Transnational Jihadism & Civil Wars

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Abstract: When rebels also employ terrorism, civil wars can become more intractable. Since the 1980s, jihadism, a form of violent transnational activism, has mobilized civil war rebels, outside entrepreneurs, foreign fighters, and organizers of transnational as well as domestic terrorism. These activities are integral to the jihadist trend, representing overlapping and conjoined strands of the same ideological current, which in turn reflects internal division and dissatisfaction within the Arab world and within Islam. Jihadism, however, is neither unitary nor monolithic. It contains competing power centers and divergent ideological orthodoxies. Different jihadist actors emphasize different priorities and strategies. They disagree, for example, on whether the "near" or the "far" enemy should take precedence. The relationship between jihadist terrorism and civil war is far from uniform or constant. This essay traces the trajectory of this evolution, beginning in the 1980s in the context of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Transnational violence in the name of jihadist ideology is intermingled with civil conflict in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. Jihadists are civil war actors as well as transnational terrorists.[1] According to James Fearon, in 1990, only 5 percent of civil conflicts featured jihadist rebels; by 2014, the proportion had increased to 40 percent.[2] Since the 1980s, jihadism has incorporated a medley of civil war rebels, outside entrepreneurs, trainers, funders, recruiters of foreign fighters, and organizers of transnational as well as domestic terrorism. Transnational coalitions link distant local conflicts. These activities are integral to the jihadist trend that developed within Islam in the 1980s, representing overlapping and conjoined strands derived from the same general ideological current, which in turn reflects dissatisfaction within the Arab world and within Islam. Jihadists primarily seek power in Muslim-majority countries or areas, and terrorism against the West and neighboring states represents the spillover of that conflict.[3]

Jihadism is a strain of violent, radical, and exclusivist Sunni Islamism. The central tenet of the ideology

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and the narrative that supports it is the urgent need to defend the worldwide Muslim community, the *umma*, from both foreign occupiers and domestic infidels and nonbelievers. As political scientist Thomas Hegghammer has argued, jihadism is as much about national identity and imagined community as about religion and faith.[4] It is a form of violent transnational activism that aims to mobilize Muslims worldwide to restore a strict conception of political and religious order stemming from the early days of Islam. Many adherents fall into the category of what Tanisha Fazal calls "religionist rebels."[5]

This is not to say that jihadism is a unitary or monolithic movement. It encompasses competing power centers and divergent ideological orthodoxies, as exemplified in the split between the Islamic State (ISIS) and its former patron, Al Qaeda. Moreover, different jihadist actors emphasize different priorities and strategies. They disagree, for example, on whether the "near" or the "far" enemy should take precedence and whether or not spectacular terrorist attacks against civilians in the West are worthwhile or justified. The majority of the victims of Islamist terrorism are Muslim, and different factions argue over whether Islam allows or prohibits killing fellow Muslims. The Islamic State and Al Qaeda think differently about cooperating with local rebels and trying to attract popular support in civil conflicts. They diverge on the issue of establishing a caliphate in Syria and Iraq. Islamic State doctrine is much more prone to sectarianism and attacks on Shia civilians, as well as publicized atrocities.

Finding distinct one-way causal mechanisms in this complex tangle is difficult if not impossible. Civil conflict may facilitate the export of terrorism by providing safe havens for those organizing attacks, but sanctuary in failed states or ungoverned spaces is only part of the story. Civil conflicts are attractions for foreign fighters from the region or from distant countries. Rebellions can also inspire "homegrown" terrorists or "lone wolves." Jihadist affiliates who are local civil war rebels use terrorism to strike at hostile neighboring states. At the same time, jihadist terrorism, inside and outside of conflict zones, and influxes of foreign fighters can alter the course of civil wars. Both terrorism and the involvement of foreign fighters can contribute to the escalation and intensification of violence and make conflicts harder to resolve.[6] Transnational terrorism provokes American drone strikes against jihadist leaders and, in general, terrorism may increase the likelihood of foreign military intervention in civil wars. Foreign intervention, in turn, sparks terrorism against occupying forces, their local allies, and their home countries. Foreign fighters may return home to join the ranks of rebels in ongoing conflicts or to orchestrate acts of terrorism in otherwise peaceful and stable environments. The ease of communication and travel in a globalized world facilitates all of these interconnections. The ubiquity of social media and Internet communications promotes individual-level "homegrown" mobilization across national borders. The fact that acts of terrorism against undefended civilian targets, such as public transportation or crowded markets, are relatively easy and cheap to carry out further compounds the problem.[7]

Despite the importance of these path intersections and interdependencies, it is still rare to find systematic academic studies of the linkages between civil war, jihadism, domestic terrorism, transnational terrorism, and foreign fighter recruitment. Most typically, each subject is studied in isolation from the others. Hegghammer has examined jihadist foreign fighter recruitment, and some recent analyses have explored the relationship between civil war and domestic terrorism. Political scientist Page Fortna, for example, found that rebels who used terrorism at home were less

likely to win.[8] These studies typically conclude by calling for an end to the neglect of the subject.[9] How transnational terrorism and civil war are linked and how these linkages change over time are questions that remain largely uncharted territory. How terrorism relates to foreign military intervention in civil wars is also an open question.

This essay proceeds to trace the trajectory of this evolution, beginning in the 1980s in the context of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. After this launch period, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the victory of the mujahideen in Afghanistan, the Balkan Wars of the 1990s, and violent discontent in Egypt contributed to the expansion of Al Qaeda's version of jihadism. The shock of the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon marked the start of a new era dominated by the global war on terrorism and American and Western military involvement in civil conflicts, beginning with Afghanistan. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 led to another shift in trajectory as jihadists became key actors in the conflict between Sunni insurgents, coalition forces, and the new Shia-dominated regime. From that point on, jihadists became active participants in an expanding number of civil wars, either through the insertion of operatives from global organizations (for example, Al Qaeda in Yemen and later the Islamic State in Libya) or when local rebels signed onto the global movement's agenda (for example, there are jihadist affiliates and clients in Algeria, Mali, Somalia, and Nigeria).[10] The uprising against the Assad regime in Syria and the ensuing civil war provided another opening, which led to a decisive split within jihadism as the organization that was Al Qaeda in Iraq transformed itself into the independent Islamic State and declared a caliphate under its governance in Iraq and Syria in 2014. Its seizure of substantial areas of both countries changed the stakes for both jihadists and their adversaries and altered the course of the civil war in Syria. The Islamic State became the focus of American military intervention, while Iran supported Assad, who was later assisted by Russian intervention. France became involved militarily and, by 2016, Turkey was also drawn in. All of these external parties have been the targets of transnational jihadist terrorism. But there is a distinction between assisting local parties and intervening directly, and between air power and soldiers on the ground. By 2017, the Islamic State's caliphate was on the verge of collapse, but the end of the caliphate will not mean the end of jihadism. In fact, in the long run, the primary benefactor of the civil war in Syria and jihadist involvement may be Al Qaeda.

In the 1980s, civil war served as inspiration and validation for the burgeoning jihadist project. Political scientist Gilles Kepel has traced radical Islamism to the 1970s, with its rise cemented by the victory of Khomeini in 1979.[11] Violence by small Islamist conspiracies, marked by the seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca in 1979 and the assassination of Egypt's Anwar Sadat in 1981, was an early signal of confrontation between Sunni Arab regimes and jihadists with revolutionary aspirations. But the crucible for the birth of jihadism as both ideology and practice that linked civil war and transnational terrorism was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and resistance by the mujahideen. The framing of the war as a struggle pitting Islam against the foreign invader was key to Abdullah Azzam's appeal, announced in 1984 with a fatwa titled *Defence of Muslim Lands*. It called for defensive jihad – to fight on behalf of the Afghans – as the individual as well as collective responsibility of all Muslims.[12] However, Azzam's ambition went beyond liberating Afghanistan from Soviet occupation; in 1985, he announced that his own homeland of Palestine would be next on the path of great battles for Islam, followed by Arab regimes that re-

fused to assist in jihad. Ayman al-Zawahiri, the leader of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad organization who joined Osama Bin Laden in Afghanistan in 1985 after his release from an Egyptian prison, also emphasized the overthrow of apostate Arab regimes. Afghanistan was to be a springboard to revolution in the Muslim world.

Having failed to defeat the American-assisted insurgency, the Soviet Union withdrew in 1989. Thus, in the 1990s, with success in hand, the foreign fighters dispersed, and Bin Laden returned to Saudi Arabia. The organization of Arab volunteers established for Afghanistan, the "Afghan Arabs," became the core of Al Qaeda under Bin Laden's leadership. Egyptians played key roles in the military command. The perceived victory of the mujahideen in Afghanistan, embellished by a mythology that exaggerated the contribution of what was actually a relatively small number of Arab foreign fighters, endowed jihadism with even more prestige. The collapse of the Soviet Union further enhanced the significance of the triumph in jihadist eyes, and it also left in its wake new Muslim-majority countries and powerful separatist movements, for example, in Chechnya.

The question now was the next step. As political scientist Kim Cragin has observed, Bin Laden did not immediately turn to terrorist attacks against the United States.[13] Instead, he expressed interest in joining the ongoing conflicts in Kashmir and Yemen. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 led the Saudi regime to invite the United States to station troops on its soil, a move that Bin Laden vehemently rejected. Still, in the early 1990s, Al Qaeda focused on assisting local Muslim militants, including rebels in Egypt, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, and then Somalia, Bosnia, Tajikistan, Chechnya, and the Philippines. Assistance included military training as well as religious indoctrination and funding. In 1991, Bin Laden relocated from Saudi Arabia to Sudan, where the National Islamic Front had assumed power in 1989.

Al Qaeda's leaders may have seen the American intervention in Somalia as a new opportunity to strike a blow against foreign occupiers of Muslim lands. But when the United States withdrew in 1994, Al Qaeda turned its attention again to overthrowing Arab regimes.[14] The Arabian Peninsula remained central to the leadership's thinking. The Saudi crackdown on dissent was further incentive for challenging the monarchy.

By the mid-1990s, Al Qaeda was active in both Sudan and Afghanistan, which had drifted into civil war. Training camps there sheltered recruits from Egypt, Chechnya, Uzbekistan, and Palestine. Egyptian Islamic Jihad militants, driven out of Egypt following an assassination attempt against the prime minister, moved to Sudan. After the 1995 Dayton Accords, Bosnian fighters also returned. Al Qaeda was now thoroughly transnational in terms of organization, location, membership, and ambitions for jihad. It was also part of a broader transformation of nationalist conflicts into Islamist struggles, as in the case of Chechnya. Political scientist Kristin Bakke has attributed this shift to the influence of transnational insurgents, or foreign fighters, especially the Arab contingent, which brought recruits, weapons, experience, and access to funding. She also noted that the Islamist framing of the war coincided with the adoption of the new tactics of suicide attacks and cross-border terrorism.[15]

In 1996, Bin Laden moved back to Afghanistan, on the eve of the Taliban's seizure of power. It was at this point that Al Qaeda declared war against the United States and its "Judeo-Christian alliance," which announced the beginning of the decades-long campaign of terrorism against jihadism's Western enemies and their allies. Al Qaeda thus benefitted from sanctuary, not in ungoverned spaces, lawless zones, or

territories unsettled by civil wars, but where sympathetic regimes held power.

The idea of attacking the United States at home was not new, as reflected in the first bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993. The perpetrators included Khalid Sheikh Mohammed's nephew Ramzi Yousef, who claimed to be acting to punish the United States for its support of Israel. Yousef was also instrumental in the 1995 Bojinka plot, which was intended to blow up multiple airliners flying from Asia to the United States. When the plot was discovered in the Philippines, Yousef was apprehended in Pakistan and tried, convicted, and sentenced to life in prison by American courts for his roles in both the 1993 bombing and the failed 1995 plot. Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, a prominent Islamist cleric from Egypt, was also indicted for his involvement in the World Trade Center bombing. He received a life sentence for a linked plot to bomb a series of New York landmarks and died in prison in 2017.

Al Qaeda opened its campaign of terrorism against the United States with the bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, and the United States retaliated with cruise missile strikes in Sudan and Afghanistan. In the build-up to the 9/11 attacks, the embassy bombings were followed by the bombing of the *USS Cole* in Yemen as well as a series of potentially deadly but intercepted plots, including an attempt to bomb Los Angeles International Airport. The operative in question in the LAX plot was an Algerian trained in Afghanistan who entered the United States from Canada.

This connection highlights another point of overlap between jihadism, civil war, and transnational terrorism in the 1990s: Algeria. Here, violent confrontation grew from a failed effort by Islamist political parties to take power through the democratic process. In December 1991, the Algerian military stepped in to cancel parliamentary elections that the Islamic Salvation Front was poised to win. The Front was banned, and its members were arrested by the thousands. Several armed groups formed, some linked to the Front, others independent and more extreme, and bloody fighting continued through the decade.

Civil conflict spilled over in two ways: One was terrorism in France. The Armed Islamic Group, known by its French acronym GIA, had attacked widely and indiscriminately within Algeria, targeting not just the government but also the Algerian political and cultural elite, unveiled women, journalists, insufficiently Islamist schools, and foreigners, among other civilians. In December 1994, the GIA famously hijacked a plane from Algiers to France, a crisis that ended with a French commando rescue. In 1995, there were bombings and bombing plots in Paris and Lyon, often against the metro and the regional train network. The strategic logic of these attacks may have been coercive, to compel the French to halt their support of the Algerian government, but competition on the rebel side and the prospect of ascendancy over the rival Islamic Front might have also been a motive.

The second spillover was a regional transfer of jihadist militancy outside Algeria's borders into the Sahel region, in part caused by high levels of domestic terrorism. In 1997 and 1998, Algeria suffered a series of terrible civilian massacres when entire villages were brutally and indiscriminately attacked. Responsibility is still disputed, but the GIA was widely blamed. As a result, the Islamic Front's armed units announced a cease-fire, and the GIA began to splinter. One faction broke away to become the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, which soon expanded its reach across Algeria's borders into Mali, Niger, and Chad. This expansion was probably a displacement of activity due to the Algerian government's success in ending the civil war, which included

a controversial amnesty program for former combatants that eventually weakened the militant groups. In the end, the excesses of the most violent militants discredited Islamism, and this distrust combined with fear of instability also discouraged popular uprisings during the Arab Spring. By 2007, the Salafist Group was formally allied with Al Qaeda and became Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). AQIM brought wealth and local contacts to the alliance, while Al Qaeda central brought the prestige of a global brand and access to communications networks. AQIM's allegiance was announced by an attack on the United Nations headquarters in Algiers.

The stunning shock of the 2001 attacks launched a new era dominated by the global war on terror and the subsequent invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. In the case of Afghanistan, transnational terrorism provoked military intervention that led to a return to civil war. After 2001, Al Qaeda was constrained by American military pressure, the defeat of the host Taliban, and the necessity of shifting its center of gravity from Afghanistan to Pakistan, but the invasion of Iraq provided a critical new opportunity for jihadists who were waiting in the wings – the origin story of the Islamic State. In retrospect, jihadists could probably not have hoped for a more propitious development. The United States now occupied a country at the heart of the Arab Middle East, and its Sunni population was in open rebellion. Ironically, the United States had removed an apostate Arab ruler generally hated by jihadists, but the replacement was an even more despised Shia government.

Jihadists now sought an active role as rebels in Iraq, but transnational terrorism continued as well. Why both? Different jihadist actors were the agents, and perhaps it also seemed reasonable to act as a combined terrorist and insurgent force in Iraq while keeping up the pressure with transnational attacks to punish the United States and its allies and mobilize worldwide support, including by attracting foreign fighters. Al Qaeda was hardly passive between the fall of 2001 and the invasion of Iraq in spring 2003. It is likely that many attacks were already in the planning and implementation stages as follow-ons to 9/11.[16] In late 2001, the famous "shoe bomber" tried to bring down an American Airlines flight over the Atlantic. In 2002, Al Qaeda operatives exploded a truck carrying natural gas at a historic synagogue on the Tunisian island of Djerba, killing mostly German tourists. Al Qaeda's Indonesian affiliate Jemaah Islamiya organized the bombings of tourist sites in Bali, killing over two hundred people, with Australia apparently the main target. Israeli tourists were similarly targeted in Kenya.

The jihadist leader poised to seize the opportunity on the ground in Iraq was Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.[17] Zarqawi was a Jordanian who had fought in Afghanistan independently of Bin Laden's organization. He returned to Jordan in 1993 to challenge the monarchy and was promptly caught and sentenced to prison, where he gained a loyal following. In 1999, he was released in the general amnesty that accompanied King Abdullah's accession to the throne. Before returning to Afghanistan, he may have played a role in the "millennium plots" that targeted Jordanian hotels and alarmed the United States. In Afghanistan, he met Bin Laden, who apparently funded his training camp in western Afghanistan. In late 2001, Zarqawi left for Iran, basing himself there and in Iraqi Kurdistan. In 2002, he directed the assassination of an American diplomat in Jordan. By August 2003, he had moved into Iraq, where he organized the bombings of the Jordanian embassy and the UN headquarters. The bombing of a Shia shrine in Najaf introduced his strategy of provoking a sectarian civil war, which intensified after the bombing of the Golden Mosque in

Samarra in 2006. Videotaped beheadings of hostages began in 2004, with the first victim an American. Zarqawi also continued his campaign against Jordan with an attempt on military intelligence headquarters in Amman.

In fall 2004, Zarqawi pledged allegiance to Al Qaeda, and his group became Al Qaeda in Iraq, or AQI. It was a tactical alliance based on expediency, and disagreements broke out almost immediately over Zarqawi's brutality and sectarian violence against Shia, including attacks on religious institutions such as mosques, pilgrimages, and funeral processions. Suicide bombings of hotels in Amman that killed large numbers of Muslims did not improve relations. Yet paradoxically, at the same time, Al Qaeda and its other affiliates were organizing bombings in Riyadh, Casablanca, Jakarta, Istanbul, and again Bali, as well as bombings against public transportation targets that caused mass casualties in Western capitals, first in Madrid in 2004 and then in London in 2005. There were more attempts to bring down airliners.

In 2006, an American bomb killed Zarqawi. His successor, an Egyptian, renamed AQI the "Islamic State of Iraq," or ISI, possibly in an effort to legitimize an organization that was suspected locally of being too foreign, or perhaps simply out of ambition and zeal. He also named an Iraqi as nominal head of the "new" organization. In 2007, the United States increased troop levels in Iraq, and Sunni tribal leaders united to reject ISI and, in many cases, to ally with coalition forces. In 2010, the two ISI leaders were killed by American bombs; the replacement was Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. When he assumed power, the future of the organization looked bleak.

However, Al Qaeda had affiliates beyond Iraq. The organization had not abandoned its goal of overthrowing the Saudi regime, but terrorism provoked severe repression. In 2009, the remaining Saudi branch merged with Al Qaeda in Yemen, thus forming Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, or AQAP. One of its first moves was a thwarted attempt to assassinate Saudi Prince Mohammed Bin Nayef. The group moved swiftly outside the region to attempt to destroy a Northwest Airlines flight from Amsterdam to Detroit, in the famous 2009 "underwear bomber" case involving a Nigerian recruit trained in Yemen. In 2010, bombs were placed on cargo planes flying from Yemen to the United States, although the plot was foiled. But an added concern was AQAP's proficiency in online propaganda, especially in the English language, as exemplified by its *Inspire* magazine and the call for supporters in the West to act independently at home. For example, the 2009 shooting at the Little Rock military recruiting office by Carlos Bledsoe, an American convert to Islam, was linked to AQAP. American-born leader Anwar al-Awlaki was an influential ideologue as well as operational planner. He inspired Major Nidal Hassan, the 2009 Fort Hood shooter, for example. But in an era of drone warfare, terrorist leaders are hard-pressed to find safe havens, and an American drone strike killed Awlaki in 2011.

The death of Osama Bin Laden in an American raid in Pakistan in 2011 was a blow to worldwide jihadism but did not slow the movement's momentum. The year 2011 also marked two major but unexpected changes in the context for jihadist violence. The first event was the withdrawal of American and coalition forces from Iraq at the end of the year. The second was the Arab Spring.

When the United States left Iraq, the Islamic State of Iraq was in decline. It could still organize domestic terrorist attacks against undefended civilian targets, but its potential as an insurgent force that could threaten internal stability had waned. Its fortunes improved when the Iraqi government failed either to provide security or to incorporate Sunnis into political and secu-

rity institutions. The combination of Sunni dissatisfaction and general insecurity was conducive to a revival of ISI, which began to reassert itself through domestic terrorism against Shia civilians and against the Baghdad government. ISI also attracted support from nonjihadist Sunni opposition groups, some with useful military expertise.

Simultaneously, in Syria, opportunities opened. In early 2011, protests broke out against the authoritarian regime of Bashir al-Assad. When the state responded with unexpected repressiveness, violence escalated. Factions from all sides, including democrats, jihadists, nonjihadist Islamists, Kurds, and others joined the rebellion, which was generally favored in the West.[18] Nevertheless, the regime, supported by Iran and its client Hezbollah, exhibited surprising staying power. Estimates vary, but by April 2016, the United Nations Special Envoy concluded that the civil war had cost 470,000 lives. Around five million Syrians had fled the country, contributing to a refugee crisis in Europe, and over six million were internally displaced. The civil war also led to direct military intervention by outside actors, including the United States, France, Russia, Iran, Jordan, and Turkey (which deployed ground troops in 2016), and indirect involvement from the Gulf monarchies.

The formation of the Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham, thus ISIS, or of Iraq and the Levant, thus ISIL, began when both Al Qaeda central and the Islamic State of Iraq were drawn to fighting in Syria. Combat against a secular Arab dictator was a perfect occasion for jihadists, especially since, from their perspective, Assad was doubly apostate, being both secular and Shia. The fact that Assad was not an ally of the United States and indeed that the United States strongly opposed him was inconsequential. Syria was a rallying cry for jihadists around the world, and as the civil war spread, it became a magnet for foreign fighters. By the end of 2015, estimates were that between 27,000 and 31,000 foreign fighters from eighty-six different countries had gone to Syria and Iraq, most of them from Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, and Russia.[19] Out of the five thousand total from Europe, large numbers came from France, Belgium, and Germany. Foreigners included supporters as well as opponents of Assad; for example, Iraq's Shia militias were drawn into the conflict, as was Hezbollah.

The formal break between Al Qaeda and ISI came in 2013 as a result of a dispute over who would represent Al Qaeda in Syria. The outcome was that the Al Nusra Front, which was established as a Syrian outpost in 2011, became Al Qaeda's main branch, and the Islamic State struck out on its own. Having picked up momentum in Syria, ISIS swept back into Iraq and, in 2014, seized Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, and declared a caliphate with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as the caliph. As it consolidated its control, the caliphate was now a state within a state in significant areas of both Syria and Iraq. Its reign was harshly intolerant, punishing the slightest deviation from strict Islamic law and brutal to the point of genocide against religious minorities. The reliance on violence that is extreme even by terrorist standards distinguished it from other rebel groups, even other jihadists. Taken by surprise, the United States began air strikes against the caliphate soon after and was increasingly drawn into the conflict as the war unfolded in both Syria and Iraq.

Political scientist Daniel Byman argues that terrorism is an integral part of the Islamic State's civil war strategy.[20] Terrorism can disconcert and distract enemies, even deter them, create security vacuums by intimidating local security forces, and attract recruits who are anti-Western or sectarian. It is a powerful propaganda tool. Terrorism also permitted ISIS to strike distant West-

ern targets that would be completely beyond the reach of its local military fighting capabilities, not that this strategy was new to ISIS. It is worth noting that cross-border terrorism did not begin until the fall of 2015. Beginning in 2014, however, ISIS publicized horrible executions of foreigners captured in Iraq, including a Jordanian pilot. Perhaps the moves outside ISIS territories in the fall of 2015 were a reaction to pressure on the ground as forces mobilized against the caliphate, but it is hard to know. The deadly December 2015 attacks in Paris, for example, were in the planning stages before ISIS began to suffer defeats on the ground. There was also a downside for ISIS, since terrorist strikes against Western targets provoke retaliation, and the military power of the Islamic State's enemies far exceeds that of the caliphate. Turkey, for example, responded to the Islamic State's terrorist attacks in Turkey by intervening in Syria despite its greater antipathy toward the Kurdish enemies of ISIS. Yet the states targeted by ISIS are vulnerable to the threat of returned foreign fighters, as seen in the coordinated terrorist attacks in France and Belgium in 2015 and 2016.

Byman concludes that the Islamic State's resources were always concentrated on the "near enemy," whereas Al Qaeda targeted the "far enemy."[21] This essay has argued that, from the outset, Al Qaeda, too, had a mixed strategy that included overthrowing local, especially Arab, regimes, although it did not favor establishing a territorial caliphate until conditions were ripe. Nevertheless, ISIS was able to constitute a powerful local fighting force that Al Qaeda was not able to muster. A critical question is whether the eventual collapse of the caliphate will weaken the Islamic State's ability to orchestrate transnational terrorist attacks. Numbers of foreign fighters as well as social media presence declined under military pressure, especially as American drone strikes specifically targeted ISIS leaders responsible for external operations and propaganda. The Islamic State's credibility and ideological appeal may decline.

Within and beyond the Iraq-Syria theater, the deepening global rivalry between the Islamic State and Al Qaeda increasingly dominated jihadist politics. Attacks against Western targets could reflect internecine struggles, indicating a form of outbidding in extremism. For example, the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris in January 2015, linked to AQAP, were perhaps intended as a challenge or reply to rival ISIS.

Spillover of civil conflict into transnational terrorism and external jihadist involvement in local conflicts increased as well. For example, AQAP came to play a more important role in the developing civil war in Yemen. In fall 2011, the regime in Yemen was collapsing, plagued by internal dissension as well as a rebellion by Shia Houthis in northern Yemen, which, in 2015, provoked intervention by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The civil war turned into a proxy war between Iran and the Sunni monarchies, with the United States, France, and Britain supporting the latter. In the turmoil, AQAP acquired a territorial base, and the Islamic State in turn established a province or *wilayat*. ISIS also established branches in the Sinai and in Libya after the fall of Gaddafi's regime in 2011. By 2017, ISIS had established a foothold in Afghanistan.

In Somalia, Al Shabaab (whose 2008 pledge of allegiance to Al Qaeda was only formally accepted in 2012) adopted a strategy of regional terrorism against civilians in Kenya and Uganda. Both countries were members of the African Union's peacekeeping mission supporting the Somali government against Al Shabaab, which got its start in 2007 by attacking Ethiopian peacekeeping troops. In 2010, two suicide bombings struck crowds in Kampala, Uganda. In 2013, Al Shabaab attacked the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, Kenya.

In 2014 and 2015, there were more attacks in Kenya, including an assault on a college in which non-Muslim students were singled out (147 victims were killed). Kenya's establishment of buffer zones was a response to such deadly cross-border terrorist attacks.[22]

Similarly, in 2014, Boko Haram moved outside its home base in northeastern Nigeria to organize attacks in Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, neighboring states that were authorized by the African Union to contain the spread of violence. Boko Haram began to rely increasingly on domestic terrorism, such as the mass kidnapping of school girls. In 2015, Boko Haram pledged allegiance to the Islamic State, and a few months later, suicide bombings hit Chad's capital, N'Djamena. Two suicide bombers also attacked a market in Cameroon in February 2016.

In addition, AQIM exploited unrest in North Africa to expand its influence first into Libya and then into Mali. It also connected with AQAP, Al Shabaab, and Boko Haram. In Mali, AQIM formed an alliance with local Tuareg tribal militants as well as indigenous jihadists to seize control of the northern part of the country. This intrusion provoked French military intervention to stabilize Mali's government, and that setback split AQIM and led to further violence, including a 2013 attack on the El Aminas gas facility in Algeria and suicide bombings in Niger. AQIM was apparently divided over whether to switch sides from Al Qaeda to the Islamic State, but in the end, it stayed in the Al Qaeda orbit. In 2015, AQIM publicly rebuked ISIS and also attacked UN peacekeepers in Mali.

Civil war, domestic and transnational terrorism, and the involvement of foreign fighters have been essential components of jihadist strategy since the 1980s. Much remains to be learned about these interconnections. What vectors might lead from civil war to terrorism? First, civil war can contribute to terrorism by providing safe havens for those organizing attacks against "far enemies," but sanctuary may not be necessary and it is more easily found on the territory of stable sympathetic governments. Safe havens have also become vulnerable with the advent of drone warfare. Second, civil wars can mobilize outside support, including recruiting foreigners for local fighting and the activation of "homegrown" terrorists. Experienced foreign fighters sometimes return home to commit acts of terrorism or to start or join rebels in local conflicts. An outside presence can "Islamize" nationalist conflicts. Third, civil wars have spillover effects. Jihadist rebels can use terrorism defensively to punish or deter hostile neighboring states or distant foreign occupiers. Defeat at home can lead them to move their operations across borders. Striking enemy civilians at home can be initiated from the outside (the 9/11 attacks) or the inside (Orlando 2016).

At the same time, jihadist terrorism and the introduction of foreign fighters can alter the course of civil wars. Both might contribute to the escalation of violence and complicate conflict resolution, especially if jihadists are absolutist religionist rebels. Terrorism can be a useful propaganda tool for recruiting foreign fighters as well as mobilizing support. Civil wars in which Muslims appear to be opposing non-Muslims are exploited as propaganda tools. It is possible that jihadists are more prone to use terrorism in civil wars than are nonjihadists, implying that they are not likely to win. In addition, foreign fighters are not necessarily an asset. In his own contribution to *Dædalus*, Stathis Kalyvas compares jihadists to the Marxist rebels of the 1960s and 1970s and concludes that they are less of a threat, largely because they lack outside state support. However, as jihadists suffer military defeats in civil wars, they may revert increasingly to transnational terrorism.[23]

Last, there are dangerous feedback loops. Terrorism against outside powers provokes military intervention, which not only intensifies civil war, but also sparks more terrorism against occupying forces, their local allies, and their home countries. An important question for the future is whether or not powerful states can resist terrorist provocation.

ENDNOTES

1 Stathis N. Kalyvas, "Jihadi Rebels in Civil War," *Dædalus* 147 (1) (Winter 2018).

2 James D. Fearon, "Civil War & the Current International System," *Dædalus* 146 (4) (Fall 2017).

3 See Anthony H. Cordesman, *Rethinking the Threat of Islamic Extremism: The Changes Needed in U.S. Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2016). Cordesman refers to a "clash within a civilization" as opposed to a "clash between civilizations." See also Martha Crenshaw, "Why America? The Globalization of Civil War," *Current History* 100 (650) (December 2001): 425 – 432.

4 Thomas Hegghammer, "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters: Islam and the Globalization of Jihad," *International Security* 35 (3) (Winter 2010/2011): 53 – 94.

5 Tanisha Fazal, "Religionist Rebels & the Sovereignty of the Divine," *Dædalus* 147 (1) (Winter 2018).

6 This is not to say that foreign fighters are necessarily an asset to civil war rebels. See Kristin M. Bakke, "Help Wanted? The Mixed Record of Foreign Fighters in Domestic Insurgencies," *International Security* 38 (4) (Spring 2014): 150 – 187.

7 The Marxist rebels of the 1960s and 1970s did not typically resort to indiscriminate attacks against civilians.

8 Virginia Page Fortna, "Do Terrorists Win? Rebels' Use of Terrorism and Civil War Outcomes," *International Organization* 69 (3) (2015): 519 – 556.

9 See Hegghammer, "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters"; Fortna, "Do Terrorists Win?"; Michael G. Findley and Joseph K. Young, "Terrorism and Civil War: A Spatial and Temporal Approach to a Conceptual Problem," *Perspectives on Politics* 10 (2) (June 2012): 285 – 305; and Bridget L. Coggins, "Does State Failure Cause Terrorism? An Empirical Analysis (1999 – 2008)," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59 (3) (2015): 455 – 483.

10 See the "maps" of the global ISIS and global Al Qaeda networks on Martha Crenshaw's website, "Mapping Militant Organizations," mappingmilitants.stanford.edu. These organizational diagrams are linked to detailed profiles of the groups in question and trace their evolution over time.

11 Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002). Although a Shia revolution, its outcome demonstrated to Sunni extremists that an Islamist rebellion could succeed against an ally of the West.

12 See R. Kim Cragin, "Early History of Al-Qa'ida," *The Historical Journal* 51 (4) (2008): 1047 – 1067. This account, which covers the period 1984 – 1996, is based largely on primary documents.

13 Ibid., 1056 – 1057.

14 Ibid., 1060 – 1062.

15 Bakke, "Help Wanted?" 166 – 170, 172.

16 Observers have a tendency to attribute causality in short time frames, seeing terrorist attacks as immediate reactions to government actions, when many complex attacks take some time to plan.

[17] Mary Anne Weaver, "The Short, Violent Life of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi," *The Atlantic*, July – August 2006, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/07/the-short-violent-life-of-abu-musab-al-zarqawi/304983/. See also Joby Warrick, *Black Flags: The Rise of ISIS* (New York: Doubleday, 2015).

[18] See the maps of Syria and of Aleppo province and accompanying group profiles at Crenshaw, "Mapping Militant Organizations."

[19] The Soufan Group, *Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq* (New York: The Soufan Group, 2015), http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf.

[20] Daniel Byman, "Understanding the Islamic State – A Review Essay," *International Security* 40 (4) (Spring 2016): 127 – 165, esp. 144 – 145.

[21] Ibid., 153 – 155.

[22] Seyoum Mesfin and Abdeta Beyene, "The Practicalities of Living with Failed States," *Dædalus* 147 (1) (Winter 2018).

[23] Kalyvas, "Jihadi Rebels in Civil War."