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THESIS

**ISLAMIC STATE RECRUITING IN THE WEST:
HOW *DABIQ* FRAMES RECRUITMENT MESSAGES
TO APPEAL TO WESTERNERS**

by

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March 2018

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TO APPEAL TO WESTERNERS**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates *Dabiq* magazine's messaging strategy to recruit foreign fighters from Western nations to fight in Islamic State (IS)–controlled areas. *Dabiq* magazine uses three main messages to appeal to Westerners: 1) *loss aversion* stresses that Muslims worldwide need to travel to IS-controlled areas to fight, or they risk losing Islam as a religion, culture, and identity; 2) *selective incentives* stress that potential recruits can gain tangible and intangible rewards in an effort to increase participation; and 3) *sense of duty* stresses that every Muslim is obligated to aid other suffering Muslims.

This thesis evaluates the 15 issues of *Dabiq* magazine released from July 2014 to July 2016 to quantitatively analyze which of the three messages is presented most often throughout the magazine. Also, it draws correlations to real-world events that could possibly explain what drives IS's messaging approach. The study finds that *Dabiq* almost equally stresses the loss aversion and sense-of-duty message, and the trends follow three distinct phases. Initially, *Dabiq* stressed the sense-of-duty argument, then faced a transition period, and eventually switched to stressing the loss aversion argument in the last five issues. The recruiting message's emphasis changes dynamically based on real-time anti-terrorism efforts.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Islamic State (IS) terrorist group increasingly directs its recruitment propaganda toward enlisting fighters from the West, seeking to convert them into human killing machines. Tragically, their strategy seems to be working. From Europe to the Americas, Westerners have increasingly taken up arms and carried out attacks in the name of IS. No country seems to be exempt from the violence, as citizens at home and abroad risk their lives to carry out grisly acts of terror against legitimate government authorities, co-workers, neighbors, friends, and strangers alike. The question that must be asked is this: How does IS recruit such willing martyrs from Western societies?

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

One prominent tool used by IS to spread its message is *Dabiq*, its propaganda magazine, which is available online for free. IS launched the magazine in July 2014, when it established the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. The organization published 15 issues. The final issue was released on July 31, 2016. Although it is clear that IS uses *Dabiq* to recruit new members, how it achieves this goal is less clear. How does IS frame its recruiting message to appeal to Western citizens? Are the magazine's editors and authors enlisting Western foreign fighters by emphasizing the Western threat to their Islamic identity? Is the magazine emphasizing monetary or other benefits such as rewards in IS-controlled territories or possibly even in the afterlife? Alternatively, could the editors instead be appealing to their potential recruits' primal emotions of guilt and shame? In my thesis, I will examine these questions to identify the ways in which IS motivates new Western recruits to join their cause.

B. INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC SIGNIFICANCE

IS currently dominates media coverage with their brutal brand of terrorism. The group has become a feared terrorist name more recognizable than al-Qaeda and the previously notorious al-Shabab, replacing those names in Western news headlines. The name IS is synonymous with terror at home and abroad. Tune in to any news channel and one will see there has been a spate of terrorist attacks by Western citizens who have pledged

allegiance to IS.¹ Some Western recruits travel to IS-controlled territories to train and fight for IS. Other Westerners enlist to train alongside IS fighters and then return to wreak havoc at home. Still others are recruited via social media to carry out attacks on their home soil. The situation begs the question: Why would any rational person leave their relatively affluent society to travel to IS-controlled areas to participate in activities likely to result in their death?

The media carries IS-related news articles as soon as they happen, which seems to be every day. These articles often feature Westerners who have been recruited and are caught up in the throes of IS operations. Whether in the West or on the battlefields of Iraq and Syria, some Westerners are buying into the IS narrative and executing these actions as directed. Over the past four years, a series of especially horrendous IS-inspired terrorists have operationalized notable attacks in Western nations. In France alone, a priest was beheaded while conducting Mass,² a truck plowed through 84 people celebrating Bastille Day in Nice,³ and another attack killed 130 people in a Paris stadium.⁴ Belgium has also experienced several attacks, including the Brussels transportation center bombing that claimed 32 lives.⁵ U.S. counterterrorism efforts have been able to thwart a few incidents, but Americans have also suffered a fair number of unfortunate attacks, including the Orlando nightclub shooting, which claimed 49 lives.⁶ Another noteworthy IS-inspired attack on U.S. soil was the San Bernardino shooting, which claimed an additional 14 lives.⁷

¹ Kevin Sullivan et al., "Orlando Shooter Posted Messages on Facebook Pledging Allegiance to the Leader of ISIS and Vowing More Attacks," *Washington Post*, June 15, 2016.

² "France Church Attack: Priest Killed by Two 'IS Militants,'" BBC, July 26, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36892785>.

³ Michael Birnbaum, William Branigin and Sarah Kaplan, "Truck Rams Bastille Day Crowd in Nice, France, Killing at Least 84," *Washington Post*, July 15, 2016.

⁴ Joshua Robinson and Inti Landauro, "Paris Attacks: Suicide Bomber Was Blocked from Entering Stade de France," *Wall Street Journal*, November 15, 2015.

⁵ "Brussels Explosions: What We Know About Airport and Metro Attacks," BBC, April 9, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35869985>.

⁶ Ralph Ellis et al., "Orlando Shooting: 49 Killed, Shooter Pledged ISIS Allegiance," CNN, June 13, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/06/12/us/orlando-nightclub-shooting/>.

⁷ Los Angeles, News Group. "14 Dead, 21 Injured in San Bernardino Mass Shooting; 2 Suspects Killed," *Daily News*, Dec 02, 2015.

Even in Canada, a soldier was killed in an IS-directed attack in 2014.⁸ News stories such as these will continue to dominate headlines as long as recruits answer the call to the IS recruitment message.

As the United States and coalition partners continue the prolonged war against global terrorism, IS is transforming the fight and taking it to Western nations via the West's own citizens. Such a dilemma requires a study to find out the messages *Dabiq* uses to recruit Western citizens to travel along the jihadi path, to fight on behalf of a foreign entity. To eventually undermine IS recruitment efforts, one must first understand the motivation and driving force behind citizens' decision to answer the call. Westerners are becoming more aware as the news media continuously reports attacks executed by citizens who could easily be their neighbors. IS propaganda has been successful in recruiting Western militants so far, and it is imperative to find out what IS is using to motivate Westerners to choose the jihadi path. Understanding what causes citizens to travel abroad in the name of IS is a solid first step in finding a solution to combating the greater problem.

C. HYPOTHESES AND ASSOCIATED LITERATURE REVIEW

Most researchers have focused on the ideology of IS and its recruitment messaging, such as how it justifies the need to unite all Muslims under the banner of one caliphate, and employs violence as a means to that end. Another set of literature focuses on the modes of message delivery. Included in this is the role of social media and, in particular, how it changes the dynamics regarding the terrorists' ability to cheaply mobilize followers over great distances and en masse. This thesis focuses instead on the structure of the recruitment message.

While most researchers look at social-media activity and the staggering number of high-resolution videos produced and distributed by IS, very few have focused on *Dabiq*, the magazine. Harleen K. Ghambir of the Institute for the Study of War, however, is one writer who examined the content of the message in the first two issues of the magazine. In "*Dabiq: The Strategic Messaging of the Islamic State*," Ghambir focuses on the magazine's

⁸ Ian Austen, "Hit-and-Run That Killed Canadian Soldier is Called Terrorist Attack," *New York Times*, October 21, 2014.

religious, political, and military messaging content. She demonstrates that in addition to the magazine's primary purpose of recruitment and propaganda, *Dabiq* also seeks to legitimize the so-called caliphate as "religiously justified and superior to rival organizations."⁹

Ghambir's first feature, "The Union of Political and Religious Authority," lays out *Dabiq*'s justification for IS's support of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as caliph.¹⁰ Her second feature, "Zarqāwī's Caliphate Plan," outlines IS's scheme to maneuver from formation to caliphate declaration.¹¹ *Dabiq*'s content retained its basic structure throughout the magazine's run insofar as the techniques used did not deviate far from the original template. The magazine detailed current events to bolster and promote the IS ideology through strategic messaging.

Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, Nathaniel Barr, and Bridget Moreng of the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism–The Hague also focus on IS's message content. In "The Islamic State's Global Propaganda Strategy," the trio looks at IS messaging on a wide scale and at various modes of delivery. They describe nine themes and narratives from what they call the "Islamic State's global propaganda playbook."¹² Their article focuses on social media, print, video, and televised IS propaganda. Overall, the authors conclude that IS's message content encompasses a "winner's message," always portraying the organization as the stronger team.¹³ They note that IS never displays any signs of weakness or defeat in their reports.¹⁴ IS's message seeks to "discredit the competition" to appear as the foremost legitimate jihadi-salafi organization in existence.¹⁵ Next, the message points out the

⁹ Harleen K. Ghambir, "Dabiq: The Strategic Messaging of the Islamic State," *Institute for the Study of War Backgrounder* (August 15, 2014), 10, http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Dabiq%20Backgrounder_Harleen%20Final.pdf.

¹⁰ Ibid., 8.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Daveed Gartenstein-Ross et al., "The Islamic State's Global Propaganda Strategy," *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague Research Paper*, March 2016, 5, <https://www.icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICCT-Gartenstein-Ross-IS-Global-Propaganda-Strategy-March2016.pdf>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

“illegitimacy of political Islamists,” accusing stalwart Islamic movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, of deviating from the true path of jihadi-salafism.¹⁶ In addition, these authors say that the IS message attempts to sow “discord within enemy ranks,” as a means to break rival groups apart.¹⁷ IS further seeks to “exploit sectarian tensions,” inciting conflicts between Sunni and Shi’a sects to encourage the Sunni to flee into IS-controlled territories for protection.¹⁸

The next element of IS messaging is to portray the “caliphate as an Islamic utopia,” as a newly forming Islamic state thriving and waiting with open arms to welcome all Muslims to live in harmony forever.¹⁹ The authors identify the next element of IS messaging as promoting “jihadist adventure and camaraderie,” glorifying life in IS-controlled territories as an eternal circle in which brothers can live together and raise children on the path of faith and love.²⁰ The authors contend that IS messaging also seeks to “drive a wedge between Muslims and the West,” whereby they attempt to turn Muslims in the West against their home countries, and to support the caliphate in turn.²¹ Finally, the authors argue that the IS message stresses a “religious obligation to join the caliphate,” citing religious bases for Muslims to recognize and support the caliph and the newly formed caliphate.²²

Dabiq magazine has come a long way since Ghambir and the Gartenstein-Ross, team wrote about their observations on IS’s messaging content and delivery modes. Although the magazine has kept its basic features intact, including the strong propaganda and self-praising overtones, *Dabiq* has evolved into a more refined publication, focused on broader issues and targeting a wider, more mainstream audience. Al-Hayat Media Center, the media arm responsible for *Dabiq*’s publication and distribution, released the 15th and

¹⁶ Gartenstein-Ross et al., “Propaganda Strategy,” 5.

¹⁷ Gartenstein-Ross et al., “Propaganda Strategy,” 5.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 6.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

final issue of the magazine (*Break the Cross*) on July 31, 2016. The messaging content remains similar, with the addition of historical articles seeking to contextualize current events happening within the sphere of IS-controlled territories. Longstanding features such as “In the Words of the Enemy” remain in the magazine as a reminder to potential recruits of the enormous challenges that lie ahead for the organization, while at the same time emphasizing the group’s solid foundation and ability to expand. This aspect of the message speaks to the methods used to appeal to the Western audience. New sections have also been added including “Among the Believers Are Men” and “Selected 10: Ten Videos Selected from the Wilāyat of the Islamic State.” The former praises those who have achieved martyrdom, while the latter highlights newly released propaganda videos. Now that we have an idea of *Dabiq*’s messaging strategy, I will shift focus to the overall messaging themes covered throughout the magazine, and the ones this thesis will focus on.

My three hypotheses explore the ways in which *Dabiq*’s messages target recruits in the West. My first hypothesis is that *Dabiq* attracts Western foreign fighters into conflict zones by promoting a message appealing to what I term “loss aversion,” whereby Muslims are encouraged to stop a major threat to their transnational Islamic identity. The loss aversion argument may be divided into three distinct themes: the near enemy, the far enemy, and the unbelievers. First is the idea of the far enemy, the Western powers *Dabiq* perceives as representing an existential threat to all Muslims’ transnational identity. *Dabiq* refers to the far enemy as the “realist and gravest threat to the Islamic State,” whether fighting on the battlefield, or as a general entity seeking to gain political control of Muslim lands. Second is the idea of the near enemies. They are the rival organizations seeking to recruit from the same pool of talent from which *Dabiq* seeks to recruit. Near enemies entail such groups as al-Qaeda, Jabhat al-Nusra, and any other terrorist group seeking to mobilize fighters to travel from abroad to take part in conflicts in areas IS seeks to control. The third group in the loss aversion triangle are the unbelievers—the secular leaders of Muslim nations. Similar to the near enemy, the unbelievers reside in Islamic nations. Politically, they lead a nation of Muslims, but not by Allah’s law, the Shari’ah. These unbelievers are so branded to delegitimize their roles in Islamic life. *Dabiq* labels their enemies with different derogatory names, including the kufr, apostates, tawaghit, rafidah, and khariji. By

presenting these enemies of IS to the potential recruits and systematically discrediting their characters, *Dabiq* seeks to undermine their legitimate political authority and, in turn, have followers join the IS cause instead of that of any other competitor.

My second hypothesis posits that *Dabiq* offers rewards in exchange for service in the form of “selective incentives.” Like the loss aversion argument, the selective incentives argument has three distinct themes—tangible rewards, intangible rewards, and rewards in the afterlife. Tangible rewards are those that a potential recruit can exploit immediately, can possibly exchange for cash, and can even pass on to another person. Intangible rewards, on the other hand, are also immediate, but they cannot be cashed in for monetary gains. However, a person would have to be physically present in the IS-controlled area in order to receive the reward. Afterlife rewards are intangible rewards that can only be received for exceptionally great deeds after death. These rewards are not viewed as punishment, but rather as rewards that keep giving forever. Afterlife rewards are those given to the soldiers who die on the battlefield in the course of fighting the enemies of IS.

My third hypothesis is that *Dabiq* shames Westerners into fighting to save their coreligionists by appealing to their “sense of duty.” Like the other two messages, the sense of duty argument can be divided into three distinct themes—shame, guilt, and honor. In this context, *Dabiq* articles and pictures are meant to shame potential recruits into action, either through their feelings about their home country, or by inciting them to join the IS ranks to help other suffering Muslims who cannot help themselves, especially women and children. To deliver the sense of duty message, the magazine also depicts the harm Muslims suffer at the hands of Western coalition forces. Here, the magazine highlights the heavy artillery being used against innocent Muslims in IS-controlled areas. The portrayal is meant to trigger the readers’ guilty consciences as they realize that the suffering exists as a result of them empowering their governments’ actions. The third part of the sense of duty argument lies in the message that *Dabiq* wishes to communicate with its readers that jihad under the IS banner is an honorable undertaking. Honor, while it bestows a form of intangible reward on the potential recruit, transcends mere worldly rewards because the martyr receives eternal life. Honor secures one’s name in perpetuity.

D. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employs content analysis to answer the primary research question: How does IS recruit willing martyrs from Western societies using print media, specifically *Dabiq*, their previous recruitment and propaganda magazine? Are the editors and authors framing their message to appeal to Western citizens by emphasizing loss aversion, selective incentives, or appealing to their sense of duty? Which appeal does the magazine emphasize most? *Dabiq* is an appropriate publication with which to study the structure of IS's recruitment message, mainly due to its widespread availability. During the time of its publication, *Dabiq* defined and documented the lifeline of IS as a caliphate. As a direct recruitment tool, the downloaded copies give a firsthand view of the way in which IS would like to be perceived, through their attempt to control the narrative.

IS launched *Dabiq* following its declaration of a caliphate in 2014; the magazine provides sufficient material to determine trends in the message structure during the magazine's lifetime between 2014 and 2016. The publication also provides enough data to allow the analysis to determine, with a fine degree of fidelity, how the message evolves and, possibly, future recruitment trends. In addition, the magazine is freely available and in a format that is readily accessible and familiar to the Western audience. Unlike some other IS-related propaganda and recruitment material available for study, *Dabiq* offers the quality and quantity not found in other avenues, such as videos, which sometimes become unavailable. Also, the magazine has not been subjected to direct analysis in the manner that other materials presented on social media have been. Further, as government authorities cooperate with the private sector to eradicate IS-related media from the Internet, it is becoming harder to replicate studies using such material, especially with the volatility of newly released material. My research will be conducted with issues of *Dabiq* retrieved from the nonprofit organization, The Clarion Project, which publishes free digital copies of the magazine in a downloadable format.

I will analyze the publication to determine which articles aim at recruiting personnel. From there, I will determine the main message of each recruiting article, to determine if it is focused more toward minimizing losses from IS's enemies, promising rewards for service, or pointing out one's obligation to protect other Muslims. I will also

annotate any article that appeals to any two of the messages and exclude those that equally emphasize all three messages. Next, I will tabulate the results and assess any trends to determine if any world events outside the realm of IS's control may be shaping the magazine's recruiting messaging.

E. THESIS OVERVIEW AND DRAFT CHAPTER OUTLINE

The next chapter will detail the background of the people, places, and events *Dabiq* editors focus on to further their recruitment efforts. I will introduce and investigate the major personnel and events that contributed to IS's emergence, as viewed from *Dabiq*'s perspective. The chapter will also seek to outline how these people, places, and events shaped IS into the organization it is today. Then I will provide the analysis and interpretation of *Dabiq* articles in the third chapter. There, I will present the criteria and definition of the messaging components. In the final chapter, I will present the three phases of the magazine's lifespan with a correlation to world events.

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II. ISLAMIC STATE IDEOLOGY AND BACKGROUND

This chapter makes the connection between IS ideology and the most prominent people, places, and events that had an impact on the organization's development, from *Dabiq*'s perspective. *Dabiq*'s editors and authors place great emphasis on key people, places, and events that have come in contact with, and helped to shape, IS into its present state of operation. The magazine calls on their names as beacons in the recruitment effort. In this chapter, I will investigate Abū Mus'ab az-Zarqāwī, Osama bin-Laden, al-Qaeda, and the Taliban. This exploration is an effort to show the contributions these people, places, and events made to the foundation of the IS, and how those contributions affect current operations within the IS and the *Dabiq* recruitment methodology.

Next, I will investigate *Dabiq*'s interpretation of how and why IS established its initial roots in Iraq and Syria. In addition, I will seek to decode the role the city of Dabiq (the magazine's namesake) plays in popular belief and the significance IS hopes it will play in the future. I will further search out any other possible nation-states the publishers emphasize as suitable for growth and any countries singled out as targets of opportunity. Finally, I will look into the different phases IS has traversed and how events in the past, such as the Sykes-Picot agreement, drive their current narrative. This approach will establish a suitable framework to better understand the IS recruitment messaging.

A. PEOPLE

Dabiq focuses mainly on winning the favor of potential enlistees. This is inherent in its purpose as a recruitment and propaganda publication. The English versions downloaded from the Clarion Project are targeted mainly at Western audiences. The magazine seeks to win people over to their side by demonizing the competition, and garnering praise for allies. The magazine dedicates a large part of its resources to broadcasting the stories of those warriors who have fought and have achieved martyrdom. One key aspect of *Dabiq* is that it features a barrage of people who have made their mark on IS as an organization. From founders, including Abū Mus'ab az-Zarqāwī and al-Maqdisi, to funders like Osama bin-Laden, the magazine is a showcase of people who have

been fighting for a place to house all Muslims internationally. In the case of Zarqāwī and bin-Laden, they are the people who represent the apex of the ideal in *Dabiq*'s narrative. They have made the sacrifice with their lives for the sake of Allah's people and will live on forever, to be eternally revered and honored. These men formed the backbone of IS ideology, and introduced IS's basic methodology—the focus on the near enemy, the far enemy, and the widespread practice of takfirism.

Because they are recruiting people, *Dabiq* naturally focuses on people as much as it focuses on events and places. In this regard, they uplift friends and discredit enemies, giving potential recruits a binary choice—us or them, friends or enemies.²³ This idea of binary choice is a focal point throughout the issues; for example, issue 10 is aptly titled, *The Law of Allah or the Laws of Men*. Other articles also mimic Western ideology; one writer quotes George W. Bush: "Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists."²⁴ The magazine makes a distinct separation between friends and enemies throughout all 15 issues. Some individuals have played massive roles in the growth, spread, and rooting of the group, and continue to be called upon to assist in the recruitment effort.

Facial recognition plays a major role in the *Dabiq* communication strategy. The magazine's pages are decorated with the faces of the friends of IS, including such figures as Zarqāwī (Shaykh Abū Mus'ab az-Zarqāwī), Osama bin-Laden (Shaykh Usāmah Ibn Lādin), al-'Adnānī (Shaykh Abū Muhammad al-'Adnānī ash-Shāmī), Abu 'Umar al-Baghdadi (Amirul-Mu'minin Abu 'Umar al-Husayni al-Baghdadi), Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (Abu Bakr al-Husayni al-Qurashi al-Baghdadi), groups like Ansar al-Islam, and, of course, the martyrs, such as Jihadi John and many others. The friends of IS are highlighted to portray IS as being affiliated with the right side of the jihadi-salafi movement. The magazine contrasts IS friends and enemies and vilifies opponents whose faces are also plastered throughout the magazine in an effort to discredit their legitimacy. The list of

²³ "The Extinction of the Grayzone," *Dabiq*, Issue 7, February 12, 2015, 54, <http://media.clarionproject.org/files/islamic-state/islamic-state-dabiq-magazine-issue-7-from-hypocrisy-to-apostasy.pdf>.

²⁴ Ibid.

enemies spans rival Islamic fundamentalist groups, the leaders of Muslim nations, the United States, and other Western nations.

By far, the people featured most prominently in the magazine are those who have made the journey to IS-controlled territories and have made the ultimate sacrifice, achieving martyrdom. Among the famous friends of IS are Zarqāwī and bin-Laden, who I discuss separately, later in this chapter. Other major players include Abu ‘Umar al-Baghdadi, and the current leader of the group, who is, as of this writing, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

Dabiq frequently cites the words of the former official spokesman, Abū Muhammad al-’Adnānī ash-Shāmī (al-’Adnānī), who was killed in an airstrike on August 30, 2016.²⁵ The magazine often quotes from his orations to issue rallying cries for Muslims all over the world to gather under the IS banner. The magazine quotes Al-’Adnānī directly in 11 of the 15 issues. Among these quotations is his most famous invitation, a call to Muslims everywhere to rise up against Western nations and their authorities wherever they are located.²⁶ Al-’Adnānī also created motivating slogans for the friends of IS, coining such phrases as “We will never alter nor change until we taste what they tasted.”²⁷ Al-’Adnānī was repeatedly highlighted as the mouthpiece of the organization throughout the magazine’s run. He is most notorious for having issued the call for Muslims in the West to carry out terrorist attacks on their home soils.²⁸ *Dabiq* mostly uses Al-’Adnānī quotes to entice Muslims to fight to save the honor of the greater Islamic community.

Among the venerated are Abu ‘Umar al-Baghdadi and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Abu-Umar was IS’s leader upon initial establishment of their caliphate in 2006.²⁹ Abu Bakr al-

²⁵ Eric Schmitt and Anne Barnard, “Senior ISIS Strategist and Spokesman is Reported Killed in Syria,” *New York Times*, August 30, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/31/world/middleeast/al-adnani-islamic-state-isis-syria.html>.

²⁶ John Cantlie, “If I Were the U.S. President Today,” *Dabiq*, November, 21, 2014, 37, <http://media.clarionproject.org/files/islamic-state/isis-isil-islamic-state-magazine-issue-5-remaining-and-expanding.pdf>.

²⁷ “Responding to the Doubts,” *Dabiq*, Issue 7, page 25.

²⁸ Cantlie, “U.S. President Today,” 36.

²⁹ Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, (New York: Regan Arts, 2015), 6.

Baghdadi took over and has been the IS leader since July 2014. There have been multiple accounts of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi meeting his demise, but none has been confirmed by reputable authorities. *Dabiq* justifies their status as the rightful leaders of the Muslim community by virtue of claims of their direct hereditary lineage to the prophet Muhammad.³⁰ The magazine also continuously highlights the effective job the two men have done leading the organization despite the massive resistance from the West and from other Islamic fundamentalist groups.³¹ The story of praise comes about because Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi answered the call after Abu-Umar perished, and the group needed a new leader. *Dabiq* subsequently paints a picture of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as a fearless leader, facilitating the organization's rapid and continuous growth into broader territories.³² *Dabiq* highlights IS leaders in an effort to legitimize their religious and political positions as a function of divine authority. This authority is meant to give IS more credibility when compared with similar Islamic fundamentalist organizations.

The people *Dabiq* focuses on most are those who have conducted hijrah (migration) to the Islamic state and achieved martyrdom in the name of Allah. The magazine rewards these martyrs in interviews conducted prior to their deaths, feature articles, testimonials, and other honorable mentions throughout the magazine. The magazine casts its net for a wide audience by featuring fighters from different racial and national backgrounds. The pictures feature seemingly happy fighters celebrating together, crying together, and sharing group embraces. Other stories broadcast the successes of those migrating from the West. *Dabiq* presents foreign fighters as a fraternity—a band of brothers who prepare for battle together, fight together, reap the spoils of war together, and, if lucky, die together.³³ Another feature the magazine uses to attract Western youth is the practice of portraying fighters in Rambo-like postures, slinging weapons and displaying their knife-wielding skills as they murder supposed enemies with impunity.³⁴

³⁰ *Dabiq*, Issue 10, page 22.

³¹ *Dabiq*, Issue 12, page 18.

³² *Dabiq*, Issue 1, page 40.

³³ *Dabiq*, Issue 2, page 42.

³⁴ *Dabiq*, Issue 3, page 4.

The magazine goes further to show the depth of Westerners within the ranks of the State by highlighting foreigners providing care and maintaining public works projects.³⁵ *Dabiq* presents the foreign fighters' story as one that is honorable, highly rewarding, and that, in the end, will facilitate sustaining the so-called caliphate until judgment day.

On the other side of the equation, *Dabiq* also highlights their enemies in feature articles, seeking to downplay their credibility in front of potential recruits. The enemies include rival groups such as al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and Jabhat al-Nusra. They further vilify tribal sects such as the Yazidis and the Houthis. Further, the magazine also brands Western politicians, secular Muslim leaders, and the prisoners in their possession as enemies. For IS to be the greatest, all opposition has to go. Such is the relationship between IS and other Islamic fundamentalist groups. For example, al-Qaeda represented the apex of worldwide terrorism, up to and after 9/11. However, since IS has started to experience steady growth, its members and especially *Dabiq*'s writers have sought to discredit al-Qaeda, even though IS came about as an offshoot of it. Such is the relationship between IS and the people who have influenced its trajectory from the outset to the present. What follows are their specific contributions, starting with the recognized founder.

1. Abū Mus'ab az-Zarqāwī

Each issue of the magazine opens with this quote from Abū Mus'ab az-Zarqāwī, the founder of the IS: "The spark has been lit here in Iraq, and its heat will continue to intensify—by Allah's permission—until it burns the crusader armies in Dabiq." Zarqāwī founded IS in 1999, although it experienced multiple iterations and name changes prior to its present-day existence as IS. Zarqāwī migrated to Kandahar, Afghanistan, from his homeland Jordan to start his own terror group. According to Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan in *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, Zarqāwī first migrated to Pakistan in spring 1989 to participate in the Soviet-Afghan war. Since the Soviets had lost the war by the time Zarqāwī arrived, he loitered in the area to establish contacts, learn the craft of terrorism, and make a name for himself in the postwar environment. To that end, he worked for the magazine *al-Bunyan al-Marsus* (*The Impenetrable Edifice*) as a correspondent, chronicling

³⁵ *Dabiq*, Issue 4, page 28.

war stories about those who had been on the front lines.³⁶ This experience marked a turning point for the “hotheaded Jordanian street-thug-turned-jihadist,”³⁷ as he was able to get a firsthand look at the role media coverage plays in recruiting foreign fighters. *Dabiq* magazine likewise tells stories of the great news from the battlefield, covers the tales of those who have achieved shahada (martyrdom), and further chronicles the journey of the State itself.

Upon returning to Jordan in 1992, Zarqāwī teamed up with Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi after founding the jihadist cell, Bayat al-Imam (the Pledge of the Imam).³⁸ Because al-Maqdisi was a recognized scholar and Zarqāwī was a street-wise thug, the two were able to complement each other in a “brain and muscle” kind of relationship. Their illicit activities eventually led to their arrest and sentencing for illegal arms possession.³⁹ Zarqāwī went back to Pakistan in 1999, met Osama bin-Laden, and received funding from al-Qaeda to start a training camp in Herat, Afghanistan.⁴⁰ Because Zarqāwī was a foreign fighter himself, his camp was utilized mainly for training émigrés from Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, and Turkey.⁴¹ His camp initially went by the name Jund-al-Sham (Soldiers of the Levant) and later transformed into the Iraqi terror cell Tawhid wal-Jihad (Monotheism and Holy War).⁴² Once the U.S.-led invasion ramped up in Iraq, Zarqāwī was able to build more experienced troops from Saddam Hussein’s Ba’ath regime.⁴³

Even while bin-Laden was funding his operations, Zarqāwī and his group did not pledge allegiance to al-Qaeda until October 2004. At this time, Tawhid al-Jihad became Tanzim Qaedat al-Jihad fi Bilad al Rafidayn (al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers or

³⁶ Weiss and Hassan, *Army of Terror*, 6.

³⁷ William Faizi McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015), 7.

³⁸ Weiss and Hassan, *Army of Terror*, 8.

³⁹ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁰ David Malet, *Foreign Fighters: Transnational Identity in Civil Conflicts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 196.

⁴¹ McCants, *ISIS Apocalypse*, 8.

⁴² Weiss and Hassan, *Army of Terror*, 9.

⁴³ Ibid., 27.

al-Qaeda in Iraq [AQI])⁴⁴ Zarqāwī succumbed to injuries sustained from U.S. Air Force F-16C air strikes on June 7, 2006.⁴⁵ Upon Zarqāwī's death, the new leader, Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, completed merging AQI with other Iraq-based terrorist groups to form the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI).⁴⁶ The *Dabiq* magazine editors continuously pay homage to Zarqāwī's legacy and lifetime accomplishments. In addition to his quote at the beginning of each issue, the editors also run Zarqāwī stories and other quotes from him to justify IS actions today, as well as to continue recruiting foreign fighters.

The IS ideology today may be traced back to the early days of Zarqāwī's immersion into salafism and the literature he studied. Those individual beliefs he chose to surround himself with, such as takfirism, apostasy, taghūt labeling, and slavery, all play dominant roles in IS's current divide-and-conquer strategy. They are frequent themes reflected in *Dabiq* articles. While IS did not proclaim state status during Zarqāwī's lifetime, it was always his intention to develop a place for all Muslims worldwide to call their home—the abode of Islam—the Islamic state.

2. Osama bin-Laden, al-Qaeda and the Taliban

Throughout the 15 issues of *Dabiq*, it is quite evident where IS places its loyalty and respect in the network of major actors in international terrorism. Among al-Qaeda, Osama bin-Laden, the Taliban in Afghanistan, and Ayman al-Zawahiri, the feelings range from mere tolerance to admiration to even downright disdain. The literature depicts IS as a movement whose leaders had great respect for the early leaders of al-Qaeda. The two groups grew apart as time passed and IS became a stronger entity.

Besides Zarqāwī, bin-Laden's is the most frequently repeated name throughout the magazine. As the forerunner and financier to modern-day salafi-jihadists, Osama bin-Laden holds a highly respected position in the *Dabiq* pages. The publishers refer to him as “the Shahid of Islam...the Imam and Sayyid of his era...the Pride of the Ummah, and the

⁴⁴ Weiss and Hassan, *Army of Terror*, 34.

⁴⁵ Benjamin Runkle, *Wanted Dead or Alive: Manhunts from Geronimo to bin Laden* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 202.

⁴⁶ Weiss and Hassan, *Army of Terror*, 62.

Crown of its New Era.”⁴⁷ The authors refer to bin-Laden as worshippers praise a saint or a sage in other religions. The authors place him on the mantle of one deserving of the utmost reverence. This is not surprising, since he was the funder for the group’s early start. Further, terrorists still draw inspiration from bin-Laden masterminding the 9/11 attacks. The group also hails bin-Laden as their champion, claiming he had praised their formation and given it his blessing when they first declared their caliphate with Abu ‘Umar al-Baghdadi as their leader.⁴⁸ This support gave them the necessary legitimacy to move forward in the fledgling stages of their caliphate. For these reasons, former U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel declared that IS “considers itself the rightful inheritor of Osama bin-Laden’s legacy.”⁴⁹ The group is at the stage where they believe they are best positioned to carry out the Shahid’s vision of fighting the Western enemy.

Although the *Dabiq* editors cite bin-Laden as the wise sage committed to fighting for Allah’s cause and as the martyr who paid the ultimate price for the movement, it is clear that they pay this homage to him strictly out of a desire to appeal to their base and would-be recruits. IS is not a group dedicated to loyalty to any one person or organization unless it furthers IS’s interests. Recall, they did not pledge allegiance to bin-Laden until 2004, when they were a somewhat strong entity. They only did so to win bin-Laden’s good graces and become the foremost group in the area, while preserving their original identity. In other words, their allegiance to bin-Laden and al-Qaeda was strictly a ploy to receive more money, personnel, and resources, and thus surpass their competition.

The legacy and romantic presence of bin-Laden as part of those revered by IS is as much for his acts of terrorism waged upon the West as it is for his ability to remain outside the hands of his Western adversaries for as long as he did. Prior to the 9/11 attacks, bin-Laden had been on the terrorist wanted list while various military and CIA assets attempted to execute him without success, further adding to his allure. As a rebel after the first World

⁴⁷ “Interview with a Spy Working for the Israeli Mossad,” *Dabiq*, February 2015, 25, <http://media.clarionproject.org/files/islamic-state/islamic-state-dabiq-magazine-issue-7-from-hypocrisy-to-apostasy.pdf>.

⁴⁸ *Dabiq*, Issue 1, page 25.

⁴⁹ <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/603270/hagel-says-isil-threats-real-must-be-dealt-with>.

Trade Center bombing in 1993, he became a high-value target with the distinction of becoming the first individual to have a dedicated task force assigned to finding him. The CIA and the military employed several tactics, including snatch-and-grab operations, farm raids, cruise missile attacks, and using tribal and other indigenous force resources in the areas in which bin-Laden was believed to be present.⁵⁰

The major contribution of bin-Laden to IS, besides funding the initial training camp at Herat, was his vision of challenging Islam's far enemies,⁵¹ looking at the world through a binary lens, and expressing that the world is divided in two camps—a camp of Islam and a camp of kufr⁵² (unbelievers). Here, bin-Laden introduces the idea of binary factions regarding Muslims and the rest of the world.

Relations between IS and al-Qaeda soured once bin-Laden passed away in May 2011. IS had been living off of al-Qaeda and in their shadow until bin-Laden's demise. The group took the opportunity of bin-Laden's death to break off on to its own path. The transport on which IS rode the express lane to legitimacy in Islamic fundamentalist circles was bin-Laden's clout. His blessings and funding brought the group from a small start-up to an official, worldwide terrorist group. Indeed, he did bless the fledgling group and Abu 'Umar al-Baghdadi when they declared their respective caliphate and caliph under the ISI banner.⁵³ The al-Qaeda/IS rift started showing cracks in the seam of their ideologies. On the one hand, IS wanted to get back to the Islam of pre-Sykes-Picot and observe borderless nations, resembling the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, al-Qaeda wanted to maintain division along the trajectory of nationalism and tribalism. Especially after bin-Laden's passing, IS believed there were no other entities fit to lead the Ummah (worldwide Muslim family), except the IS leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

The first anti-al-Qaeda article appears in issue 6 of *Dabiq*. The feature article, "al-Qa'idah of Waziristan: A Testimony from Within," exposes al-Qaeda as a has-been group

⁵⁰ Runkle, *Wanted Dead or Alive*, 158-167.

⁵¹ Weiss and Hassan, *Army of Terror*, 11.

⁵² *Dabiq*, Issue 7, page 54.

⁵³ *Dabiq*, Issue 1, page 25.

of imposters who have lost their way since their days of substance, when bin-Laden and Zarqāwī led with the right vision.⁵⁴ The author, Abū Jarir ash-Shamālī, describes present-day Waziristan as an area that was supposed to be under exclusive al-Qaeda control and ruled by the Shar’iah. On the contrary, the area was teeming with Pakistani army forces and following tribal laws. Subsequent issues of the magazine present a series of articles titled, “The Allies of al-Qaeda in Sham,” which seek to delegitimize al-Qaeda as the preeminent terrorist group in Syria. Considering the era of issuance, issues 8–12 were released covering the April–November 2015 time frame following IS’s rally in Syria. The articles then were written in an effort to win over new recruits to fight on the IS side. After al-Qaeda formally disavowed IS on February 2, 2014, IS needed to pave its own path after creating its niche.⁵⁵

B. PLACES

Dabiq magazine’s main objective is to convince people to travel from their homes in the West to fight alongside their brothers in IS-controlled territories. The operative word becomes hijrah (migration) and an entire issue is dedicated to it (issue 3—*A Call to Hijrah*). Throughout the magazine, there are eight feature articles focused on the subject of hijrah. As a matter of fact, the first step in the journey to caliphate status, as delineated in the IS five-step process, is hijrah.⁵⁶ In the foreword to the second issue, the editor stresses that the potential recruit’s first priority is “to perform hijrah from wherever you are to the Islamic state.”⁵⁷ To understand the impact of IS ideology, one must also understand the precepts the organization holds dear and emphasizes most. One such precept is hijrah. This is how the group maintains the ranks with foreign fighters and replenishes the supply of martyrs. Hence, the subject of migration becomes a focal point as one examines the locations the magazine targets for future recruitment and possible IS takeover.

⁵⁴ *Dabiq*, Issue 6, pages 40–55.

⁵⁵ Weiss and Hassan, *Army of Terror*, 196.

⁵⁶ *Dabiq*, Issue 1, page 20.

⁵⁷ *Dabiq*, Issue 2, page 3.

Local and national news outlets frequently feature stories of Westerners caught plotting to travel to IS-controlled areas, as well as of those who have successfully made the journey.⁵⁸ Hijrah, as a recruiting tool, is presented to potential recruits in the form of the binary choice for Muslims to migrate to fight in IS-controlled territory or continue to reside in Western nations controlled by secular politicians. An example taken from issue 7—*From Hypocrisy to Apostasy* demonstrates the point:

The Muslims in the West will quickly find themselves between one of two choices: They either apostasize and adopt the kufrī religion propagated by Bush, Obama, Blair, Cameron, Sarkozy, and Hollande in the name of Islam so as to live amongst the kuffār without hardship, or they perform hijrah to the Islamic state and thereby escape persecution from the crusader governments and citizens.⁵⁹

1. Targets of Opportunity—Potential Strongholds

In addition to targeting Westerners to join its ranks and become foreign fighters, *Dabiq* also celebrates IS's spread from Iraq and Syria into other states as it seeks to create a borderless world for all Muslims. As reported in the news as well as in the magazine, there are more and more territories falling under the IS banner as the group expands and assumes political control of additional areas. As IS continuously seeks to expand, it looks favorably on those states lacking a powerful central authority. Specifically, *Dabiq* points to targets for potential strongholds such as Chechnya, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, the Sinai Peninsula, Somalia, Waziristan, and Yemen, as well as parts of Algeria, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Tunisia.⁶⁰ As the geopolitical situation shifts within IS-controlled territories and strong nations develop methods to deter or defeat the IS threat, *Dabiq* seems to preempt the demise of the current location, and directs followers to alternate locations to plant seeds to start propagating for future movements. This is the method the group followed when it spread into Syria from Iraq.

⁵⁸ Adam Goldman and Souad Mekhennet, “‘That is not the son I raised’: How a British citizen became one of the most notorious members of ISIS,” *Washington Post*, May 23, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/that-is-not-the-son-i-raised-how-a-british-citizen-became-one-of-the-most-notorious-members-of-isis/2016/05/23/6d66276c-1cfd-11e6-b6e0-c53b7ef63b45_story.html?hpid=hp_hp-top-table-main_elsheikh-1225pm%3Ahomepage%2Fstory.

⁵⁹ *Dabiq*, Issue 7, page 62.

⁶⁰ *Dabiq*, Issue 1, page 36.

2. Targets of Opportunity—Potential Victims

Dabiq magazine urges attacks against any country engaged in the war against IS including Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Poland, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States.⁶¹ *Dabiq* editors realize all sympathizers possessing the means may not actually have the capability to conduct hijrah into IS-controlled areas. For those who would like to fight for IS but cannot afford to travel to any of the potential strongholds, *Dabiq* gives them an alternative. The magazine tells followers and sympathizers who cannot conduct hijrah to organize bay'ah (pledges of allegiance) to the IS leader and to distribute them to followers via social media.⁶² If there is a strong police presence, *Dabiq* encourages the potential recruit to make the bay'ah anonymously.⁶³ The magazine further provides other options for recruits to carry out attacks on their respective home soils. The magazine quotes Al-'Adnānī's call to action in four issues:

So, O muwahhid, do not let this battle pass you by wherever you may be. You must strike the soldiers, patrons, and troops of the tawāghīt. Strike their police, security, and intelligence members, as well as their treacherous agents. Destroy their beds. Embitter their lives for them and busy them with themselves. If you can kill a disbelieving American or European—especially the spiteful and filthy French—or an Australian, or a Canadian, or any other disbeliever from the disbelievers waging war, including the citizens of the countries that entered into a coalition against the Islamic State, then rely upon Allah, and kill him in any manner or way however it may be. Do not ask for anyone's advice and do not seek anyone's verdict. Kill the disbeliever whether he is civilian or military, for they have the same ruling.⁶⁴

The release of these four issues between October and December 2014 (issues 4, 5, and 6), and again in November 2015 (issue 12) correlates with attacks in Canada, France, the United States, and Denmark during the same time period. *Dabiq* is out to direct all the sympathizers on a path to actively support the organization, either by traveling abroad or by striking locally on their home soil.

⁶¹ *Dabiq*, Issue 4, page 44.

⁶² *Dabiq*, Issue 2, page 3.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ *Dabiq*, Issue 4, page 9.

3. Iraq

After the United States military forces invaded Iraq in 2003, the gates were open for jihadists to engage in liberating Allah's land from the crusaders, especially after the Taliban won a resounding victory against the greater Soviet forces in the Soviet-Afghan war. Spirits were high and the jihadists remained confident, because most of the current leaders were veterans of that previous war. Even prior to the 2003 U.S. invasion, Zarqāwī had planted the seeds for expansion into Iraq by means of Jund al-Islam forming in Kurdistan.⁶⁵ Jund al-Islam later merged with other groups to form Ansar al-Islam. Iraq also became Zarqāwī's central operational hub after the U.S. routed the Taliban in Afghanistan. Ansar fighters provided Zarqāwī refuge.⁶⁶ The initial decision to relocate to Iraq was mostly based on ethnic ties that would facilitate incoming fighters blending into the society.⁶⁷ In addition, the fighters calculated correctly that the postwar civil conflicts that would arise after the invasion could, if managed properly, actually help establish a state for all Muslims—the Islamic state.⁶⁸

Chaos. The catalyst and prime mover behind IS's rise and command of power is disrupting the chain of events and challenging the status quo. What is the best way for a small, relatively unknown group of fighters to carve out a niche for themselves in a foreign land in a relatively short time span? By unleashing a never-before-seen tornado of violence in Iraq, IS became an international phenomenon and gained everyone's attention, despite the fact they were not the largest terrorist insurgent group in the area. Their trademark methodology of employing and broadcasting over-the-top brutality against the enemy accomplished their goal of garnering attention, which brought with it all the trappings of a successful terror organization—money, people, and more attention. So successful were their operations in the early stage of the Iraq war that al-Qaeda reached out to them to form AQI.⁶⁹ This partnership with al-Qaeda, in turn, provided the group a form of legitimacy as

⁶⁵ Weiss and Hassan, *Army of Terror*, 145.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ McCants, *ISIS Apocalypse*, 9.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 10.

⁶⁹ Weiss and Hassan, *Army of Terror*, 34.

the foremost Islamic fundamentalist group in Iraq, further leading to vast sums of money, more people, and of course, more power.⁷⁰

To achieve their goal of pacifying the Iraqi population, the *Dabiq* authors delineated the detailed plan in the magazine's first issue. The *Dabiq* authors detailed the template for establishing the caliphate in a five-step process: (1) hijrah (migration), (2) jama'ah (militancy), (3) regime destabilization, (4) tamkin (consolidation), and (5) khilafah (caliphate) declaration.⁷¹ Accordingly, the plan was to first seek opportunities in which the political and societal conditions favor the Islamic state—places “where they could operate without the threat of a powerful police state.”⁷² This would be those fragile, failing and failed states such as Chechnya, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, the Sinai Peninsula, Somalia, Waziristan, and Yemen, as well as parts of Algeria, Indonesia, and the Philippines;⁷³ these are some of the states on their list of targeted breeding grounds. The *Dabiq* editors sum up the thought process:

Because there were almost no safe havens on the earth left for the mujahidin, the ideal land for hijrah was a place where they could operate without the threat of a powerful police state. In the case of Abu Mus'ab, he chose Afghanistan and later Kurdistan as a base to form Jama'atut- Tawhidi wal-Jihad.⁷⁴

Because the tactical and operational environment that favors terrorist organizations is one of rampant chaos and ever-increasing degradation, IS created the problem in Iraq so that they, in turn, could provide the solution. They envisioned a scenario in which they would infect the population with a disease to be able to sell them the antidote at a high cost. The disease in Iraq was the antagonism of Shia tribes who would then attack Sunni populations. The Sunni populations would then have no choice but to seek protection from

⁷⁰ Ibid., 150.

⁷¹ *Dabiq*, Issue 1, page 38.

⁷² Ibid., 36.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ *Dabiq*, Issue 1, page 36.

IS, thus justifying their follow-on actions, slaughtering other Muslims.⁷⁵ A similar scheme of events will transpire in Syria, according to *Dabiq* editors.

4. Syria

IS's spread into Syria followed a different set of opportunities than the model set in Iraq. Whereas IS spread into Iraq following the U.S. invasion of 2003, Syria already had a civil war underway, which provided an opening for IS to enter. The IS spread into Syria was inevitable, given the geopolitical situation at the end of the first decade of the 2003 war in the Middle East. With so many failing and fragile states in the region, IS saw in Syria an opportunity to spread their horizons and expand their borders. In Syria, they saw what they had previously seen in Iraq—a large state without the presence of a large police capability. With the cascading effects of the Arab Spring present in so many Middle Eastern nations, it was only a matter of time before Syria would meet the criteria for an attempted IS takeover. Such was Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's vision when he started setting up an IS arm in Syria under the banner of Jabhat an-Nusrah in January 2012, under the leadership of Abu Muhammad al-Jawlānī.⁷⁶ *Dabiq* explains IS's vision for the caliphate as follows:

It is a state where the Arab and non-Arab, the white man and black man, the easterner and westerner are all brothers. It is a khilāfah that gathered the Caucasian, Indian, Chinese, Shāmī, Iraqi, Yemeni, Egyptian, Maghribī (North African), American, French, German, and Australian. Allah brought their hearts together, and thus, they became brothers by His grace, loving each other for the sake of Allah, standing in a single trench, defending and guarding each other, and sacrificing themselves for one another.⁷⁷

5. *Dabiq*

According to the al-Hayat publication company that produces *Dabiq*, the name *Dabiq* is derived from an area in the northwest portion of Syria, close to the Turkish

⁷⁵ Weiss and Hassan, *Army of Terror*, 60.

⁷⁶ Weiss and Hassan, *Army of Terror*, 149.

⁷⁷ *Dabiq*, Issue 11, page 20.

border.⁷⁸ The magazine asserts that the location will play a major role in the future, as Islamic forces will defeat Western forces in that vicinity and force Armageddon.⁷⁹ They attempt to spell out the location's significance in the first issue of the magazine and repeat it in subsequent issues: "This place was mentioned in a hadith describing some of the events of the Malahim (what is sometimes referred to as Armageddon in English). One of the greatest battles between the Muslims and the crusaders will take place near Dabiq."⁸⁰ This romantic outlook on the world and how it will end is by no means unique to this particular group of Islamic fundamentalists, as other religious groups also cite events that will signify the end of time. Accordingly, IS routinely cites a hadith from the prophet Muhammad saying: "The Hour will not be established until the Romans land at al-A'maq or Dabiq (two places near each other in the northern countryside of Halab)."⁸¹ This is one scenario in which a group of actors are essentially intentionally attempting to influence an extinction-level event—by focusing on an ancient prophecy and acting to bring about its occurrence by drawing Western nations into a showdown in Syria. The fact that the organization discontinued *Dabiq* and called the follow-on magazine *Rumiyah*, is a clear indication of IS's changing priorities and world view.

C. EVENTS

Just as IS has seen many name changes since its inception in 1999, many events have transpired to shape the group into the organization it is today. In addition to the grievances they cite with the artificial Sykes-Picot borders and the milestones surrounding the declaration of the Islamic state, *Dabiq* writers also stress the importance of other events within the Muslim world. The writers consider the Soviet-Afghan war of the 1980s as a building block of IS for more reasons than one. First, the editors cite the ability of Muslims of different backgrounds to overcome nationalism and fight a common enemy in the form

⁷⁸ "Introduction: Until the Crusader Armies Burn in Dabiq," *Dabiq*, July 2014, 3, <http://media.clarionproject.org/files/09-2014/isis-isil-islamic-state-magazine-Issue-1-the-return-of-khilafah.pdf>.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 4.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

of the communist Soviet Union.⁸² Second, Zarqāwī took the lessons learned from the Soviet-Afghan war and incorporated those advantageous traits into his caliphate development plan.⁸³ And third, the Soviet-Afghan war gave a clear demonstration of the power of the foreign fighter phenomenon.⁸⁴ All of these points lend credence to IS's ability to possibly defeat the Western militaries in accordance with the hadith of the end of time.

1. Sykes-Picot Agreement

The Sykes-Picot Agreement of May 1916 defined British and French areas of control and influence in southeast Turkey and other traditional Arabic lands.⁸⁵ IS frequently refers to the abolition of the Sykes-Picot borders as a primary goal and as one of their main sources of grievance. *Dabiq* editors refer to the Sykes-Picot borders in the ideological, theological, and physical realms, to justify and realize the end state of their vision.

In the ideological realm, the Sykes-Picot boundaries represent the division of Arab peoples' land, culture, and identity. This divide-and-conquer strategy sought to reduce Arab identity and replace it with nationalist and patriotic emotions. The *Dabiq* editors capture the point:

Nationalism, patriotism, tribalism, and revolutionism were never the driving forces inside the heart of the muwāhhid mujāhid. For him to lose his tongue would be more beloved to him than to voluntarily utter slogans of nationalist Jāhiliyyah. Rather, the banners of nationalism are beneath his dusty feet, as they oppose Tawhīd and the Sharī'ah and represent the kufri and shirkī ideologies brought to the Muslim world by the two crusaders: Sykes and Picot.⁸⁶

Theologically, the Sykes-Picot borders are used to legitimize IS's status as a caliphate with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as its caliph. This point comes to light in an article

⁸² *Dabiq*, Issue 1, page 35.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2013), 60.

⁸⁶ *Dabiq*, Issue 8, page 4.

in issue 10, “A Fatwa for Khurāsān.”⁸⁷ The writer presents a challenge that had been posed by al-Qaeda to the IS leadership, stating that Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi couldn’t legitimately be the caliph because al-Qaeda’s Mullah Umar already held the title in Afghanistan.⁸⁸ Here, the *Dabiq* editors responded by saying that Mullah Umar, unlike Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, is a nationalistic, territorial leader and only represents Muslims residing in Afghanistan. They contend that Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, on the other hand, is not bounded by Sykes-Picot geography, and in effect, exerts global authority on all Muslims, so al-Qaeda should be pledging allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.⁸⁹

On a physical level, IS leaders cite the borders merely as lines on a map that force Muslims to identify with a defined state, rather than as exclusively Muslim. Here, the magazine’s editors claim that the borders are merely one more source of fitnah (conflict) for Allah’s people. IS leaders stress the need to permanently abrogate all Sykes-Picot borders to open a path between Iraq and Syria (Sham),⁹⁰ because border removal will also open pathways for jihadists to travel freely over land.⁹¹ There has been no indication as to whether the organization will undergo another name change in the event of further expansion, either in the territories already claimed or if other international bodies, such as the United Nations, were to ever recognize IS as a legitimate entity.

Sykes-Picot happened without the people it would affect being consulted on whether they wanted to be divided along national borders in 1916; the decision was strictly political, based on the prevailing circumstances of World War I. History will determine whether the lines will be removed without the knowledge or consent of the people again or if the people will be afforded an opportunity to choose to remain divided along the lines of nationalism and patriotism. Of course, if IS remains dominant, the choice will not be left up to the people, as outlined in *Dabiq*, issue 5: “Giving the people choice was no longer a

⁸⁷ “A Fatwā for Khurāsān,” *Dabiq*, July 13, 2015, 18.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 21.

⁹⁰ “Remaining and Expanding,” *Dabiq*, November 21, 2014, 33.

⁹¹ Ibid., 23.

possibility in this new state of affairs.... Every time choice is allowed, it will result in misguidance, either in the present or in the future.”⁹²

2. Paper State, Digital Caliphate, the Islamic State

As described above, IS has undergone multiple name changes and alliances since its inception. As a result, their transformation has been given several different descriptions, as scholars attempt to capture the group’s essence and better understand them. As IS continuously regroupes and attempts to establish itself as a legitimate entity on the international stage, scholars and pundits alike have been trying to formulate a designation to appropriately describe IS. Some authors, such as Cole Bunzel of the Brookings Institute, calls IS “the paper state.” Others, such as Abdel Bari Atwan call it “the digital caliphate.”

Cole Bunzel describes IS’s ascendance as a four-part series in his article, “From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State.” Bunzel argues that IS developed over four discernible stages between 2002 and 2014. The first stage, Stage 1—the Zarqāwī prelude, spanned 2002–2006; Stage 2—the Islamic State of Iraq, spanning 2006–2013; Stage 3—the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS) or the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) spanning 2013–2014; and finally, Stage 4—the Islamic State as the caliphate, spanning 2014 to the present.⁹³ Bunzel refers to the second stage spanning the immediate post-Zarqāwī period as the “paper state” era.⁹⁴ Bunzel further contends that the Islamic State *in* or *of* Iraq has a different connotation depending on the audience to which it is directed. The Islamic State *of* Iraq was for the Iraqi Sunni Muslim population, while the Islamic State *in* Iraq was a state for all the world’s Muslim populations.⁹⁵ This distinction was meant to attract the local Sunni Muslims to join the jihad in Iraq and further entice foreign fighters to combat the crusaders in the newly founded state.

⁹² Abū ‘Amr Al-Kinānī, “It’s Either the Islamic State or the Flood,” *Dabiq*, July 27, 2014, 5.

⁹³ Cole Bunzel, “From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State,” *The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World* 19 (2015): 7.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

As relations between IS and al-Qaeda strained due to their varying methods of achieving their objectives, the Iraqi populace lost their affinity for IS, resulting in the group's move to Syria. IS considered the move to be an expansion, and as a result, went through a "state of disunity" in 2013–2014 as the rift between IS and al-Qaeda grew, and especially in the immediate aftermath of bin-Ladin's death.⁹⁶ Bunzel's caliphate phase began with the announcement of the caliphate on the first day of Ramadan 1435 AH (July 1, 2014). *Dabiq*'s editors delineate the steps to becoming a part of the Islamic State in issue 7. They state that "this process includes documenting their bay'āt, unifying the jamā'āt who have given bay'ah, holding consultations to nominate a wālī and members for the regional shūrā assembly, planning a strategy to achieve consolidation in their region for the Khilāfah so as to implement the Sharī'ah, and presenting all this to the Islamic State leadership for approval."⁹⁷ While the Islamic State struggles to maintain relevance and secure its footing to restore the glory days of Islam and the caliphate, IS commanders are expanding their reach to the West utilizing the World Wide Web.

Due to its widespread reach and the relative ease with which IS spreads its message to potential recruits, Abdel Bari Atwan has dubbed the Islamic State as the "Digital Caliphate."⁹⁸ IS can conduct most of their activities online, from recruiting and arranging travel plans via safe routes to even providing live updates from the battlefield, all at a cheaper rate than conventionally sanctioned military apparatuses.⁹⁹ Whereas coalition forces require expensive equipment for secure communications, IS fighters can simply access relatively secure two-way communications and can expand their communications network to any number of personnel via social media.¹⁰⁰ With the advent of smartphones, IS commanders' battlefields become readily accessible wherever a person has an Internet connection. Leaders can issue their commands through a variety of digital applications with a relatively small likelihood of detection. As technology becomes cheaper and more secure,

⁹⁶ Bunzel, "Paper State," 25.

⁹⁷ "Wilāyāt Khurāsān and the Bay'ah from Qawqāz," *Dabiq*, July 27, 2014, 35.

⁹⁸ Abdel Bari Atwan, *Islamic State: The Digital Caliphate* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015), 5.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 22.

the new digital battlefield benefits IS. They don't have to provide any special communications devices or encryption material, because those are already being provided by Silicon Valley by way of the latest free and low-cost applications. As newly minted recruits act upon IS-issued commands from Paris to London to San Bernardino, it does not cost much to wage their war of attrition because fighters come pre-equipped with the instruments of war—reliable, commercially available communications; weapons; and a willingness to execute the mission. This relatively easy mastery of newly available technology and the ability to reach millions of followers and disciples around the world simultaneously and in real time is what prompts Atwan to label the Islamic State as a digital caliphate.¹⁰¹ The territory is borderless and the battlefield is even larger.

Whatever the argument may be pertaining to whether the Islamic state is an actual *state* in the Westphalian sense of the word, and whether it is a digital or paper state, IS's success or demise will depend to a large extent on its leadership and the attitudes of those considering themselves to be citizens of said state. According to Article 1 of the "Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of the States," the criteria for an entity to be considered a state is having a population, a defined territory, a government, and the ability to relate with other states. Article 4 of the same convention goes on to state that "the political existence of the state is independent of recognition by the other states."¹⁰² Based on this definition, the Islamic state would be a legitimate entity, even without recognition by the United Nations or any other international society. As time goes by and more people continue to exert their influence on the organization, as more places become target of or fall under IS control, and as events unfold in the world arena, it will remain interesting to see the trajectory and outcome of the Islamic state.

D. CONCLUSION

From recruiting to executions, some noteworthy people, places and events have left an indelible mark on IS, as they have formed the foundation that the organization has built

¹⁰¹ Atwan, *Digital Caliphate*, 30.

¹⁰² *Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States*, Montevideo, Uruguay, December 26, 1933, 1.

upon throughout the years. IS continues to dominate international news headlines as they follow the blueprint they laid down during the early days of the organization. The lessons they have drawn from the people, events, and places continue to direct their trajectory and practices. They continue to recruit personnel from the West to travel to their lands for training, while at the same time inspiring fighters to carry out attacks at home. IS currently uses modern-day technologies at the center of all of their operations. Their weapons involve those stockpiled from the Soviet-Afghan war, those received as ghanīmah (war booty) from fleeing adversaries, and those bought from private arms dealers. Based on the propaganda presented in the *Dabiq* magazine pages, one feasible method of curbing, or controlling, their narrative would be to work alongside the suppliers of the new technologies to deny, or at least minimize, terrorist networks' exploitation of new and emerging technologies.

III. *DABIQ* MESSAGING STRATEGY

Dabiq magazine attempts to attract Western recruits utilizing three main messages to pique the potential recruits' interests: loss aversion, selective incentives, and sense of duty. I have analyzed the articles using coding criteria that will be laid out as this chapter proceeds. Using these coding metrics, I selected all the articles that contained a recruiting message, then determined if the primary aim was geared toward any one or two of the three main messages. I did not include the issue's foreword in my analysis as those articles typically contained all three messages. Also, I did not include articles that equally made the point for all three messages because they tend to negate each other, quantitatively. In this chapter, I draw examples from articles throughout the magazine to demonstrate each of the three recruitment messages. I also reviewed any trends over time to see how the narrative changed in response to world events.

A. THE LOSS AVERSION ARGUMENT

IS, through *Dabiq*, encourages Muslims to stop any and all threats to their religious identity, even though they risk getting caught by legal authorities or losing their lives in the undertaking. Muslims fear losing their religion, culture, territory, and identity at the hands of militarily greater Western powers. IS's message is that Muslims should stop, or at least minimize, those losses. *Dabiq*'s propaganda rhetoric plays on the potential Muslim recruit's risk aversion with the goal of pushing them to act on their fears. In *Thinking Fast and Slow*, Daniel Kahneman sums up loss aversion: "Many of the options we face in life are 'mixed': there is a risk of loss and an opportunity for gain, and we must decide whether to accept the gamble or reject it."¹⁰³ *Dabiq* magazine publishes articles pertaining to losses the State faces on a day-to-day basis. This is in an effort to demonstrate that IS is indeed losing ground to Western armies and needs warriors to defend the communes.

Most Western government authorities employ tools to prevent would-be terrorists from traveling to IS-controlled territories to undertake IS-directed actions; the price for

¹⁰³ Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow*, (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2011), 283.

getting caught is high.¹⁰⁴ From being placed on terrorist watch lists and no-fly lists, to facing criminal sanctions, passport revocation or denial, and even deportation,¹⁰⁵ getting caught supporting terrorist causes can have these and other detrimental effects. Terrorist recruiters understand the risks potential recruits face. As a result, *Dabiq* editors frame the message in such a way that the recruit will be more likely to accept the risks. The message then becomes one of emphasizing that the loss of the Islamic identity is greater than one individual getting caught in the migration process. In other words, the potential recruit would be more accepting of the idea that migrating to IS-controlled territories is worth the potentially negative consequences because standing idly by will result in the greater loss of their beloved identity.

David Malet, in *Foreign Fighter: Transnational Identity in Civil Conflicts*, explains some of the basic reasons people may opt to fight for causes that do not pose an existential threat to their own nation-state's survival. He posits that insurgents in conflicting states, such as Iraq and Syria, portray their impending struggle as an existential threat to all Muslims around the world and hence their own identity.¹⁰⁶ *Dabiq*'s recruitment message to the potential foreign fighter stresses that Muslims in the West risk losing their highly valued Muslim identity because "crusaders" on the battlefield threaten Islam as a religion, as a culture, and as a way of life. The potential recruit then perceives that the only means of identity preservation is to join the fight abroad before Islam is rendered extinct in ensuing waves of military suppression, led by the West. As the war transforms, there is a greater likelihood that it will encroach on the lives of Western Muslims. The greatest motivation for the potential recruit becomes the need to take action and save Islam from the West.

The *Dabiq* writers and editors demonstrate throughout all issues of the magazine that Western politicians, and even other Muslims, are on a never-ending quest to

¹⁰⁴ "Legal Tools to Deter Travel by Suspected Terrorists: A Brief Primer," CRS Reports and Analysis, 2, <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=788694>.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ David Malet, *Foreign Fighters: Transnational Identity in Civil Conflicts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 4.

completely destroy Islam, as IS envisions it. These adversaries fall in three categories of near enemies, far enemies, and unbelievers. Fawaz A. Gerges, in *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global*, defines the far enemy as “the United States and its Western allies,” and the near enemy as “Muslim regimes.” I add a third category of enemies, the unbelievers, because Gerges’s definition does not account for the enmity among rival groups.¹⁰⁷ Several articles address apostatic leaders and label them as serving and appeasing their American leaders.¹⁰⁸ The feature article in issue 11, “From the Battle of al-Ahzab to the War of Coalitions,” specifies the various enemies and delineates the categories in which the different enemies fall. The writer compares one of Muhammad’s enemies to the present-day enemies of IS, dubbing the current anti-terrorism effort “the New Ahzab” (the Parties).¹⁰⁹ Here, the *Dabiq* writers and editors term the far enemies as the “Crusader Coalition,”¹¹⁰ the near enemies as the “Sahwah Coalition,”¹¹¹ and the unbelievers are grouped into the “Front Stage”¹¹² and the “Safawi Empire.”¹¹³

1. Coding Loss Aversion Articles

I consider an article to be appealing to a potential recruit’s sense of loss aversion when the article’s main argument refers to the near enemies, the far enemies, or the unbelieving political rulers in Muslim majority countries. Here, the writers present the threat that these varying enemies pose to IS as a state, to Islam as a religion, or to Sunni Muslims worldwide. First, the editors stress the loss of IS-controlled territory to Western powers, also called the far enemy. They focus on the relative difference in strength between IS forces and Western crusaders on the battlefield. In particular, they stress the technological differences between the two entities, and how Western forces vastly

¹⁰⁷ Gerges, *Far Enemy*, 1.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁰⁹ *Dabiq*, Issue 11, page 46.

¹¹⁰ *Dabiq*, Issue 10, page 47.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

outnumber IS soldiers on the battlefield. Hence the need for recruits to travel to IS-controlled areas and replenish the ranks.

Loss-aversion-coded articles also stress the loss of IS's influence and power base to the competing near enemy factions. An example of this is when *Dabiq* editors portray IS as a new movement looking out for the affairs of all Muslims throughout the world. This situation requires new soldiers to fill the ranks and bolster those preserving and maintaining the IS position. Although the magazine rarely, if ever, admits to losing any territory or losing any battles, they vividly display images of fighters killed on the battlefield. The writers understand that potential recruits risk losing their lives getting to the area, as well as on the front lines of battle, but they pitch the message that it is better for soldiers to die defending the Islamic State, because any other option will result in the complete loss of the newly formed caliphate, which will further lead to a loss of their transnational identity.

When photos or advertisements appear outside of an article, those depicting the relative strength of IS versus Western coalition forces fall within the scope of loss aversion. Wherever they show examples of Western armies with advanced weapons systems and the jihadis armed with nothing but small arms, I consider these pictures as serving to demonstrate the risk of losing the Islamic state to the West. Pictures or articles showing images of martyrs speak to both the themes of loss aversion and sense of duty—the martyrs have made the ultimate sacrifice, hence the need to replace lost warriors if the organization is to keep the abode of Islam (dar-ul Islam) secure.

2. The Far Enemy

Dabiq presents the far enemy as America and the coalition of other Western nations suppressing Muslims worldwide. The group cites events going back as far back as the Sykes-Picot agreement to support the claim. The magazine cites the war against terrorism as the continued oppression of Islam as a religion, rather than as just a purely political conflict. The magazine editors also assert that Western nations hijack Muslim political leaders, using them to further Western interests in the region. This presents, in their view, a genuine threat to the Muslims' transnational culture and identity. The far enemy is presented in the form of major political leaders and any other symbol of Western influence

in Muslim majority countries. *Dabiq* presents the far enemy in a historical context, showing past and current Western presidents, cabinet members, and members of nongovernmental institutions such as the RAND Corporation as being part of this anti-Muslim consortium.

Each issue of the magazine makes reference to the far enemy as the main threat to the Muslims' transnational identity. In particular, *Dabiq* likes to highlight the maltreatment of Muslims at the hands of highly industrialized Western nations as the greatest threat to not just the Islamic state as a potential nation-state, but to all Muslims worldwide. The magazine draws a picture of the far enemy as working in tandem with the near enemies and other secular Muslim leaders to systematically destroy Islam as a religion, Islamic culture, and politics.

The "In the Words of the Enemy" series is the main recurring feature focusing on the far enemy throughout all issues of the magazine. The series has been a mainstay of the magazine. Twelve of the 15 issues focus on what Western political elites have said about IS in interviews, TV shows, and other types of media. The magazine presents select quotes to demonstrate the ill will Westerners have toward IS. The articles also attempt to show IS's growth and the magnitude of its threat to those Western nations and their interests. The articles feature such political figures as former U.S. President Obama (issue 3) and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel (Issue 6), Senators John McCain (Issue 2) and Rick Santorum (Issue 8), and think tanks such as the Combating Terrorism Center (Issue 1) and the RAND Corporation (Issue 5) have also been subjects of the articles.

The "In the Words of the Enemy" articles seek to put a positive spin on the condition of the Islamic State by turning the far enemies' words into more reasons for potential recruits to join the Islamic State. The magazine quotes Senator Santorum in issue 8 to demonstrate the historical nature of the conflict: "The reason the West had a thousand-year war with Islam is that Islam was ever-expanding. When Islam began to contract, it collapsed, and the caliphate was eliminated."¹¹⁴ This position is meant to demonstrate that the dire situation of the current war is just another crusade reminiscent of the past. The magazine also puts a spin on their enemies' words by showing how the far enemies

¹¹⁴ *Dabiq*, Issue 8, page 57.

acknowledge IS's growth and legitimacy, and consider it more powerful than any of its rival groups. Issue 1, for example, uses former Director of Research for the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point Brian Fishman's quote to demonstrate that the Islamic state is indeed a state where IS "has created a multi-ethnic army, almost a foreign legion, to secure its territory [and] the group does not have a safe haven within a state, it is a *de facto* state that is a safe haven."¹¹⁵

Many other articles throughout the magazine focus on the far enemy's bid to destroy Islam as a religion. Issue 9, *They Plot While Allah Plots*, is an entire issue focusing on the far enemy. This issue's cover is telling as it features an image of former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry flanked by a host of Middle Eastern political leaders, suggesting that the Western political elite is the puppet master to the leaders of Islamic nations. As a result of this relationship, these men cannot be legitimate leaders of the Muslims of the world. The corresponding feature, "And Allah Is the Best of Plotters," presents religious, political, and historical data to demonstrate the West's attempts to destroy Islam.¹¹⁶

3. The Near Enemy

Dabiq portrays the near enemy as those other Islamic fundamentalist groups that have not pledged allegiance to IS. These enemies include other groups close to IS's geographic positions, including al-Qaeda, the Jawlani Front, the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), the Peshmerga, the Free Syrian Army (FSA), and any other local, adversarial terror groups. Whereas one would probably expect groups with the same goals to cooperate to accomplish more, their relationships are not about cooperation; they are about conflict. As discussed in Chapter II, the dynamics between IS and most other groups in the area are turbulent, to say the least. In addition to al-Qaeda and other well-known jihadi-salafist groups, *Dabiq* focuses on other Islamic groups in the cast of near enemies. The aim in the pages of *Dabiq* is to expose potential recruits to the illegitimacy of those other groups that have not given bay'ah to IS.

¹¹⁵ *Dabiq*, Issue 1, page 33.

¹¹⁶ *Dabiq*, Issue 9, pages 50-59.

Two series of articles best describe the relationship between IS and the near enemy. These are “The Fight for [a New Wilāyat]” series and the news reports. Together, the two recurring features show how IS has been defeating the weaker Islamic fundamentalist groups in the territory, while at the same time promoting their own progress as a self-proclaimed state. In addition, the articles seek to demonstrate the intimate relationships between other groups, the Western powers, and the unbelieving Muslim political leaders.

The *Dabiq* publishers outline IS’s near enemies in the issue 1 feature, “From the Pages of History: From ‘Jihad’ to Fasad.”¹¹⁷ The writer lists some of the countries that previously boasted prominent salafi-jihadist groups that have since embraced Western political methods to resolve conflicts. Most of the groups no longer seek to pursue ends in the same manner as IS; *Dabiq* portrays them as it does all groups not allied with IS—as a group of sellouts who fight against IS at the behest of Western powers, their masters. As the article discusses the different groups and their leaders, it promotes the narrative that IS is under attack from other Islamic fundamentalist groups that are joining forces with the far enemies and other apostatic leaders to destroy IS. As a result, more recruits are needed to enlist and join the fight by conducting hijrah to the Islamic state.

The magazine usually present features with captioned images of IS fighters engaging other Islamic fundamentalist groups for territory. Figure 1, for example, demonstrates the link between al-Qaeda, the near enemies and the far enemies who conspire to destroy IS.

¹¹⁷ *Dabiq*, Issue 1, pages 24–27.

Strange Bedfellows

Parties that display friction or outright aggression toward one another are finding themselves aligned in a desire to counter Islamic State. Groups of colored lines between parties represent shared interests.

[Text and graphics from the crusaders of the Wall Street Journal!]

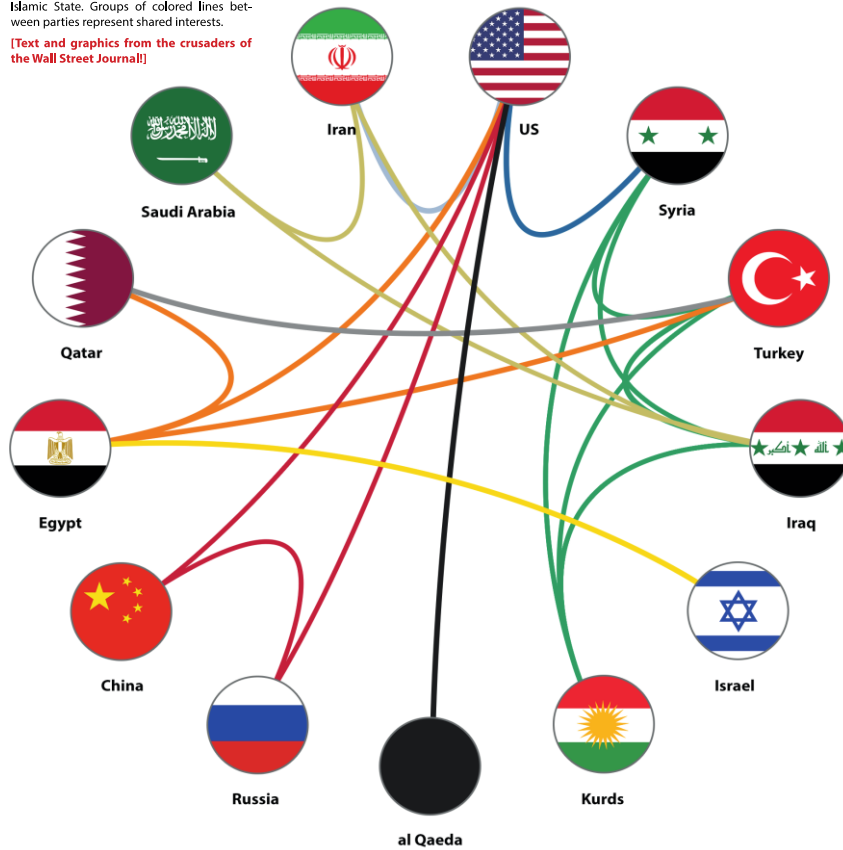


Figure 1. IS-Portrayed Enemy Relationships.¹¹⁸

4. The Unbelievers

The unbelievers are those secular political leaders of Muslim nations. They do not rule, according to the *Dabiq* editors, by Allah's law, the Shari'ah. This group of IS enemies, though similar in character to the near enemy, also feature some traits of the far enemy. For this reason, I separate this group into their own niche, to clarify the role they play in the IS narrative. This group of political actors falls directly below the far enemy in the IS threat hierarchy due to their ability to impose damage on IS forces. The unbelieving political leaders also pose a threat to IS because of their capability to hurt IS fighters by

¹¹⁸ *Dabiq*, Issue 9, page 63.

means of military technology received from the Western nations.¹¹⁹ In addition, *Dabiq* brands these leaders as puppets acting on behalf of their Western puppet masters, further taking away from their legitimacy to lead Muslims in the modern era.

B. THE SELECTIVE INCENTIVES ARGUMENT

Dabiq emphasizes selective incentives in an effort to minimize the problem of free riders, which arises whenever “an individual may be able to obtain the benefits of a [public] good without contributing to the cost.”¹²⁰ The public good here is Islam as a religion, because “it cannot feasibly be withheld from others in that group.”¹²¹ As IS leaders strive to control more territory and become a worldwide caliphate for all Muslims, there are risks involved for those sympathizing with or sponsoring the organization. Although it is not clear if the Islamic state will ever become a recognized entity in the international community of nations and states, all people who identify as Muslims will stand to benefit from such a victory, should it ever happen. Would-be participants, however, are less likely to actively support a cause because they stand to receive the same benefits as those actually involved in the fight—even if they themselves do not take part or sacrifice anything.

Similarly, sympathetic Muslims residing in Western societies “free ride” on the sacrifices of those on the battlefield. Mancur Olson explains this behavior in *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*: “rational, self-interested people will not act to achieve their common or group interests.”¹²² This group of people is *Dabiq*’s target audience when presenting their message under the selective incentives framework. IS needs new soldiers to fill the ranks and bolster those sacrificing everything in the preservation and maintenance of IS’s position.

Selective incentives appear in many shapes and forms and may be employed in various scenarios to achieve different results as the situation demands. Selective incentives

¹¹⁹ *Dabiq*, Issue 7, page 5.

¹²⁰ Pasour Jr., Ernest C. “The Free Rider as a Basis for Government Intervention,” *The Journal of Libertarian Studies* 5, no. 4 (1981): 453–464.

¹²¹ Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 14.

¹²² Olson, *Logic of Collective Action*, 2.

may be tangible or intangible, negative or positive, and may be used to facilitate desired actions or to deter undesirable behavior. Most researchers and the media focus on the tangible rewards used for recruiting. Tangible rewards have the potential to provide a recruit instant gratification and utility and can include salary, communal benefits, and other goods and services for the fighter's family.¹²³

The literature also highlights intangible rewards recruiters may offer to lure their target audience. In *Suicide Bombers in Iraq: The Strategy and Ideology of Martyrdom*, Mohammed M. Hafez explains that martyrdom is the definitive reward for taking part in jihad because it carries the ultimate payback.¹²⁴ Martyrdom allows one to achieve immediate sin forgiveness, entry into the most exalted of the heavens, and the ability to accompany the venerated, while marrying heavenly maidens and seeking forgiveness on behalf of relatives.¹²⁵ From a Western perspective, the premise of working for gifts that only come in the afterlife may seem irrational and border on the absurd. Prevailing literature, however, suggests that people may opt to undertake martyrdom not so much for personal gains, but for the purpose of preserving what they hold dear, especially when they perceive an existential threat to their identity. In "What Motivates Participation in Violent Political Action: Selective Incentives or Parochial Altruism," Jeremy Ginges and Scott Atran explain that people will opt to kill, die, and engage in other seemingly irrational actions to further a goal they hold dear and on behalf of the community.¹²⁶ One can then conclude that intangible rewards can be more coveted than tangible incentives because they may be extended on behalf of loved ones and also may exist forever in the afterlife.

Status in social groups may also be employed as a selective incentive. Rob Willer explains how status can be used to motivate individuals to contribute to the group's

¹²³ Mohammed M. Hafez and United States Institute of Peace, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq: The Strategy and Ideology of Martyrdom*, (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007), 153.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Hafez, *Suicide Bombers*, 153.

¹²⁶ Ginges, Jeremy, and Scott Atran. "What Motivates Participation in Violent Political Action," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*: 1167, no. 1 (2009): 122.

cause.¹²⁷ A potential recruit may be marginalized and may be a part of the lowest strata in Western society. *Dabiq* provides a beacon of hope for such an individual through the multiple feature articles and pictures contained in the magazine. The magazine ostensibly says that recruits will achieve positions of rank and authority immediately upon entry to the IS organization, achieving rewards not possible at home within their Western societies. Also, martyrdom, as the ultimate sacrifice, carries with it the ultimate reward in the afterlife. The *Dabiq* narrative poses the opportunity for the recruit to receive instant rewards on earth and again in the afterlife. Status has the ability to simultaneously become a catalyst and a prime mover in the potential recruit's decision-making process. As individuals aspire to gain positions of higher stature, they tend to work harder in the form of committing and giving more of themselves to the group. Greater dedication, in turn, leads to a rise in status in a continuous cycle. In effect, the allure and temptation of status drives individuals to become active participants within the group and, in effect, solves the free rider problem. In addition, people earning greater status also tend to exert positive influence on others within the group. Such a situation then leads to greater unit cohesion and respect. Material and social benefits tend to motivate individuals to become active participants as they pursue greater status within the group, and "people are sometimes also motivated by a desire to win prestige, respect, friendship, and other social and psychological objectives."¹²⁸ Hence, as Willer points out, "groups reward those who sacrifice for the group."¹²⁹ Active participation also tends to be seen in a more positive light, as the perception becomes one of self-sacrifice for the group ahead of one's own self-preservation and well-being.¹³⁰

Beyond being tangible or intangible, selective incentives also have the capacity to be negative or positive, with the ability to curb behaviors, depending on the target audience. In "Rewards and Punishments as Selective Incentives for Collective Action: Theoretical

¹²⁷ Robb Willer, "Groups Reward Individual Sacrifice: The Status Solution to the Collective Action Problem," *American Sociological Review*: 74, no. 1 (February 2009): 23.

¹²⁸ Olson, *Logic of Collective Action*, 60.

¹²⁹ Willer, "Groups Reward Individual Sacrifice," 24.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 39.

Investigations,” Pamela Olivier asserts that positive and negative incentives may be used as rewards or punishment to provide an impetus for action.¹³¹ She further notes that incentives may be used to stimulate potential recruits to do something they probably would not have done otherwise.¹³² We see examples of positive rewards in the case of some of the tangible and intangible rewards described above. Negative rewards, on the other hand, are those used to display the ill fate awaiting IS’s opponents. Activities such as public beheadings and immolation of captured enemies are a few examples of negative incentives. Olivier explains that negative incentives become effective in the context that they are “essential for ensuring unanimous cooperation in costly collective action, but have the potential side effects of disharmony and discord.”¹³³

1. Coding Selective Incentive Articles

I assess *Dabiq* articles to be geared toward selective incentives when some form of reward is promised in return for the fighters’ services. Incentives may be direct or indirect, tangible or intangible, and are intended to take care of the free rider problem. Many Muslims stand to benefit if IS manages to achieve their goals of unifying all Muslims under one caliph, but their sympathies alone will not lead to victory; the group actually needs professionals and other auxiliary service people to dedicate their time, money, blood, and sweat to the effort and to make sacrifices in the name of the mission. As a result, IS offers selective incentives to those who actually commit to fighting and migrate to IS-controlled areas. This separates participants from sympathizers, and ensures active participants are separated from free riders.

Rewards may be directly passed on to the recruit, but may also be extended to family members as well. Ghanīmah is an example of a selective incentive that is given directly to the fighter and is typically tangible, such as weapons and women. Those gifts that are intangible include the sense of pride and sense of belonging to the ummah (family) that is winning great victories, even while being outnumbered and outgunned by the Western coalition forces. In addition, photos assist in the recruitment effort as the themes from the articles are presented in pictorial form. Among the pictures, those showing images of fighters bonding and unifying speak to the idea that only active participants showing up on

¹³¹ Pamela Oliver, “Rewards and Punishments as Selective Incentives for Collective Action: Theoretical Investigations,” *American Journal of Sociology* 85, no. 6 (May 1980): 1373.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Oliver, “Rewards and Punishments,” 1373.

the front lines will be able to achieve this sense of belonging. Further, images showing war trophies also count as part of the selective incentive appeal, as they display exactly what is at stake for those who commit themselves to the struggle.

2. Tangible Rewards

Tangible rewards, as presented by the *Dabiq* editors and publishers, are meant to play only a minor role in the recruitment process. The subject of salary is almost never mentioned in any of the articles as a major incentive. The most prominent tangible rewards in the magazine are those of ghanīmah and women as part of the reward package. Most of the other rewards from fighting for the group are intangible, and will only be received in the afterlife for deeds conducted in this life on behalf of IS.

Dabiq writers and editors laud ghanīmah as “the most beloved thing to Allah, and no other form of income can stand up to it.”¹³⁴ This method of paying one’s salary on the basis of one’s performance on the battlefield goes back to the idea of seeking to minimize the free rider problem. Only those people engaging in battle will receive the spoils of war. The spoils of war go beyond simple materials left behind by the enemy, and include the mushrikin (enemy) women who may be enslaved and taken as concubines for IS soldiers.¹³⁵ This recruitment tool goes beyond the usual idea of suicide bombers marrying heavenly maidens after martyrdom operations.¹³⁶ The warriors will be given their rewards in the present, here and now. One example appears in issue 4 in an article entitled “The Revival of Slavery Before the Hour.” Here, the author describes how enemy women are enslaved and distributed as payment: “After capture, the Yazidi women and children were then divided according to the Sharī’ah amongst the fighters of the Islamic State who participated in the Sinjar operations.”¹³⁷ Only warriors actively fighting in the battlefield can receive such gifts.

¹³⁴ *Dabiq*, Issue 3 page 30.

¹³⁵ *Dabiq*, Issue 9, page 45.

¹³⁶ Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq*, 153.

¹³⁷ *Dabiq*, Issue 4, page 15.

3. Intangible Rewards

Intangible rewards make up the bulk of selective incentives available for the potential recruit seeking to join IS. These intangible rewards include sharing in the adventure of the jihadi lifestyle, the fellowship of bonding with other like-minded individuals fighting for the same cause, and the satisfaction of knowing they are helping Allah's cause, with the prospect of achieving stature not possible in their Western societies. The magazine overwhelmingly dedicates resources to advertising intangible rewards. It features seemingly happy fighters preparing together before battles and celebrating after victories. The features often include interviews with exceptional fighters, heaping praises on those who have given their lives fighting the enemy, and offering other forms of recognition to highlight foreign fighters' contributions. *Dabiq* further places great emphasis on recognizing those past recruits who have given their lives on the battlefield, utilizing a number of features built into the magazine's recurring themes.

Whereas the "In the Words of the Enemy" series of articles is dedicated mostly to the far enemy, the interviews with living IS fighters serve to offer testimonials from those who have made the commitment and are actually on the inside sharing their experiences. The interviews reward the fighters directly and serve as a positive reinforcement for their commitment at the same time. The interviews serve to demonstrate to aspiring fighters that they, too, may be able to achieve what other foreign fighters have achieved. A pertinent example appears in issue 7, *From Hypocrisy to Apostasy*, where *Dabiq* interviews Abu Umar al-Baljiki (Abdelhamid Abaaoud), the organizer behind the November 2015 Paris attacks.¹³⁸ The interview highlights the heroics of one fighter who achieved fame and notoriety by answering the call to jihad. Having the interview published in the magazine serves as the incentive to the participant. Only those actually engaged can receive such rewards.

Other rewards provide instant gratification. They appeal to the new generation of fighters who are used to communicating at the speed of light in the modern, digitally connected world. The first few issues of the magazine feature multiple images of warriors

¹³⁸ *Dabiq*, Issue 7, page 73.

celebrating together after defeating enemies. These warriors are usually smiling or waving flags in jubilation. These images also typically show groups of personnel from multiple ethnicities. Only warriors in the IS ummah can achieve such unity without the restriction of rank or racial differentiation. Pictures of joyous celebrations usually appear in conjunction with articles of liberation and newly overthrown wilāyat pledging bay'ah. Issue 3, for example, shows a picture of new pledges of allegiance in Homs.¹³⁹ The magazine frequently features interviews with prominent IS jihadis such as Amedy Coulibaly, one of the terrorists in the January 2015 Paris attack.¹⁴⁰ Figure 2 is an example of an image highlighting the possible fellowship one can expect to experience as a fighter under the IS banner.

¹³⁹ *Dabiq*, Issue 3, page 16.

¹⁴⁰ *Dabiq*, Issue 7, page 50.

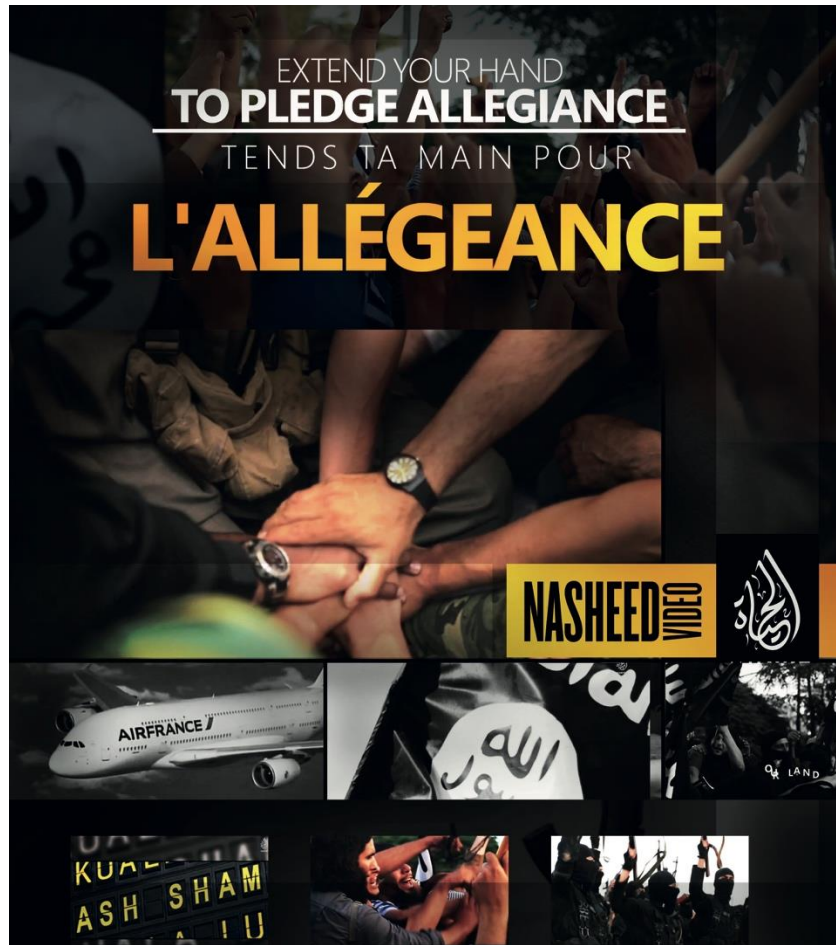


Figure 2. Intangible Rewards Example.¹⁴¹

4. Afterlife Rewards

Beyond tangible and intangible rewards are those benefits that come in the afterlife. The glorious afterlife starts with an article in the magazine dedicated to the selected martyr. Starting with issue 7, *Dabiq* ran a recurring feature entitled, “Among the Believers Are Men.” These articles present character sketches of warriors who have achieved martyrdom on the battlefield for the cause of Allah. The sketches show the journey of “average” Muslims defying the odds of their home states. These warriors have taken the journey from their respective lands of disbelief and traveled to the abode of Islam. Warriors such as Abū ‘Umar at-Tūnusī and Jihadi John are described in romantic phrases—“a warrior from the

¹⁴¹ *Dabiq*, Issue 9, page 37.

warriors of the khilafah travelled from this fading Dunya to that which is everlasting.”¹⁴² These character sketches tell the stories of heroes who have passed from the earth, but who are also canonized in the pages of *Dabiq* magazine forever. Only those actually fighting can receive this type of recognition.

Although *Dabiq* editors utilize selective incentives to alleviate the free rider problem, they are also careful to warn the prospective recruit about the allure of material gains. Whether the purpose is to minimize complaints once recruits arrive on station or simply to act as a form of disclaimer, recruits are warned against embarking on the path of jihad if it is simply for the purpose of spoils of war or any other form of physical reimbursement. To demonstrate the point of not fighting for incentives, but to instead fight for Allah’s cause, they enlist ibn Rajab Hanbali’s explanation in an article titled, “My Provision Was Placed for Me at the Tip of my Spear.” Hanbali explains that while ghanīmah and fay’ (what is taken without fighting) were available to the Prophet Mohammad, he and his companions “did not perform jihad for the sake of ghanīmah.... Therefore, he did not dedicate his time solely towards seeking provision.... So, Allah made his provision easy during such worship, without his intending to seek it or endeavoring to pursue it.”¹⁴³ Because the Prophet, in all his might and with blessings from God, is willing to look beyond the worldly rewards and look instead to the heavenly rewards direct from God, the sincere recruit, seeking to become a martyr, will be more likely to forego the ghanīmah and instead carry out his jihad strictly out of his deeper sense of duty.

C. THE SENSE-OF-DUTY ARGUMENT

Rather than being motivated by the fear of attacks on their religion or the need for rewards, some people are spurred to action by their sense of duty. When atrocities abound, standing by without taking action makes one implicitly culpable. People naturally feel guilt, shame, or anger (or any combination thereof) when presented with details of

¹⁴² *Dabiq*, Issue 10, page 41.

¹⁴³ *Dabiq*, Issue 4, page 11.

transgressions against them.¹⁴⁴ In addition, when people are overcome with emotions, they may feel obligated to act to uphold their own honor, or the honor of those within their communities.¹⁴⁵ Emotions, as a powerful driver of human actions, mixed with the desire for honor or even the expectation to conduct honorable acts, may be enough to mobilize recruits to act and to achieve goals of a higher order. The primal emotions of guilt, shame, anger, and honor can then be seen as a major impetus for fighters to mobilize and support external causes.

Whereas selective incentives seek to reward active participants and minimize the free rider problem, the emotions of guilt and shame are meant to burden onlookers who may not otherwise be concerned with the activities at hand. The feeling of the emotional affliction is meant to provide an impetus for action. The prevailing literature proposes that emotional impulses are sufficient to drive one to conduct harmful actions against one's own countrymen.¹⁴⁶ In their article, "Why Individuals Protest the Perceived Transgressions of their Country: The Role of Anger, Shame, and Guilt," Aarti Iyer, Toni Schmader, and Brian Lickel explain how ordinary citizens can become homegrown terrorists.¹⁴⁷ The trio highlight the fact that citizens have the potential to carry out violent action against their home state when they get the inclination that their country may be engaged in actions that may negatively impact others.¹⁴⁸ Iyer et al. further explain that emotions play a key role in determining the likelihood of people carrying out violent action against their home state in response to the perception of their country's injustice.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ Aarti Iyer, Toni Schmader, and Brian Lickel, "Why Individuals Protest the Perceived Transgressions of their Country: The Role of Anger, Shame, and Guilt," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*: (2007), 584.

¹⁴⁵ Peter Olsthoorn, "Honor as a Motive for Making Sacrifices," *Journal of Military Ethics* 4, no. 3 (November 2005): 184.

¹⁴⁶ Iyer, "Why Individuals Protest," 584.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 572.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 584.

Iyer and colleagues, like many other sociologists and psychologists, consider shame to be the premier social emotion.¹⁵⁰ Iyer et al. contend that shame draws on immense feelings of self-consciousness, such that individuals may feel as if they are “bad people” just by association with their home country’s military action against others.¹⁵¹ The gruesome images IS shows of the damage done to innocent civilians by Western coalition forces are in effect meant to evoke their viewers’ feelings of shame. This would serve to influence any decision they could already be weighing to make a commitment to act on behalf of IS. This is as a result of what Iyer et al. explain as the transgressions of the home country extending back to that person’s own image, if simply by association.¹⁵² This shame, being a heavy burden, then has the potential to push the potential recruit to act on behalf of IS to save their Islamic identity, if only to minimize their shameful feeling. A shamed person may also have the feeling of “holding their country responsible, and believing that this event poses a threat to their national character.”¹⁵³ This shameful frame of mind, coupled with a person’s fear of Western practices impinging on their religious or cultural identity, will have a great potential to mobilize followers. So, where American and other coalition partners are fighting a war against terrorism in Islamic nations, Muslims in those same Western nations may feel impelled to act on behalf of their religion or culture because of their association with the offensive Western nation.

Guilt plays a similar role as shame in the sense of duty argument. Guilt, rather than make people feel as if they are bad, makes them feel as if they have actually committed an atrocious deed.¹⁵⁴ Here, the person is overcome by the guilt of being a part of the nation carrying out the fatal acts in the name of defending national security. In this case, a Muslim residing in a Western nation may feel guilty about America carrying out air strikes against Islamic nations with bombs bought using their money in the form of taxes. They bought

¹⁵⁰ Thomas J. Scheff, “Shame and the Social Bond: A Sociological Theory,” *Sociological Theory* 18, no. 1 (March 2000): 84.

¹⁵¹ Iyer, “Why Individuals Protest,” 575.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 574.

the bombs. In effect, Western citizens would feel as if they contributed to the demise of their fellow Muslims by their status as citizens in the offending Western nation.

In addition to the emotional impulses of shame and guilt, honor also plays a role in one's sense of duty. Honor, however, may be seen in two different lights. On one level, honor may be seen as an incentive when bestowed upon a person as a reward for committing courageous acts.¹⁵⁵ Conversely, honor, like emotions, may be used to invoke certain feelings within the individual. In "Honor as a Motive for Making Sacrifices," Peter Olsthoorn indicates that although honor may be similar to selective incentives, it transcends tangible and other intangible rewards, due to its association with the ideal.¹⁵⁶ This is the angle of honor this thesis is concerned with: living up to an ideal to serve one's higher self-interests.¹⁵⁷ In the case of Western Muslims traveling abroad to fight in the name of IS, it is about striving to be like Allah's prophet, Muhammad. The honor is in striving to live in accordance with Allah's word as passed on through his prophet. Honor is further meant to give a person eternal life because an honorable name never dies and continues to resonate throughout history and over time.

Honor also plays another deeper role in recruiting Muslim foreign fighters due to the religious fervor associated with the current media portrayal of the war against terrorism. The religious aspect injects the idea of obligation to support the effort. In "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters," Thomas Hegghammer points out that most jihadi recruitment media highlight fighting in wars against Muslim aggression as one's individual religious duty.¹⁵⁸ He demonstrates the manner in which recruiters emphasize the obligation of "all able Muslim men worldwide join the fighting because Islamic law requires it."¹⁵⁹ Wherever there are Muslims in adversity, it is one's duty to do one's part to ease the agony to another "brother" or "sister" suffering at the hands of the invading Western forces. The

¹⁵⁵ Olsthoorn, "Honor as a Motive," 185.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Hegghammer, 73.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. 74.

fact that the recruiters also cite traditional religious publications and classical Islamic jurists also legitimize the calls to action.

1. Coding Sense of Duty Articles

Articles falling under the coding of sense of duty will generally be in one of the following categories: obligation, emotional appeals to shame or guilt, or honor. Sense of duty appeals to one's sense of living up to the ideal of the prophet Muhammad or other venerated souls who have passed on. The sense of duty message may also be derived from graphical images. Sense of duty applies to those images depicting suffering at the hands of Western powers. These images may or may not contain captions, and may simply supplement the corresponding article. Later issues of *Dabiq* (Issue 9 and beyond) feature video selections that aspiring recruits may view online. These "Selected 10," as they are titled, are captioned and feature screenshots to give an idea of the subject matter. I treat these images as I treat images appearing in other areas of the magazine.

The idea of sense of duty is more than images and videos. Whereas the images are meant to shame Western recruits into action, the videos are meant to give a more in-depth view of IS lifestyle. Other methods of appealing to a recruit's sense of duty include promoting the notion that a recruit has no choice but to depart the land of kufr (disbelief) and travel to the abode of Islam. This idea goes back to the call that says all Muslims should rally around the IS banner—the caliphate is for all Muslims. The idea of sense of duty is also communicated through the language of honor. *Dabiq* editors present the idea that fighting for IS is an honorable act—fighting for IS is, in effect, fighting for Allah. Honor also includes the idea of fulfilling an oath—fighting for the State is fighting for the Prophet's honor.

2. Shame

So far, the narrative has been that Islam is under attack from Western powers that seek to erase the Muslims' cultural identity; jihad is required to prevail. IS recruitment tactics provide active participants with selective incentives in order to alleviate the free rider problem. Because people are driven by different motivating factors, *Dabiq* editors also appeal to the potential recruit's sense of duty. Throughout the issues of the magazine,

the editors attempt to shame potential recruits into action by presenting IS's plight in graphic imagery and language. The editors frame one's duty to fight in such terms as obligation, honor, liberation, and even revenge and punishment. It would appear the magazine is highly aware of the power of appealing to the individual's *ethos*. As a result, the sense-of-duty-themed articles are not only loaded with messages to shame the reader to action, but to also arouse a feeling of guilt.

3. Guilt

IS has become well-known for their overblown acts of violence in their high-quality and widely distributed videos. The images in *Dabiq* magazine are no different. The magazine is a sea of gore and triumph aimed at the different strata they seek to recruit. Images of helpless women and children burnt alive by indiscriminate air strikes resonate with the sympathetic and are meant to elicit a sense of guilt in the onlookers who may be relatively secure in their Western societies. It becomes a man's duty to protect those who cannot protect themselves, especially the helpless women and children. Where the Western forces outnumber and outgun the Muslim fighting cadre, the State needs fighters to emigrate with their skills to protect the helpless. The earlier issues of the magazine focus almost exclusively on arousing an exaggerated guilty feeling with images and stories describing, in detail, the horror that befalls many such helpless people at the hands of the Western crusaders. Key examples include pictures of fellow "Sunnis murdered by the Safawis,"¹⁶⁰ and "Regime Target ar-Raqqah."¹⁶¹

IS's central ideology revolves around the belief that a prophet will return at the end of time and have a great showdown with Western forces in Dabiq, a city near the Turkish-Syrian border. As a result, most of the actions IS undertakes is in an effort to prepare their forces for this final battle. What ensues is capturing new villages in an effort to amass forces, territory, and resources to create a larger pool from which to recruit locally. The additional real estate provides new opportunities for incoming fighters to become leaders

¹⁶⁰ *Dabiq*, Issue 1, page 16.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

in the new wilāyat, further increasing their status. *Dabiq* magazine takes great care to frame these victories in the light of performing a great service to the “newly liberated.”

4. Honor

A recurring theme in the recruitment propaganda is the idea that the fighting is happening in an effort to uphold God’s honor, much like the Prophet and his companions had done in their day. The point is reiterated as the writers refer to the hadiths to provide the necessary impetus for the recruits to make the leap onto the path of hijrah and then jihad. Figure 3 is one example of an advertisement dedicated to honor.

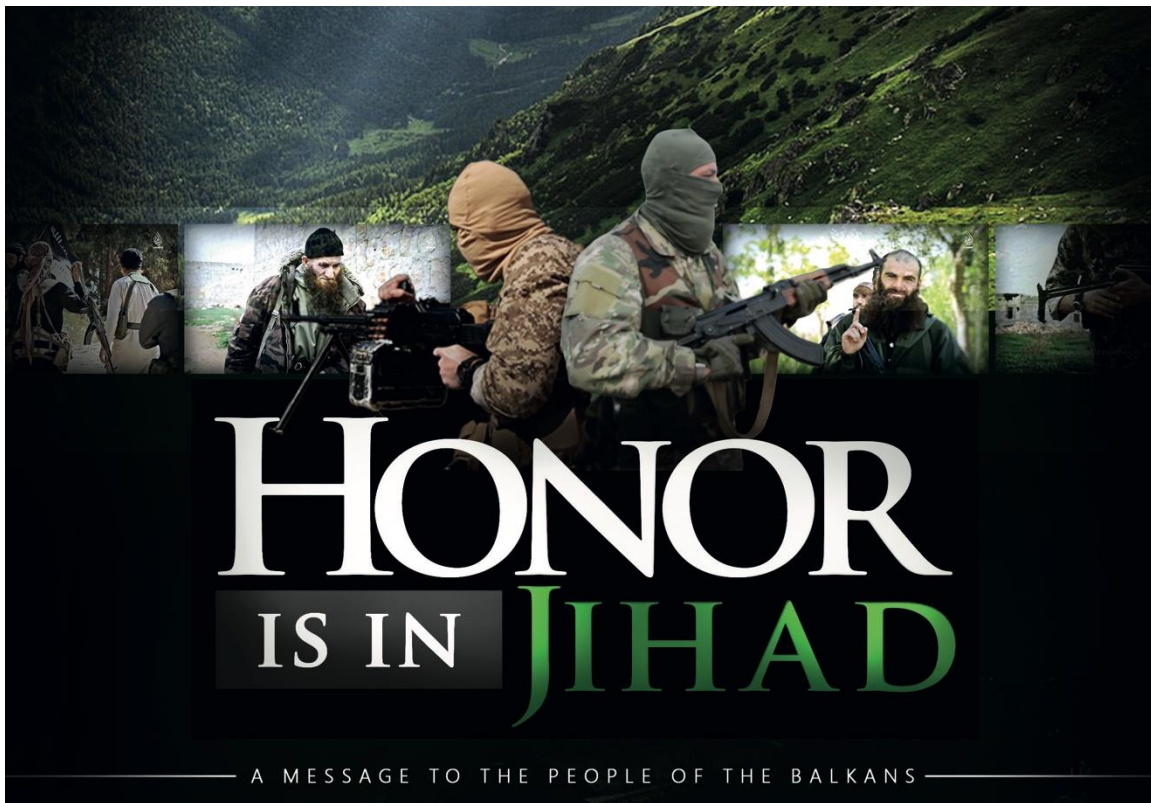


Figure 3. Sense-of-Duty Example.¹⁶²

¹⁶² *Dabiq*, Issue 10, page 35.

D. CONCLUSION

Dabiq magazine specifically targets people from the West to travel to IS-controlled territories to fight and die for their cause. Each issue includes an article dedicated to the performance of hijrah. These articles range from giving tutorials on how to prepare for travel to providing possible routes; most importantly, they present stories from those who have achieved mission success. The success stories, in particular, are typically from a wide range of personnel including single males; couples; and even single, pregnant women. The editors also make a point of including star émigrés, such as the Paris terrorists. Amedy Coulibaly and Abdelhamid Abaaoud's journeys to the Islamic state demonstrate that anyone, regardless of race or socio-economic strata, can become a fighter for IS, and that the results are real and nearly instantaneous.

Throughout the issues of *Dabiq*, the editors seek to recruit Westerners by appealing to their loss aversion tendency. They achieve that goal by offering selective incentives and appealing to their sense of duty. Using the definitions developed at the beginning of this thesis, and the results in the following table, it is evident that *Dabiq* appeals most often to people's tendency to minimize loss, in an effort to draw recruits from the West. The initial issues of the magazine focus heavily on the unbalanced capabilities of the Western nations compared with IS; IS is outmatched politically, militarily, and economically. The narrative from the IS standpoint is that it is imperative for Muslims band together and defeat Western forces, hence saving Islam, for God's honor.

The editors started framing their arguments under loss aversion in the middle of the magazine's run and increased its frequency over time. The editors also presented the argument of selective incentives as an attempt to overcome the free rider problem. However, selective incentives were the messages that were emphasized the least because the editors advise against recruits joining IS for the sole purpose of receiving rewards. IS takes pride in documenting the rate and volume of newly conquered wilāyat pledging loyalty to IS. They also do not shy away from recalling tales of personnel killed while carrying out the will of Allah to reign over all people.

IV. ASSESSMENT AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This thesis began with the aim of investigating how IS recruits willing martyrs from Western societies to migrate to war-torn areas, possibly sacrificing their lives for interests outside of their national borders. To explore the question, I analyzed the English version of *Dabiq* magazine, downloaded from the Internet. I examined the issues for all articles aimed at recruiting new fighters. Next, I codified and categorized the articles into groups based on the main message of the argument. Also, I examined the people, places, and events that form a major part of what IS represents and looked at the manner in which *Dabiq* magazine perceives and portrays them. The aim was to determine whether the magazine emphasizes loss aversion, selective incentives, or sense of duty to mobilize recruits to travel to fight in foreign wars in the name of IS. After analyzing the data, it is apparent the message is split between loss aversion and the sense of duty appeal, depending on the prevailing geopolitical circumstances.

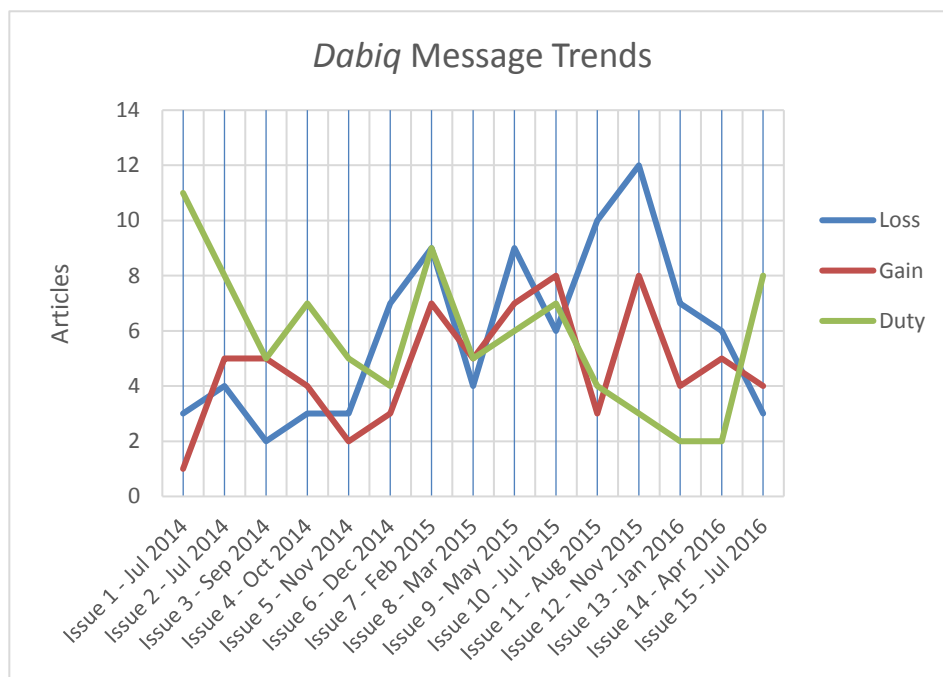


Figure 4. *Dabiq* Message Trends

Figure 4 provides a snapshot of the messaging trends over time. Loss aversion played a minor role during the early days of the caliphate declaration, only starting to increase in frequency later as coalition forces started targeting IS forces in Iraq and Syria. On the other hand, the sense of duty message shows an inverse trend. Sense of duty dominated the messaging initially, but gave way to the loss aversion argument. Further, selective incentives mostly played a minor role in the early stages, serving to warn recruits not to join the organization for the sole purpose of receiving rewards, but for the purpose of fighting for a cause, as obligated by Islamic law.

Table 1 depicts the issues under examination in this thesis, with further details on the total articles coded per issue. Appendix A has a further breakdown of all the articles subject to this study. It provides a listing of all of the recruitment articles subject to this thesis and their respective coding based on the criteria previously described.

Table 1. *Dabiq* Issue and Periodicity

Issue Periodicity						
Issue	Loss	Gain	Duty	Date	Frequency	Pages
Issue 1 – The Return of Khilafah	3	1	11	05-Jul-14	Initial Issue	50
Issue 2 – The Flood	4	5	8	27-Jul-14	22	44
Issue 3 – A Call to Hijrah	2	5	5	10-Sep-14	45	42
Issue 4 – The Failed Crusade	3	4	7	11-Oct-14	31	56
Issue 5 – Remaining and Expanding	3	2	5	21-Nov-14	41	40
Issue 6 – Al-Qa'idah of Waziristan: A Testimony from Within	7	3	4	29-Dec-14	38	63
Issue 7 – From Hypocrisy to Apostasy: The Extinction of the Grayzone	9	7	9	12-Feb-15	45	83
Issue 8 – Shari'ah alone Will Rule Africa	4	5	5	30-Mar-15	46	68
Issue 9 – They Plot and Allah Plots	9	7	6	21-May-15	52	79
Issue 10 – The Law of Allah or the Laws of Men	6	8	7	13-Jul-15	53	79
Issue 11 – From the Battle of Al-Ahzab to the War of Coalitions	10	3	4	09-Aug-15	27	66
Issue 12 – Just Terror	12	8	3	18-Nov-15	101	66
Issue 13 - The Rafidah: From Ibn Saba' to the Dajjal	7	4	2	19-Jan-16	62	56
Issue 14 - The Murtadd Brotherhood	6	5	2	13-Apr-16	85	68
Issue 15 - Break the Cross	3	4	8	31-Jul-16	109	82
Grand Totals	88	71	86	757	757	942

Throughout my study of the 15 issues of *Dabiq* magazine issued by al-Hayat Media Center and available for free download at the Clarion Project's website, the message is clear: IS messaging strategy is complex and it targets Westerners. My research covered 197 articles, stand-alone images, and advertisements aimed at recruiting foreign fighters.

Of the 197 articles, 88 presented loss aversion as the main messaging strategy, 71 presented the selective incentives message, and 86 used the sense of duty argument. Forty-eight of these 197 articles equally presented two of the three messages. Loss aversion appeared as the dominant message in six of the 15 issues, selective incentives appeared as the dominant message in one issue, and the sense of duty message was dominant in five issues. Two issues equally carried sense of duty and loss aversion as the dominant message, while sense of duty and loss aversion were equally presented as the dominant message in one issue. The loss aversion and selective incentives message were never equally presented in any one issue.

A. THREE PHASES OF *DABIQ* RECRUITING MESSAGE

The magazine's issues and timeline tell the story of IS and give an overview of the state over time, which is reflected in the emphasis placed on each recruiting message. The first five issues of the magazine emphasize the sense of duty argument, exclusively, with the exception of issue 3, which equally emphasized the selective incentives argument as well. Issues 6–10 mark a transition period, where the sense of duty argument makes way for the loss aversion argument to start playing a more dominant role in the messaging strategy. The selective incentives argument also appeared twice as the dominant message during the transition period. The final five issues were completely focused on the loss aversion message, with the only exception being issue 15, the final issue, which abruptly reverted to the sense of duty message.

The three phases of the magazine's lifespan directly correlate to real-world events and may be attributed to events happening across the domain. The trend emphasizes how the recruitment message changed as anti-terror efforts changed with IS tactics, which further changed with the rest of the world's counter-terrorism strategy. The trend also serves to underscore the dynamic nature of the magazine's communication setup, which may very well be a reflection of the organization itself. The magazine's editors respond immediately to anti-IS actions in the world, which seems to drive the overall recruiting message and the amount of resources directed at each of the message.

1. Phase 1: Sense of Duty

Following the declaration of the caliphate and the initial launch of *Dabiq* magazine, the organization saw three distinct phases of the recruiting message. The first five issues of the magazine experienced what may justifiably be called the “honeymoon period.” Here, the magazine celebrated the declaration of the newly formed caliphate, gave a historical context for their cause, laid out a road map for their success, and explained the need for their continued existence, all while appealing to Westerners to actively support the newly installed caliph in an effort to help all Muslims worldwide.

The first five issues are titled to give an overview of what may be expected within the pages of the particular issue. Issue 1, *Return of Khilafah*, emphatically celebrated the launch of the new caliphate and hailed the new caliph. The issue declared the start of a new era for the Muslims of the world, with a message of liberation. Further, the articles made it clear that a state for Muslims needed Muslims to play major roles to insure the state’s survival. There was a clear message appealing to the moral fiber of any and all Muslims with a capability to migrate to IS-controlled areas, to make it the true abode of Islam. This was to become their solemn duty.

The first five issues of the magazine also serve to show the direction IS would have liked to proceed in as an organization, as a movement, and as a state. The issues opened a window into an organization that had a goal and a plan to achieve that goal. They seemed genuinely interested in recruiting people for the pure purpose of fighting for Allah’s sake. Hence, their approach was to stress the individual’s moral obligation to come to the defense of suffering Muslims. The magazine’s editors made a central point not to stress individual’s incentives as any of the reasons to travel to the region, possibly in an effort to maintain a sense of purity. Although they wanted to maintain the organization’s purity of cause, they also did not want to focus too heavily on the loss aversion message because they were jubilant and doing relatively well. They were ever-expanding into new territories and taking over new wilāyat and provinces. Aside from publishing the caliphate declaration, the magazine also published the state’s planned way ahead along with a strategy to remain in the area and expand into other countries. Once the coalition forces devised and enacted

a plan to engage IS on the battlefield, IS's tactics started shifting, including altering their recruiting message.

2. Phase 2: Transition

As IS's actions seemingly shocked the world with beheadings and immolation of captured enemies, the rest of the world joined in the fight against IS. This shift brought about another change in the messaging strategy. The new transition phase was captured in issues 6–10. Because IS still experienced victories on the battlefield, there was still a sense of hope, so the sense of duty argument still played a major role in the messaging. At the same time, the world was starting to form operational partnerships to challenge IS on the battlefield. Now, with increased opposition and battlefield attrition, came the need for a new strategy and a shift in the message to incentivize new recruits.

As the war against IS was taking shape, in issue 5, the organization made a call for supporters to attack citizens in the West if they could not afford to make the journey to IS-controlled areas. The magazine's editors deemed the strategy successful after followers attacked military and law enforcement officials in Australia, Canada, and Queens, NY.¹⁶³ The transition issues 6–10 picked up where issue 5 left off, continuing to reiterate Al-'Adnānī's call for supporters to carry out attacks in their home states in the name of IS. In addition, the magazine also shifted its focus to discrediting other prominent Jihadi-salafi groups. This period also marked a heavy shift to focusing on selective incentives in the form of recognizing noteworthy martyrs. While the magazine explored new avenues, it still did not completely abandon the sense of duty message.

The transition period offers some insight, as it marks the first glimpse of the magazine shifting focus to the loss aversion argument. Issues 6, 7, and 9, in particular, offer the narrative that all the entities of the world had turned against Islam, in the form of coalition air strikes against IS. Issue 6, *al-Qa'idah of Waziristan—a Testimony from Within*, appeals to potential recruits and sympathizers by suggesting that other terrorist groups were joining forces with Western enemies. The magazine's editors, and possibly

¹⁶³ *Dabiq* Issue 5, page 37.

even key IS leaders, were starting to feel desperate, which led to the shift in tactics in the pages of the magazine and on the battlefield. Considering the time period and what was happening in the area, the group was rightly concerned about facing the military might of the Western militaries on the battlefield.

The transition period also marks the last time any issue of *Dabiq* magazine focused primarily on the selective incentives message. The message was dominant again in issue 10. When the selective incentives argument was dominant, the message remained on track, and paid greater attention to intangible and afterlife rewards than to tangible ones. The magazine also started merging the sense of duty argument more heavily with the selective incentives argument. In addition, the magazine started endowing noms de guerre on battlefield martyrs and using romantic catch phrases to describe their successes, in an effort to demonstrate the fighters serve a cause much greater than themselves. Issue 10, for example, dedicates a full-page advertisement to men who previously committed acts of terrorism in their own home countries. The ad implores potential recruits to “join the caravan of Islamic State Knights in the land of the crusaders,” and features photographs of citizen-martyrs who pledged allegiance to IS and committed acts of terrorism in Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, and the United States.¹⁶⁴

Regarding the increased usage of noms de guerre, *Dabiq* editors and authors significantly ramped up the employment of this distinction in the latter stages of the transitional phase. The editors also distinguish between foreign fighters and citizen-martyrs—foreign fighters on the battlefields of IS-controlled areas receive a nom de guerre, while the citizen-martyrs are referred to by their legal names or received the title of knight or soldier. They went all out in using flattery to describe martyrs and to woo recruits. The article, with its flowery language, incentivizes the cause and romanticizes the impending journey of the warrior. This quote from issue 10 provides an example:

The knight finally dismounted... the knight, the hero Abū Mālīk at-Tamīmī dismounted from the horse of jihad...and departed. He had abandoned the world, prestige, wealth, and luxury, and left in search of the path for a pristine life and the Hereafter, migrating thousands of miles in search for a

¹⁶⁴ *Dabiq* Issue 10, pg 5.

jihād in which the creed of pure tawhīd as well as walā' and barā' is practiced.¹⁶⁵

The transitional period of the magazine also represents a period of exploration of the potential of either staying on message and imploring recruits to travel to the land of jihad, or appealing to supporters to carry out attacks at home in the name of IS. In addition, this period saw the organization determining who would become their enemies and delineating certain approaches to competing with those seeking to pull recruits from the same pool of talent.

3. Phase 3: Loss Aversion

The third phase of the magazine was the loss aversion phase, spanning issues 11–15. The period was marked by multiple IS attacks outside of IS-controlled areas. The attacks took on a more sinister tone because the targets were not just military and law enforcement personnel. The attacks were against any members of the Western citizenry from Russian airline passengers to fans in French soccer stadiums, party-goers in American night clubs, and travelers in Belgian transportation centers. The loss aversion phase marked a period in which IS leaders resolved to take the battle to the West and make the entire world the battlefield. Issue 11, the first issue of the final phase, clearly lays out the intended direction of travel and the method of delivery. In that issue, *From the Battle of al-Azhab to the War of Coalitions*, the feature article of the same name spoke of the battle of “The Parties.” The article breaks down, in great detail, the enemies of IS, which also means the enemies of Islam as a religion.

The great shift to the loss aversion messaging in the third phase indicates that the leaders of the organization and the editors of the magazine saw the need to adapt to the circumstances and to shift focus in order to survive. Whereas the initial issues of the magazine stressed the operations occurring in IS-controlled areas, the message became that every supporter can and must do their part wherever they were located. Although the magazine still heaped praises on those dying on the battlefield in IS-controlled areas, they started placing greater emphasis on those notorious warriors who carried out acts of

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 40.

terrorism in their home states in the West. While earlier issues of the magazine focused on IS as a group operating within the confines of Iraq and Syria, in the later issues, the operations were beginning to spread among worldwide terrorists. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria was by the end of the last issue of *Dabiq* truly a worldwide entity—stand by for a name change.

In addition to the trend of the messaging throughout *Dabiq*'s lifespan, another trend worth looking at is the frequency of issuance. The magazine did not have a strict publication schedule. Looking at the release of the issues during the three phases, the first phase (July 5, 2014–November 5, 2014) had an average of 46 pages per issue every 35 days. The transition phase (December 29, 2014–July 13, 2015) had an average of 74 pages every 47 days, and the loss aversion phase (August 9, 2015–July 31, 2016) had a release rate of 68 pages every 77 days. Overall, the magazine produced an average of 63 pages every 54 days. The trend of the releases suggests that as operations were closer to home and happening within the sphere of IS-controlled areas, it was easier to collect data, to write about the intended plan of operations, and to report the news. As the resources spread farther and wider, however, it became harder to dedicate resources to gather information from overseas operations, as demonstrated in the loss aversion phase.

IS no longer depends solely on foreign fighters travelling to IS-controlled areas to fight. Their methods have evolved out of necessity. When faced with an insurmountable threat and battlefield losses in Iraq and Syria, they shifted methodology to conduct terrorist activities in other countries. The same type of threat forced the group to shift focus from remaining in the area under their control in Iraq and Syria to adopting a more decentralized layout and taking root in other countries. The magazine, although static in nature, demonstrates that IS is an organization able to adapt to circumstances quickly and shift methodology as necessary. Even though the magazine did not release its issues as frequently as content on social media, the authors and editors of *Dabiq* magazine shifted focus and provided their core target of recruits with the immediately gratifying results they sought with remarkable speed.

This thesis debunks several myths found in the mainstream media about terrorist recruitment and mobilization. First is the popular claim that people travel abroad to fight

alongside IS in a bid to receive heavenly maidens in the afterlife. The magazine does offer afterlife rewards to people who migrate and fight, but it stresses that people should not fight solely for rewards. Instead, they should fight to uphold the honor of all Muslims worldwide, and to defend those who cannot defend themselves. The magazine does not mention heavenly maidens in any of its issues. As discussed in Chapter III, the afterlife rewards highlighted in *Dabiq* allow martyrs to pass straight into heaven and live on forever in the pages of the magazine.

This study attempts to be objective; however, the articles are highly subjective, and other analysts could interpret some articles as having a different emphasis. Based on my coding metrics for each of the framing messages, the results give a close representation of *Dabiq*'s messaging structure. Hybrid messages, which equally emphasize two of the three elements, appeared at least 48 times throughout the magazine's run, and underscore the complexity of *Dabiq*'s messaging strategy. Further, the trends also indicate that the magazine's structure was responsive to external world events and reactive to greater counter-IS efforts outside of IS's realm of control. The magazine focused on loss aversion, selective incentives, and sense of duty almost equally. Which appeal appeared most was dependent on what was taking place in the fight against IS by coalition forces. Future research can explore if trends continue, or if any of the emphases break out from the others in IS's present recruiting and propaganda magazine, *Rumiyah*.

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APPENDIX A. *DABIQ* ARTICLES AND ISSUES

Table 2. List of Articles and Issues

Issue 1 – The Return of Khilafah				
Page	Article Title	Loss	Gain	Duty
6	Khilafah Declared			X
10	The World Has Divided Into Two Camps			X
12	Halab Tribal Assemblies		X	X
16	Tal Afar Liberated			X
20	The Concept of Imamah (Leadership) is from the millah (path) of Ibrahim			X
30	Wisdom Quote ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab			X
32	In the Words of the Enemy	X		
34	From Hijrah to Khilafah			X
42	Regime Targets ar-Raqqah			X
44	News Articles	X		X
46	Al-’Adhim and Hawijas Liberated	X		X
48	Murtaddin Repent in the Thousands			X
Total	12	3	1	11
Issue 2 – The Flood				
Page	Article Title	Loss	Gain	Duty
5	It’s Either the Islamic State or the Flood	X		
12	Fight Against the PKK	X	X	
14	The Destruction of Shirk in Wilāyat Ninawa			X
18	Hijrah and Jihad			X
20	The Flood of the Mubalahah	X		
31	In the Words of the Enemy	X		
33	Hadd for Shabbihah		X	X
35	News Articles: Unity in Ramadan		X	
36	News Articles: Stoning			X
37	News Articles: Liberation of Dulu’iyyah			X
38	News Articles: Caring for the Orphans			X
39	News Articles: 121st Regiment Base Captured		X	
40	News Articles: Wilāyat Ninawa Liberated			X
42	News Articles: The Capture of Division 17		X	X
Total	14	4	5	8

Issue 3 – A Call to Hijrah				
Page	Article Title	Loss	Gain	Duty
5	The Islamic State Before al-Malhamah		X	X
12	The Punishing of Shu'aytat for Treachery			X
15	The Liberation of Dabiq			X
16	Da'wah and hisbah in the Islamic State		X	
18	Military Conquests in Ninawa and ar-Raqqah		X	X
23	Hijrah and Forgiveness		X	
25	Hijrah from Hypocrisy to Sincerity		X	X
35	Words of the Enemy	X		
37	Foley's Blood is on Obama's Hands	X		
Total	9	2	5	5
Issue 4 – The Failed Crusade				
Page	Article Title	Loss	Gain	Duty
10	My Provision was Placed for me in the Shade of my Spear		X	X
18	The Birth of Two New Wilāyat	X		X
21	Ansar al-Islam Pledges Allegiance to the Islamic State		X	
23	Military Operations			X
27	A Window into the Islamic State			X
30	Ghanīmah and Niyyah		X	X
32	Reflections on the Final Crusade	X		X
46	In the Words of the Enemy	X		
47	A Message from Sotloff to his Mother Days Before his Execution			X
56	Back Page		X	
Total	10	3	4	7
Issue 5 – Remaining and Expanding				
Page	Article Title	Loss	Gain	Duty
4	Yahya: Lessons From a Shahid		X	X
10	The Fight for Wilāyat Al-Anbar	X		
12	Unifying the Ranks		X	X
15	The Fight for' Ayn-al-Islam			X
18	The Currency of the Khilafah	X		
22	Remaining and Expanding			X
34	In the Words of the Enemy	X		
36	If I Were the U.S. President Today			X
Total	8	3	2	5

Issue 6 – Al-Qa'idah of Waziristan: A Testimony from Within				
Page	Article Title	Loss	Gain	Duty
6	Advice for the Soldiers of the Islamic State		X	X
16	Al-Qaidah of Dhawahiri, al-Harari, and an-Nadhari, and the Absent Yemeni Wisdom	X		
26	Abu Hamza al-Muhajir Training Camp		X	
28	Action in the New Wilāyat		X	
31	Dismantling a Khariji Cell	X		X
32	The Liberation of Biji	X		X
34	The Capture of a Crusader Pilot	X		
38	Misleading Scholars and Bewitching Media	X		
40	Al-Qaidah of Waziristan: A Testimony from Within	X		X
56	In the Words of the Enemy	X		
Total	10	7	3	4
Issue 7 – From Hypocrisy to Apostasy: The Extinction of the Grayzone				
Page	Article Title	Loss	Gain	Duty
5	The Burning of the Murtadd Pilot	X		X
9	Advice for the Leaders of the Islamic State			X
17	From the Pages of History: An Explicit Ultimatum from the Salaf to the Apostates			X
20	Islam is the Religion of the Sword; Not Pacifism			X
26	Interview with a Spy Working for the Israeli Mossad	X		X
30	Revenge for the Muslimat Persecuted by the Coptic Crusaders of Egypt	X		X
33	Wilāyat Khurasan and the Bay'ah from Qawqaz		X	
40	Major Operations in Libya and Sinai		X	
42	Clamping Down on Sexual Deviance	X		X
44	The Salvation from Fitnah is Khilafah and Jihad		X	
46	Among the Believers are Men: Abu Qudamah al-Misri		X	X
50	A Brief Interview With Umm Basir al Muhajirah			X
52	In the Words of the Enemy	X		
54	The Extinction of the Grayzone	X		
67	Healing the Believers' Chests	X		
68	The Good Example of Abu Basir al-Ifriqi		X	
72	An Interview with Abu 'Umar al-Baljiki		X	
76	The Anger Factory	X		
82	From Inside Halab		X	
83	Back Page	X		
Total	20	9	7	9

Issue 8 – Shari’ah alone Will Rule Africa				
Page	Article Title	Loss	Gain	Duty
7	The Allies of al-Qa’idah in Sham	X		
12	Abu Bakr as-Siddiq’s Monumental Stance			X
14	The Bay’ah from West Africa		X	
17	Soldiers of Terror		X	
20	The Lions of Tomorrow			X
22	Erasing the Legacy of a Ruined Nation			X
28	Abandon the Lands of Shirk and Come to the Land of Islam			X
30	Among the Believers are Men: Shaykh Abu Talhah		X	
32	The Twin Halves of the Muhajirin			X
39	Irja’ The Most Dangerous Bid’ah (and its Effects on the Jihad in Sham)	X		
57	In the Words of the Enemy	X		
59	An Interview with Abu Muqatil		X	
63	Stories from the Land of the Living		X	
64	Paradigm Shift	X		
Total	14	4	5	5
Issue 9 – They Plot and Allah Plots				
Page	Article Title	Loss	Gain	Duty
5	For the Sake of Allah			X
6	The Allies of al-Qā’idah in Shām: Part II	X		
8	The Virtues of Ribat for the Cause of Allah			X
14	Conspiracy Theory: Shirk	X		
20	The Flags of Jahilliyyah	X	X	
24	Healthcare in the Khilafah			X
28	Harvesting the Sahwah		X	X
29	The Capture of the 4th Regiment Base in Wilāyat Shamal Baghdad		X	X
31	Advancing East and West	X		
34	The Yarmuk Camp	X		
37	Extend Your Hand to Pledge Allegiance		X	
38	Perfecting One’s Islam, Iman, Hijrah, and Jihad		X	
40	Among the Believers are Men: Hudhayfah al-Battawi		X	
44	Slave Girls or Prostitutes		X	
50	And Allah is the Best of Plotters	X		
60	In the Words of the Enemy	X		
66	Interview with the Amir of the Yarmuk Camp Region	X		
74	The Perfect Storm	X		
79	Back Page			X
Total	19	9	7	6

Issue 10 – The Law of Allah or the Laws of Men				
Page	Article Title	Loss	Gain	Duty
5	Join the Caravan of Islamic State Knights in the Lands of the Crusaders		X	X
6	Allies of al-Qa'idah in Sham Part III	X		
14	Tawhid and our Duty to our Parents		X	X
18	A Fatwa for Khurasan		X	
26	From the Pages of History: The Expeditions, Battles and Victories of Ramadan			X
30	American Kurdistan	X		
35	Honor is in Jihad: A Message to the People of the Balkans			X
36	The Qawqazi Caravan Gains Pace		X	
38	Wala' and Bara'			X
40	Among the Believers are Men: Character Sketches		X	
42	They are not Lawful Spouses for One Another		X	
49	And they Gave Zakah			X
50	The Law of Allah or the Laws of Men: Is Waging War Against the Khilafah Apostasy?	X		X
66	In the Words of the Enemy	X		
70	Interview With Samir al-Urduni	X	X	
77	Come my Friend		X	
78	Cihad Yolu: The Path of Jihad	X		
Total	17	6	8	7
Issue 11 – From the Battle of Al-Ahzab to the War of Coalitions				
Page	Article Title	Loss	Gain	Duty
6	The Allies of al-Qā'idah in Shām: Part 4	X		
10	The Evil of Division and Taqlid			X
16	The "Mahdi" of the Rafidah: The Dajjal	X		
22	The Danger of Abandoning Darul-Islam	X		X
24	From the Pages of History: From "Jihad" to Fasad	X		
28	A Selection of Military Operations Across the Islamic State	X	X	
34	The Final Statement of Abu Sinan an-Najdi	X	X	
36	Who are the True Fuqaha' and Scholars, and Who are the Evil Scholars	X		
38	Among the Believers are Men: Abu Ja'far al-Almani		X	
40	A Jihad Without Fighting			X
46	From the Battle of Al-Ahzab to the War of Coalitions	X		
50	In the Words of the Enemy	X		
60	Abul-Mughirah al-Qahtani (The Delegated Leader for the Libyan Wilāyat)	X		X
Total	13	10	3	4

Issue 12 – Just Terror				
Page	Article Title	Loss	Gain	Duty
5	The Allies of al-Qa'idah in Yemen	X		
9	Advice to the Mujahidin: Listen and Obey	X	X	
11	Allies of al-Qa'idah in Sham: The End	X		
17	Baqiyah (It Will Remain)	X		
19	Two, Three or Four		X	X
24	Decisiveness or Division	X		
25	A Selection of Military Operations by the Islamic State		X	X
29	And as for the Blessing of your Lord then Mention it	X	X	
33	O you who Have Believed Protect yourselves and your Families from Fire	X		
37	The Revival of Jihad in Bengal with the Spread of the Light of the Khilafah	X	X	
43	You Think they are Together but their Hearts are Divided	X		
47	Paradigm Shift Part II	X	X	
51	In the Words of the Enemy	X		
55	Among the Believers are Men: Character Sketches		X	X
60	Interview with Abu Muharib as-Sumali	X	X	
Total	15	12	8	3
Issue 13 - The Rafidah: From Ibn Saba' to the Dajjal				
Page	Article Title	Loss	Gain	Duty
6	Kill the Imams of Kufr	X		
10	Know Your Enemy: Who Were the Safawiyyah	X		
20	The Best Shuhada': A Word of Truth	X	X	
22	Among the Believers are Men: Abu Muharib al-Muhajir		X	
28	Do they not then Reflect on the Qur'an			X
31	Image: No Respite		X	
32	The Rafidah: From Ibn Saba' to the Dajjal	X		
46	In the Words of the Enemy	X		
48	Interview with: The Wali of Khurasan	X		X
55	Image: Just Terror		X	
56	Back Page: Image	X		
Total	12	7	4	2

Issue 14 - The Murtadd Brotherhood				
Page	Article Title	Loss	Gain	Duty
6	The Knights of Shuhada in Belgium		X	
8	Kill the Imams of Kufr in the West	X		X
18	Do they not then Reflect on the Qur'an			X
20	Islamic State Operations		X	
26	Affliction and Faith		X	
28	The Murtadd Brotherhood	X		
44	Lessons from the Fitnah of the Mongols	X		
50	Among the Believers are Men: Abu Jandal al-Bangali		X	
52	The Blood of Shame	X		
56	In the Words of the Enemy	X		
58	Interview with the Amir of the Khilafah's Soldiers in Bengal	X	X	
Total	12	6	5	2
Issue 15 - Break the Cross				
Page	Article Title	Loss	Gain	Duty
8	Contemplate the Creation			X
14	The Response to the Call of the Prophet			X
20	The Fitrah of Mankind and the Near Extinction of the Western Woman			X
26	Words of Sincere Advice From an American Convert in the Islamic State to the Former Christian who Accepted Islam			X
30	Why we Hate you and why we Fight you	X		
34	The Call to Islam and the Consequences of in the Worldly Life		X	X
36	How I Came to Islam		X	X
46	Break the Cross	X		
64	Interview with Abu Sa'd at-Trinidad		X	
70	Among the Believers are Men		X	X
74	In the Words of the Enemy	X		
78	By the Sword			X
Total	12	3	4	8
Grand Total	197	88	71	86

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APPENDIX B. *DABIQ* ISSUE-DATE OVERVIEW

Table 3. Issues by Date

Issue	Islamic Date	Gregorian Date	Days Between Issue
1 – The Return of Khilafah	1435 Ramadan	05-Jul-14	Initial Issue
2 – The Flood	1435 Ramadan	27-Jul-14	22
3 – A Call to Hijrah	1435 Shawwal	10-Sep-14	45
4 – The Failed Crusade	1435 Dhul-Hijjah	11-Oct-14	31
5 – Remaining and Expanding	1436 Muharram	21-Nov-14	41
6 – Al-Qa'idah of Waziristan: A Testimony from Within	1436 Rabi' Al-Awwal	29-Dec-14	38
7 – From Hypocrisy to Apostasy: The Extinction of the Grayzone	1436 Rabi' Al-Akhir	12-Feb-15	45
8 – Shari'ah alone Will Rule Africa	1436 Jumada Al-Akhirah	30-Mar-15	46
9 – They Plot and Allah Plots	1436 Sha'ban	21-May-15	52
10 – The Law of Allah or the Laws of Men	1436 Ramadan	13-Jul-15	53
11 – From the Battle of Al-Ahzab to the War of Coalitions	1436 Dhul-Qa'Dah	09-Aug-15	27
12 – Just Terror	1437 Safar	18-Nov-15	101
13 - The Rafidah: From Ibn Saba' to the Dajjal	1437 Rabi' Al-Akhir	19-Jan-16	62
14 - The Murtadd Brotherhood	1437 Rajab	13-Apr-16	85
15 - Break the Cross	1437 Shawwal	31-Jul-16	109

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