified in the debate taking place in democratic societies, and by referring to the state of war, the grand narrative may also dehumanise the enemy.

3. The ability to shift from one type of combat activity to another must be denied by basing the effects-based approach on accurate intelligence shared on a multinational basis. This simply refers to the importance of intelligence sharing so that the jihadist movement can be denied the initiative to expand or reduce its level of activities. This mainly means the sharing of intelligence on important target individuals, social networks, economic data, communications channels and safe havens between responsible authorities. Cooperation between intelligence services is a well-known fact in the Western world but the lessons learned from the rise of ISIS and the movement of foreign fighters that it has created show that active sharing of intelligence and, if necessary, using lethal force are essential in the combating of the jihadist threat.

From the perspective of the threat arising from the global jihadist movement, this principle can have a particularly strong impact on contacts between regional organisations and prevent cooperation between them. This will also bring indirect benefits as it means that an actor striving to establish a state is unable to show that it has real contacts with organisations or units supporting the same ideology. This is not simple and in the war against ISIS, it is based on active sharing of intelligence and information between the front-line troops, intelligence services, national security authorities, social welfare authorities and the justice system. Such operations involve a multitude of challenges and the legislative issues and the practices arising from operating cultures are not the least of them. They can, however, be solved through political steering in the face of a common threat.

4. Freedom of the information space cannot be denied. Internet does not have any leadership and it has different rules than a hierarchical organisation involving supervisor-subordinate relationships and chains of command. From the perspective of information warfare it is an uncontrolled operating environment and it can-

not be categorically shaped as a battlespace. However, the information environment (and not only the Internet) is absolutely essential for disseminating the ideology and narratives countering the jihadist propaganda. This requires active attacks against jihadism without, however, taking part in the interactive discussion with the jihadist actors themselves.

The jihadist guerrilla marketing will succeed if it is recognised as such by the Western coalition. It will only succeed if it can show that it contains a credible message. Thus, justification for the use of lethal force by one's own troops must be sought by countering the message and by actively eroding it. At the same time, it can be shown that the combating of the threat arising from the jihadist organisations provides the moral justification for the military action. This is an absolute requirement, especially in the foreseeable future where the jihadists will rely on longer-term goals rather than on the quick establishment of a state. For this reason and because ISIS has lost a great deal of its operational strength, the active efforts to deny the jihadist movement the status of a martyr must start from the information environment. The anti-ISIS coalition is the right organisation for this. It knows the weak points of the propaganda disseminated by the jihadist groups and it understands how they can be countered through information operations.

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