



Master Thesis
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The Strategy of the Islamic State

Instrumental and Organizational Developments in Relation to
the Strategy of Al Qaeda

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Abstract

Al Qaeda and the Islamic State are two of the most dangerous terrorist organizations in the world, whose terror campaigns have changed the nature of global jihadi terrorism in fundamental ways. The purpose of this thesis is to study the strategy of the Islamic State in relation to the strategy of Al Qaeda, with Martha Crenshaw's Instrumental and Organizational Perspectives. These perspectives provide different explanations on the behavior of terrorist organizations: while the Instrumental focuses on the intentions of terror groups, the Organizational Perspective focuses on the internal dynamics between members, and organizational survival.

Furthermore, this thesis is conducted through a comparative case study, in which different aspects of Al Qaeda's and the Islamic State's strategies are examined. Emphasis is on studying the intentions and capabilities of each group by examining the ideology, goals, warfare, tactics, propaganda, recruitment, organization, and resources. Two of the main results are that one needs to understand Al Qaeda in order to understand the strategy of the Islamic State, and that the Instrumental and Organizational Perspectives complement each other: while the Instrumental Perspective explains the rationale behind the organization's strategy, the Organizational Perspective offers explanations of how the organization is shaped by its members.

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Keywords: *Terrorism, Al Qaeda, the Islamic State, Martha Crenshaw, Terrorist strategy.*

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	5
1.1. Background	5
1.2. Purpose Of The Study	6
1.3. Research Questions	6
1.4. Delimitations	6
1.5. Gaps And Contribution To Knowledge Development	6
1.6. Previous Research	7
2. Theoretical framework	11
2.1. Terrorism: Background And Definitions	11
2.2. The Instrumental Perspective	12
2.3. The Organizational Perspective	14
2.4. Instrumental And Organizational Approaches: Motivation	16
3. Methodology	18
3.1. Research Approach	18
3.2. Research Process	19
3.3. Data Collection	21
3.4. Quality Of The Study	22
4. The Strategy of Al Qaeda	24
4.1. Background	24
4.2. Intentions	25
4.3. Capabilities	26
5. The Strategy of the Islamic State	31
5.1. Background	31
5.2. Intentions	32
5.3. Capabilities	34
6. Analysis	39
6.1. Overview Of The Strategies Of Al Qaeda And The Islamic State	39
6.2. The Instrumental Perspective	39
6.3. The Organizational Perspective	44
7. Conclusion	49
8. References	51

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The terror organizations Al Qaeda and the Islamic State are undoubtedly the two largest 'brands' of global insurgent terrorism, i.e., non-state actors that practice global terrorism, a phenomenon which has evolved through establishments of new strategies, ideas and methods. Until quite recently, Al Qaeda was considered the most dangerous and uncompromising terror organization, with 9/11 being their signature mark as the most lethal and innovative terror attack in modern history. In the summer of 2014, the Islamic State got the attention of world leaders and media. Originally known as Al Qaeda in Iraq, the group rebranded themselves to the Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham (ISIS) after capturing large areas of land in both Syria and Iraq, and declaring it a caliphate. Moreover, the terrorism of the Islamic State was of another kind: the publicly staged beheadings, slavery, crucifixions and success in capturing territory left many confused. Where did this group come from? How had they conquered so much land? Why this kind of brutality? Although initially successful, in the fall of 2017, the Islamic State had lost all their strategically important territory (BBC 2017).

Despite losing territory, the future of the Islamic State is uncertain, as scholar Anthony Cordesman emphasizes: "Ending ISIS physical caliphate will not end ISIS or the broader threat of terrorism and Islamist extremism" (Cordesman 2017: 2). This assertion regarding the broader threat of Islamist terrorism also relates to the resurgence of Al Qaeda in various parts of the world, e.g., Afghanistan and North Africa (Hoffman 2017: 14). In other words: neither Al Qaeda nor the Islamic State are likely to decline or disappear, but rather develop, and the future of terrorism is still very much uncertain.

However, in order to understand the future of terrorism in relation to organizations such as Al Qaeda and the Islamic State, knowledge about their past and present terrorist strategies is required. According to Peter Neumann and M.L.R. Smith of King's College, "the only scholar to have explored terrorism as a strategy is Martha Crenshaw, whose work continues to be essential in developing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon" (Neumann & Smith 2008: 356-357). One strength in the theories of Crenshaw lies in the fact that she asserts rationality behind the action of terrorist organizations: despite brutality and lethality, there is carefully strategic planning. In other words, it would be unwise to view the actions of either Al Qaeda or the Islamic State as irrationality or as a 'death loving cult'. For Crenshaw, it is essential to base predictions of future terrorism on theories that explain past patterns (Crenshaw 2011: 122). This is also the aim with this thesis: to understand the strategy of the Islamic State with the help of her theoretical framework. Moreover, since this group used to be an affiliate of Al Qaeda, the strategy of Al Qaeda should also be examined to understand where the Islamic State came from, and why they differ with regards to their strategy.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the development of the strategy of the Islamic State, especially how it has been developed in relation to the strategy of Al Qaeda. To study this, two main theories are used: the Instrumental and the Organizational Perspectives, that cover different aspects of terror organizations' strategic development. An operationalization of terrorist strategies is created in order to focus on the most important aspects of the respective strategies of the Islamic State and Al Qaeda.

1.3. Research Questions

The following research question is used:

How can the Instrumental and Organizational Perspectives of terrorism explain the development of the strategy of the Islamic State in relation to Al Qaeda?

1.4. Delimitations

This study is limited to the strategic level of the terrorist organizations Al Qaeda and the Islamic State. Therefore, certain details that belong to the tactical and operational levels will not be included. The strategic level includes things that affect the whole organization, and shape the direction in which it is moving. Issues that are related to a single operation, attack, or to single members in the organization are therefore not relevant. For example, it is relevant to look at the overall propaganda strategy (i.e., what channels are used, what the broad themes are), but not on the details of specific instances.

Furthermore, since the aim of the study is to examine how the strategy of the Islamic State has developed *in relation to Al Qaeda*, the focus will mainly be on the Islamic State and not on Al Qaeda. While their strategy is included in the data and analysis, the aim of this study is not to explain the strategy of Al Qaeda, nor to explain what effects the Islamic State has had on the development of Al Qaeda's strategy.

Additionally, this thesis focuses on terrorist strategy, not counter-terrorist strategy. Therefore, the actions of government, and ways to combat terrorism, are not included in the scope of this thesis. While certain factors including government actions are touched upon, e.g., when terrorist organizations change their strategies as a result of what the government does, this thesis will not go into detail regarding what governments can do to prevent or fight against terrorism.

1.5. Gaps and Contribution To Knowledge Development

This thesis contributes to the field of terrorism research in two main ways: by applying Martha Crenshaw's theoretical framework to the Islamic State and Al Qaeda, and by making a *structured* analysis of the overall strategies of the two terrorist groups. In the current state of terrorism research, there are

gaps when it comes to both these things. While Martha Crenshaw's Instrumental and Organizational Perspectives have been studied, they have not yet been used to examine the strategies of Al Qaeda and the Islamic State in a comprehensive way.

When it comes to comparisons between the strategies of Al Qaeda and the Islamic State there are works that examine the differences, but the majority of these works analyze a particular aspect of the strategy in depth, such as ideology or propaganda. In this thesis, the strategies are compared in a very structured and holistic way, providing an explanation of the overall strategy. Moreover, explanations of why and how these differences between the Islamic State and Al Qaeda might have occurred, are also provided.

In other words, this thesis is relevant both within the field of Political Science as well as Terrorism Research. On the one hand, this thesis aims to deal with the issue of violence perpetrated by non-state actors that affects whole societies, and the international community in relation to security policies. On the other hand, it contributes to the field of Terrorism Research by providing a comprehensive analysis on the rationale and internal group dynamics behind terrorist organizations.

1.6. Previous Research

1.6.1. Terrorism

The field of terrorism studies is very broad and interdisciplinary, with aspects relating to other areas such as political science, international relations, history, military science, and communications, just to name a few. McAllister and Schmid argues that the complexity of terrorism with its different forms and manifestations distinguishes it from other political phenomena (McAllister & Schmid 2011: 202). This also speaks to the theories regarding terrorism: on the one hand, general enough to deal with wide spectra of different terrorism, and on the other, narrow enough to analyze a particular feature of terrorism.

Since the aim of this thesis is to study the strategy of the Islamic State in relation to Al Qaeda's strategy from Crenshaw's Instrumental and Organizational Perspectives, the focus is on non-state terrorism with an institutional/organizational level of analysis. An organizational level of analysis deals with the dynamics within a terrorist group and their goals, such as the articulation of strategies, mobilization of resources and recruitment of members, among other things (McAllister & Schmid 2011: 226). Besides the work of Crenshaw, scholars such as David Rapoport, Bruce Hoffman, Mark Juergensmayer, Magnus Ranstorp, and Walter Laqueur have contributed with analysis to explaining non-state terrorism.

Rapoport offers, for instance, a broad historical classification with his *Wave theory* (McAllister & Schmid 2011: 228-230). These historical waves range over a century, from the early Russian anarchists to today's Islamist terrorist. According to Rapoport, each wave had its own particular kind of terrorist

organization with a special characteristic of strategies and targets (McAllister & Schmid 2011: 229). The first wave is exemplified with the Russian anarchists who as a consequence of slow or failed reforms, resorted to terrorism by assassinating elites and robbing banks (McAllister & Schmid 2011: 230). Rapoport contrasts this with his fourth and last wave which is characterized by religiously motivated violence, the rise of Islamist terrorism and suicide terrorism as their 'modus operandi'. Religiously motivated political violence on the other hand, particularly the rise of Islamist terrorism, is characterized by its most catastrophic strategy: suicide terrorism. Rapoport traces three events which has come to shape the fourth wave: Shia radicalism inspired by the Iranian revolution in 1979, the success of Sunni militants in Afghanistan in 1980, and the arrival of a new Islamic Century: *the al-hijra* calendar, thus adding a 'millenarian aspect' within both Shia and Sunni radicalism.

The debate regarding the rise of religious elements in relation to insurgency terror on an institutional level can be divided into two large strands of thought within terrorism studies (McAllister & Schmidt 2011:231). On the one hand, there are those who believe that the combination of religious and political violence changes the nature of terrorism from an old kind of terrorism to a new, more lethal and fanatical one. On the other hand, some scholars see religion as a "collective action solution" for the terror organizations who still seek to change the political status quo. Ranstorp views religious terror as a form of warfare, although also acknowledging some factors that differentiates the terrorism with religious elements from more conventional terrorism (McAllister & Schmid 2007: 231). One such is the idea of a particular juncture in history which religious radicals feel that they are a part of. The other is the belief of 'worldly' events as a struggle between good and evil, making religious radicals more uncompromising in their terrorism. Hoffman also focuses on religiously motivated terrorism as a part of a wider comparative analysis on today's terrorism (Hoffman 2006). In his work Hoffman draws distinctions based on typologies of terrorism such as ethno-nationalist like Irgun, EOKA, FNL and religious terrorism such as Jewish terrorism, Islamic groups and American Christian white supremacists (Hoffman 2006: 61-62, 82). With regards to religious terrorism, Hoffman argues that the notion of religiously motivated violence is driven by terrorists as something holy. The belief in terrorist violence as something sacramental would also be the reason as to why the lethality in terror attacks have escalated (Hoffman 2006:88-89).

On the other side of the spectrum of Old vs. New terrorism is Mark Juergensmayer who emphasizes that the new kinds of terrorists perceive the struggle between themselves and their adversaries as a cosmic struggle, eventually resulting in a cosmic war (McAllister & Schmid 2011: 232). Juergensmayer argues that this idea is driven by two trends regarding religious violence: a tendency toward mass-casualties, and a lack of a grand strategy in the use of violence. Terrorism in this regard is viewed as a drama playing to three audiences: the victims, the in-groups, and a wider audience. A lack of strategy and political agenda with regards to new kinds of terrorism is also something Laqueur emphasizes: the new kind of terrorist motivations and tactics are signified by rage and fanaticism (1999: 81-82, 274).

Furthermore, this aggression goes hand in hand with the increasing lethality of terrorism, further coinciding with increased opportunity for obtaining, and using weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).

With regards to the debate on Old vs. New terrorism, Crenshaw herself argues that the attributes of the supposedly new terrorism cannot be identified without knowing the features of the old terrorism (Crenshaw 2011: 53-54). Moreover, in order to fully understand terrorist behavior, comparisons must also take the historical context into consideration. Only through fact-based comparisons regarding the strategies of terrorist organizations can evaluations of the changing nature of terrorism be made, for instance, by looking at goals, methods, organizational structure, and resources of the groups practicing terrorism. In this regard, resources and opportunities must be taken into account, as much as changes in doctrine and ideology. According to Crenshaw, differences among groups, and in patterns do exist, but many of these shifts are a consequence of changing environments and other structures of opportunity (Crenshaw 2011: 65).

Since two terrorist organizations with religious imperatives were chosen for this thesis, the theories of Juergensmayer or Lacquer could have been used. However, their theories view terrorism through a longer historical perspective. Since these theories are based on different kinds typologies of terrorism and distinctions between Old vs. New kinds of terrorism, an analysis of the Islamic State and Al Qaeda from the perspective of Rapoport would have benefitted from being either based on a longer time frame or through a comparison of different kinds of terror organizations. However, since both Al Qaeda and The Islamic State were founded during the Fourth Wave, a historical comparison becomes less suitable, why neither the Wave theory or Old vs. New Terrorism theories is fitting for this research.

Since the aim is to study the *overall* strategy of the Islamic State and Al Qaeda, this makes theories of external goals and internal groups dynamics more beneficial to use, such as the Instrumental and Organizational Perspectives. The Instrumental Perspective allows for the study of collective action solutions of terrorist organizations, i.e., their goals and preferences, while the Organizational Perspective is useful with its focus on the internal group dynamics in relation to organizational survival.

1.6.2. Empirical Research on Al Qaeda and the Islamic State

Besides theories of terrorism, there is also a substantial amount of empirical research on terrorism. This is in particular true for organizations such as Al Qaeda, and in recent years, also the Islamic State. For example, many comparisons between the two groups have been made. Fawas Gerges have, for instance, written extensively on both Al Qaeda and the Islamic State, particularly with regards to their ideology and historical development. In the *The Far Enemy: How Jihad went global*, Gerges focus on fractions within the larger jihadist movement pre-9/11, and Al Qaeda's shift in their enemy picture (Gerges 2009). In *ISIS: A history*, the focus is on the historical development of the Islamic State, and their historical evolution (Gerges 2016). Daniel Byman offers perhaps the most comprehensive comparison between Al Qaeda and the Islamic State in his *Al Qaeda, the Islamic State and the global jihadist*

movement: What everyone needs to know (2015). Most weight is however on Al Qaeda, with a focus on their ideas and influence in relation to their fundamentalist roots and overall organizational development. With his *The ISIS apocalypse: The history, strategy and doomsday vision of the Islamic State*, Will McCants offers a compelling book about the ideological roots of the Islamic State (2015).

Although these authors provide important knowledge about Al Qaeda, the Islamic State, and some differences between them, there is a theoretical gap in explaining how and why these differences have occurred. In this regard, I believe an analysis with a combination of Crenshaw's Instrumental and Organizational Perspectives can provide a substantial contribution.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Terrorism: Background and Definitions

According to Crenshaw, there is no agreed definition of what terrorism is, because of problems with reaching a “neutral” definition (Crenshaw 2011: 2-5). The inability to reach empirical rather than normative definitions have also led to other consequences, such as defining terrorist organizations and differentiating terrorism from other forms of violence. For instance, the term terrorism applies to organizations using terrorist violence, but has also been used a way of delegitimizing the political agency of opponents by a regime. The issue of state-sponsored terrorism is also difficult to explain since states usually have more means to exercise their power (Crenshaw 2011: 4). Another dilemma is the context in which terrorism takes place, and the distinction between combatants and non-combatants. For instance, civil wars or insurgencies mobilize large numbers of people within sectarian fault lines. In such settings, terrorist acts aimed at the power of the state can also target local communities of another faith or ethnicity. According to Crenshaw, one way of addressing the problem of what constitutes terrorist violence would be to look at both context and intent. One example of this would be to look at the purpose of creating a psychological effect in a spectating audience, rather than just destroying assets of military values. Another would be to see how this kind of violence takes place systematically with similar actions.

In order to study the causes and process of terrorism, Crenshaw has developed a conceptual framework which is based on three levels of analysis (Crenshaw 2011: 5):

- the individual,
- the group and its strategy, and
- environmental conditions

Some of these aspects, like the last point, are difficult to measure. Other perspectives can benefit from being coupled in an analysis since terrorism is usually a product of several aspects, e.g., as an act of strategic logic as well as a way of maintaining organizational coherence. In the next section, a short introduction to Crenshaw’s own definition of terrorism is given.

2.1.1. Crenshaw’s Definition of Terrorism

In 1972 Crenshaw proposed a concept of terrorism which grew out of her research of the Algerian terrorist organization Front de Libération National (FLN): “Terrorism is a form of violence that is primarily designed to influence an audience. Its execution depends on concealment, surprise, stealth, conspiracy and deception. Terrorism is not spontaneous, nor does it involve mass participation. The act itself communicate a future to people who identify with the victims. The choice of time, place, and

victim is meant to shock, frighten, excite, or outrage. Psychological impact is central to both the aspirations of its uses and its effectiveness. It is an asset to those who challenge authority, in part because it maximizes effect while minimizing effort. Its inherent transgressiveness makes it attractive to those out of power, who see in disorder the path to future gain and who often wish to do away with the norms they violate” (Crenshaw 2011:2).

Regardless of ideology or political objective, Crenshaw argues that actors who use terrorism, do it because of five basic and interrelated reasons (Crenshaw 2011: 9). These are:

1. Setting the political agenda
2. Undermining authority
3. Provoking overreaction from the government or from the population that is targeted
4. Mobilizing popular support both home and abroad
5. Coercing compliance

2.2. The Instrumental Perspective

In this section, the Instrumental Perspective is explained. Below is summary of this perspective.

Table 1: The Instrumental Perspective (Crenshaw 1988: 27)

The Instrumental Perspective	
1.	The act of terrorism represents a strategic choice.
2.	The organization using terrorism acts as a unit, on the basis of collective values.
3.	The means of terrorism are logically related to ends and resources; surprise compensates for weakness.
4.	The purpose of terrorism is to bring about a change in an actor’s environment.
5.	The pattern of terrorism follows an action-reaction process; terrorism responds to what the government does.
6.	Increasing the cost of terrorism makes it less likely; decreasing the cost or increasing reward makes it more likely.
7.	Terrorism fails when its practitioners do not obtain their stated political objectives.

The most fundamental notion within the Instrumental Perspective is that terrorism represents a *strategic choice*. Violence is thus regarded as intentional and as a means to a political end (Crenshaw 1988: 13). Moreover, the group using terrorism is assumed to demonstrate a collective rationality based on their values: violence is chosen from a variation of other options, and through a cost-benefit calculation (Crenshaw 1988: 14). The primary reason for choosing terrorism is because of efficacy in which action is assumed to be valuable, for instance in relation to a high probability of success, or when the status quo is deemed intolerable (Crenshaw 1988: 14). In this regard, the resort to terrorism is best

understood as a learning process: through experience, dissidents gain information about the potential consequences of their actions, or of others, communicated to them via news media (Crenshaw 2011: 113).

According to Crenshaw, it is important to understand that the extremist groups respond to either opportunities or threats in which they “may act out of anticipation of reward or out of desperation” (Crenshaw 1988: 14). Since terrorism is a strategy of surprise, the instrumental perspective is paramount in order to understand the nature of surprise attacks. In this regard, the means of terrorism logically relates to their ends and resources: surprise attacks are deemed necessary in order to compensate for conditions of weakness as well as destructive capabilities (Crenshaw 1988: 14). According to Crenshaw, there are several strategic conditions that promote surprise attacks, which are “determined by perceptions of incentive and opportunities” (Crenshaw 1988: 14). Thus, a terror organization might not operationalize their intentions into action, unless the right moment presents itself. Moreover, these moments of opportunities and incentives often relate to time constraints or to technical and doctrinal innovations.

One such opportunity for the terrorists to strike is when the power ratio between the government and the terror organization is at the side of the terrorists (Crenshaw 1988: 15, 2011: 113-117). The regime may prove to be weak or fragile to protect its citizens. This can in turn be a consequence of circumstances such as overextended resources and/or insufficient security (Crenshaw 2011: 115). According to Crenshaw, terrorists who usually are impatient for action will thus strike: winning cheaply and quickly will, for instance, give the terror organization propaganda gains in showing the weakness of governments (Crenshaw 1988: 14).

Another opportunity for terrorists to surprise is through obtaining new kinds of resources that relate to financial means and technological developments (Crenshaw 2011: 115-116). Funding is therefore fundamental for support of full-time activists, weapon purchases, transportation, and logistics. In addition, surprise can also be achieved through technical or doctrinal innovation (Crenshaw 1988:15). One such example of a doctrinal innovation has been the shift from hijackings and kidnappings to massive and indiscriminate bombings.

Strategic weakness of terror organizations might however also result in surprise attacks (Crenshaw 1988: 15). In this regard, terrorist organizations strike as a response to the actions of governments. An organization might thus attack as a way of preventing worsening conditions for the terrorists. This also explains the escalation of violence in terrorism in which the terrorists engage in a “process of constant adaption to the strategic environment” (Crenshaw 1988:16).

However, according to Crenshaw, few organizations attain their long time goals, something which makes terrorism a failure as a strategic method. The only reason that it continues is because of the immediate success that terrorists gain from publicity and recognition.

The Instrumental Perspective is advantageous with its focus on the *goals, intentions* and *preferences* of terror groups (Crenshaw 1988:14-16, 2011:112). This is fundamental in order to understand the motivations of terrorist violence: the means used by terrorist organizations must logically relate to their ends. Crenshaw emphasizes the symbolic connection between the targets of terrorism, and the ideological beliefs of the terror group. Moreover, the predictability and interpretability of terror acts are dependent on this connection between target and perpetrator (Crenshaw 1988: 15).

2.3. The Organizational Perspective

In this section, the organizational perspective is explained. Below is a summary of this perspective.

Table 2: *The Organizational Perspective (Crenshaw 1988: 27)*

The Organizational Perspective	
1.	The act of terrorism is the outcome of internal group dynamics.
2.	Individual members of an organization disagree over ends and means.
3.	The resort to terrorism reflects the incentives leaders provide for followers and competition with rivals.
4.	The motivation for participation in terrorism include personal needs as much as ideological goals.
5.	Terrorist actions often appear inconsistent, erratic, and unpredictable.
6.	External pressure may strengthen group cohesion; rewards may create incentives to leave the group.
7.	Terrorism fails when the organization disintegrates; achieving long-term goals may not be desirable.

A key assumption in the organizational perspective is that the “fundamental purpose of any political organization is to maintain itself”, i.e. *survival* is the top priority for an organization.

From an organizational perspective, the act of terrorism is the result of group dynamics, leadership and incentives, and the individual members’ motives. (Crenshaw 1988: 19-24). Likewise, organizational stability and survival are dependent on how the leaders manage dissidents within the group.

The most important function leaders have is to “enhance and promote the organization,” since the political goals and success of the organization is tied to the leaders and their personal ambitions (Crenshaw 1988: 19). However, in order to survive, the organization must provide incentives for its members. This can however be rather complicated, since people join terror organizations for different reasons, not just ideological: personal needs are considered as important as ideological ones. The leaders of the organization must thus provide both real incentives and fantasies, such as comradeship, social status, material needs, or just excitement. According to Crenshaw, radicals who join a militant organization may under specific circumstances perceive their membership as a “valued social relationship” in which winning the admiration of family and friends is an important incentive

(Crenshaw 1988: 20). Furthermore, these people may truly believe that they are continuing a historic struggle with their violent actions.

Since the top priority for an organization is survival, leaders might change the goals of the organization, which can cause some terrorist actions to seem inconsistent, erratic and unpredictable (Crenshaw 1988: 20-21, 27). In this regard, a chance for action might benefit the organization, since activity is regarded as vital for the continuing existence for the organization. According to Crenshaw, this way of ensuring organizational survival is called “operationalizing the ideology” (Crenshaw 1988: 20).

According to Crenshaw, the stability of an organization and the achievement of goals depends on the motivation of the organization (Crenshaw 1988: 20). In this regard, James Q. Wilson’s theory about two different categories of political purpose is used: either *single specific*, or *redemptive oriented* organizations (Crenshaw 1988: 20). Organizations with a single-specific objective are, as the name suggests, narrowly focused and oriented towards one specific goal (Crenshaw 1988:20). They are common but short lived, and often characterized as a protest-movement or revolution. Wilson distinguishes the ideological incentives based on beliefs that establish rejections of the current political situations, and with a promise to replace the status quo. Redemptive groups, on the other hand, are characterized by their effort to change the lives of their members, with focus on self-sacrifice, high morality, and conversion. Moreover, these groups can be manifested both as religious groups and as terrorist organizations. In addition to wanting to change the status quo, the motivation for terrorism in these groups is to go beyond reality: the violence is seen as personal and as a way to salvation. However, because of their extreme destructiveness and desperate risk-taking, these groups seldom succeed in achieving their goals. In these types of organizations self-maintenance usually tends to ‘replace’ political purposes: group solidarity is substituted for political goals (Crenshaw 1988: 21).

Furthermore, organizational survival is also tied to external pressure, in which the group may either become strengthened or disintegrate. Here, Crenshaw emphasizes Albert O. Hirschman’s economic theory of organizational importance, in which two aspects are emphasized: 1) organizations are more sensitive to its members than to government policy, and 2) organizations behave differently in competitive than in non-competitive environments, and rivalry happens more frequently when there are similar political objectives (Crenshaw 1988: 22).

In this regard, dissatisfied members of an organization usually have two choices: *exit* (i.e., to leave the organization), or *voice* (i.e., to persuade the group to follow another direction) (Crenshaw 1988: 22-23). Exit usually take place when a member has failed to exercise its ‘voice.’ This usually happens when some members become impatient by the moderates in a group, and wish to escalate the violence. Moreover, there are two types of exit: to join another rival group that appears to be more satisfactory, or to “splint,” i.e., to create a new group (Crenshaw 1988: 22).

Leaders of an organization can only resist the demands for change if the possibilities for exit are nil. Moreover, leaders can avoid exit and voice by “soliciting” the loyalty of members, for instance through ideological indoctrination (Crenshaw 1988: 23). However, the existence of a strong loyalty can also become a problem, since it can make it difficult to change the ‘ideological’ incentives when necessary, for instance in relation to changing conditions (in relation to operationalization of ideology). As mentioned, this can in turn threaten the organizational survival.

Although Crenshaw emphasizes that no group can resist the outcome of either exit or voice in the long run, dissatisfied or disappointed fighters can respond by escalating the violence as a means of ‘saving’ the organization (Crenshaw 1988: 23). In this regard, the escalation of violence can also be understood as a way of attracting new recruits.

However, according to Crenshaw, preventing exit or voice will eventually lead to a disintegration of the organization. As mentioned, this could be a response to too large changes in incentives, which further makes long term goals undesirable. In this regard, the only way to save the organization would be through some kind of innovation (Crenshaw 1988: 24).

2.4. Instrumental and Organizational Approaches: Motivation

Although the Instrumental and Organizational Perspectives are two different explanations of the behavior of terror groups, that each on its own provides a comprehensive analysis of terrorism, a combination of the two theories allows for studying terrorist organizations in a more multifaceted way. The Instrumental Perspective allows for studying how the preferences of terrorist organizations are decided, while the Organizational Perspective looks at circumstances, such as incentive structures within the organization, and competition among different organizations. Since my aim is to study the strategy of the Islamic State in relation to Al Qaeda’s strategy, both the Instrumental and Organizational Perspective are useful in understanding the rationale of the strategy within the organization, as well as the relationship among groups. Thus, in combination, the Instrumental and Organizational Perspectives explains “the process of terrorism” (Crenshaw 1988: 27). Below, a summarized comparison of the two perspectives (taken from Martha Crenshaw) is presented (Crenshaw 1988: 27).

Table 3: Comparison of the Instrumental and Organizational Perspectives (Crenshaw 1988: 27)

The Instrumental Perspective	The Organizational Perspective
1. The act of terrorism represents a strategic choice.	1. The act of terrorism is the outcome of internal group dynamics.
2. The organization using terrorism acts as a unit, on the basis of collective values.	2. Individual members of an organization disagree over ends and means.
3. The means of terrorism are logically related to ends and resources; surprise compensates for weakness.	3. The resort to terrorism reflects the incentives leaders provide for followers and competition with rivals.
4. The purpose of terrorism is to bring about a change in an actor's environment.	4. The motivation for participation in terrorism include personal needs as much as ideological goals.
5. The pattern of terrorism follows an action-reaction process; terrorism responds to what the government does.	5. Terrorist actions often appear inconsistent, erratic, and unpredictable.
6. Increasing the cost of terrorism makes it less likely; decreasing the cost or increasing reward makes it more likely.	6. External pressure may strengthen group cohesion; rewards may create incentives to leave the group.
7. Terrorism fails when its practitioners do not obtain their stated political objectives.	7. Terrorism fails when the organization disintegrates; achieving long-term goals may not be desirable.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Approach

The purpose of this study is to explain how the strategy of the Islamic State has developed, especially in relation to Al Qaeda. When it comes to analyzing strategies and organizations, it is hard to quantify different parts, why a qualitative approach is used. Since deep, qualitative information is required, a comparative case study approach is used.

3.1.1. Qualitative Research

In qualitative research, the focus is on gathering “data and information in-depth” (Burnham et al 2008: 40). This can be either achieved by studying single or multiple cases. The in-depth focus offers both detailed studies as well as a holistic understanding of how some processes and relationships are connected within social settings (Denscombe 2010: 53). However, the significance of in-depth knowledge comes at the expense of making generalizations about the phenomenon (Burnham 2008: 40).

3.1.2. Comparative Case Study

In a study with a qualitative focus, comparative analysis usually involves a limited number of cases. According to Burnham et al, it is seen as the most important research designs in political science, since it is a “natural way of putting information in a context where it can be assessed and interpreted” (Burnham, 2008: 69). Burnham et al summarize the most important advantages of the comparative method under four headings (Burnham et al 2008: 80). These are

1. Contextualization of knowledge
2. Improvement of classifications
3. Formulation and testing of hypotheses
4. Making of predictions

In this thesis, it is the first and last would be of particular relevance in this study. The qualitative focus allows me as a researcher to contribute with more knowledge in terms of the overall strategies of the Islamic State and Al Qaeda. Moreover, a contextualization of knowledge with regards to the past and present strategies of the Islamic State and Al Qaeda can also be used by others in order to make predictions about future strategies.

However, this does not necessarily mean that the findings produced in this thesis about the Islamic Sate and Al Qaeda can be used to illustrate general points about terrorism or other extremist groups (to be further discussed under Generalizability). Another disadvantage a with a qualitative study is the danger

of oversimplification (Denscombe 2010: 304-305). As previously mentioned, terrorism is a complex issue, consisting of many parts that one needs to take into consideration. This is something I have to be aware of and be transparent about, for instance when it comes to my data (to be further discussed under Quality of the study)

3.2. Research Process

The research process consists of two parts. It starts with examining the strategies of the Islamic State and Al Qaeda according to the operationalization presented below. When the different elements of the organizations' strategies have been described, it is used as a basis for the analysis of how the strategy of the Islamic State has developed in relation to Al Qaeda's strategy.

In the second part of the research process, the Instrumental and Organizational Perspectives are used to analyze ways in which the strategy of the Islamic State has developed, and what influence the strategy of Al Qaeda has had.

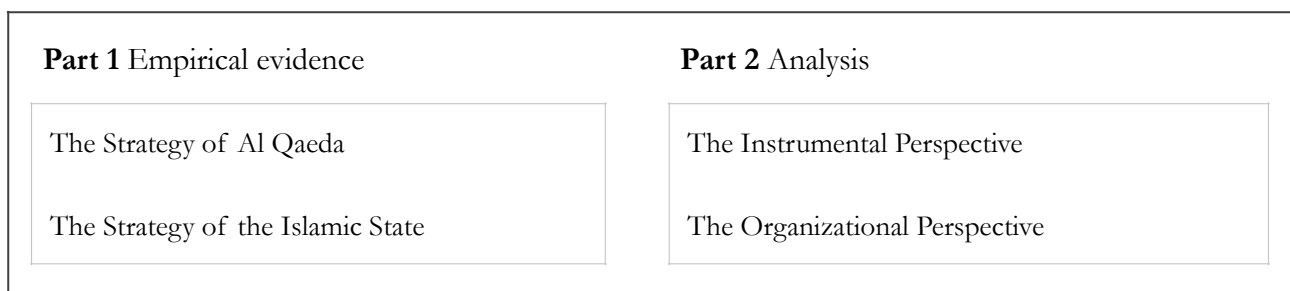


Figure 1: Research Process

3.2.1. Operationalization of Terrorist Strategies

In this section, the operationalization for the first part of the research process is presented, i.e., how the strategies of the Islamic State and Al Qaeda will be examined.

“Terrorist ideology, no matter how unrealistic, must be taken seriously as a guide to intentions. Coupled with analysis of capabilities, it provides a basis for expectations.”

- Martha Crenshaw (1988: 15)

In the quote above, Martha Crenshaw claims that *intentions* and *capabilities* provide a basis for expectations, i.e., that you can understand what to expect from terrorist organizations by understanding their intentions and capabilities. She also claims that ideology is the key to understanding intentions. The operationalization presented in Table 4 is largely based on these assertions. The *Intentions* category is needed in order to understand what a terrorist organization *wants* to achieve, while the *Capabilities* category is needed in order to understand what they are capable of doing, i.e., what is *possible* to achieve.

When Martha Crenshaw herself compares the strategies of old and new terrorist organizations, she does it according to their *Goals, Methods, and Organization and Resources* (Crenshaw 2011: 54). This aligns well with the quote above, and therefore these subcategories are added to the initial breakdown.

In Table 4, the operationalization is presented with examples of each category. The details of these categories are explained below.

Table 4: Operationalization with examples of each category

Intentions	Ideology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beliefs • Purpose
	Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision • Long term objectives
Capabilities	Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terrorist attacks and warfare • Recruitment and propaganda
	Organization and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational structure • Affiliations

For Intentions, Ideology and Goals are chosen as the subcategories. In order to determine what a terrorist organization wants to achieve, one needs to look at its ideology (which Martha Crenshaw also claims in the quote above), and to use it as a “guide” to its intentions. However, one cannot focus only on ideology, since ideology alone does not dictate all the intentions of a terrorist group, especially the more practically oriented goals of changing the status quo.

For Capabilities, two broad subcategories are chosen: Methods, which are the different actions that the terrorist organizations are capable of doing, and Organization and Resources, which enable certain actions. Please see the structure above for examples of each.

3.2.2. Analysis

In the analysis, the Instrumental and Organizational Perspectives are used to explain how the strategy of the Islamic State has been developed, using the operationalization as a structure. The two perspectives emphasize different factors as explanations to how and why an organization’s strategy looks the way it does. For instance, the Instrumental Perspective emphasizes the end goals and values of the organization, while the Organizational Perspective emphasizes the individual members and group dynamics. In the analysis, the different parts of the strategy, i.e., the ideology, goals, methods, organization and resources, are explained, and in particular how the different parts are connected.

Throughout the analysis, different examples from both the Islamic State and Al Qaeda are used. Since this thesis is about the development of the strategy of the Islamic State in relation to Al Qaeda, several ways in which Al Qaeda has influenced the Islamic State are covered. Examples from Al Qaeda are also

used as a contrast to the Islamic State, to highlight how differences in their strategies can be explained by the theoretical framework.

3.3. Data Collection

Since several aspects of the strategies of the Islamic State and Al Qaeda are covered, different kinds of empirical data are used in this study. The majority is secondary data in the form of written material, such as reports, academic books, and journals, that deal with different aspects of Islamic State's and Al Qaeda's strategies.

Reports and books have been preferred because they provide more in-depth knowledge. Much of the data is written by academics with experience of Middle Eastern politics in relation to security, religion, and history. In this regard, the works of Daniel Byman, Will McCants, Charles Lister, and Fawas Gerges have been of particular relevance. All of them have unique knowledge in their respective fields, which, combined, have proved to be very valuable for this thesis.

In another format, this thesis would have benefitted from the use of primary sources. This has proven to be rather difficult with regard to the longer time frame that would have been needed in order to get as a comprehensive picture of the strategies as possible. Thus, both the scope and the time limit of this thesis have made it difficult to use primary sources.

As mentioned previously, there is a lot of data regarding the strategies of both Al Qaeda and the Islamic State, ranging from reports on ideological beliefs to methods of conducting warfare, finances and propaganda. It is however not feasible to go in-depth in each area, since neither time nor space would allow it, why the study is limited to the strategic level of each area.

This also explain why, for instance the choice was made to examine the propaganda strategies of the Islamic State through the work of Charlie Winter, whose work show an extensive account of the Islamic State's propaganda and recruitment strategy. Moreover, since the aim is to look at the strategies from the perspective of the organization, social media accounts of (proclaimed) jihadists have not been taken into account, since there is no way of telling if they represent the view of the whole organization or just themselves.

Table 5 includes the names of some scholars and reporters that are used as sources, as well as their expertise. Table 6 presents types of data and where it was produced.

Table 5: Scholars and reporters

Academics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Williams McCants: expert on militant Islamism and Islamic scripture • Daniel Byman: counterterrorism expert with a focus on Middle Eastern security • Fawas Gerges: scholar on Middle Eastern studies and US foreign policy • Charles Lister: expert on terrorism, conflicts and insurgency across the Levant

Table 6: Sources

Academic Journals	Policy Reports	Books	Primary Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perspectives on Terrorism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brookings • Washington Institute • Quilliam • Middle East Institute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Far Enemy • The ISIS Apocalypse • The Syrian Jihad • Al Qaeda, the Islamic State and the global jihadist movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bin Laden speeches

3.4. Quality of the Study

Good research needs to be credible, and this must be demonstrated in some way for the readers. The basis for judging the credibility for research have traditionally been validity, reliability, generalizability and objectivity (Denscombe 2010: 297-298).

3.4.1. Validity

The question of validity is essentially whether the study has answered the research question that is chosen, or if some other question is answered. Since only material regarding the Islamic State and Al Qaeda has been used, the study should have relatively good validity. However, one can criticize the study in that the development of a terrorist strategy is a very complex issue, and that it is hard to pick the right factors to study.

3.4.2. Reliability

Reliability concerns whether the results in this study could be replicated by someone else. Since all the material is openly available, and the analysis is based on already collected empirical data (i.e., this study has not produced any new empirical data), it would be easy to replicate the study. Whether the same results, or conclusions, would be reached, is a question of whether the analysis is properly done. In order to make sure that the results are indeed reliable, the analysis has benefitted from the two different perspectives, highlighting different factors of the topic.

3.4.3. Generalizability

Generalizability is to what extent the results in this study can be generalized to other instances of the same phenomenon. Since this study has focused on the Islamic State in particular, it does not aim at finding generalizable results that can be applied to other terror groups. However, the author thinks that the theoretical framework that was used has a lot of explanatory power for both the Islamic State and Al Qaeda, and that it would probably also work for other terrorist groups, and that the results from this study could be used as inspiration for such studies.

3.4.4. Objectivity

Objectivity is about being as close to the “objective” truth as possible, and being free from subjectivism, preconceived ideas and biases. To make sure that the results of this study are as objective as possible, multiple different reputable sources have been used. Therefore, the empirical evidence should be as neutral and unbiased as possible. The analysis on the other hand has benefitted from using two different perspectives that in many ways have opposite underlying assumptions. By using different assumptions, preconceived notions and a biased way of thinking can be avoided.

4. The Strategy of Al Qaeda

In this chapter, the strategy of Al Qaeda is covered, according to the operationalization mentioned in the methodology chapter. To facilitate the reading of this chapter, the operationalization is presented once again in Table 7.

Table 7: Operationalization

Intentions	Ideology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beliefs • Purpose
	Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision • Long term objectives
Capabilities	Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terrorist attacks/warfare • Recruitment • Propaganda
	Organization and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational structure • Affiliations

4.1. Background

Al-Qaeda was founded in the midst of the Soviet-Afghan war in the 1980's by Osama Bin Laden and other core operatives (Byman 2015: 3-5). By establishing “a base” (the name Al Qaeda is Arabic for base) for Muslim fighters all over the world, the aim was to defend Muslim territory and promote jihad (Byman 2015: 14). The invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union ignited an uprising in which tribal as well as Islamist groups took up arms in the name of Islam, and shaped the ideology of the first global jihadist movement: “Egyptian jihadists met Saudi fighters, and both in turn mixed with Pakistani and Libyan figures. Ideas and struggles that in the past had been limited to one community were now embraced by many nationalities” (Byman 2015: 4-5). The ensuing defeat of the Soviet Union also came to play a fundamental role in shaping of the ideology, strategy and organization of Al Qaeda. With their initial focus on Afghanistan and Pakistan, Al Qaeda was considered of insignificant importance, and rather unknown as a terror organization (Byman 2015: 10). In the beginning of the 1990's, Bin Laden moved to Sudan, where he established The Islamic Army Shura Council, with the aim of coordinating different jihadist and insurgent groups from all over the world, and establishing ties with their leaders (Byman 2015: 17-20). Bin Laden also aided jihadists in the Muslim world with financial and operational support (Byman 2015: 11-12). One group of particular importance was the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) and its leader Ayman Al-Zawahiri (Byman 2015: 17-20). This collaboration played an important role in two of Al Qaeda's most successful attacks: the 1998 attacks on US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and 9/11, which is also what made Al-Qaeda famous. Since then, the group has carried out several large-scale attacks, e.g., in Spain and London in 2004. In May 2011, Bin Laden was killed by US intelligence officers, and many thought the group would deteriorate as an organization

after the death of its leader. This has however not proved to be the case. Al Qaeda and its affiliates have taken advantage of the security vacuums after the Arab spring in Middle East and North Africa, as well as exploiting current conflicts in South East Asia.

4.2. Intentions

4.2.1. Ideology

As mentioned in the previous section, the ideology of Al Qaeda was shaped by the years of the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan, through a blend of many ideas from a variety of Muslim communities (Byman 2015: 14). According to Fawas Gerges, it was in particular the “fusion of puritanical Salafi-Wahhabism and the militant internationalist stand of the Muslim Brotherhood” that lay the foundation of “bin Ladenism” (Gerges 2009: 85).

In a more simplified manner, the ideology of Al Qaeda is a mix of modern militant Jihadi-Salafism, in which Al Qaeda represents the most important organization within the modern jihadi movement (Bunzel 2017: 7). Although made up by a variety of traditions within Islam, jihadism is best understood as representing fight for a true Islamic State in need of restoration (Bunzel 2017: 1). One common principle among the different traditions is that the regimes of the Middle East are ruled by apostates that needs to be overthrown and replaced with an Islamic government (Bunzel 2017: 2). Moreover, another conviction within the militant school of jihadism is the practice of *takfir*: excommunication of Muslims who do not share the views of the jihadists. In this regard, the jihadists rely heavily on Salafism, a purist movement connected with the Wahhabi movement in Saudi Arabia which dates back to the mid eighteenth century. According to Bunzel, “Salafism brought to the jihadi movement, a single-minded focus on correct belief, meaning the strict and intolerant monotheism” (Bunzel 2017: 8). For Al Qaeda, the combination of Jihadism and Salafism, “Jihadi-Salafism”, thus came to give them the theory on which they could base their ideological framework, which further shaped their goals (Bunzel 2017: 8).

4.2.2. Goals

When founded, Al Qaeda declared that their agenda was of war, and to promote fighters with an awareness of jihad, as well as to create a unified international jihadist movement (Byman 2015: 14). Bin Laden’s vision has however not always been clear, with multiple priorities and a mission to defend Muslims everywhere in the world (Byman 2015: 13). During the whole 1980’s and mid 1990’s Al Qaeda attacked West-friendly regimes in the Middle East (the Near Enemy) such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Algeria (Gerges 2009: 21). However, in the mid 1990’s, a significant shift occurred with regards to the perceived enemy: Al Qaeda went from targeting the “apostate” regimes in the Middle East, to the United States (the Far enemy). This shift was also specified in declarations with specific goals, such as ruling through Sharia law, liberating Muslim lands from enemies, and repel rulers who violated true

Islamic laws and principles (Ganor 2015: 114). The main target of these declarations was the United States and Israel, which Bin Laden dubbed as the “Jewish-Crusader alliance” (Bin Laden 2005: 20-30). According to Bin Laden, the United States was considered more important to target because they were the true oppressors of Muslims, and indirectly ruled over the apostate regimes, such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

From targeting the Near Enemy, the main goals of Al Qaeda were now to defeat the United States, and end their presence in the Middle East, as well as destroying Israel (Byman 2015: 48). According to Bin Laden, this also required Muslims to unite, which made a re-orientation of the jihadist movement necessary. Above all, Muslims needed to be educated on Sharia Law and the notion of Jihad. Only by emancipating themselves by gaining knowledge on these issues could Muslim expel the West from the Middle East, and end the Israeli occupation of Palestine. In the end, Bin Laden envisioned a total war which would prepare all Muslims to fight, for instance through guerrilla warfare (Gerges 2009: 32).

The long-time goal of Al Qaeda is the establishment of a caliphate in which they can govern according to Sharia Law (Byman 2015: 49). A caliphate would also enable the return to what Al Qaeda considers a “pure” version of Islam, and which could be expanded throughout the world (Ganor 2015: 102). This is however not discussed in detail, making another goal of Al Qaeda more important: supporting local jihadist groups, since they can spread AQ’s interpretation of Islam (Byman 2015: 54). Moreover, Al Qaeda sees the battlefield as global, in which promoting civil wars and insurgencies is part of their agenda (Byman 2015: 104).

4.3. Capabilities

4.3.1. Methods

War and Terror Campaigns

War is considered fundamental for the founding and continued existence of Al Qaeda, as it has been since the Soviet years in Afghanistan (Byman 2015: 104). Many of their methods and tactics are shaped by civil wars, and throughout their history, Al Qaeda has engaged in different kinds of conflicts and insurgencies. In the beginning, one major goal in relation to warfare was that of defensive jihad, i.e., protecting Muslim lands and Muslim people from enemies of Islam, such as (perceived) infidels and apostates (Byman 2015: 104). Besides driving away the Soviets from Afghanistan, other areas in which Al Qaeda engaged in defensive jihad was Kashmir and Chechnya. Moreover, in relation to the concept of defensive jihad is the foreign fighter phenomenon. In this regard, Afghanistan was considered a learning opportunity for fighters who learned urban warfare, guerrilla tactics and how to use explosives. A few were also chosen to get more advanced training in terrorism, such as surveillance, assassination, and recruitment of new members (Byman 2015: 23).

The loss of Afghanistan as a safe haven after 9/11 changed the modus operandi of Al Qaeda. From being able to operate in a more central chain of command, outside pressure, among other things, caused Al Qaeda to decentralize their methods (Byman 2015: 105, 122). In this regard, civil wars and insurgencies have had unexpected benefits. Apart from spreading jihad through local groups, the strategy of aiding insurgencies has had the effect of creating security voids in which new safe havens can be established. This kind of “progressive destabilization in phases” also gives Al Qaeda the ability to operate openly (Wright 2016:19). According to Byman, Al Qaeda “seeks to exhaust its enemy through a strategy of attrition” (Byman 2015: 51-52). This strategy was applied during the Afghan-Soviet War, and was indeed successful in forcing back the Soviets.

It is however the suicide attacks that have come to shape the modus operandi of Al Qaeda, and have become “the hallmark” of the organization (Gerges 2009: 142-143). After all, suicide attacks marked the first major attack of Al Qaeda: the 1998 bombings, and later, the 9/11 attacks. In this regard, Zawahiri and the Egyptian jihadists have been particularly influential in promoting suicide missions as a terrorist tactic. Suicide missions were used by Zawahiri and his group as early as 1993, in an attempt to kill the Egyptian Interior minister (Byman 2015: 55). Moreover, Zawahiri considers the appeal for suicide missions to have several benefits: they are seen as effective, shocking and inexpensive (Byman 2015: 56). Moreover, since the suicide bombers plan to die, simple defenses can be avoided, making the suicide bomb a “smart” tactic, as well as making Al Qaeda stand out in terms of commitment and zealotry (Byman 2015: 56). The use of suicide bombers can also be used in what Byman calls “large-scale dramatic attacks against strategic or symbolic targets,” as the 1998 bombings and 9/11 exemplify (Byman & Williams 2015). This is based on the ‘Hezbollah model’ in which Hezbollah 1983 bombed multilateral peacekeeping forces in Beirut, resulting in the deaths of 241 American and 56 French soldiers. Moreover, it also led to withdrawal of all international forces within a year.

Propaganda and Recruitment

Propaganda has been a fundamental tool since the years in Afghanistan (Byman 2015: 84). At that time, Bin Laden published the magazine *Al Jihad*, in which pictures from the battlefield were used to raise money and recruit new members. The purpose of Al Qaeda propaganda is to inspire the broader Muslim community to support them, and the themes usually center around the oppression of Muslims from non-Muslims, threatening the West, and influencing militant organizations to join Al Qaeda.

Besides being considered as the ultimate tactic by Zawahiri, suicide missions have a high media coverage, making it useful for propaganda purposes. In this regard, Zawahiri also aims to spread a culture of martyrdom by making it seem glorious and righteous. (Byman 2015: 56).

Another important media source for Al Qaeda has been video messages in which Bin Laden videotaped operations and statements by “future-martyrs,” with the aim of inspiring (Byman 2015: 85). Before 9/11, Bin Laden also gave a few interviews. However, according to Byman and Williams, Al

Qaeda has not been particularly innovative when it comes to producing propaganda, relying on “long videos featuring senior Al Qaeda ideologues pontificating about various aspects of jihad and quoting extensively from the Koran” (Byman & Williams 2015). Moreover, in contrast to other jihadist groups (such as the Islamic State), Al Qaeda seem to rely on older internet platforms, such as online forums, to a larger extent.

When it comes to recruitment, Al Qaeda has been able to recruit new members in mosques and schools, including technical and engineering colleges (Byman 2015: 10; Bloom 2016: 605-606). According to Mia Bloom, Al Qaeda has always been rather selective in their recruitment criteria (Bloom 2016: 605). In this regard, the recruitment of Al Qaeda has worked through ‘talent spotters’ who recruit potential members based on two criteria: 1) perceived level of commitment to the Islamist cause, and 2) their skills and psychological durability. Moreover, potential Al Qaeda members has had to undergo both spiritual preparation and basic military and survival training (Bloom 2016: 615).

4.3.2. Organization and Resources

Organizational Structure

According to Byman, it can be rather difficult to talk about Al Qaeda as one organization (Byman 2015: 95). Although outside pressure has led the organization to become more decentralized and network based, the fact that Al Qaeda at times uses a hybrid of centralized and decentralized methods makes it even more difficult to talk about Al Qaeda as single organization. In general, Al Qaeda has tried to maintain their hierarchical structure which defined Al Qaeda during their initial phase in the Afghan-Soviet War. During this time, the members swore loyalty to Bin Laden as their *emir*. In the beginning, Al Qaeda also relied on specific committees that dealt with some part of the organization, such as military operations, finances, foreign affairs, administration, religious matters, propaganda, intelligence and internal security, etc. In addition, Al Qaeda also consisted of an advisory committee composed of top members, in which the second highest decisions were made.

Since 9/11 and the loss of Afghanistan as a safe haven, the activities of Al Qaeda has focused on aspects of control and coordination in connection to its affiliates. In this regard, senior Al Qaeda members seem to have had a direct hand in the most important operations.

Today, the Al Qaeda core centers around Ayman Al-Zawahiri as their top leader (Byman 2015: 157). The core around him consists of dedicated and skilled operatives, probably no more than a hundred, who have “transferred their loyalty” from Bin Laden to Zawahiri upon Bin Laden’s death. According to Byman, these are the ones that see themselves as the “vanguard elite,” who truly understand the interests of Muslims (Byman 2015: 157). Moreover, the core of Al Qaeda is believed to have focused on the high-profile terrorist attacks, for instance the 1998 embassy bombings and 9/11. Despite decentralization, the organizational structure of the the highest level is still maintained in some respects, for instance, by core members exercising strategic command and control, in which Al Qaeda

only deals with centralization on a broad level and through strategic leadership (Byman 2015: 95-96). Charles Lister emphasizes the appointment of a global deputy leader for operating Al Qaeda's most strategically valuable zone as a key mechanism in avoiding taking decentralization to far (Lister 2017: 4). Being forced to adapt since the Soviet War, Al Qaeda has had time to develop their organizational skills as a "learning organization" in which there is a willingness for self-evaluation (Byman 2015: 96). In this regard, core operatives are for instance allowed to criticize leaders, and operations are evaluated.

Affiliates

Cooperation with other groups has been a fundamental part of Al Qaeda's activities since its creation, but sometimes, Al Qaeda has also sought more formal alliances through the creation of affiliates: independent organizations accept the authority and goals of Zawahiri, and in return, gets to use the Al Qaeda label (Lister 2016). As of today, Al Qaeda has five affiliates: Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQIP), Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), Al-Shahbaab, and Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (although rebranded itself in 2016 and claims to no longer be an affiliate). All these groups are considered as either insurgent or terror groups that have participated in mass causality terrorist attacks (Wright 2016: 21). They follow the statements and strategic vision of the Al Qaeda core, as well as implementing a local strategy of destruction. In line with Al Qaeda's own long-term objectives, this means devoting resources to fighting both the near and the far enemy.

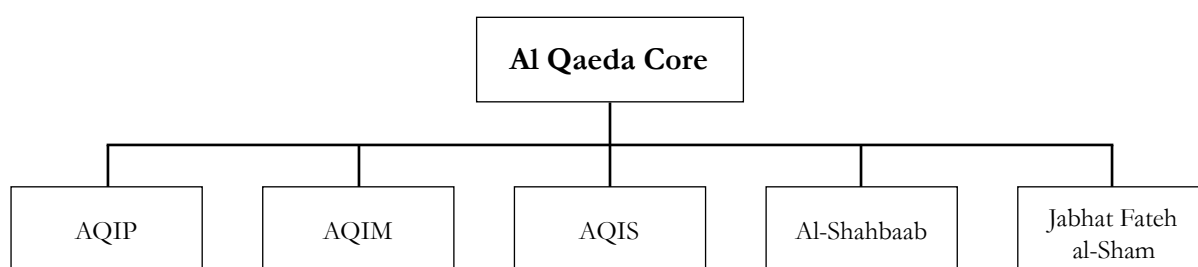


Figure 2: Al Qaeda and its affiliates

As mentioned, this process of formalized relationships escalated after 9/11 and the loss of Afghanistan—the core had to find new ways in order to remain active. Furthermore, affiliations make Al Qaeda a powerful global terror organization, since it helps the Al Qaeda brand to gain access to conflict zones which would otherwise have been difficult to take part in (Byman 2015: 151). By affiliating with Al Qaeda, local fighters gain military experience and tactics. Moreover, the best practices is shared to all affiliates through Al Qaeda's communications network. According to Byman, some of the most important learning take place on the strategic level: failures and successes are evaluated before being communicated to affiliates (Byman 2015: 151). This is a lesson learned through the affiliation of Al Qaeda in Iraq, and their overall brutality towards Sunni tribes and Muslim civilians (such as the Shia) which came to "tarnish" the Al Qaeda brand (Byman 2015: 151). As a consequence, the Al Qaeda core and their affiliates have become much more responsive when it comes to respecting local grievances and identities. Moreover, this strategy around local goals has intensified during the civil war in Syria and

in Yemen, where Al Qaeda focuses on building alliances in which they grow stronger within the unstable and repressed societies (Lister 2016: 2). In this regard, Al Qaeda also avoids seeming too repressive by restraining their harsh form of Sharia law: doing so make them appear as a “favored alternative to the pre-existing status quo” (Lister 2016: 2).

Resources

According to Byman, Al Qaeda has over the years raised money in creative ways (2015: 109). In the early days, the personal wealth of Bin Laden funded much of Al Qaeda’s campaigns. Later on, when governments seized his assets, Bin Laden drew on the Golden Chain: a ‘charity’ system in which money is transferred through *hawala*, an informal system. Through hawala, individuals from different countries can pass the same amount of money to the intended receiver. Another source of income has been fundraising through charities, such as their own and those which Al Qaeda has infiltrated.

Previously, affiliates used to get money from Al Qaeda, but in recent years, the flow has been reversed: money is going from the affiliates to the core (Bauer & Levitt 2017: 93). The most common means of raising money for the affiliates is through kidnapping for ransom and extortion: between 2008 and 2014, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) received more than \$100 million in ransom (Bauer & Levitt: 94). Another means of receiving money for the affiliates is through cooperation with other groups: Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, for instance, cooperates with Al Shabab in Somalia, and Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent are, according to UN, in an active collaboration with the Taliban in Afghanistan (Bauer & Levitt 2017: 100).

5. The Strategy of the Islamic State

In this chapter, the strategy of the Islamic State is covered, according to the operationalization mentioned in the methodology chapter. To facilitate the reading of this chapter, the operationalization is presented once again in Table 8.

Table 8: Operationalization

Intentions	Ideology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beliefs • Purpose
	Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision • Long term objectives
Capabilities	Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terrorist attacks/warfare • Recruitment • Propaganda
	Organization and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational structure • Affiliations

5.1. Background

The Islamic State originally emerged as an affiliate of Al Qaeda (Wright 2016: 10). It was formed by a Jordanian jihadist by the name of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in 1999, with the help of seed money from Bin Laden. It was however not until after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 that Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) was formed, and would eventually evolve into the Islamic State. The chaotic political landscape in Iraq after the demise of Saddam Hussein, and the invasion of US forces, created the base for Zarqawi to start conducting terror campaigns (Lister 2015: 266). During this period, Zarqawi eventually merged with several other jihadist groups, and renamed AQI to the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) (Lister 2015: 266). Early on, Zarqawi had a sectarian, i.e., *dogmatic*, dimension in his terror campaigns, for instance by attacking Shi'a. In 2006, Zarqawi was killed by a US airstrike, and in 2008, US troops and Iraqi tribes managed to drive away ISI from its strongholds, as well as killing and imprisoning some core members. (Lister 2015). In 2010, Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi became the leader of ISI. In the following years, the group also managed to rebuild itself, enabled by a new leadership, in combination with the failing domestic politics in Iraq, among other things (Lister 2015: 93). In an attempt to consolidate his own ambitions, the Iraqi prime minister Nouri al-Maliki attempted to coerce and restrain protests, and to exclude Sunnis from power, which all played a significant role in the the support given to Baghdadi. The chaos that was created in Syria also benefited the cause of the Islamic State. In 2011, Zawahiri urged jihadists to travel to Syria and fight, and Baghdadi sent small numbers of fighters to recruit and raise money (Lister 2015: 63, 70-71).

In 2013, ISI changed their name to the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), in an effort to declare the control over these fighters in Syria, and to formally expand the project of statehood. In January 2014, the Islamic State seized the provincial capital Raqqa from the Nusra Front, in its pursuit of building a state, despite being against the wishes of Al Qaeda and other jihadist organizations. One month later, Al Qaeda Core severed its ties with the Islamic State—a split regarded as having a major impact on the jihadist movement (Wright 2016: 10). On the night of Ramadan, in June 2014, Baghdadi officially declared the Islamic State as a caliphate with its own government, economy, and army. A formal bureaucracy with institutions was also created, and managed with a hard-line interpretation of Islam. Moreover, Baghdadi urged fellow Muslims to come and join in the state building of the caliphate. In June 2014, the Islamic State also advanced military in Iraq, seizing Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq, as well as launching attacks across the provinces of Ninawa, Salah ad Din, Diyala, Kirkuk and Anbar (Lister 2015: 232). Moreover, the extreme brutality of the Islamic State and their uncompromising attitude became known to a wider public, with public beheadings of prisoners, killing and enslavement of religious minorities such as the Yazidis, mass executions of the Shi'a, and suicide bombings (Lister 2015: 298). In 2015, the Islamic State claimed responsibility for several large-scale attacks in both Europe and in Iraq. By the end of 2016, between 27,000 and 31,000 foreign fighters had traveled to Syria to join the Islamic State and other jihadist groups. Jihadists with professions such as engineers, accountants, teachers, etc., also traveled to Syria and the Caliphate (Wright 2017: 10). According to Pentagon in late 2016, around 90% of IS members in Iraq were of Iraqi origin whilst 70% of IS fighters of in Syria were local jihadists. In 2017, the Islamic State lost several of their cities, e.g., Mosul and Raqqa, and is today dramatically diminished territorially. The group is however said to be operating in other places, and are, like other jihadist groups, exploiting the security vacuums that are fueled by wars and conflicts, most notably in North Africa.

5.2. Intentions

5.2.1. Ideology

The ideology of the Islamic State is a mix between the Salafi-Jihadism of Al Qaeda, and identity politics (Gerges 2016: 24). Some of the group's motivations can be traced to their ideological roots of Salafi-Jihadism, whilst others are a consequence of what Gerges calls “a hyper Sunni-identity, driven by an intrinsic and even genocidal anti-Shia ideology” (Gerges 2016: 24). To one extent, this anti-Shia ideology hails from Zarqawi's own hatred of Shia Muslims, who he believed had united with the Jews and Christians (McCants 2015: 226). According to Will McCants, the sectarian ideology of the Islamic State hails from their interaction with old Islamic texts and prophecies about the End Days (McCants 2015: 39-40). Moreover, these prophecies have sectarian dimensions to them, making them resonate with today's conflicts (McCants 2015: 178). In these texts, the ideas about the apocalypse, i.e., the final

battle between “good and evil,” and revolution, i.e., the overthrowing of governments, goes hand in hand with the caliphate as God’s kingdom on earth (McCants 2015: 45-47).

Already in 2006, Zarqawi considered the establishment of a caliphate necessary, since it would represent the state of true Islam and help AQI to expel the Shi’a from Iraq (McCants 2015: 22). In 2006, shortly after Zarqawi’s death, his successor, Abu Ayyub al-Masri did not hesitate to declare the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), thinking a caliphate was needed for the final apocalyptic battle (McCants 2015: 71). This idea has been further narrated by Baghdadi, although with a more focus on state building and actual governing institutions (McCants 2015: 317). Above all, Baghdadi have sought to demonstrate the idea of the caliphate as an obligation for all Muslims to live in. For Baghdadi, the idea of a caliphate is both religious and political: by pledging allegiance to the valid caliph (Baghdadi), Muslims would also affirm Sunni Islamic identity. Cultural cleansing of alien elements, such as other religions, and even local Sunni practices, are parts of Baghdadi’s idea of a true Islamic State (Gerges 2016: 30). According to McCants, there are no grey zones in the world view of Islamic State (McCants 2015: 36).

Thus, the notion of brutality is a fundamental concept in the ideology of the Islamic State, and works in tandem with their millenarianism: neither competition nor diversity of ideas are allowed. In this regard, the brutality in the Islamic State’s ideology is delineated in showing strength and power (McCants 2015: 316). Moreover, in order to justify their brutality and showing their strength, the Islamic State have in some cases gone against Qur’anic regulations, which, according to McCants, is a way of distinguishing themselves from other groups through provocation: “it is almost as if the group does extreme things to create opportunities for demonstrating its scholarly dexterity and burnishing its ultraconservative bona fides” (McCants 2015: 226). One such example of religious controversy was, for instance, the immolation of the Jordanian pilot Muath al-Kasasbeh for apostasy, which caused outrage in the Muslim community (and even among Al Qaeda ideologues) since it is strictly forbidden in the Qur’an to burn someone, even for heresy (McCants 2015: 214). According to the Islamic State, this was however deemed as a necessary act of showing strength against their enemy: the pilot represented the apostate kingdom of Jordan who had targeted the Islamic State through a number of airstrikes.

Another example of ideological zealotry in relation to brutality, is the Islamic State’s involvement in the sex trade and enslavement of Yazidi women and girls (Gerges 2016: 32). According to Gerges, besides male power and patriarchy, these actions are undertaken to represent the ‘authenticity’ in their ideology: “Baghdadi and his organization wants to ‘distinguish themselves’ from Islamist rivals by attempting to revive traditions, rituals, and practices that have been dormant for over a thousand years in Muslim history” (Gerges 2016: 32).

5.2.2. Goals

In line with their ideology, the most important goal is the establishment of a caliphate: a true Islamic State, by governing the captured areas in Iraq and Syria (Byman 2015: 171). This makes fighting local and regional enemies the most urgent goal: eliminating the Iraqi government, the Assad regime in Syria, and disloyal Sunnis is the top priority. By doing so, the Islamic State can further expand their territory as proclaimed by their motto: *baqiya wa tatamd*, or “lasting and expanding.”

5.3. Capabilities

5.3.1. Methods

War and Terror Campaigns

The warfare strategy and territorial success of the Islamic State depends on several things, such as the military capabilities and strategic planning of Baghdadi with regards to terror operations (Lister 2015: 274-276). In tandem with the warfare strategy of the Islamic State, their military capabilities have played an important role in their success. According to Lister, this is because of the importance of the military element in the identity of the Islamic State as a terror organization (Lister 2016: 274). With regards to warfare, the Islamic State has, for instance, been able to remain militarily strong, and to impose defeats on their enemies, and has also controlled several strategic border crossings within Syria (Byman 2015: 173). When seizing territory from Syrian and Iraqi armies, the Islamic State has also managed to take large amounts of arms, e.g., US weaponry that had been provided to the Iraqi government, surface-to-air missiles, anti-tank weapons, Humvees, tanks and (unarmed) surveillance drones (Byman 2015: 173).

Although much of this can be attributed to the weakness of the regimes in Iraq, and Syria, the territorial expansion of the Islamic State can also be explained with regards to the strategic investments and planning by Baghdadi and his core operatives (Lister 2015: 276). Baghdadi has, for instance, relied on the operational expertise of both former Iraqi army and police officers, skilled Chechen trainers and AQI veterans. As a consequence, the Islamic State uses a mix of warfare tactics, both conventional and unconventional (guerrilla) fighting, in which they have been capable of carrying out-large scale offensives against Iraqi and Syrian military brigades (Lister 2015: 275; Gerges 2016: 149).

In addition, Baghdadi has also invested in training new fighters, in both religious studies as well as military training. According to Lister, new recruits have usually been placed on guard and frontline duty before moving on with more operational and offensive operations (Lister 2016: 275). In this regard, Baghdadi have in particular relied on the foreign fighters and the use of suicide bombers (Lister 2016: 276; Gerges 2016: 274).

According to Lister, the Islamic State participate in three kinds of military operations: mass casualty targets towards minorities, attritional campaigns, and full-scale sieges and operations (Lister 2015: 274-276). The mass casualty targets against minorities have dual purposes: besides killing minorities and undermining the lack of security in large cities such as Baghdad, the Islamic State hopes to fuel the sectarian conflicts with retaliation attacks by Shia militias towards Sunnis (Lister 2015: 275). The attritional attacks towards security personnel are committed in order to reduce their capabilities and societal support structures. This has also included methodical infiltration of Islamic State fighters in Iraqi societies, in which individual army and police officers have been targeted in their homes. The last kind of terror campaigns, i.e., the full-scale sieges, are meant to display the military element of the Islamic State. In this regard, fighters are positioned like a light infantry force who operates in an organized manner with tanks, artillery and heavy weapons.

Propaganda and Recruitment

The intentions and military success of the Islamic State's terror campaigns have also played an important role when it comes to their propaganda and recruitment: strategies with regards to the attention that the group has gained both in the media as well as through their own channels.

Moreover, the level of 'sophistication' in the sense of style of editing and staging have also made the Islamic State known for their propaganda as being 'invigorating,' for instance with references to video games and movies (Byman & Williams 2015). Besides distribution through their media organization *Al Hayat Media* and magazines such as *Dabiq*, the Islamic State has also created an app: *The Dawn of the Glad Tidings* (Wilson 2017: 4). By making users sign away their privacy rights when installing the app, the Islamic State gained access to their contacts and Twitter accounts, with which they could upload their propaganda. According to Byman and Williams, the Islamic State also encourages bottom-up propaganda, for instance by recruiters bringing smartphones to record and share what happens on the battlefield, and by enabling 'crowdsourcing of jihad' (Byman & Williams 2015).

The Islamic State has recruited different kinds of people, ranging from foreign fighters to young women, to families with children, and people wanting to contribute with their expertise from their professions. During the extension phase of the caliphate, the propaganda of the Islamic State was modeled to attract different kinds of recruits (Bloom 2016: 616). Themes or narratives have thus varied depending on the target group, although the theme of brutality stands out by far as the most prominent one, since it serves a dual purpose: threatening the West, and at the same time attracting potential recruits by showing strength (Winter 2015). Charlie Winter, who has studied the propaganda of the Islamic State in detail, emphasizes that their propaganda entices a specific way of living for potential recruits: both immediate and in the long run (Winter 2015: 2). Besides the theme of brutality, Winter distinguishes between five other narratives such as mercy, victimhood, war, belonging, and utopianism. While brutality is the most common theme, utopianism is regarded as the most important one: Muslims

can live the rightful life here on earth, by moving to the only true Islamic State—Baghdadi’s caliphate (Winter 2015: 2, 29).

According to Winter, the utopianism in the propaganda resonates powerfully with the narrative of the apocalypse or “apocalyptic utopianism” (Winter 2015: 28). The apocalyptic message has in particular been successful in several ways when it comes to recruiting foreign fighters. First, it attracts people to join the fight in Syria, which, as previously mentioned, is important in the narrative of the apocalypse. Second, it also works towards making people more brutal and ruthless on the battlefield. As already mentioned, foreign fighters with no ties to the local community have specifically worked as “shock troops” in being ruthless and barbaric (Gerges 2016: 274). Moreover, it also works to increase the sense of urgency for the potential recruit (Winter 2015: 29-30).

5.3.2. Organization and Resources

Organization

The success, brutality, and even the audacity of the Islamic State as a terrorist organization in many ways reflect the personal story of AQI’s founder Zarqawi. Arriving too late to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan. In 1989, Zarqawi went home to Jordan and got in-prisoned due to terrorist activities. In prison, he got to know more Salafi-jihadists, and became further radicalized (Warrick 2015: 129-132). Some years later, Zarqawi travelled to Kandahar and eventually managed to persuade Bin Laden and Zawahiri to help him stir up an insurgency in the lands of the Levant (Warrick 2015: 132). However, due to Zarqawi’s extremist (even according to jihadist standards) and sectarian views in who counted as a good Muslim, he was looked upon with suspicion by the Al Qaeda Core, for instance with regards to Zarqawi’s hatred of the Shi’a (McCants 2015: 17). Nonetheless, the Al Qaeda core needed to establish a base in the countries of the Levant and provided Zarqawi with seed money, since his Jordanian connections could be useful. Zarqawi, on the other hand, would not have to be obliged to swear loyalty or accept every point of Al Qaeda’s ideology—it was more about “coordination and cooperation” in order to reach joint objectives (Warrick 2015: 132). In 2002, Zarqawi, who sensed the forthcoming of a US invasion, moved to Iraq to establish terror cells by exploiting the security voids that would rise after the fall of Saddam Hussein’s regime. Despite being successful in his terror attacks, in 2004, Zarqawi proposed a merger with Al Qaeda. His aim and strategy was to provoke the Shi’a and ignite a sectarian conflict, which would also defeat the transitional government (McCants 2015: 24-26). Al Qaeda, who had lost their safe haven in Afghanistan, and had run a disastrous terror campaign in Saudi Arabia, saw no choice but to merge, since they wanted to have a part in the Sunni uprisings against the United States. However, already in 2005, the core started raising objections towards Zarqawi’s violent methods, such as his public beheadings of foreign journalists, aid-workers, attacks on Shi’ite Mosques, and attacks on Sunni scholars that AQI believed to be heretics, but whose support Al Qaeda needed in order to cooperate with the Sunni tribes (McCants 2015: 29).

Moreover, Al Qaeda feared that Zarqawi's brutality would alienate ordinary Muslims as well as tarnish the Al Qaeda brand (McCants 2015). However, Zarqawi continued to fuel sectarian conflicts between Sunnis and Shi'a, hoping that this would gather more Sunnis to AQI. He also merged AQI with other groups, and in 2006, Zarqawi started speaking about the necessity of establishing an Islamic State as soon as possible in order to expel the enemy.

After Zarqawi's death in 2006, his successor Masri dissolved AQI and proclaimed The Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) since he believed that Mahdi, a Muslim savior mentioned in prophecies, would come, and the caliphate would assist him during the apocalypse (McCants 2015: 52). In 2006, ISI, with the help of other jihadist groups, managed to seize some territories, such as the Anbar Province and Ninewa, in which they consolidated their power (McCants 2015: 70, 300, 316). However, the brutality of ISI alienated many Sunnis. ISI began targeting civilians and other jihadist groups, and some of them wrote an open letter to Bin Laden, criticizing his Iraqi franchise: "They threaten some members of the group with death if they do not swear allegiance to Al Qaeda or its other names" (McCants 2015: 55-56).

According to McCants, one part of this problem is related to the fact that ISI had allowed too many people to become members without proper vetting, and thus encouraged 'rouge' elements. Another problem was Masri's lack of leadership skills, who was too occupied with thinking about the Mahdi prophecy (McCants 2015: 56, 58, 77). Moreover, the foreign core within ISI did not understand the ways of the Iraqis well, and even some of its own members complained. All of this eventually led to an erosion of ISI's base support among Iraqi Sunnis. In 2008, some of the Sunni Tribes, with the help of US backed forces, managed to expel ISI.

The second and the third leader of ISI both died in 2010, and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was chosen as the new emir, something that would change the structure of ISI considerably. The leadership of ISI consisted of foreign fighters, which caused rifts between the foreign fighters and the Iraqi jihadists (Zarqawi was Jordanian, and Masri Egyptian) (McCants 2015: 119). However, Baghdadi managed to go between these factions, much due to his 10-month experience in a US detention centre, in which he built ties to both former Saddam members as well as AQI jihadists (McCants 2015: 118). When Baghdadi was appointed leader, he made sure to bring with him the Iraqis who were already trained in military and intelligence matters, as well as the jihadists with experience in running an insurgency. Baghdadi eventually consolidated his power by purging ISI leaders that were suspected of disloyalty, and replaced them with Iraqis (many who had served in the regime of Saddam Hussein) (McCants 2015: 123). Baghdadi also launched the "Breaking of Walls" campaign, that freed hundreds of AQI members from Iraqi prisons. In addition, between December 2009 and January 2010, ISI evaluated their failure through a policy document with the name "The Strategic Plan" (McCants 2015: 124-128). In this, recommendations were given on how to succeed with coming attacks, and managing the Sunni tribes with incentives, much like the Americans had done.

From 2010, and during its most successful years (until 2017), the Islamic State was a controlled and bureaucratic organization with a strict hierarchy, designed to act and behave like a state (Lister 2015: 271). Lister describes the structure as a pyramid with Baghdadi as the supreme leader, or *caliph*. Below Baghdadi are his deputies for Syria and Iraq as well as his advisers, and below them is a cabinet of ministers, and a twelve-man military council. As the caliph, Baghdadi has supreme political and religious authority, although he relied on his deputies who oversaw the captured territories, as well as managed the administration.

Resources and Finances:

The territorial gains of the Islamic State have also led them to controlling resources, such as hydroelectric dams and oil refineries (Byman & Williams 2015). At their height of power, the Islamic State oversaw some of the most profitable oil resources in Iraq and Syria, in which they produced 50,000 barrels of oil every day, to sell on the black market. According to Byman, oil smuggling grossed around \$2 million a day in September 2014. In addition, ransoms, and taxing local populations have also helped fund the Islamic State. The money that Islamic State generated was used to recruit and pay fighters, as well as giving them bonuses when they married and had children (thus expanding the caliphate).

6. Analysis

This chapter contains the analysis of the strategy of the Islamic State and its development in relation to Al Qaeda. The analysis is in two parts: first, according to the Instrumental Perspective, and second, according to the Organizational Perspective. However, before that, a short recap of the differences between the strategies of Al Qaeda and the Islamic State is presented.

6.1. Overview of the Strategies of Al Qaeda and the Islamic State

For purposes of clarity, an overview of the strategies of Al Qaeda and the Islamic State is presented in Table 9.

Table 9: An Overview of the Strategies of Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State

Area	Al Qaeda	The Islamic State
INTENTIONS		
Ideology & Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jihadism and Salafism • Shift from Near Enemy to Far Enemy (the West) • Create a caliphate sometime in the future • Supporting local jihadist groups - winning hearts and minds • Main goal: Spread Islamic ideas and inspire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jihadism and Salafism • Apocalypse and State-building • Brutality and Sectarianism • Main goal: Create a caliphate now
CAPABILITIES		
Warfare & Terror attacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defensive Jihad • Focus on the Far Enemy • A strategy of attrition & innovative attacks • Large scale symbolic attacks on the West • Suicide bombings & martyrdom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploited security vacuums in Iraq and Syria • Mass casualty attacks towards minorities as a retaliation and escalation strategy • Attritional campaigns towards security forces • Full-scale sieges and attacks on military facilities • Brutality
Propaganda & Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From fatwas to online propaganda • Longer “tirades” and Koranic sermons • “Talent-spotting” strategy • Elitism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media • High level of ‘sophistication’ with editing and pop-cultural references • Modeled to attract different kinds of recruits • Brutality and utopianism most common themes
Organization & Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hybrid of centralized to decentralized structure • Formalized affiliations • Financing through wealthy individuals (e.g, Bin Laden), charities, and affiliates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created as an affiliate to Al Qaeda • 3rd leader Baghdadi purged leadership and united organization • Centralized and hierarchical structure • Resources: Territory have provided IS with oil and taxes of local population

6.2. The Instrumental Perspective

According to the Instrumental Perspective, the purpose of terrorism is to bring about a change in an actor’s environment, and is used as a means to achieve this goal—it represents a *strategic choice*. In this section, the focus is on how the strategy of the Islamic State has developed as a result of their

intentions and collective values, and how they use terrorism as a means to achieve their ends, but also on comparing the Islamic State to Al Qaeda. If intentions shape strategy, different intentions should result in different strategies. This is used to explain the differences between the strategies of Al Qaeda and the Islamic State.

6.2.1. Intentions

According to the Instrumental Perspective, an organization acts as a unit, on the basis of collective values. To understand the strategy of an organization, one needs to understand the underlying values and goals that the strategy is designed to achieve.

The Islamic State has one major goal: the creation of a caliphate. To create a caliphate, they need land, people to govern and run the society, and all the different societal functions, e.g., healthcare, education, legal system, military, etc. As will be shown, this goal shapes many parts of their strategy. Apart from the goal of creating a caliphate, the Islamic State is founded upon other collective values, such as sectarianism and brutality. They are considered necessary components in order to create the right kind of caliphate, one which is cleansed from unwanted elements.

As delineated in the empirical data in the previous section, much of the brutality and sectarianism of the Islamic State hails from their interaction with old texts, in which violence against minorities is ‘sanctioned’ and even encouraged. In this regard, the collective values of the Islamic State shape the rest of their strategies.

While Al Qaeda also wants to form a caliphate, this goal is further into the future. Their current focus is to fight the Far Enemy and give strength to the whole jihadist movement by supporting local jihadist groups all over the world with training, logistics and inspiration in how to wage defensive jihad against the enemy: The focus of Al Qaeda is thus much more global or transnational, which in turn has shaped the rest of their strategies in a different way than the Islamic State.

In the following sections, the effects of these intentions on the other parts of the strategy is explored.

6.2.2. Warfare and Terror Attacks

Capturing and defending land is fundamental to the Islamic State’s goal of creating a caliphate. To achieve this, ISIS uses terrorism as a learning process. In this regard, terror operations are the consequence of the combined skill and experience of former jihadists as well as security and intelligence officers from Saddam Hussein’s Baathist Party. In other words, the Islamic States method of conducting terrorism has been successful since it has been characterized by people who already know how to wage war, and to run an authoritarian and brutal government, as well as training new people in security and intelligence operations.

In contrast, the terror attacks by Al Qaeda are distinguished by surprise attacks against symbolic targets against the Far Enemy, i.e., suicide missions against targets that represent the United States or the West. In addition, and in line with their intentions, the suicide missions of Al Qaeda are also undertaken with the aim of inspiring and electrifying the Muslim community, for instance, through innovative means of attacking the enemy. The best example of this is 9/11, in which Al Qaeda managed to innovate the tactic of attrition by combining several kinds of terror tactics, i.e., suicide missions and hijackings. This shows that differences in warfare strategies can be derived from differences in intentions.

According to the Instrumental Perspective, using terrorism as a strategic choice is based both on the ends and the means of the organization. If the organization is weak or small compared to its enemies, it can use surprise to compensate for this weakness. The Islamic State is a good illustration of this, in that they have used surprise attacks, as well as a general strategy of attrition. As mentioned, some of the attacks, such as attritional terror campaigns towards Iraqi security personnel, are engaged by the organization in order to reduce the enemies' capabilities and show the weakness of the Iraqi state. By using attrition, the Islamic States can use its resources more efficiently towards achieving their goal of creating a caliphate.

However, to truly surprise the enemy, one needs to not only be unpredictable when it comes to the time and place of the attacks, but also on the nature of the attacks themselves. Succeeding in this can be considered doctrinal innovations. The Islamic State's terror attacks on minority communities in the large cities can be regarded as one such example. On the one hand, targeting Shi'a (and other minorities) is a part of their intentions and collective values. However, by hoping that Shia militias will retaliate by attacking Sunnis, the Islamic State also wishes to exacerbate the sectarian tensions further, and thus create a case for their apocalyptic visions. These attacks are not only aimed at creating new victims, but through retaliations, also new perpetrators, and can thus fuel a new wave of chaos, unrest, and even more victims. They are even used as a way of strengthening the world view of the Islamic State by suggesting an apocalyptic situation. This is an example of how the Islamic State can use their limited resources in an efficient way to get maximum effects of their attacks.

Lastly, some terror tactics of the Islamic State are particularly shaped by the notion of brutality in their intentions. These acts of violence apply to a specific kind of 'symbolic' violence such as beheadings of Sunnis, the immolation of the Jordanian pilot, and the sexual slavery of Yazidi women and girls.

6.2.3. Propaganda and Recruitment

To establish a caliphate, the Islamic State needs a large number of people with different backgrounds and skills. Just recruiting soldiers is not enough to create a functioning society, other professions are also needed. The fact that Baghdadi shifted focus in the intentions of the Islamic State can be understood as a strategic choice with regards to attracting as many people as possible. By moving away from 'Mahdi the Savior' towards more focus on the establishment of a caliphate and the coming

apocalypse, the Islamic State could bring attention to several themes, such as brutality and utopianism, which made it possible for the Islamic State to target different kinds of people, e.g., families, fighters, doctors, and other professionals.

In contrast to the propaganda strategies of Al Qaeda, who has relied on older internet platforms such as websites and online forums, the propaganda of the Islamic State has been distributed on social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, as well as through their own media channels, which has attracted younger people. Much of the propaganda is also available in several languages. This is in line with their goals to create a caliphate: they need to reach a broader and larger audience.

On the other hand, Al Qaeda's propaganda is adapted to their intentions, i.e., targeting the Far Enemy and recruiting people to their cause of defensive jihad, rather than building a caliphate. In contrast to the Islamic State, Al Qaeda can thus focus more on one kind of propaganda, such as suicide missions or 'martyrdom operations' towards Western objects. Moreover, the propaganda strategy of Al Qaeda reflects the elitism in Al Qaeda's intentions in how they see themselves as an 'elitist vanguard' through inspiration. This means that senior Al Qaeda members can 'afford' to pontificate about jihad and quoting from the Qur'an in Arabic, rather than being active on social media and adapting their propaganda to a broader audience.

6.2.4. Organization and Resources

Starting from the formation of the Islamic State, the merging of Zarqawi's group with Al Qaeda can be regarded as a strategic choice from both sides. From a strategic point of view, the Al Qaeda brand was regarded as beneficial for Zarqawi's own cause, since it could legitimize his terror operations. Likewise, the failed insurgencies of Al Qaeda could be seen as a reason for why Al Qaeda accepted the merger with Zarqawi: they would have someone running an insurgency for them against their biggest enemy, and help them spread their ideology. In this regard, one could point out that both parties used the other as a means to an end.

In the current state, the organizational structure of the Islamic State reflects their intentions of creating a caliphate. Compared to Al Qaeda, the Islamic State is more centralized, depends on a single leader to a greater degree, and is also geographically centralized. This is natural when one considers that the end goal is to run a society—something which is hard to do in a decentralized manner. In contrast, Al Qaeda, who are more focused on spreading Islamic ideas than on creating a caliphate, have a decentralized organization suited for long term survival and adaptation. The fact that they have relied on both formal and informal collaborations with other groups thus reflect their intention of spreading their ideas and reaching their goal of gathering other jihadist groups under their 'inspirational' umbrella. In line with this is also to win the heart and minds of local populations to support the visions of Al Qaeda. The fact that the Al Qaeda Core communicates their learning to affiliates, for instance by

respecting local traditions (rather than imposing strict Sharia laws) thus reflect their intentions. This shows that the intentions of an organization shape its strategy and even organizational structure.

The territorial gains by the Islamic State in capturing large cities and strategic border crossings are a key aspect in understanding their strategies and organizational development. Besides being able to govern in line with their intentions, territorial gains have provided the organization with opportunities to expand further and thus conduct more terror campaigns, much due to the advantage in logistical support in training fighters, moving and withstanding more easily. Another aspect that has increased the opportunities for the Islamic State to continue and develop their strategies is the financial and technological advantages that seizing land have generated. By controlling and smuggling oil as well as taxing the local population, the Islamic State has been able to pay their fighters and give bonuses to families that move to the caliphate with their family. This has been a major advantage in comparison with Al Qaeda, who had to rely on bin Laden's personal wealth, as well as on charity.

While the Islamic State's strategy of acquiring territories has many benefits, it can also be problematic. While Al Qaeda has experienced territorial loss of Afghanistan as a safe haven and operational base, they have managed to survive through its affiliates who operate in different parts of Middle East and Africa. Although forced, the decentralization process in operations has proven to be strategically beneficial. In this regard, Al Qaeda has managed to survive both as an organization and at the same time to succeed with some of its intentions: to gather the jihadist movement under their 'inspirational umbrella'. In contrast, since much of the Islamic States identity and success as a terror organization is tied to their territorial gains and with it, their wealth, the terrorism of the Islamic State could fail—at least with regards to their goals.

6.2.5. Summary

In the above sections, the connection between the intentions and the strategy of the Islamic State has been explored. Many examples have been used to show that the intentions, collective values, and goals of an organization shape the other components of its strategy. In the case of the Islamic State, the strategy can to a large extent be explained with reference to the goal of creating a caliphate in the near future. Since this is one of the major differences between the Islamic State and Al Qaeda, many major differences in their respective strategies can also be derived from this difference.

However, an organization is not, as the Instrumental Perspective assumes, a unit acting on completely shared values. It consists of many individuals with their own needs, motivations, and agendas. To explore how this view can explain the strategy of the Islamic State, the Organizational Perspective is used.

6.3. The Organizational Perspective

According to the Organizational Perspective, things are not as ‘straightforward’ as in the Instrumental Perspective. Not everything can be derived from the collective values and goals that the members of the organization have. Instead, it is the individual members’ differences and group dynamics that result in terrorism. The members disagree over ends and means, have different motivations for participating in terrorism (including personal needs), and actions can often be explained with the incentives that leaders provide for followers. This perspective allows one to look at ways in which the organization behaves inconsistently, erratically, and unpredictably, without having to explain all actions in terms of strategic choices towards the fulfillment of ends. In this section, the focus is on how the Islamic State has developed in terms of these factors, and what influence Al Qaeda has had.

6.3.1. Intentions

The development of the intentions of the Islamic State can be explained as the internal dynamics within AQI, and the disagreement over ends and means between AQI and Al Qaeda. In this regard, the anti-Shia stance of Zarqawi, and his methods of publicly beheading his enemies are two such examples of members of an organization having different opinions on why and how to conduct terrorism, or in this case: differences between the parent organization and one of its affiliates. Zarqawi's dissatisfaction with Al Qaeda's intentions and his anti-Shia rhetoric can also be understood as a means of him trying to ‘voice’ the intentions of Al Qaeda, for instance with his wish to escalate violence. Besides having different views on who the real enemy is, the necessity of a caliphate also became a central point in AQI/ISI's intentions. This further distanced AQI from AQ with regards to intentions.

Although Zarqawi never officially exited from Al Qaeda, the difference in means and ends between AQI and AQ would eventually lead to the development of the Islamic State. Moreover, the Islamic State would not only support the visions of Zarqawi, but further develop them in accordance with his sectarian views, both ideologically and politically.

The development of the Islamic States' intentions would however eventually lead to an ‘exit’ from the parent organization. Moreover, the Islamic State's reinforcement of voice with regards to intentions, and their eventual exit, can also be understood as the result of the group dynamics between members in AQI/ISI (and later also under the name the Islamic State), with regards to notions of sectarianism, the caliphate and the apocalypse, which would dominate the intentions of the Islamic State.

However, the fact that Baghdadi shifted focus in Islamic States intentions to state building and the apocalypse can also be regarded as one example of ensuring organizational survival. By connecting the past (historical) struggles in the Middle East with the present instability in Iraq and Syria, he could “operationalize the intentions,” i.e., transform the ideology and goals of the organization into a different kind of action than the one promulgated by Masri. Although not a major change in the

intentions of the Islamic State, this shift to a focus on state building and the apocalypse would provide the Islamic State with new incentives to conduct terror campaigns, both with regards to tactics and propaganda.

Overall, the Organizational Perspective captures aspects that the Instrumental Perspective overlooks, for instance the disagreements between different groups and individuals, and the role of group dynamics in the development of terrorist organizations.

6.3.2. Warfare and Terror Attacks

From an Organizational Perspective, the terror tactics and the military identity can be perceived as the result of the internal group dynamics between the jihadist and Baathist sections of the Islamic State. As already mentioned, their combined skill in waging war and running insurgencies has shaped the specific modus operandi of the Islamic State and consequently their success: different kind of attacks has had specific aims.

According to the Organizational Perspective, one can change a group's intentions because it benefits the survival of the organization, and to incentivize the members, i.e., 'operationalization of ideology.' When Baghdadi shifted focus to the apocalypse and state building, he made it possible to act with regards to capturing territory as well as killing minorities. This is an example of how the warfare of the Islamic State, and especially their brutality, can explained by organizational survival and incentives rather than as means to an end.

Moreover, the Organizational Perspective also explains organizational survival relation to rivalry among groups, and escalation of violence. The brutality used by the Islamic State in relation to their warfare and terror tactics can thus be understood as them competing with Al Qaeda.

The military strategy and success of the Islamic State is also an example how Baghdadi has improved and 'promoted' the Islamic State. From an organizational perspective, the success of the Islamic State's terror campaigns is thus tied to the personal ambitions of Baghdadi.

However, the Islamic State has not always been successful. From an Organizational Perspective, the organization has also appeared inconsistent, erratic and unpredictable in their terrorism (and terror actions). The leadership of Masri, and the actions undertaken by AQI/ISI reflect this very well. One such example is the brutality towards not only civilians, but towards other jihadist groups as well, something which led to Bin Laden receiving a letter of complaint about his Iraqi franchise.

Again, the Organizational Perspective complements the Instrumental Perspective by explaining the actions of the Islamic State using other factors, such as group dynamics, rivalry with other terrorist groups (especially Al Qaeda), incentives, and personal ambitions. It also shows that terrorist actions not always work towards the ends of the group, but can also appear inconsistent and erratic.

6.3.3. Recruitment and Propaganda

The fact that the Islamic State has been particularly successful in their propaganda and recruitment strategies relates to the incentives that Baghdadi has provided to different kinds of potential recruits. Since the intentions of the Islamic State is to establish and expand territory, attracting a wide range of people with different skills has been paramount for its success.

By using different themes in the propaganda and recruitment, Baghdadi and his organization have been able to attract people who join for both personal as well as ideological reasons: both families as well as foreign fighters and professionals. For instance, by drawing on the necessity of state building and the coming of an apocalypse, Baghdadi and the Islamic State have been able to connect the past struggles with the present and thus making people feel like they are a part of an important historical struggle. This is why the theme of utopianism can be regarded as particularly effective in providing people with incentives to join, since it can appeal to a variety of needs: both personal as well as ideological. Many people can find a reason to join the Islamic State, whether it is about help 'building' the state, working for it, or fighting for it, or simply improving one's own life.

According to the Organizational Perspective, terror organizations need to compete with each other, and this can be used to explain the way they portray themselves. In this regard, the extreme violence of the Islamic State is also one aspect that has made them stand out with regards to rivals, which can provide an incentive for people to join them. The propaganda, and the style of editing, is also something that makes the Islamic State stand out in relation to rivals: particularly in relation to the brutality that is portrayed.

In contrast, the incentives provided by Al Qaeda with regards to propaganda and recruitment differs from the Islamic State in several aspects, with the two main things being the focus on elitism, and on jihad. From an organizational perspective, the elitism of Al Qaeda in their propaganda and recruitment can however be regarded as a way of ensuring the organizational survival: only the most devoted and well educated (on jihad) members are allowed to join. This also provides the potential members with personal motives, i.e., pride of belonging to the elite, as an incentive to join.

In relation to jihad, the incentive of martyrdom or suicide missions can thus be regarded as the most important provided by Al Qaeda and their leader Zawahiri. Besides the fact that suicide missions are considered effective, the publicity it generates also provides recruits and members with motivation, especially since it makes Al Qaeda stand out in terms of uncompromising religiousness. However, although the elitist strategy of Al Qaeda might help in keeping unwelcome people away, the lack of variety when it comes to incentives can prove to be a problem in competition with the Islamic State.

Compared to the Organizational Perspective, the Instrumental Perspective lacks two important aspects in explaining propaganda and recruitment of terror organizations. First, people join terror organizations not only due to ideological motives, but also because of personal needs. Second, the

propaganda is designed not just to spread the organization's ideas, but also to compete with other terror organizations.

6.3.4. Organization and Resources

The development of the Islamic State as an organization can be understood as the result of group dynamics of two sorts: external and internal. The external group dynamics are between the Islamic State's predecessor and parent organization: Al Qaeda in Iraq, and Al Qaeda. In this regard, group dynamics are for instance manifested by the fact that Zarqawi managed to persuade Bin Laden to provide him with seed money, despite the doubts Bin Laden and Zawahiri had regarding Zarqawi. Without the money provided by Bin Laden, and later the Al Qaeda brand, it would probably have been more difficult for Zarqawi to establish his own terror organization, and later merge with Al Qaeda. From an organizational perspective, the Al Qaeda label can also be understood as an incentive in its own right for Al Qaeda to use, and for Zawahiri to attract followers to Al Qaeda in Iraq.

Where external groups dynamics is what started Al Qaeda in Iraq, the evolution from AQI to the Islamic State has been characterized by internal group dynamics. In this regard, Baghdadi has been successful in tying his own personal ambitions to the survival of the group by providing different incentives for the leadership within the Islamic State. The process of "Iraqisation" can be seen as one such example, where senior leadership positions were given to Iraqis who Baghdadi personally knew and trusted, and who knew the ways of Iraqi people, in contrast to AQI/ISI and the core around Masri. By replacing and purging the previous leadership, Baghdadi also eliminated future disagreements over ends and means within the Islamic State and could further strengthen his own ambitions as the leader of the Islamic State.

According to the Organizational Perspective, achieving the long-term goals of the organization is not the only thing that matters—in some sense, the survival of the organization is more important. Organizational survival can also be related to the incentives in Baghdadi and the Islamic State's tribal policy, which provided some of the Sunni tribes with both carrots as well as sticks. Masri and ISI were too brutal, and sometimes erratic and unpredictable in their terrorist actions, making people stop cooperating with them. Baghdadi, on the other hand, used a combination of incentives and making the tribes complicit in the terror operations, which made it difficult for them not to cooperate with the Islamic State. In this regard, the evaluation of previous strategies in the form of the Strategic Plan has also been important for the survival of the Islamic State. It can therefore be understood as a means of ensuring organizational survival.

The ambitions of Baghdadi and his demands for extreme loyalty can however prove to be unfavorable for the long term organizational survival of the Islamic State. Where organizational purging and replacement has helped AQI/ISI evolve to the Islamic State, the fact remains that the very authoritarian structure also prevents outlets of dissatisfaction, both with regards to voice and exit.

The organizational development of Al Qaeda can also be understood in relation to maintaining organizational survival, albeit somewhat differently. Although the highest level of the organizational structure is maintained in some respects, the fact that Al Qaeda evaluate their operations and core operatives are allowed to criticize leaders, can be regarded as a sign of sensitivity to members, as suggested by Crenshaw (1988: 22). Another example of organizational survival is how Al Qaeda evaluate successes and failures which are further transmitted to their affiliates, for instance with regards to local grievances and sensibilities. In this regard, the organizational survival of Al Qaeda happens on several levels: both within the core as well as outside in relation to their affiliates.

Affiliations, which Al Qaeda make use of to a larger extent than ISIS, can be understood in relation to two kinds of organizational survival: 1) as an 'evolutionary' response to government and counter terrorism policies, and, 2) as innovative responses to 'exit'. The increase in the more formalized relationship after 9/11 and the US-invasion of Afghanistan is would be an example of the first kind of organizational survival in which the Al Qaeda label on insurgent groups was deemed necessary, for both the Al Qaeda core, but also as a response to those targeting them. The more formalized affiliation can thus be understood as a way for Al Qaeda to remain active as a potent brand.

An example of the second kind of organizational survival is the focus on strategic command and control (rather than day-to day oversight), and the appointment of a global deputy leader in strategic zones. This can be regarded as 'innovative responses' in several ways: on the one hand, the affiliates will have enough say in running their 'own' insurgency, and on the other, Al Qaeda have found several ways of 'curbing' decentralization and thus preventing 'voice' or dissatisfaction.

However, the fact that Al Qaeda, since its beginning has used centralization and decentralization simultaneously, is an example of how they maintain their survival in relation to the leadership of Bin Laden (and later Zawahiri): by supporting local insurgent groups with money, logistics, training, and their cause in relation to Al Qaeda's, Bin Laden could make sure that Al Qaeda grew as a global terrorist organization. In this regard, the sometimes fluid organizational structure has made Al Qaeda durable. Time will tell if the centralized structure of the Islamic State can survive in the long run, or if they too need to decentralize in order to survive.

According the Organizational Perspective, an organization is not just formed for the fulfillment of the goals, but also due to personal ambitions and agendas, internal group dynamics, and disagreements over means and ends. The survival of the group is as important as reaching the goals, and as can be seen in the examples above, it has been an important factor to consider when studying the development of the Islamic State in relation to Al Qaeda. In the next chapter, *Conclusion*, the results of the analysis from both the Instrumental as well as the Organizational Perspective are discussed.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to study the strategy of the Islamic State in relation to the strategy of Al Qaeda. Furthermore, this have been done with Martha Crenshaw's Instrumental and Organizational Perspectives. In this thesis, different components of both the Islamic State's and Al Qaeda's strategy have been examined, and analyzed with the help of the Instrumental and Organizational Perspectives.

One of the main conclusions of this thesis is that the development of the strategy of the Islamic State has been closely tied to Al Qaeda. To truly understand the Islamic State, one needs to study Al Qaeda. This is true, independently of which perspective one assumes, the Islamic State has been strongly influenced by Al Qaeda, both instrumentally and organizationally.

According to the Instrumental Perspective, intentions and ideology shape the strategy of a terrorist organization. Since Al Qaeda and the Islamic State have different intentions and values, their strategies are different. Al Qaeda, for instance, has been more focused on spreading their ideas in fighting the Far Enemy (the US), and supporting local jihadist groups under Al Qaeda's inspirational banner of global Jihad. On the other hand, the main goal of the Islamic State has been to establish a caliphate, and rule through brutality. Thus, the intentions of each organization have come to shape different sections of their strategy differently.

The warfare and terror tactics of the Islamic State have, for instance, been about fighting local and regional enemies such as the Iraqi and Syrian government, and targeting minorities such as the Shi'a and Yazidis. In contrast, Al Qaeda's global approach in fighting the Far Enemy, have resulted in attritional terror campaigns towards symbolically important targets, and providing the affiliates with training, and strategical support. Since the strategy of the Islamic State is land based, and has a focus on the creation of a caliphate, this requires different kinds of people with a variety of skills, and thus, their recruitment and propaganda strategy has been more diversified and adapted to a larger audience. In contrast, the recruitment and propaganda strategy of Al Qaeda has been more elitist, with more focus on targeting the Far Enemy, through methods of attrition (such as suicide bombings).

The territorial gains made by the Islamic State have also resulted in a highly centralized and hierarchical organizational structure. Moreover, these gains have also led to resources such as oil, and money from taxing local populations. While Al Qaeda also favors a hierarchical structure within the Al Qaeda Core, they rely more on a mix of centralized and decentralized organizational structures, in line with their intentions.

According to the Organizational Perspective, group dynamics and individual members are as important as intentions in explaining the behavior of terrorist organizations. The fact that the AQI/ISI has evolved towards the Islamic State is one example of the internal dynamics between the founder of AQI (Zarqawi), and the Al Qaeda Core (Bin Laden/Zawahiri), having disagreements over ends and means.

Moreover, personal agendas within the leadership of AQI/ISI have resulted in their warfare and terror tactics being erratic, unpredictable, and inconsistent. The success of the Islamic State's recruitment and propaganda strategies has been defined by the fact that Baghdadi has provided members and potential recruits with different incentives, both personal as well as ideological. In this regard, the brutality of the Islamic State's intentions and terror tactics have also been important in recruiting members as well as competing with other groups such as Al Qaeda. Although the creation of the Islamic State can be understood as disagreements over ends and means between AQI and Al Qaeda Core, the survival of the Islamic State from ISI is an example of the personal ambitions of leaders in maintaining organizational survival. One such example is how Baghdadi came to purge and replace leadership positions. In the case of Al Qaeda, organizational survival is best explained by their formalized affiliations.

As stated, understanding the development of the strategy of the Islamic State depends on understanding Al Qaeda. Another key conclusion is that the two different perspectives are both needed and complement each other. While the Instrumental Perspective allows one to understand the logic and rationale behind the Islamic State's strategy, things are sometimes more complex than it suggests, and can be better understood through the lens of the Organizational Perspective, which emphasizes the individual members and group dynamics.

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