

An Exploration of *Dabiq*'s Strategies and Arguments to Persuade Its Readers of Joining and Supporting the Islamic State

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## Summary

In recent years, ISIS has become one of the most notorious groups advocating and deploying violence for political reasons. Arguably, the internet has played a role in facilitating their rise as these groups have taken advantage of an opportunity to communicate directly with their audience. Using rhetorical analysis, frame analysis, and motive talk through justification techniques, this thesis analyzes how the Islamic State's online publication *Dabiq* magazine attempts to persuade non-Arabic readers of directly or indirectly supporting and/or joining ISIS. Furthermore, this thesis provides a discussion that considers how both the form and the content of messaging in *Dabiq* works together in an effort to persuade the reader of an alternative view of the Islamic State group, a view that positions ISIS as legitimate and justified in their actions.

## Introduction

Within the literature, the two underlying logics of the numerous models developed by scholars present the process of engagement into violent action from a deterministic perspective. The models present the process of engagement into violent action as a response to being subjected to and determined by various social forces such as the experience of relative deprivation or a form of identity crisis (Bhatt, 2007; Borum, 2003; Moghaddam, 2005; Sageman, 2008; Silber & Taylor & King, 2011; Wiktorowicz, 2004). This thesis argues that *Dabiq* appreciates their readers as free social agents instead of seeing them as empty vessels that can be forced into action by a series of unfortunate social forces. *Dabiq* does not assume that readers are passive receptors who will act upon being exposed to their messaging. Rather, *Dabiq* acts as an educational tool, educating the readers on what ISIS stands for, what their purpose is, and how readers can emulate the group's interpretation of what 'good Muslims' should do and act. *Dabiq* demonstrates this through actively attempting to convince readers of the legitimacy of the Islamic State by appealing to various content and form strategies. *Dabiq* respects their reader as free social agents with emotional and logical competencies, that are capable of making their own decisions and in need of thoughtful persuasion in order to adopt loyalty to the Islamic State.

The evolution of the internet has provided groups advocating violence for political or religious reasons with the opportunity to communicate with a wider audience. Formerly having to rely on personal relationships or networks, interested individuals can now engage with the group through a variety of formats. No longer confined to negotiating their identity and purpose with the interests of popular news media outlets, these groups can directly communicate an unfiltered perspective that may be unpopular in traditional news media sources (Weimann, 2008).

The focus of this thesis is the online ISIS publication *Dabiq* and the rhetorical styles, strategies, and justifications that are used to communicate and persuade the reader to join and/or support ISIS. This thesis outlines the argumentative framework *Dabiq* deploys in an effort to persuade their readers of the legitimacy of their cause, actions and of the organization itself. The first chapter identifies the importance of discourses, ideas, and justifications for engaging in violent action, and the role that the internet plays in facilitating the communication between like-minded individuals. The second chapter identifies the theoretical framework that I will use to analyze *Dabiq*. I use rhetorical analysis to examine the ‘form’ through which *Dabiq* communicates with its audience. Additionally, I use frame analysis to gain an understanding of how *Dabiq* presents ISIS, its enemies, their ‘problems’, and the proposed solution to those ‘problems’. Lastly, I use motive talk, specifically Sykes and Matza’s (1957) Techniques of Neutralization, to analyze how *Dabiq* defends their actions in an effort to persuade readers of the legitimacy of not only violent actions but also of the group and their ways of life. The third chapter justifies the choice of *Dabiq*, specifically issue number 7, and provides an overview of the type of content that tends to be featured in the magazine in order to provide the reader with a better understanding of the magazine. Lastly, I describe the method that I used to analyze it. The fourth chapter provides the analysis in regards to the ‘form’ that is used to communicate with the reader, examining the purpose of statements and how those statements are delivered. The fifth chapter provides the analysis of the role that ‘content’ plays in persuading the reader to support and/or join ISIS. The conclusion provides a discussion on the importance of how both the form and content of the messaging in *Dabiq* works together in efforts to persuade the reader of joining and/or supporting ISIS.

## **Chapter 1: Literature Review**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Sageman (2008) argues that al-Qaeda and its affiliates are rapidly changing, becoming more “fluid, independent, and unpredictable” compared to their predecessors who carried out the attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 (p. 1). It has evolved from a top-down management style where select leaders controlled resources and nominated high value targets to a more decentralized network of ‘homegrown’ supporters who globally align themselves with a violent ideology (Sageman, 2008). This evolution carries a significant impact specifically on processes and practices of recruitment and more broadly on strategies of communication and message dissemination. Whereas before it was essential to encounter the right people in the right places in order to join an organization and be in a position to act, the changes in these organizations have made it so that an individual in the name of an organization can take action without ever having direct contact with that organization. In the first section of the chapter, I use the scientific literature that focuses on the factors that lead to the engagement of individuals in violent religious action to highlight the need to be exposed to discourses, ideas or explanations justifying the use of violence for religious goals as a core feature of any process of engagement in violent religious action. The second section focuses on the evolution of media outlets and how it has affected organizations using violence for political and/or religious reasons. This evolution has come with an increasing advantage in ‘liberating’ organizations from traditional media to reach sympathizers, supporters and potential supporters directly. The progression to the use of the Internet has facilitated a virtual form of communication that has allowed organizations to operate independently from the media, enabling these organizations to craft and disseminate their message without intermediaries. This has resulted in virtual networks where like-minded individuals can come together to garner ideological support as well as find tactical advice. The final section presents a frame analysis of the grand narrative

produced by groups advocating the use of violence for religious goals. Frame analysis identifies three elements: defining the ‘problem’, identifying the solutions to the ‘problem’ and providing justifications for engaging in violent action. We will present what authors using frame analysis have to say about violent militant Islamist public discourses by al-Qaeda and other such organizations.

## **1.2 The Process of Engagement in Violent Religious Action**

Since the events of September 11 in the United States, part of the scientific community has focused their attention in attempting to identify the processes or stages that individuals go through prior to becoming involved in violent religious action. There are two underlying logics to the numerous models developed by scholars: a linear logic and a convergent logic. Borum’s (2003) Pathway model, Wiktorowicz’ (2004) model, Moghaddam’s (2005) staircase to terrorism radicalization process model, and Silber and Bhatt’s (2007) radicalization process model are various accounts of radicalization processes detailing a linear progression. The linear process highlights that there are different stages that an individual will progress through before reaching the ultimate step, that of engaging in violent religious action. Alternatively, Sageman (2008) proposes a more synergetic model in which engaging in violent religious action results from the interplay between four factors. Whether drawing from a linear or a convergent logic, the literature considers certain factors as significant contributors to an individual’s engagement in violent religious action: experiencing relative deprivation, identity related issues, and the influence of relationship building and ideological support (King & Taylor, 2011). I will now present each of these factors in more detail.

Relative deprivation occurs when individuals believe they are treated unfairly, experience unemployment, feel moral violations, a sense of personal injustice or alienation whether as an individual or as a community (Bhatt, 2007; Borum, 2003; Moghaddam, 2005; Sageman, 2008; Silber & Taylor & King, 2011; Wiktorowicz, 2004). Knowledge of the ill-treatment of detainees at Guantanamo Bay or Abu Ghraib and other instances of Muslims being abused can elicit feelings of moral outrage and injustice that can push someone to want to act for the benefit of, or in order to protect their community (King & Taylor, 2011; Sageman, 2008).

Every model identifies some form of identity crisis as an important factor in the process of engagement in violent religious action (Al-Lami, 2009; Borum, 2003; Eatwell, 2006; King & Taylor, 2011; Moghaddam, 2005; Precht, 2007; Sageman, 2004; Silber & Bhatt, 2007; Veldhuis & Staun, 2009; Wiktorowicz, 2004; Wilner & Dubouloz, 2011). In some instances, it is a sense of dissatisfaction with their current belief system that prompts them to look elsewhere as they strive for answers to existential questions (Durodie, 2007; Eatwell, 2006; King & Taylor, 2011). In other instances, it can be that second or third generation immigrants may experience a lack of integration and confusion on how to maintain dual identities – a Western identity and the ethnic identity from their family (Durodie, 2007; Eatwell, 2006; King & Taylor, 2011). Internalizing images of conflict and injustice carried out against Muslims can strengthen their feelings of disarray and lead them to withdraw from previously held beliefs (Sageman, 2008; Wilner & Dubouloz, 2011). Turning to Islam becomes an identity building movement that allows these individuals to find strength and belonging within a group in a way that reduces the individual's feelings of uncertainty (King & Taylor, 2011; Wilner & Dubouloz).

Engagement in violent religious action can potentially occur anywhere feelings of “isolation and vulnerability” are likely to occur (Rogers & Neumann, 2007, p. 47). Consequently,

relationship building, finding ideological support, and being “mobilized by networks”<sup>1</sup> is the final common factor among the models (King & Taylor, 2011; Sageman, 2008, pg. 84)). This component involves building relationships with like-minded individuals for support and validation (King & Taylor, 2011; Sageman, 2008). Accordingly, engagement into violent religious action is not a formal or top-down recruitment process but rather as a relationship building process that fosters active discussions and debates relying on persuasion to encourage an individual to join a particular group (Wiktorowicz, 2004). Key to this process is the development of social bonds that provide individuals with support, positive acknowledgment, peer recognition, and guidance from like-minded individuals that share similar beliefs and outrage (Al-Lami, 2009; Sageman, 2008).

Some scholars argue that these social bonds are created and maintained in specific physical spaces such as mosques or prisons (Cuthbertson, 2004; Haddad & Balz, 2008; Hamm, 2009; Rogers & Neumann, 2007; Sageman, 2004; Silke, 2008; Useem & Clayton, 2009; Wiktorowicz, 2004; Wilner, 2010). In Western countries in particular, individuals away from family and friends might seek companionship from people with similar backgrounds in the mosque (Silke, 2008, p. 111). By being a central element in Muslim community life, the mosque provides a setting for community members to socialize but can occasionally lead to the formation of radical groups, even when this is not consistent with the religious instruction within the mosque (Rogers & Neumann, 2007; Sageman, 2004; Silke, 2008). Thus, the mosque offers social opportunities for individuals who share certain norms and values to meet like-minded people, to develop an ideological commitment to violent religious action and to make connections to groups and/or individuals who share their belief in the need for violent religious action (Sageman, 2004; Wiktorowicz, 2004).

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<sup>1</sup> Sageman (2008) describes being “mobilized by networks” as ultimately being guided from experiencing anger and grievances to actually taking that “next step” and becoming involved in violent “terrorist” actions. Being “mobilized by networks” focuses on the actual relationships that are exploited to “influence” members of a group (p. 84).

The prison is another physical location thought of as a fertile ground for recruitment or, at least, as a space providing the opportunity to the presentation and discussion of violent ideologies. Religion in the prison environment provides a sense of security, certainty, and offers a break from the past (Goldman, 2014; Rogers & Neumann, 2007). Conversions in these environments may be motivated out of the need to feel protected and belong to a group (Goldman, 2014; Hamm, 2009; Wilner, 2010). Scholars state that, while conversion to Islam – like other religious practices – can be a positive development for inmates, shortages in rehabilitation programs, shortages in religious leaders, or a serious gang problem, creates the proper conditions for ideologically inspired individuals in prison to advocate for violent action and recruit prisoners into what Wilner (2010) calls “Jailhouse Islam<sup>2</sup>” (p. 17).

Notwithstanding, the significance of physical locations in the process of engagement in violent religious action can be overrated (Rogers & Neumann, 2007). Islamist militants have taken advantage of places with “no particular significance” other than where Muslims meet and congregate such as “summer camps organized for Muslim youth, Internet cafes, cafeterias, university campuses, or fitness centres in Muslim areas” (Rogers & Neumann, 2007, p. 47). The actual physical location is simply a medium that can facilitate encounters between an individual and someone committed to an ideology promoting violence in the name of Islam.

In this section we have seen that the scientific literature considers that engagement in violent religious action is contingent on an individual coming into contact with ideas that explain and justify the need for violent religious action as well as with other likeminded individuals with

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<sup>2</sup> According to Wilner (2010), “jailhouse Islam” is “Muslim practice with gang dynamics, Islamist predation, intimidation, and violence, providing a potent and dangerous brew of religious faith and socio-political ideology” (p. 13).

whom they can exchange, learn, mutually reinforce their beliefs and eventually take violent action. Although physical spaces have traditionally facilitated these encounters and have been sites for relationships to develop and grow, the internet has become an alternative virtual space that fulfills the same function.

### **1.3 The Transformative Effects of the Internet on Violent Religious Action**

In the past, religious and political organizations advocating for the use of violence had to physically be with the individual or try to indirectly influence and guide prospective supporters through traditional mediums such as television and print news outlets. Among scholars, there is widespread agreement that these organizations and news media share a unique relationship between each other; the degree to which it is mutually beneficial is, however, contested (Ciovacco, 2009; Cohen-Almagor, 2005; Crelinsten, 1989; Enache, 2012; Hackett, 2007; Kelly & Mitchell, 1981; Perešin, 2007; Schmid, 1989; Steuter, 1990; Weimann, 2008; Wilkinson, 1997; Zein, 2012). While media outlets play an important function in society, they ultimately thrive by making profit through the time and space sold to advertisers (Ghetti, 2008; Perešin, 2007; Wilkinson, 1997). Often, highly emotional and dramatic events will draw a larger readership or viewership rating to a media outlet; therefore, it is in the best interests of media outlets to devote attention to covering content that elicits this response (Ghetti, 2008; Perešin, 2007; Wilkinson, 1997). Scholars thus argue that ‘terrorist<sup>3</sup>’ groups and news media outlets share a symbiotic relationship between each other. When news media outlets report on a ‘terrorist’ event, viewership or readership increases in conjunction with advertising dollars. When the media covers a ‘terrorist’ event, the organization

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<sup>3</sup> Quotation marks are used around the word terrorist and terrorism to highlight the problematic nature of the term.

responsible for it gets the opportunity to elicit a strong emotional response and gain popularity or legitimization by using the event to disseminate information regarding their cause. In this regard, some authors express concern over traditional media outlets being manipulated by ‘terrorist’ groups.

Some scholars argue that news media essentially act as ‘accomplices’ to ‘terrorist’ groups by prominently publicizing acts that were staged for the purpose of attracting international media attention (Cohen-Almagor, 2005; Ghetti, 2008; Hackett, 2007; Schmid, 1989; Spencer, 2007; Steuter, 1990). One particular news agency to come under scrutiny for supporting ‘terrorism’ is Al-Jazeera (Weimann, 2008; Zein, 2012). Al-Jazeera had previously been labeled Osama bin Laden’s ‘mouthpiece’ in the West due to having reporting policies that refrain from labeling an act a ‘terrorist’ act as well as frequently airing videos submitted by ‘terrorist’ groups (Zein, 2012, p. 443). Al-Jazeera explains its policy by stating that the news agency believes in “objectivity, integrity, and presenting all point of view – including both Osama bin Laden and George W. Bush” (Zein, 2012, p. 443). However, scholars argue that simply reporting on an act contributes to the goals of the ‘terrorist’ group by providing a platform enabling them to disseminate their messages and creating a strong psychological impact – enhancing their popularity with recruitment efforts and helps create legitimacy for their cause (Cohen-Almagor, 2005; Hackett, 2007; Liebes & Kampf, 2004; Perešin, 2007; Spencer, 2007).

Some authors argue that ‘terrorist’ groups hope that their presence in traditional TV, radio and print media will contribute to four main objectives: to create fear and panic among the masses, to frustrate government and security forces, to generate wider international support for their cause, and to boost recruitment and funds for future attacks (Perešin, 2007; Wilkinson, 1997). In order to achieve these objectives, groups “choreograph” their actions (Weimann, 2008, pg. 71). In fact,

‘terrorist’ acts are sometimes described as a type of theatrical act where groups carefully choreograph their actions through “script preparation, cast selection, sets, props, and role playing” to attract the attention of the international press (Weimann, 2008, p. 71). Scholars agree that ‘terrorist’ groups select targets, locations, the timing of the act, video clips, video or press releases, in order to satisfy media criteria of being newsworthy (Cohen-Almagor, 2005; Weimann, 2008). In other words, groups manipulate and shape the act by purposely choosing locations or choosing specific targets to generate shock, which ensures massive media coverage of their actions around the world and thus providing publicity for the group (Cohen-Almagor, 2012; Enache, 2012; Ghetti, 2008; Hackett, 2007; Ross, 2007; Weimann, 2008). While publicity and advertising of the group may not be the ultimate goal of the terrorist group, accessing and being covered by international news media provides a useful platform to promote the legitimization of their cause and goals as well as gain followers or sympathizers (Crelinsten, 1989; Cohen-Almagor, 2005; Perešin, 2007; Weimann, 2008; Wilkinson, 1997; Steuter, 1990).

Using the international news media for their own communicative purposes, one of the most frequently cited terrorist acts as a ‘theatrical’ event are the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 (Cohen-Almagor, 2005; Crelinsten, 1989; Enache, 2012; Perešin, 2007; Weimann, 2008). Aimed at American and international audiences, it is argued that Osama bin Laden considered ‘terrorist’ acts first as a communication strategy (Nacos, 2003; Weimann, 2008; Zein, 2012). This type of orchestrated ‘terrorist’ act can serve as a psychological weapon triggering strong emotional responses such as fear and panic among the masses (Enache, 2012; Ghetti, 2008; Hackett, 2007; Kelly & Mitchell, 1981; Perešin, 2007). Scholars argue that the American public and political leaders were not the entire target audience; Osama bin Laden was also targeting Muslim populations – Arab media’s coverage of the event, especially al Jazeera’s, fortified his popularity,

respect, and legitimacy among Muslims around the world which assisted with recruitment and morale for al Qaeda (Hackett, 2007; Perešin, 2007; Weimann, 2008).

Although ‘terrorist’ groups stand to gain popularity, recognition, and legitimacy, the way in which the news is covered can on the contrary undermine the organization and its goals (Ghetti, 2008; Kelly & Mitchell, 1981). While the news media covers the event, there is little information provided regarding the underlying motivations or causes of the act; the act is often taken out of political context or trivialized (Crelinsten, 1989; Kelly & Mitchell, 1981; Steuter, 1990). The news media attracts the attention of the audience but does not transmit the actual message behind the act and transforms the “crusader into a psychopath” (Kelly & Mitchell, 1981, p. 288; Steuter, 1990). While the group may grab the attention of news media, they may be disadvantaged in the way the media presents their actions (Kelly & Mitchell, 1981). As news media outlets selectively choose information to cover and how to present it to its audience, the media undermines efforts by the group to establish legitimacy (Crelinsten, 1989; Nossek, 2008). Therefore, while the actions committed by the group can effectively gain attention, the actions may not be presented by traditional media outlets in the way ‘terrorist’ groups intend acts and messages to be covered (Crelinsten, 1989; Kelly & Mitchell, 1981; Perešin, 2007; Wilkinson, 1997). While ‘terrorist’ groups can effectively manipulate the media, they are aware of how much damage it can cause by unfavourable publicity (Kelly & Mitchell, 1981; Perešin, 2007; Wilkinson, 1997). The message that ‘terrorist’ groups want to convey is critical and only in cases where groups “also control media directly can they fully control the way their violent communication is handled” (Schmid, 1989, p. 559).

### *The Role of the Internet*

The Internet has become a widely accessible space that facilitates recruitment and support for ‘terrorist’ organizations with various groups using the border free communication network to connect with individuals globally and ultimately further their own organizational goals (Benson, 2014; Freiburger & Crane, 2008; Silke & Dienel, 2010). The Internet has effectively become a forum for groups to communicate and disseminate their messages as well as report on activities against them in their own approach. No longer needing to go through media outlets that often filter or skew information, these groups can use the Internet to gain supporters or sympathizers, to scare the enemy, and to post violent footage that news media outlets would not otherwise post (Weimann, 2008). Ciovacco (2009) argues that groups such as al-Qaeda go through “painstaking lengths to protect the sanctity” of their message (p. 855). For example, to aid them in preserving their specialized message, al-Qaeda created al-Sahab, a media production entity that controls the content of media releases as well as disseminates the media releases by al-Qaeda (Ciovacco, 2009).

Through chat rooms and forums, the internet facilitates global relationship building through mutual sharing and understanding with like-minded individuals (Benson, 2014; Conway, 2002; King & Taylor, 2011; Lieberman & Collins, 2008; Sageman, 2008). Additionally, the online space provides access to information and educational materials that allows the user to obtain knowledge, fulfilling a more practical ‘how to’ approach (Benson, 2014; Freiburger & Crane, 2008; King & Taylor, 2011; Lieberman & Collins, 2008; Sageman, 2008; Stan, 2010; Tsfati & Weimann, 2002; Weimann, 2004). Websites run by organizations supporting violent jihad can provide interested parties with ideological narratives, justifications for violence, and operational knowledge (Lieberman & Collins, 2008; Sibianu, 2010; Weimann, 2004). These two functions of the Internet feed off of each other as the ideological and operational knowledge acts as discussion

pieces for chat room or forum participants, an advantage that was not previously had by ‘terrorist’ groups solely relying on mainstream media (Benson, 2014; Freiburger & Crane, 2008; Sageman, 2008).

What is important to retain from this section is that the internet on one hand allows individuals to have access to ideas, people and organization elements that are essential for being able to engage in violent religious action. On the other hand, the internet allows organizations to present their message without having to deal with intermediaries. They are free to speak directly to a potential public. Furthermore, whereas before an individual, a person, was the vehicle for ideas, since the internet there is a significant separation between people and ideas. The internet provides access to both components but now individuals no longer need someone to give them access to the ideas because the ideas can be easily accessible through the internet.

#### **1.4 Framing Process**

In the previous section, I discussed the role of the Internet and the ways in which it facilitates the recruitment and radicalization process; largely through providing forums for individual’s to meet and share ideologies and experiences as well as providing access to passive knowledge such as ideological frameworks and tactical knowledge. In this section I will describe the frameworks that have been identified in the literature, such as those presented by Sivek (2013). According to frame analysis, initially developed by Irving Goffman, frames are “schemata of interpretation that enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify, and label occurrences within their life space and the world at large” (Eilders & Lüter, 2000, p. 417). Collective action frames and framing processes, have become especially prominent in social movement research where the

“promotion of pertinent frames is viewed as an important condition for successful protest mobilization” (Benford & Snow, 2000; Eilders & Lüter, 2000, p. 417; Polletta & Jasper, 2001; van Stekelenburg, J., Klandermans, B., & van Dijk, 2009). Framing is ultimately intended to encourage mobilization in potential supporters and bystanders, as well as used as an opportunity to undermine enemies (Eilders & Lüter, 2000). Framing organizes and produces meanings in an attempt to mobilize an audience; from this perspective, social movements are not based on meanings that appear unexpectedly out of events or ideologies, rather, actors in the social movement are viewed as representatives who “actively engage in the production and maintenance of meaning for constituents, antagonists, bystanders, or observers” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 613). Therefore, collective action frames in social movements engage in persuasive reasoning to activate, encourage, and legitimate the activities that social movements actors are engaging in (Benford & Snow, 2000; van Stekelenburg, J., Klandermans, B., & van Dijk, 2009). In this section of the literature review, I will be presenting the literature that draws on Benford and Snow’s three framing tasks (diagnostic framing, prognostic framing, and motivational framing) to illustrate a narrative framework commonly found in militant jihadist discourse with a particular focus on rationalizations for violent actions.

#### *Diagnostic Framing – The Point at Issue*

As set out by Benford and Snow (2000), diagnostic framing involves identifying the problem(s) perceived by the group, and specifically who is accountable for those problems (Benford & Snow, 2000). At its core, diagnostic framing seeks to assign blame and responsibility to perceived problematic situations or issues (Benford & Snow, 2000).

When applying diagnostic framing to militant Islamist discourse, it is important to recognize that various groups fight for varying reasons with various methods; however, many

groups share similar long-term aims and political desires (Hegghammer, 2009). Within the literature, there are two common discourses within militant jihadist literature that describes their perceived enemies. This discussion centers around a so-called “near enemy-far enemy divide” that is used to distinguish groups that primarily target local Muslim regimes and groups that primarily target Western countries (Hegghammer, 2009, p. 26). Hegghammer (2009) argues that over the recent years, distinguishing between these two types of groups has become less relevant as “many jihadist groups are displaying ambiguous rhetoric and behavior with regard to who they consider as their main enemy” (p. 26). Because of this, a “process of ideological hybridization has occurred” making jihadist groups more diverse in who they consider an enemy to be (Hegghammer, 2009, p. 26). Part of this diversification of enemies is a sign of “increasing radicalization and political isolation” often adopting a more diverse set of enemies to help with recruitment as with a wider range of enemies you can attract a larger audience to recruit from (Hegghammer, 2009, p. 27).

Hegghammer (2009) describes the terms “near enemy” and “far enemy” as insufficient as “they suggest that the difference is merely one of targeting, and because the notion of the far enemy is ambiguous (potentially referring to both the US and Israel) and may thus lead to the inclusion of Hamas as a far-enemy group” (p. 28). To avoid this confusion, Hegghammer (2009) refers to the far-enemy as *global jihadist* ideology and the near-enemy as *revolutionary Islamism*. This global jihadist ideology “promotes military confrontation with the United States and her allies, to avenge and deter non-Muslim oppression of Muslims” (Hegghammer, 2009, p. 28; Page, Challita, & Harris, 2011). Global jihadist violence is likely to be directed towards “representatives or symbols of non-Muslim oppression of Muslims, such as Western embassies, military bases, and tourists in the Muslim world, or the home capitals of the nations considered the most hostile to Muslims” and may make reference to “occupations, alleged massacres, prisoner humiliation and

blasphemy by non-Muslims against Muslims” (Hegghammer, 2009, p. 28; Page, Challita, & Harris, 2011). In these instances, blame is attributed to Western countries for influencing and corrupting the Muslim community (Hegghammer, 2009; Page, Challita, & Harris, 2011; Sageman, 2004).

Revolutionary Islamism “advocates military confrontation with Muslim regimes in order to topple them and capture the state” as these regimes are often critiqued as being ‘pawns’ of Western powers (Hegghammer, 2009, p. 28; Page, Challita, & Harris, 2011; Sageman, 2004). Revolutionary violence is likely to be directed towards “representatives and symbols of Muslim regimes, such as security forces and police stations, ministers and ministries etc.” and may make reference to problems at a local level including “secular legislation, corruption, oppression, and treason to the cause of Islam and the Muslim Nation” (Hegghammer, 2009, p. 28; Page, Challita, & Harris, 2011).

Whether critiques of the enemy are directed to the ‘near-enemy’ or the ‘far-enemy’, the overarching argument for their criticism focuses on Islam being under attack. Both of these distinguished enemy types, Western countries and allies as well as ‘illegitimate’ Muslim regimes, are routinely accused of attacking and threatening Islam by means of a religious threat and a political threat (Hegghammer, 2009, p. 28; Page, Challita, & Harris, 2011; Sageman, 2004). The religious threat is overall concerned with non-Muslims corrupting the loyalty of Muslims to God and Islam (Wagemakers, 2008). The religious threat is framed by a “portrayal of non-Muslims as potential enemies of the purity of Islamic rituals and customs. The very contact with these ‘enemies of God’ is portrayed as being harmful to Muslims’ religion, which is why believers should avoid all loyalty to Jews and Christians” (Wagemakers, 2008, p. 5). The religious threat is concerned with non-Muslims “corrupting Islamic purity”, breaking down a true form of Islam and potentially

guiding Muslims to practice other religions (Torres, Jordán, & Horsburgh, N, 2006; Wagemakers, 2008, p. 6). Wagemakers (2008) states that frequently in Salafi<sup>4</sup> discourse to prevent the corruption of Muslims, Muslims are urged to make hijra<sup>5</sup> from “dar al-kufr (abode of unbelief) to the dar al-Islam (abode of Islam) to ‘flee from temptation’” (Wagemakers, 2008, p. 7). Making hijra is argued as “necessary to counter the religious threat to Islam, since ‘settling in the lands of unbelief leads to loyalty to the infidels’” (Wagemakers, 2008, p. 7).

The political threat is framed by incorporating “politics, rulers and diplomatic ties with other countries into their frame” (Wagemakers, 2008, p. 5). Wagemakers (2008) states that within Salafi discourse, there is the assertion that political leaders in Muslim countries should “show the same disavowal of non-Muslim countries as ordinary Muslims are compelled to show to Jews and Christians” (p. 5). There is an expectation that loyalty to Islam and disavowal to non-Muslim entities should be displayed not only on a personal level but on a political level as well (Torres, Jordán, & Horsburgh, N, 2006; Wagemakers, 2008). Wagemakers (2008) argues that, “...since diplomatic relations and friendly ties between Muslim countries and non-Muslim states are quite common, they are often highly critical of government in the Muslim world” (p. 5). The political threat is framed as coming from leaders of Muslim countries “who they consider to be apostates (*murtaddun*) and unbelievers (*kuffar*) because of their loyalty to ‘infidel’ states” (Wagemakers, 2008, p. 7). To prevent this threat, Wagemakers (2008) argues that Salafi discourse will frequently urge the excommunication of Muslim leaders.

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<sup>4</sup> Ultra-conservative branch of Sunni Islam

<sup>5</sup> Emigration

### *The Solution*

Prognostic framing involves expressing proposed solutions to the problem or ‘what is to be done’ to resolve the problem (Benford & Snow, 2000). As noted above, militant Islamist groups routinely state religious, political, or cultural threats from Western countries, as well as Muslim regimes. In order to counteract these threats, militant Islamist authors at the strategic level as well as a tactical level provide solutions.

At the strategic level, a short-term and long-term goal of many militant Islamist groups is to establish a caliphate in order to protect Islamic law and Islam against perceived enemies (Brachman & McCants, 2006; Payne, 2009; Rogan, 2010; Sageman, 2004). Bar (2016) argues that the current caliphate model being used by the self-proclaimed Islamic State “derives from its modern roots in Iraq and Syria and its ideological fountainhead of the Salafi-Jihadi *Weltanschauung* of al-Qaeda” (Bar, 2016, p. 7). Under the belief that Western countries have caused a virtuous religious community to stray from the true path of Islam, there is a call to revive a caliphate: a wholly Muslim community in which people would live their lives as instructed by the Prophet and under the rule of sharia law (Brachman & McCants, 2006; Payne, 2009; Rogan, 2010; Sageman, 2004; Torres, Jordán, & Horsburgh, 2006). Bar (2016) argues that the key element of the caliphate model is “Jihad against the non-Muslim world, and ‘making the work of Allah supreme in the world’” that is wholly free of Western influence (p. 7).

To facilitate the caliphate and sharia law solution, various tactical methods have emerged; the most prominent being to engage in violent jihad. Various scholars have suggested that violent jihad is presented as the ‘only option’ to fight perceived injustices (Bhui & Ibrahim, 2013; Holbrook, 2013; Torres, Jordán, & Horsburgh, 2006; Payne, 2009; Post, 2009). Online, there is no shortage of tactical manuals that cater to enhancing skill sets in terms of building various weapons,

bombs, as well as how to survive interrogations, or how to ‘blend in’ within Western culture (Page, Challita, & Harris, 2011; Sivek, 2013). In addition to practical manuals, efforts such as martyrdom are regularly encouraged and hailed as heroic (Sivek, 2013; Page, Challita, & Harris, 2011).

### *The Justifications*

The final framing element involved in the attempt to create consensus and mobilization in a social movement involves motivational framing. Motivational framing provides the rationale for engaging in collective action (Benford & Snow, 2000). Motivational frames will offer compelling accounts for engaging in collective action and sustaining the audience’s participation; paired with a vocabulary emphasis stressing “severity, urgency, efficacy, and propriety” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 617).

One common framing element in militant Islamist literature is legitimating and encouraging violent jihad as a religiously permissible action that has legal justifications founded in religious doctrine, or Islamic law (Bhui, K., & Ibrahim, Y, 2013; Chertoff, 2008; Holbrook, 2013; Page, Challita, & Harris, 2011; Rogan, 2010; Salem, Reid, & Chen, 2008; Schreiner, Williams, & Zuckerman, 2013; Sivek, 2013; Smith, Suedfeld, Conway, & Winter, 2008; Stout, 2009; Torres, Jordán, & Horsburgh, 2006; Venkatraman, 2007). Scholars argue that Islamist terrorism legitimates violence in order to preserve the Islamic community with an extreme interpretation of the Quran (Muthuswamy, 2014; Venkatraman, 2007). Participants who use an extreme interpretation of the Quran call for “unquestioned devotion and blind obedience” to the word of God in order to reject un-Islamic practices, encouraging Muslims to live their lives as envisioned by God (Venkatraman, 2007, p. 6). Religious arguments are interpreted and presented to legitimate violence as a means to return to the glory of original Islam and the path of the prophet, with assurances of victory through God’s will (Venkatraman, 2007).

Violent militant Islamist discourse that legitimates violence with religious and legal authority will commonly refer to select passages in the Quran for support or cite interpreted sharia law; statements from violent Islamist leaders such as Osama bin Laden or Ayman al-Zawahiri have demonstrated a combination of an interpreted Quran occasionally interlinked with current events (Torres, Jordán, & Horsburgh, 2006). Leaders of violent Islamist groups often rationalize and encourage violent jihad to the audience by means of referencing religious doctrine and sharia law interpretations to support returning back to the original state of Islam as practiced by the Prophet.

Spier (2018) argues that while scholars have previously addressed the use of verses from the Quran in violent militant Islamist discourse, few have addressed the “ways in which the scripture has been misappropriated – or ‘hijacked’” by these groups (p. 555). Taking 22 issues from Islamic State magazines *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, Spier’s (2018) study translates the content of the most occurring verses from the Quran that appear in the magazine and investigates the purpose of these verses in the groups messaging. Spier (2018) finds that the use of religious verses in these magazines serves to educate the reader of basic religious teachings, with the most common verses used to reinforce an us vs. them position encouraging “unity through isolation and positional distancing from the *Other*” (p. 565).

While Kuznar (2017) does not look at the use of religious text in Islamic State magazines, he looks at the role religious text plays in speeches released by leaders in the Islamic State. Kuznar (2017) argues that while publications such as *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* play an important role in conveying the messaging of the Islamic State group, the “ultimate source for their content is the ideological corpus of IS thought leaders” (p. 41). In regards to the religious narrative, Kuznar (2017) found that Islamic State leaders often utilized religion to stress “the need for violence in order to establish the caliphate, oppose evil, and ultimately, to bring about the second coming of

Christ” (p. 45). While these themes used in a religious context are not necessarily new in militant jihadist discourse, Kuznar (2017) argues that the Islamic State’s narrative is unique as religious themes are presented in a dichotomous style. Clear distinctions are made between friend and foe, and a complete commitment to violence is demonstrated in confronting anyone who does not adopt their specific interpretation of Islam (Kuznar, 2017).

Similar to Spier (2018), Kuznar and Moon’s (2014) study of speeches given by Islamic State leadership found that in general, the use of religious themes, the destiny of the caliphate, the honor and duty of fighting for Islam, and attacking various enemies such as “infidels”, “Shi’a”, “America”, and “Tyrants” all played a larger role in enabling the Islamic State to clearly define friends and enemies (p. 50). Kuznar and Moon (2014) argue that the creation of an us vs. them theme contributed to making a permissible case for the murder of those in the ‘them’ group.

Additionally, targeted emotional appeals are utilized to legitimize violent jihad against perceived enemies. Emotional appeals can exploit sentiments of anger, vengeance, humiliation, and victimization due to the stated injustices suffered by Muslim groups worldwide, usually by Western aggressors (Bhui, K., & Ibrahim, Y, 2013; Page, Challita, & Harris, 2011; Payne, 2009; O’Shaughnessy, & Baines, 2009; Prentice, Taylor, Rayson, Hoskins, O’Loughlin, B, 2011; Sivek, 2013). Militant jihadist groups such as AQAP<sup>6</sup> often use appeals founded in references to Muslim suffering across the globe; linking oppression experienced by the modern Muslim community to references to the crusades (Page, Challita, & Harris, 2011). An imagery of Muslim suffering “reinforces feelings of group identity and cultivates a desire for revenge” and will refer to injustices

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<sup>6</sup> Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

focusing on, for example, detainment conditions, security force abuses and civilian airstrikes (Page, Challita, & Harris, 2011, p. 160).

In addition to evoking feelings of anger and retribution, militant jihadist groups may use humiliation as a technique to encourage and rationalize violent jihad (Page, Challita, & Harris, 2011). Jihadist militant groups who use this strategy essentially rationalize violence by ‘shaming’ men into carrying out violent jihad by praising the actions of heroic women to cowardly men who are not brave enough to answer a call to arms; if the women are doing it, the men can do it (Page, Challita, & Harris, 2011). This strategy is often repeated by AQAP to humiliate men in communities with extreme “gender hierarchies” (Page, Challita, & Harris, 2011, p. 160).

Alternative rationalizations may focus on the actual rewards that participants can receive if they engage in violent jihad for the cause. Violent militant Islamist discourse will routinely spotlight status enhancement as a special reward that is awaiting martyrs upon participation in violent jihad (Holbrook, 2013; O’Shaughnessy, & Baines, 2009; Payne, 2009; Snow & Byrd, 2007; Sivek, 2013). Describing almost a ‘superhero’ type narrative, the martyr is assured that they will be remembered through “photographs, posters, murals, and plaques, exhibited in public places” – the reward is the fame and prestige it will bring to their family (Tosini, 2010, p. 401). Violent militant Islamist discourse will frequently praise and encourage emulating model figures, either historical characters or modern day martyrs, in an attempt to rationalize violent jihad (Page, Challita, & Harris, 2011; Prentice, Rayson, & Taylor, 2012; Sivek, 2013; Torres, Jordán, & Horsburgh, 2006). Militant jihadist discourse will include biographies of martyrs comparing them to the actions of historical figures (Page, Challita, & Harris, 2011; Prentice, S., Rayson, & Taylor, 2012; Torres, Jordán, & Horsburgh, 2006). The language that is often used in these biographies act as a testimonial to the martyr’s heroic, brave, and pious actions and demonstrate that they are

not forgotten in death (Prentice, Rayson, & Taylor, 2012; Sivek, 2013). Role models have included the “‘underwear bomber’ Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab; Faisal Shahzad; Roshonara Choudhury of England, who stabbed a British MP; and Stockholm suicide bomber Taimour Abdulwahhab al-Abdaly, who killed himself and injured two others” (Sivek, 2013, p. 14). The purpose of publishing biographies of martyrs not only lends credibility to groups vowing to conduct violent jihad but also utilize the concept of “mortality salience, in which the trapping of martyr imagery can lead to an increase in support for extremism when it is linked to group identity” (Page, Challita, & Harris, 2011, p. 162).

Within violent militant jihadist discourse there is also an overarching emphasis of ‘us vs. them’. While some discourse may emphasize the Muslim global community as one, there are frequent threats of consequences of failure to act. Threats of being labeled an apostate and messages critical of Muslim masses for being inactive and passive, and therefore not true Muslims are frequent (Boylan, 2015; Holbrook, 2013; Sivek, 2013).

### **1.5 Al-Qaeda’s on-line magazine *Inspire***

*Inspire* magazine is Al-Qaeda’s well-edited and polished digital magazine directed particularly towards Muslims in the West who feel dislocated and marginalized providing them with consistent and coherent messaging, motivation, and discourse to take action (Sivek, 2013). It’s central argument that violent jihad is a religious duty that should be undertaken against primarily Westerners is disseminated using strong emotional appeals such as guilt and fear given that “although *Inspire* readers may already be intellectually familiar with Al Qaeda’s arguments for individual jihad (awareness) and have adopted this perspective (interest), they may not yet

emotionally accept that violence must be done to fulfill the mission set forth” (Sivek, 2013, p. 13). Each call to violence in *Inspire* magazine is accompanied by a liberal use of quotations from the Quran and comments from scholars that are used to legitimate violence as well as idolizing those who have either attempted or completed violent actions in the name of Islam (Sivek, 2013).

Appealing to their Western target audience, the magazine emphasized an “ordinary guys turned superheroes” narrative (Sivek, 2013, p. 15). In addition, a secret identity is ‘glamorized’ in this superhero narrative (Sivek, 2013). The magazine featured articles such as “Qualities of an Urban Assassin” that played up an alternative identity including qualities such as the “ability to intermingle well into modern society and its culture...He seems to be an ordinary citizen in everyday clothing instead of appearing ultra-conservative in religion” (Sivek, 2013, p. 15).

*Inspire* justifies violence towards enemies by dehumanizing them: “the victim being viewed as subhuman and not as a person with feelings and qualities” (Sivek, 2013, p. 16). Lastly, Sivek (2013) states that jihadi ‘heroes’ are presented as “defenders of women” using “guilt and emotion” to encourage their readers to accept the use of violent actions, for example by noting “women’s deaths in fights with Western troops” calling on readers to defend “damsels in distress” (p. 16). In combination with this strong ideological narrative was a prominent operational knowledge section entitled ‘open source jihad’ that acted as a tactical resource manual for creating bombs and other weapons to be used in acts of violence (Sivek, 2013).

## **1.6 Conclusion**

This literature review has identified the importance of discourses, ideas, and justifications for violent religious action. It has shown the role of the internet in communicating those messages

and connecting people across the globe who share similar concerns. Finally, it has described how other researchers have analyzed the content of those messages through frame analysis. This analysis conflates content and form, does not appear to pay particular attention to the underlying logic of the arguments justifying and rendering legitimate the use of violence, and has not focused on how the organization is presented as legitimate. To contribute to this literature (which has mainly analyzed Al Qaeda discourses), my research asks the following question: how does the Islamic State's publication *Dabiq*<sup>7</sup> magazine attempt to persuade non-Arabic readers of directly or indirectly supporting and/or joining ISIS?

In order to answer this question, my specific goals are:

- Examine the 'form', the manner in which ideas or messages are disseminated by looking at the rhetorical strategies deployed and the rhetorical styles used throughout the magazine
- Explore the content, the messages or ideas, that *Dabiq* is using to persuade its readers by:
  - o Exploring the way in which *Dabiq* frames ISIS and its enemies
  - o Describing *Dabiq*'s analysis of the 'problem' Islam is currently facing and the solution they advocate for
  - o Identifying the underlying logics of the justifications provided for its violent and non-violent actions

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<sup>7</sup> *Dabiq* magazine is an online magazine, published by the Islamic State.

## Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

The literature using frame analysis has provided with helpful insights into how organizations attempt to convince their targeted audience (potential members and supporters, sympathizers...) that their actions are well founded. They do this by defining the problem in a certain way, then proposing a solution that makes sense to the problem identified and then providing the motivational frame to get their audience to partake or contribute to the organization. However, I highlighted how the literature does not differentiate between content and form. Moreover, the motivational frame seemed to lack a theoretical structuring and looked haphazard in their description of the justifications the organization provides. This thesis attempts to contribute to the literature by using rhetorical analysis and vocabularies of motive to analyze how *Dabiq* magazine attempts to convince its readers of joining or supporting ISIS. I will be using rhetorical analysis in order to examine the form, the manner, in which *Dabiq* magazine disseminates its messages and I will be relying on frame analysis and vocabularies of motive to analyze the content of the messages or ideas *Dabiq* communicates.

### 2.1 Rhetorical Analysis

Having roots in the ancient world, the study of rhetoric “embodied the principles and rules for effective communication” (Horner, 1988, p. 2). The art of rhetoric emphasized spoken and written language skills that empowered the speaker to persuade others, to motivate people to think and act (Horner, 1988). Rhetorical analysis studies not only how individuals persuade and effectively communicate with their audience through language but also how the audience is persuaded and understands what is being communicated (Longaker & Walker, 2011; Selzer, 2004).

Selzer (2004) states that it is helpful to approach rhetorical analysis as a critical reading of the text. Comparing it to “eavesdropping”, the reader gains a better understanding of not only the content but how the content is being conveyed and delivered to the particular audience (Selzer, 2004, p. 282). When researchers are conducting a rhetorical analysis, it is critical to consider how ideas are being shaped and delivered to the target audience “in a particular form for a specific purpose” (Selzer, 2004, p. 282 – 283). Selzer (2004) states that while there is no one ‘correct’ way to approach rhetorical analysis, there are generally two approaches. One approach to rhetorical analysis relies less on the actual text and more on the actual larger context in which the text is placed in (Selzer, 2004). In this approach, the researcher uses the larger context of the situation to assist them to better understand the actual text (Selzer, 2004). Another approach to rhetorical analysis focuses on the text rather than the larger context (Selzer, 2004). In this approach, the researcher uses a form of “rhetorical terminology”<sup>8</sup> to assist in the analysis of the text (Selzer, 2004, p. 283). This thesis will concentrate on this textual approach, referring to Aristotle’s *On Rhetoric*. Aristotle (2006) defined rhetoric as “an ability in each particular case, to see the available means of persuasion” (p. 37). Referencing Book I of Aristotle’s *On Rhetoric*, I will discuss the three categories of rhetoric (deliberative, judicial, and epideictic). Referencing Book II, I will discuss the three rhetorical appeals as outlined by Aristotle (ethos, pathos, logos).

### **2.1.1 Categories of Rhetoric (rhetorical styles)**

Aristotle (2006) states that there are three categories of rhetoric that can be presented by the speaker: *deliberative, judicial, and epideictic* rhetoric. *Deliberative* rhetoric is a judge of future action and is concerned with the best interest of the audience, urging the audience either to “do or

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<sup>8</sup> “Rhetorical terminology” refers to the tools that researchers can use to assist them in actually analyzing their text (Selzer, 2004, pg. 283).

not do something” (Horner, 1988, p. 13; Kennedy, 2007, p. 20). *Judicial* rhetoric is a judge of past actions and is concerned with justice, either an attack or a defense of an individual (Horner, 1988; Kennedy, 2007, p. 20). Rhetoric is *epideictic* if it concerned with the praise or blame of the subject. (Horner, 1988; Kennedy, 2007, p. 20). Aristotle (2006) states that epideictic rhetoric is perhaps the most important of the styles as it reflects the ‘present’. While praise and blame is given, the audience is also reminded of the past and is given projections for a future course of action (Aristotle, 2006). In using these rhetorical styles, it is beneficial to the orator to identify the rhetorical style that is most appropriate depending on the audience and occasion that they are addressing (Horner, 1988; Pepe, 2013).

Kallendorf and Kallendorf (1985) recognize that Aristotle’s practice of rhetoric takes place primarily in a political setting with judicial rhetoric described as “speeches of prosecution and defense in the courts”, epideictic rhetoric described as “ceremonial and display speeches”, and deliberative rhetoric described as, “speeches of counsel and advice” (Kallendorf & Kallendorf, 1985, p. 44). This division of rhetorical styles was appropriate for Aristotle’s time period but as centuries progressed, more people were given opportunities to speak and write in new formats outside of the political setting (Kallendorf & Kallendorf, 1985). This development has provided researchers with many opportunities to apply rhetorical styles to a variety of settings, and explore the use of rhetoric outside of a political environment; something this thesis takes advantage of as the practice of rhetoric would not traditionally apply to new formats such as *Dabiq* magazine.

### **2.1.2 Rhetorical Appeals (rhetorical strategies)**

The classical approach I will rely upon to analyze arguments presented in *Dabiq* magazine is Aristotle’s classification of *pisteis*, which are described as three main modes of proof or appeal: ethos, logos, and pathos (Aristotle, 2006). The predominant meaning of *ethos* for Aristotle is

centered on the “moral character”, and most importantly the trustworthiness of the speaker (Kennedy, 2011, p. 148). The *ethos* of the speaker can include the “reputation, credentials, knowledge of the subject, intelligence, fair-mindedness, honesty, goodwill, and general moral quality” (Longaker & Walker, 2011, p. 45). Aristotle regards character as almost the most authoritative form of persuasion – “there is persuasion through character whenever the speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence; for we believe fair-minded people to a greater extent and more quickly than we do others, on all subjects in general and completely so in cases where there is not exact knowledge but room for doubt” (Aristotle, 2006, p. 38-39).

Aristotle (2006) states that “persuasion occurs through the arguments [*logoi*] when we show the truth or the apparent truth from whatever is persuasive in each case” (p. 39). Longaker and Walker (2011) describe *logos* as the reasoning itself – in direct argumentation, it is the “stated reason or reasons and/or evidence given in support of a conclusions; in indirect argumentation, it is the unspoken relationships between the speakers’ statements and the conclusions (inferences) they encourage the audience to draw” (p. 47)

Aristotle (2006) states that there is persuasion “through the hearers when they are left to feel emotion [*pathos*] by the speech; for we do not give the same judgment when grieved and rejoicing or when being friendly and hostile” (p. 39). Longaker and Walker (2011) describe *pathos* as the emotion of the audience – “the mood or feeling motivates the audience to believe or do something. It is often said that pathos – desire, fear, anger, love, and so on – moves a person to take action” (p. 46). Longaker and Walker (2011) state that in order for an analyst to identify the appeal to pathos, they must be able to identify and describe what specific emotion would get evoked and to provide some insight as to why that particular emotion would be invoked.

Rhetorical analysis will enable me to achieve my first specific goal of analyzing the form (the rhetorical styles and the rhetorical strategies) deployed to persuade the audiences of *Dabiq* magazine. It is a fitting counterpart to frame analysis and vocabularies of motive, which will be used to analyze the content of their statements; in particular, the specific arguments provided supporting violent jihad.

## **2.2 Vocabularies of Motive**

Using vocabularies of motive, my analysis will focus on the arguments provided by *Dabiq* to encourage support for ISIS, boost its membership and justify its actions. There are two traditions within vocabularies of motive: one focuses on attributing meaning to action, largely driven by some internal reflection that drives individuals to act; the other focuses on attributing meaning to action, largely as a social process where motives are given because the actions of the actor have been questioned. It is the latter tradition I will be using for the thesis. I will therefore explain in more detail the second tradition, ‘motive talk’, and present the models created by Sykes and Matza (1957), Lyman and Scott (1968), and Hewitt and Stokes (1975).

### **2.2.1 Motive as an Internal Process**

The first tradition considers that meanings attributed to motives are largely an internal psychological process – something within the individual that drives them to act. In this tradition, the meaning attributed to motive is anchored in the actor’s personality: the meaning of an action and the “emotional needs and desired goals which are related to it” are the result of the actors’ reflection on their subjective life experiences (Burger, 1977, p. 130). The internal position assumes human conduct can be understood in the context of the particular subjective meaning the actor has

attached to it (Burger, 1977; Campbell, 1996). Burger (1977) argues that Max Weber's original conception of motive saw the meaning of conduct to be found within the individual, focusing on the need to consider the conscious or unconscious feelings and emotions of the actor. For Weber, understanding motive was not solely about understanding the reasons for an individual's action; rather, it involved exploring the actual meaningful context of the action including the "institutional, cultural and psychological" dimensions (Campbell, 1996, p. 104).

Weber proposes that "historically and sociologically relevant meaning of conduct can be (partly) determined by identifying the acting individuals' psychic and mental contents" (Burger, 1977, p. 129). It is not only actions that need to be understood; the underlying emotions, intentions, and "rational motives" – "conscious or unconscious" – must be taken into account in order to understand action (Burger, 1977, p. 129). Weber defined motive as "a complex of subjective meaning which seems to the actor himself or to the observer an adequate ground for the conduct in question" (Campbell, 1996, p. 103). As a psychological and internal process, motive explains "actual course of behaviour"; in other words "what makes him do this at precisely this moment and in these circumstances" (Campbell, 1996, p. 103). Motives initiated in conversation are likely a result of introspection or self-observation, not out of being questioned by other people (Campbell, 1996).

### **2.2.2 Motives as a Social Experience**

The second tradition to understanding action focuses on motives as primarily a social experience. C. Wright Mills (1940) challenges Weber's assumption that motives arise from something within an individual. This tradition focuses solely on the words used to publicly articulate an action and therefore views motive purely as a social experience (Mills, 1940). A central tenet of vocabularies of motive entails that questions of motive will only become apparent

when the actor is 'frustrated' in some way, such as when the actor feels the need to defend or justify their actions to others who are questioning their conduct – a need primarily felt in social situations (Campbell, 1996; Mills, 1940). For Mills (1940), motives are distinctly words offered as justifications to a conduct that is questioned by someone.

The terminology used to provide a motive by an actor might vary depending on the group that the actor is addressing (Mills, 1940). The motives an actor gives to a group can be controlled and tailored if the actor knows the characteristics that make up the group being addressed (Mills, 1940). When the actor is appealing to others involved in the act, the motive is used as a “strategy of action” (Mills, 1940, p. 907). In order to act in social situations, there needs to be agreement for the reasons of the act or else the act risks being abandoned without the larger group buying-in (Mills, 1940). When the actor provides a verbal motive for their conduct, they are not only influencing themselves but trying to influence others as well; in this case the motive is not simply a description of their conduct but also acts as a means to influence and motivate others to act (Mills, 1940).

While motives for Mills (1940) focuses solely on the words that an actor provides to account for their conduct, Mills (1940) stresses that when interpreting an actors motive, you need to go further than looking at a list of all the words used to describe their conduct; rather, you need to holistically consider the vocabulary that is being used in context to “historic epochs and specified situations” (p. 913). Mills’ (1940) development of vocabularies of motive holds that motives are distinctly words and “do not denote any elements ‘in’ individuals” (p. 905). When we interpret a motive from an actor, all we can meaningfully expect is an account of their conduct in their own vocabulary and consider it in the specific situation and social context (Mills, 1940).

Kenneth Burke also discusses motive as a social experience. Benoit (1996) argues that while there is a body of literature that interprets Burke's (1945) *dramatism* method<sup>9</sup> as including internal drivers that have an influence on motives and behaviour, most of the interpretations of Burke's work on motive have focused on describing the use of language to describe actions<sup>10</sup>. While internal influences are not explicitly disregarded, Benoit (1996) argues that Burke's writing gives indication that he was primarily concerned with motives in discourse not as internal states:

In a rounded statement about motives, you must have some word that names the *act* (names what took place, in thought or deed), and another that names the *scene* (the background of the act, the situation in which it occurred); also, you must indicate what person or kind of person (*agent*) performed the act, what means or instruments he used (*agency*), and the *purpose*...any complete statement about motives will offer some kind of answers to these five questions: what was done (act), when or where it was done (scene), who did it (agent), how he did it (agency), and why (purpose) ” (Burke, 1945, p. xv as quoted by Benoit, 1996 p. 72).

This statement by Burke (1945) reinforces that the *dramatism* method is used to attribute motives to action. Benoit (1996) brings attention to the explicit use of the term 'statement' within this passage, identifying motives as a form of discourse rather than an internal state. Burke highlights the actor's choice to select and provide different variations of a motive, depending on the audience

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<sup>9</sup> In *A Grammar of Motives*, Burke (1945) discusses the dramatic pentad method as a means to attribute motives to action. The *dramatism* method can be used to help understand an actor's action and why the actor did it. To help understand, Burke (1945) focuses on the five key elements of dramatism: Act, Scene, Agent, Agency, and Purpose. Burke (1945) argues that when we are assigning motives to actions, applying statements that resolve these key five terms will give us an understanding of a "rounded statement about motives" (p. xv). Addressing the 'Act' will provide context to what the actual action was – what was the action? What took place? (Burke, 1945). Addressing the 'Scene' will provide context to where the action exactly took place or when exactly it took place (Burke, 1945). Addressing the 'Agent' will provide context to who exactly carried out the action (Burke, 1945). Addressing 'Agency' will provide context to how the actor actually carried out the action (Burke, 1945). Lastly, addressing 'Purpose' will ask why the action was carried out (Burke, 1945).

<sup>10</sup> Benoit (1996) states that the term 'motive' is commonly read and understood as an internal factor that influences an individual's behaviour, citing the term as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary and emphasizing 'motive' as a 'cognitive' state including words such as 'desire', 'fear', 'emotion', and 'volition'. Benoit (1996) states that various scholars have interpreted Burke's work on motive as a "construct that shapes or causes human behaviour", viewing motive as a cognitive process, an unconscious process, or an influence of various factors coming together to drive an actor to act (p. 69). Benoit (1996) argues that while some scholars have used Burke's work on motive and the pentad to look at the internal influence that can have an impact on action, most of the interpretations of Burke's work on motive have focused on describing the use of language to describe actions.

that the actor is addressing, strategically choosing the “most favorable motive” to their audience (Benoit, 1996, p. 73). Because the actor has the choice to select and provide various motives to an audience, the “motive presented in the discourse may be different from (and probably more simple than) the ‘actual’ motive” (Benoit, 1996, p. 76). The following section showcases the different models of motive talk developed by scholars working within Mills’ and Burke’s approach to vocabularies of motive.

## **2.3 Motive Talk**

In this section I present the different models produced by Sykes and Matza (1957), Scott and Lyman (1968) and Hewitt and Stokes (1975) to analyze motive talk.

### **2.3.1 Techniques of Neutralization**

Sykes and Matza’s (1957) work focuses on categorizing justifications given that an individual can avoid “moral culpability” for their criminal action if they can prove that they did not have the “criminal intent” to carry out the action (p. 666). Interestingly, these justifications are viewed as either preceding or following the deviant behavior and protects the individual from “self-blame and the blame of others after the act” (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 666). The following excerpt from Sykes and Matza’s (1957) *Techniques of Neutralization* describes how juveniles can prepare themselves to engage in delinquency without damaging their self-image:

Disapproval flowing from internalized norms and conforming others in the social environment is neutralized, turned back, or deflected in advance. Social controls that serve to check or inhibit deviant motivational patterns are rendered inoperative, and the individual is freed to engage in delinquency without serious damage to his self image (p. 667).

Sykes and Matza (1957) identify five major techniques that individuals use to deflect blame from themselves. The first technique, *denial of responsibility*, claims that if an individual can deny responsibility for an act, disapproval of that act is significantly reduced or mitigated (Sykes & Matza, 1957). More than stating an act as an 'accident' to negate personal responsibility, the individual can attribute blame to forces outside of their control such as living in a bad neighbourhood (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 667). The second technique, *denial of injury*, focuses on the harm caused by the delinquent act. Sykes and Matza (1957) state that the delinquent distinguishes between an act that is "wrong in themselves and acts that are illegal but not immoral" (p. 667). Using vandalism as an example, Sykes and Matza (1957) illustrate this technique by stating that the individual may view the act of vandalizing as simply "mischief" if they believe the property owners look like they can afford to fix their outcome of their actions (p. 667). The third technique, *the denial of the victim*, maintains that even if the delinquent "accepts the responsibility for his deviant actions and is willing to admit that his deviant actions involve an injury or hurt, the moral indignation of self and others may be neutralized by an insistence that the injury is not wrong in light of the circumstances" (p. 668). The act is not really an injury but rather a "rightful retaliation or punishment" (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 668). The fourth technique, *the condemnation of the condemners*, focuses on the shift of attention from his "own delinquent acts to the motives and behavior of those who disapprove of his violations" (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 668). The condemners may be labelled as hypocrites or deviants – the individual will justify their action because it is no worse than the acts of the condemners (Sykes & Matza, 1957). The final technique, *the appeal to higher loyalties*, entails that "internal and external social controls may be neutralized by sacrificing the demands of the larger society for the demands of the smaller social groups to which the delinquent belongs" (p. 669). Sykes and Matza (1957) state that the delinquent may not

reject the norms of the dominant system, despite the “failure to follow them”, rather, the delinquent is in a dilemma between the expectations of the social group and the expectations of the wider society in general (p. 669). Overall, Sykes and Matza (1957) state that techniques of neutralization are widely and effectively used to justify behaviour and lessen the “effectiveness of social controls” of a larger society (p. 669).

Stanley Cohen (2001) draws from Sykes and Matza’s work to look at how perpetrators and officials account for public and political atrocities. In Cohen’s (2001) account for denials, he acknowledges the five core components of Sykes and Matza’s (1957) techniques of neutralization and adds two more: *denial of knowledge* and *moral indifference*. *Denial of knowledge* occurs when actors claim to not know the actions of themselves or others around them (Cohen, 2001). Cohen (2001) states that the “public knowledge of atrocities and social suffering varies according to political setting, length of conflict, control over mass media, visibility, geographical spread, proportion of the population involved, and much else” (p. 78). However, Cohen (2001) states not to expect to be provided with a denial of knowledge from ‘ideological perpetrators’ as they will often know what exactly is happening, “what they did”, how it was justified – and probably is still justified (p. 78).

*Moral indifference* on the other hand is the “absence of even token appeals to conventional morality – no neutralization because there is nothing to neutralize” (Cohen, 2001, p. 77). Cohen (2001) states, “By definition, neutralization theory has nothing to say about truly radical and consistent repudiations of conventional moral codes” (p. 77). Cohen (2001) uses *radical* not as denying the existence of moral codes such as “(‘I didn’t know rape was wrong’)” but denying their moral legitimacy (p. 98). Cohen (2001) goes on to state specifically that “fundamentalist religion is even more radical, by excluding the very possibility of secular law or morality” (p. 98). When

*moral indifference* is used, there is no real requirement to neutralize because “there is no morally legitimate universe outside the ideology” (Cohen, 2001, p. 98).

### 2.3.2 Accounts

Scott and Lyman (1968) argue that there are two types of accounts: excuses and justifications. Either or both of these types are likely to be used when an individual’s conduct is questioned for doing something “wrong” (Scott & Lyman, 1968, p. 47). Justifications are “accounts in which one accepts responsibility for the act in question, but denies the pejorative quality associated with it” (p. 47). For example, a soldier may admit that he has killed other men but will deny the act as being immoral since the other men were the part of the enemy group and “deserved” it (Scott & Lyman, 1968, p. 47). Justifications attribute a positive value to a behaviour that is socially questionable, using socially acceptable vocabularies that can be given as a response to when an actor’s behaviour is questioned (Scott & Lyman, 1968). Scott & Lyman (1968) use four out of the five *techniques of neutralization* as described by Sykes and Matza (1957) and puts emphasis on denial of injury, denial of victim, condemnation of condemners, and appeal to higher loyalties. Additionally, Scott and Lyman (1968) add two other types of justifications: sad tales and self-fulfillment. Scott and Lyman (1968) describe a sad tale as the presentation of facts from an actor’s miserable past used to help reason and explain the actor’s current behaviour. Self-fulfillment is described as grounds for an individual’s conduct with an emphasis on a ‘before’ and ‘after’ state; justifying actions that have taken the individual to the ‘after’ state, helping them to achieve a higher level of comfort and understanding with themselves (Scott & Lyman, 1968).

In contrast, excuses are “accounts in which one admits that the act in question is bad, wrong, or inappropriate but denies full responsibility” (Scott & Lyman, 1968, p. 47). For example, the soldier may admit that the act is ‘bad, wrong, or inappropriate’, but claim that they were under

orders to do so and obeyed (p. 47). Scott and Lyman (1968) distinguish between four types of excuses: appeal to accidents, appeal to defeasibility, appeal to biological drives, and scapegoating. Excuses appealing to an accident as the “source of conduct” are often blamed on hazards in the environment and often mitigate or relieve the consequences of the act as accidents are irregular and often out of the individual’s control (Scott & Lyman, 1968, p. 47). Appealing to defeasibility is an available form of excuse because it contains a mental element (Scott & Lyman, 1968). Using “knowledge” and “will” as components of the mental element, an individual can argue that they did not have all of the facts or were not completely acting on their own free will (Scott & Lyman, 1968, p. 48). Biological drives is another type of excuse that can be used as Scott and Lyman (1968) state that there is still a belief that the biological factors unique to each individual play a part in determining their behaviour. One such common excuse is “men are like that” – invoking sex linked traits that can govern the individual beyond their will (Scott & Lyman, 1968, p. 49). The final excuse is scapegoating: a person will state that their behavior is in response to the behavior of another person (Scott & Lyman, 1968).

### **2.3.3 Disclaimers**

Hewitt and Stokes (1975) contribute to the theorization of motive talk through a discussion of disclaimers. An individual will use a disclaimer when they know in advance that people will find their behaviour problematic. As some actors may recognize that their actions may lead them being characterized in a negative way, the actor may prepare for this as means to protect a social interaction that might become damaged following the actor’s action (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975). A disclaimer is thus “a verbal device employed to ward off and defeat in advance, doubts and negative typifications which may result from intended conduct” (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975, p. 3). An example of a disclaimer in speech is “This may make you unhappy, but...” (Hewitt & Stokes,

1975, p. 3). When used in speech, the individual accounts for the possible negative reaction and attempts to manage the meaning of the social situation (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975).

Hewitt and Stokes (1975) describe five different types of disclaimers that reflect various different sets of conditions for use. *Hedging* is a disclaimer that is used in conversation that intentionally signals “minimal commitment” to the impending conduct and an openness to receive criticism or become better informed (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975, p. 4). An example of hedging would be “I’m no expert, of course, but...” (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975, p. 4). *Credentialing* is a disclaimer used when the individual knows the outcome of the act will be questioned but regardless, is committed to the act (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975). An example of credentialing is “I’m not prejudiced – some of my best friends are Jews, but...” (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975, p. 4). Using this disclaimer, an individual seeks to avoid unwanted reactions by establishing a ‘special qualification’ that permits them to treat the issue as if they do not need to use the disclaimer in the first place (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975). *Sin licenses* are another type of disclaimer (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975). This type of disclaimer is invoked when the “actor is committed to a line of conduct and is certain of a negative response, but does not fear some specific undesired typification” (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975, p. 5). An example of sin licenses is “What I’m going to do is contrary to the letter of the law but not its spirit...” (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975, p. 5). Using a sin licensing disclaimer, the actor acknowledges that their act would normally be deemed a violation in advance of their action (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975). *Cognitive disclaimers* are used when an individual anticipates that their words or actions will be perceived by others as lacking sense or “out of touch with empirical reality” (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975, p. 5). An example of a cognitive disclaimer is “Don’t react right away to what I’m going to do.” (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975, p. 5). *Appeals for the suspension of judgment* is the final disclaimer outlined by Hewitt and Stokes (1975). Appeals for the suspension of judgment is used

in social situation where a group of people work to achieve common ends (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975). An example of this disclaimer is “Hear me out before you explode.” (Hewitt & Stokes, 1976, p. 6). An individual can use this disclaimer when they believe their actions may offend or anger their friends (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975). Under this context, the individual appeals to their audience to suspend judgment until “the full meaning of the act can be made known” (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975, p. 6).

Hewitt and Stokes (1975) state that in the interests of preserving identities, “situationally appropriate norms, meanings, and judgmental standards must be taken into account” as the actor manages expectations and prepares for potential reactions to their questionable conduct against wider culturally acceptable norms (p. 11). Hewitt and Stokes (1975) call this process “aligning actions” as they serve to bring the individual’s questionable conduct into line with “cultural constraints” (p. 11).

## **2.4 Conclusion**

I will use rhetorical analysis to examine the ‘form’ through which *Dabiq* communicates its messages to its audience. More specifically I will be looking at the rhetorical styles (deliberative, judicial, and epideictic) and the rhetorical strategies (ethos, pathos, and logos) used to deliver the content of *Dabiq* magazine. I will draw on frame analysis to explore how *Dabiq* magazine presents the ‘problems’, how they present the various parties involved, and what the proposed solution to these problems looks like. These are essential elements of motive talk as they provide the context in which motive talk takes place. I will then use motive talk, more specifically Sykes and Matza’s

Techniques of Neutralization and Scott and Lyman's excuses to analyze how *Dabiq* magazine defends their actions in their effort to persuade readers of supporting and/or joining ISIS.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, I will present my justifications for choosing to analyze *Dabiq* magazine, and specifically issue 7. I will then present the research methods I used to produce and analyze my empirical material; particularly focusing on how I conducted rhetorical analysis and thematic analysis. Lastly, I will present challenges and limitations to these methods.

### 3.1 Documentary Analysis

I used documentary analysis as the technique to produce the empirical material for this thesis. My research goal was to see how *Dabiq* attempts to convince Western readers to support and/or join ISIS. Clearly, gaining access to the population was impossible, but I wanted to gain an understanding of the strategies the group uses to communicate with a Western audience. Suitable to my research goal, documentary analysis was a relevant technique to pursue as *Dabiq* provided me with access to the group's own written text, acting as an unobtrusive measure that did not require me to directly communicate with the population through, for example, interviews (Esterberg, 2002). Documentary analysis proved to be particularly valuable to this research as *Dabiq* provided an understanding on how ISIS chooses to not only represent themselves to Western readers in this particular text but also how they attempt to persuade their readers of joining and/or supporting the group

In a discussion on the limitations of documentary analysis, Platt (1981) addresses the availability of documents, particularly concerned with the "inadequate quantity of data" that researchers may face (p. 35). Platt's (1981) concern with an inadequate amount of data lies in the possibility that researchers may "over-interpret" the data that is available and treat it as perhaps more important than it actually is (p. 35). Using *Dabiq* magazine as my sample, I had access to the

entire published document set and did not encounter a shortage of data to analyze. Additionally, I did not encounter a limitation that a researcher may face when they are forced to evaluate when exactly it is reasonable to stop collecting documents as the *Dabiq* data set is reasonably sized and did not force me to stop collecting (Platt, 1981).

One limitation I experienced with documentary analysis was identifying my sample and choosing an issue that would be representative of the magazine. Platt (1981) states that a sample will only be useful if the researcher knows “about the population” (p. 38). This is accomplished through a “controlled section” that involves reviewing and choosing a sample based “on principles” that do not relate to the researcher’s main purpose (Platt, 1981). In doing this, the researcher reduces the possibility of bias by not only selecting documents that support their research (Platt, 1981). In order to account for this, I selected an issue that was not necessarily a document that was more important than the others but was an appropriate representation of the document collection as a whole. I engaged in a detailed reading of the first 14 issues in order to identify the type of content from each section, and the overall messages that were being communicated. The ‘principles’ that I used to select issue 7 focused on the format of the magazine, not the actual messaging of the magazine. As a magazine, *Dabiq* undergoes a type of evolution. As the issues progress, the aesthetic format and the types of sections that are included in the magazine expand. It is with issue 7 that *Dabiq* settles with a consistent format.

I chose to work with a deductive strategy to look for specific items such as positive representations of the group, negative representations of various enemy groups, and specific justifications for engaging in violent action. This strategy was an advantage to me as it kept me concise and organized while I looked for specific content and form strategies.

### 3.2 *Dabiq* Magazine

Through the earlier literature review, I identified the discourses, ideas, and justifications for violent religious action and the role that the internet plays in communicating those messages and connecting people who share similar perspectives. The literature analyzing discourses focused primarily on those produced by al-Qaeda after September 11<sup>th</sup> and how that specific group used the Internet to communicate its messages. In order to contribute to the literature, I chose to analyse the Islamic State's digital magazine *Dabiq* to see how it attempts to persuade non-Arabic readers of supporting and/or joining ISIS.

The increased news coverage of ISIS and of its magazine *Dabiq* is what led me to find out about the publication in the first place. As the group gained more media attention, news reports commented on *Dabiq*, claiming it to be “‘slick’ and ‘glossy’, an aesthetic masterpiece” (Colas, 2016, p. 173). As Mahood and Rane (2017) declare, “the most readily accessible material is also likely to be the most popular and widely viewed content available” (p. 21). *Dabiq* magazine is an online magazine that is published by ‘Al Hayat Media’, the multilingual publishing centre of the self-proclaimed Islamic State. The magazine is easily obtainable online by a variety of sources with a quick Google search of ‘*Dabiq* magazine’ returning several options for accessing the magazine on the first page of the results. After exploring the magazine, I chose *Dabiq* precisely because it is a readily accessible publication available in English that actively appeals and addresses a Western audience.

The first issue of *Dabiq* ‘The Return of the Khilafah’ was released in July 2014, shortly after Mosul fell and was captured and claimed by ISIS (Colas, 2016). Over the course of the 15 issues, *Dabiq* developed a specific brand geared towards Western English readers that looks professional with an aesthetically polished look and read. With each issue, there was an increasing

feel of professionalism. The magazine incorporated more aesthetically polished images, featured more professional type photography keeping in theme with the articles they were featuring and slowly expanding the number of sections in the magazine. Using carefully selected high-resolution images and a structured layout; the magazine currently has a feel that resonates to a Western audience accustomed to the appearance of Time magazine or the Economist.

Indeed, several features of the magazine promote a look and feel a Western reader would likely respond to. The front cover of the magazine features in large bold letters ‘*DABIQ*’ at the top of the page alongside the issue number. Underneath the title in a smaller font, the date in month and year format is given, aligning to dates to the Islamic calendar. The rest of the front page is dedicated to displaying a large image, which compliments the title of the ‘Feature’ to be found inside the issue. In each of the issues, a table of contents is provided along with appropriate page numbers, giving insight into all of the articles that are to be found in each issue. Additionally, each issue includes page numbers and footers that indicate to the reader which section the article they are reading falls under. For example, the article titled “A Jihād without Fighting” in issue 11 falls under the footer ‘To Our Sisters’, aligning with the table of contents section (*Dabiq*, September 2015, p. 40). In addition to these small format features that resonate with Western magazines, the magazine is in the English language and at times uses anglicized Arabic terms, occasionally including the definition of the term, assisting a Western reader to understand what the authors are trying to convey. Furthermore, the magazine attempts to resonate with English speaking Western readers as the issues attempt to address concerns or realities specific to Western countries and Western readers.

The following table provides a short description of each section that is included in *Dabiq*. In providing this description, this gives the reader an idea of the type of content and the overall

themes that are being communicated across the issues before delving into the actual form and content used to spread their messaging. Conducting a detailed reading of the first 14 issues was instrumental in selecting issue 7 for a detailed analysis. I found that as the issues progressed, it is with issue 7 of *Dabiq* that the magazine seems to have settled not only on the type of content that will be featured but also the form and style of the publication.

| Section Name                 | Description/Themes   |
|------------------------------|--|
| <i>Foreword</i>              | Average of two pages in length. Several consistent themes include the promise of Allah to ISIS, reinforcing the necessity for violent jihad as a means to defend Islam, supporting the rejection of nationalism, and promoting the global expansion of the group.  |
| <i>Article</i>               | Ranges from 5 to 20 pages in length. While the article section covers a diverse range of topics, there are three particular themes that stand out across the issues including providing the reader with guidance and support for various practices, discrediting rival opposition groups, and the rejection of nationalism and democracy.  |
| <i>Islamic State Reports</i> | Information in this section overwhelmingly comments on events occurring within Islamic State self-proclaimed territory. With regular titles relating to operations across the Islamic State self-proclaimed territory, it is only in issue 11 where the magazine starts presenting the 'Reports' section as operations conducted 'by the Islamic State', rather than 'across the Islamic State', showing a shift to including the actions of those who have pledged allegiance to ISIS around the world rather than just actions within ISIS self-proclaimed territory. Prominent themes in this section include the 'normalization' of daily life in ISIS self-proclaimed territory, the continued expansion as more groups pledge allegiance, and the regular implementation and enforcement of Islamic Law in ISIS self-proclaimed territory. |
| <i>Wisom/Hikmah</i>          | Approximately one to two pages in length. The section exclusively features Islamic scholarship that is used to advocate various ideological positions of ISIS such as the responsibility to emigrate to ISIS self-proclaimed territory (Issue 8, Issue 2), a warning regarding 'misleading scholars' (Issue 6), or the best qualities that make up a martyr (Issue 13). Unique to this section is the lack of commentary from writers of <i>Dabiq</i> . Instead, Islamic scholarship is featured, along with a title that is selected by the writers of <i>Dabiq</i> , expressing the sentiment representative of ISIS within the featured scholarship. The section largely expects the reader to interpret the text on their own.   |

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|----------------------------------|---|
| <i>In the Words of the Enemy</i> | Approximately three pages in length. In each issue, at least one ‘enemy’ is featured. Quite often, the featured enemy is a prominent political figure such as Barack Obama, Benjamin Netanyahu, Chuck Hagel, or Michael Scheuer. The presentation of this section is unique as aside from a brief introduction on who the chosen enemy is, the majority of the text is dedicated to featuring an excerpt of a speech or article that the chosen featured enemy has publicly stated. All of the featured excerpts largely criticize ISIS, however, at the same time the excerpts that are published act as a compliment for ISIS and their achievements – all in the words of their enemy.   |
| <i>Feature</i>                   | Approximately 13 pages in length. The ‘Feature’ section is the article that is first introduced on the cover page of the <i>Dabiq</i> issue with a similar title and large photo image that gives insight into what the article will address. While the content of all the issues vary, there are several prominent themes throughout the issues that consistently emerge, including the theme of encouraging emigration as well as discrediting opposition groups.   |
| <i>Advertisements</i>            | Approximately one page in length. While not distinctly presented as ‘advertisements’, <i>Dabiq</i> heavily features advertisements distributed from the Islamic State’s Al Hayat Media Center and are especially prominent through issues 7 – 14. Advertisements in <i>Dabiq</i> provide promotion for other free resources that the reader can access, encouraging readers to access various communication mediums such as through video, music, or radio, in addition to reading <i>Dabiq</i> magazine.   |
| <i>Shuhadā</i>                   | Approximately two pages in length. From issues 7 through 14, there is a section titled ‘Among the Believers are Men’ followed by the name of the individual that is featured. Additionally, the article is subtitled ‘Shuhadā’. <i>Dabiq</i> uses this section as an obituary for selected soldiers of ISIS, with an entire article dedicated to the memory of one chosen ISIS soldier. The articles are relatively short, and will feature photos of the individual, usually smiling, as well as photos in their deceased state.   |
| <i>To Our Sisters</i>            | Issues 7 through 14 include a dedicated section for the female reader, alternatively titled ‘To Our Sisters’ or ‘From Our Sisters’. This section is unique as apart from articles presumably authored by John Cantlie, this is the only other section to regularly state the author of the article, Umm Sumayyah al-Muhājirah, indicating a female author. The articles in this section are fairly text heavy. Noticeably absent from this female targeted section is the use of violent images that are quite prominent in other sections of <i>Dabiq</i> . Images in this section are noticeably softer in appearance, characterized with panoramic scenery, flowers, children, or alternatively quite plain and neutral such as the generic image of |

|                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
|                                  | an envelope and card titled “Advice on Ihdād” <sup>11</sup> ( <i>Dabiq</i> , January 2016, p. 24) or the plain white background of an article titled “Slave-Girls or Prostitutes?” ( <i>Dabiq</i> , May 2015, p. 44).  |
| <i>Special</i>                   | There are eight issues in total that include a ‘Special’ section averaging approximately 5 pages in length. The majority of the articles in this section are supposedly written by John Cantlie, the British photojournalist who has been held in captivity by ISIS since 2012. Noticeably absent in John Cantlie’s pieces is the heavy use of religious doctrine that is very prominent in other sections of <i>Dabiq</i> . John Cantlie’s articles feature a heavier political perspective, writing to the actions and ultimate failures in Western leaders as well as the failure of Western foreign policy in the region, criticizing the American government in particular as well as his own British government.   |
| <i>From the Pages of History</i> | Issues 7 through 14 include a section titled ‘From the Pages of History’ approximately three pages in length. This section overwhelmingly reflects on events throughout history and uses them to provide context to the current worldview that is presented by ISIS in <i>Dabiq</i> . The topics that are covered in the ‘From the Pages of History’ section vary, covering topics such as the importance of keeping firm in the religion, the history and encouragement of fighting during Ramadan, the Sykes and Picot agreement and the importance of rejecting nationalism   |
| <i>Interviews</i>                | Issues 7 through 14 include an ‘Interview’ section. The interview begins with a very brief introduction to who is being interviewed, followed by a question and answer type format that reads like a conversation. The article will clearly display ‘Dābiq:’ with a question or comment and the name of the interviewee alongside their response ( <i>Dabiq</i> , November 2015, p. 60). The content of the ‘Interview’ section widely varies as interviews are held with individuals across ISIS self-proclaimed territory. Questions that are consistent through the issues include asking about the situation on the ground in that particular region, the situation with opposition groups including how opposition members feel about the opposition leadership, and asking if the interviewee has any advice for Muslims in the Khilafah or advice for Muslims in general. |

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<sup>11</sup> Meaning ‘Mourning’

### 3.2.1 *Dabiq* – Issue 7

As these magazine issues are all accessible online, I chose to download the issues from the Clarion Project. The Clarion Project is described as an “independently funded, non-profit organization dedicated to exposing the dangers of Islamist extremism while providing a platform for the voices of moderation and promoting grassroots activist” ([clarionproject.org/about](http://clarionproject.org/about)).

Prior to choosing the issue of *Dabiq* I wanted to conduct my analysis on, I engaged in purposeful sampling<sup>12</sup> first by reading through the first 14 issues of the magazine in order to determine at which issue the magazine comes to form. While the content of the magazine differs with each issue, there are some constants that are maintained throughout the issues. Regular content will often feature a ‘foreword’ that focuses on current events (i.e. San Bernardino, California attack). Included is a ‘From the Pages of History’ section that will draw on history and relate to the current context. There is a ‘reports’ type section that discusses the current situation on the battlefield. Additionally, there is a ‘To our Sisters’ section that caters to the female audience, offering advice on how to get to and live in the Islamic State. A final section within the issues are the ‘interviews’; interviewed guests will vary from each issue but is a constant feature of the magazine. After reading the issues, the sampling unit I decided to draw from is issue 7 of *Dabiq* magazine. Released in February 2015, it is within this issue that we find all the sections found in subsequent issues, having settled on the style and form of the publication.

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<sup>12</sup> Purposeful sampling involves “deliberately searching out and selecting” items to analyze that will provide the researcher with information regarding the research question (Locke, 2017, p. 1288).

### **3.3 Rhetorical Analysis**

While conducting my analysis of issue 7, I analyzed how the publication attempts to directly or indirectly persuade readers of supporting ISIS. Given my research goal to examine the form in which ideas or messages are disseminated, I used rhetorical analysis to identify rhetorical strategies (ethos, pathos, logos) and rhetorical styles (deliberative, judicial, epideictic) used to justify and persuade readers of the rightfulness of ISIS actions and of the need for the readers to engage in violent jihad.

#### **3.3.1 Rhetorical Strategies**

##### **3.3.1.1 Ethos**

Ethos is largely centred on the “moral character”, and most importantly the trustworthiness of the speaker (Kennedy, 2011, p. 148). In order to identify this particular strategy, I used Longaker and Walker’s (2011) guideline of questions that a researcher can ask to help locate appeals to ethos:

- Does the rhetor already have a status among the audience? Will these people know who the rhetor is initially, and, if not, how does the rhetor reveal his or her standing in the community? (Longaker & Walker, 2011, p. 248).
- Will these people respect or trust the rhetor based on their knowledge of his or her position? (Longaker & Walker, 2011, p. 248)
- How does the rhetor’s status affect the audience’s willingness to trust, believe, or identify with him or her? (Longaker & Walker, 2011, p. 248)

- Does the rhetor say or present anything in the introduction that reveals a certain character to the audience? Is there any explicit mention of the rhetor's profession, character, or life story? (Longaker & Walker, 2011, p. 248)
- Does the rhetor try to show that he or she shares with the audience a background or a set of values? (Longaker & Walker, 2011, p. 249)
- Does the rhetor use key words to show a certain background, knowledge, or set of beliefs and values? (Longaker & Walker, 2011, p. 249)
- Does the rhetor depend upon certain figures or tropes that the audience will relate to a known and/or revered character type? (Longaker & Walker, 2011, p. 249)
- If there is a visual component to the text (textual design, layout, or images), do these visuals convey a certain character type and how? (Longaker & Walker, 2011, p. 249)

### **3.3.1.2 Pathos**

Pathos is largely centred on the emotion of the audience, the “mood or feeling” that motivates an audience to adopt a particular belief or undertake a certain action (Longaker & Walker, 2011, p. 46). In order to identify this particular strategy, I used Longaker and Walker's (2011) guideline of questions that a researcher can ask to help locate appeals to pathos. Longaker and Walker (2011) pose questions related to identifying images with an appeal to pathos as well as language. The following list of questions posed by Longaker and Walker (2011) assisted me with identifying this particular strategy, both through imagery and language, in issue 7:

- Are there any detailed (particularly visual) descriptions? Any especially realistic scenes or images? (Longaker & Walker, 2011, p. 230)

- If there are particularly detailed descriptions or realistic scenes, what does the rhetor want the audience to feel when reading or seeing them - fear, discomfort, revulsion, joy, sorrow? (Longaker & Walker, 2011, p. 230)
- If there are particularly graphic images, what focuses the audience's attention here and not elsewhere? (Longaker & Walker, 2011, p. 230)
- Are there any abstract ideas, terms, or icons that will likely resonate with a certain population in a certain way? (Longaker & Walker, 2011, p. 230)
- What are these people likely to feel when they hear this term, think this idea, or see this icon? (Longaker & Walker, 2011, p. 230)
- What makes the audience associate these terms, this idea, or this icon with such feelings? If there are ideas, terms, or icons whose emotional resonance cannot be explained by relating them to something the audience has experienced or lived, then how does the rhetor associate this idea, term, or icon with other things that the audience likely cares about? (Longaker & Walker, 2011, p. 230 – 231)

### **3.3.1.3 Logos**

Logos centers on the reasoning itself, the evidence, and proof that is provided in support of the rhetors arguments. In order to identify this particular strategy, I used Longaker and Walker's (2011) guideline of questions that a researcher can ask to help locate appeals to logos:

- What stance would you adopt if you accepted this ideology? What kind of person would you be? What kind of person would you separate yourself from? (Longaker & Walker, 2011, p. 206)
- What single word, image, icon, or phrase – what ideograph – encapsulates this ideology? (Longaker & Walker, 2011, p. 206)

- What must you believe exists, is good/bad, and is possible in order to identify with this ideology? (Longaker & Walker, 2011, p. 206)
- What does the rhetor want you to believe when you get to the end of this argument? What's the principal claim? (Longaker & Walker, 2011, p. 206)
- What must you do, care about, or accept if you are persuaded by this argument? (Longaker & Walker, 2011, p. 206)
- What appeals does the rhetor present in support of his argument? (Longaker & Walker, 2011, p. 206)

### **3.3.2 Rhetorical Styles**

In regards to rhetorical styles, I found that there was not a helpful tool to assist researchers to identify deliberative, judicial, or epideictic rhetoric. More commonly, rhetorical styles were identified by applying the broader description of Aristotle's deliberative, judicial, and epideictic rhetoric as they were found in each individual study. In order to account for this, the following section will provide a description of each rhetorical style as described by Aristotle as well as an example of each rhetorical style taken from issue 7 of *Dabiq*. The purpose of this is to give the reader an example of the words and types of statements that lead me to identify each particular style for my specific research goals.

#### **3.3.2.1 Deliberative**

Recalling Aristotle (2006), deliberative rhetoric is used when the speaker urges the audience to take or not take a particular action. In order to identify this particular style, I went through issue 7, looking for clear calls for the reader to take specific actions. This style was most

evident when the issue addressed the actions of the reader specifically with statements similar to, for example:

He also revealed the sword against the apostates, {O you who have believed, whoever of you should revert from his religion – Allah will bring forth a people He will love and who will love Him [who are] humble toward the believers, mighty against the disbelievers; they strive in the cause of Allah and do not fear the blame of a critic}[Al-Mā'idah: 54]. This verse is a fundamental basis for the obligation to fight against the apostate parties (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 21).

### 3.3.2.2 Judicial

Recalling Aristotle (2006), judicial rhetoric is a judge of past action, largely concerned with establishing guilt or innocence. In order to identify this particular style, I went through issue 7 to look for the judgment of past actions. This style was most evident when the magazine attributed guilt to various enemy groups, judging the actions of various enemy groups while simultaneously rendering the actions of ISIS as innocent.

This week, the Islamic State released a video depicting the execution of the Jordanian crusader pilot, Mu'ādh Sāfi Yūsuf al-Kasāsibah. As displayed in the video, the Islamic State had resolved to burn him alive as retribution for his crimes against Islam and the Muslims... (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 5).

### 3.3.2.3 Epideictic

Recalling Aristotle (2006), epideictic rhetoric are statements where the rhetor either praises or blames a subject. In order to identify this particular style, I went through issue 7 to look for language either praising the actions of ISIS and its supporters, or language focusing on blame – most commonly on enemies of ISIS. For instance, the following excerpt is an example of *Dabiq* praising the actions of Amedy Coulibaly, answering the call to attack and pledging allegiance to ISIS without ever having gone to the Islamic State: “And of those who answered the call recently

was the brave mujāhid<sup>13</sup> Abū Basīr al-Ifriqī (Amedy Coulibaly – rahimahullāh<sup>14</sup>)” (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 58).

### 3.4 Thematic Analysis

Recalling my research goal to analyze the content, the messages or ideas that *Dabiq* uses to persuade its readers, I used thematic analysis to code the text according to pre-established categories. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a method that is used for exploring and identifying themes that are found in data. In Braun and Clarke’s (2006) description of theoretical thematic analysis, the analysis is more driven and controlled by the researcher’s specific interests. In this approach, there is less emphasis on the entire data set and is focused on more specific aspects of the data the researcher would like to focus on (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I applied frame analysis to guide the higher level sets of categories that I was interested in exploring. I used high level categories to explore the way in which *Dabiq* frames both ISIS and its enemies, the way the ‘problem’ Islam is currently facing is described, the solution that ISIS advocates for, and the underlying logics of the justifications that are provided for its actions. While I applied these larger themes to assist me with guiding my analysis in order to address my research goals, I let specific themes emerge from the data for each section.

#### 3.4.1 Diagnostic Framing

For this thesis I was interested in exploring the diagnostic framing of issue 7 of *Dabiq*, specifically addressing how ISIS presents itself in contrast to their perceived enemies. In order to

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<sup>13</sup> Meaning ‘individual engaged in jihad’.

<sup>14</sup> Meaning ‘May Allah have mercy upon them’.

do this, I first identified attributes that contributed to the presentation of ISIS as a whole as well as identified attributes that specifically reflected the presentation of ISIS leadership, their male members, and their female members. By specifically exploring these themes, I produced a description that presented ISIS as a legitimate well-defined entity.

As I was interested in how ISIS assigns blame and responsibility to perceived enemies and or problems, I contrasted this positive presentation of ISIS with a discussion of how the ‘other’ is represented, giving insight to the blame and characteristics assigned by ISIS to various enemy groups. I identified attributes that contributed to the presentation of those who do not accept Islam in general, as well as identified attributes that specifically reflected Western forces, ‘false’ Muslims, and competing ‘claimant’ groups. By exploring how *Dabiq* frames its enemies, I produced a description that gave context to the various problems that ISIS perceives. Throughout this section attributing blame and responsibility for various problems, *Dabiq* documented the need to protect and defend Islam and true Muslims from all types of attacks from various enemy groups, largely through the use of violent actions. *Dabiq* further justifies past and future actions by drawing from a series of neutralization techniques.

### **3.4.2 Motivational Framing**

In order to explore the justifications of both past and future actions of ISIS, I used motivational framing to identify efforts to justify both specific actions that ISIS has taken responsibility for as well as efforts to justify and encourage potential future actions. Specifically, I applied Sykes and Matza’s (1957) *Techniques of Neutralization*, including the denial of responsibilities, the denial of victim, the appeal to higher loyalties, and the denial of injury, to form a rationale that is provided in issue 7 of *Dabiq* for engaging in action.

In order to identify the denial of responsibilities, I looked for instances of the issue assigning blame for their own actions to forces outside of their control. By assigning blame to outside forces, the group deflects responsibility for their actions by framing the blame and consequences of ISIS' actions as resulting from the initial provocation by an enemy group. The following excerpt taken from issue 7 provides an example of the types of statements that I looked for to identify the denial of responsibilities. With this statement, *Dabiq* deflects responsibility for both their past action and any future action, positioning the attacks on Coptic Christians as a justified response to an action outside of their control, attributing responsibility to a leader of the Coptic Christian church stating:

So more than one hundred crusaders were killed and injured by just five brave istishhādiyyīn<sup>15</sup> from the Islamic State. And the different Christian churches had no one to truly blame but Shenouda for the deaths of their brethren in kufr<sup>16</sup>... (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 31).

In order to identify the appeal to higher loyalties, I looked for instances of issue 7 justifying past and future actions by reiterating the permissiveness of the action as it is grounded in religion, and is for the greater good of Islam. The appeal to higher loyalties was generally applied in two different ways. One application of the appeal to higher loyalties was used when calling for future action or justifying teachings or actions in general, outside of addressing a specific event. In this application, the appeal to higher loyalties is often found alone. The following excerpt taken from issue 7 provides an example of the types of statements that I looked for to identify the appeal to higher loyalties. With this statement, *Dabiq* provides religious text in order to justify the general permissiveness and necessity of future violent actions in defense of Islam, stating:

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<sup>15</sup> Meaning 'Martyrs'

<sup>16</sup> Meaning 'Disbelievers'

Hudhayfah Ibn al-Yamān (radiyallāhu ‘anhumā<sup>17</sup>) said, “The people used to ask Rasūlullāh (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam<sup>18</sup>) about good and I used to ask him about evil. I said, ‘O Rasūlullāh, do you see this good that Allah gave us, will there be evil after it like there was before it?’ He replied, ‘Yes.’ I said, ‘What is the salvation from it?’ He replied, ‘The sword [meaning jihād]’ (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 45).

In another application of the appeal to higher loyalties, the justification strategy was used in combination with another appeal such as the denial of injury or the denial of victim. This application of the appeal to higher loyalties was used most often when addressing a specific event. The following excerpt taken from issue 7 provides an example of the types of statements that I looked for to identify the appeal to higher loyalties when it is used in combination with another strategy to address a specific event. With this statement, *Dabiq* provides religious text to justify the burning execution method as well as denies the victim status of the executed pilot, stating:

In burning the crusader pilot alive and burying him under a pile of debris, the Islamic State carried out a just form of retaliation for his involvement in the crusader bombing campaign which continues to result in the killing of countless Muslims who, as a result of these airstrikes, are burned alive and buried under mountains of debris. This is not to even mention those Muslims – men, women, and children – who survive the airstrikes and are left injured and disabled, and in many cases suffering from severe burns that cause them pain and anguish every minute of every day.

{AND IF YOU PUNISH [AN ENEMY], PUNISH WITH AN EQUIVALENT OF THAT WITH WHICH YOU WERE HARMED} [An-Nahl: 126].

This āyāh<sup>19</sup> sufficiently demonstrates the shar’ī validity of burning someone alive in a case of qisās (retribution) (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 6 – 7).

In order to identify the denial of victim, I looked for instances of issue 7 deflecting responsibility for their actions by assuring that the act was not wrong in the particular circumstances but rather a rightful punishment. The denial of victim in issue 7 was not only used

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<sup>17</sup> Meaning ‘May Allah be pleased with him’.

<sup>18</sup> Meaning ‘Peace be upon him’.

<sup>19</sup> Meaning ‘evidence’.

to deflect blame by justifying the need for retribution or punishment but also used to justify certain techniques that are encouraged to carry out the expressed retaliation or punishment. The following excerpt taken from issue 7 provides an example of the types of statements that I looked for to identify denial of victim. With this statement, *Dabiq* positions punishments for ‘sexual deviance’ as a necessary punishment to protect Islam, stating:

In the midst of this widespread affront to the fitrah (natural human disposition), the Islamic State continues its efforts against these deeds of misguidance – which Western “Civilization” regards as part of their “values” – by implementing the rulings of Allah on those who practice any form of sexual deviancy or transgression.

This was demonstrated recently in Wilāyat<sup>20</sup> Ar-Raqqah, where the Islamic State carried out the hadd<sup>21</sup> on a man found guilty of engaging in sodomy (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 43).

As I identified various justification strategies, an absence of Hewitt and Stokes (1975) *disclaimers* and Scott and Lyman’s (1968) *excuses* became apparent. In issue 7, there were no instances of the articles attempting to ward off negative impressions of ISIS in advance of justifying an act. Additionally, there were no instances of ISIS admitting an action was inherently wrong, but necessary. When justifying an action, *Dabiq* consistently never acknowledges the action as wrong in the first place.

### 3.5 Challenges

As I chose rhetorical analysis and thematic analysis as my methods to explore *Dabiq*, there were various challenges and limitations that arose. *Dabiq* includes extensive imagery in combination with their articles. Throughout various parts of my analysis most often relating to

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<sup>20</sup> Meaning ‘province/region’

<sup>21</sup> Meaning ‘punishment’

pathos and ethos, I describe various images that are used in combination with the text. Including the description of images was a limitation as traditionally, rhetorical analysis does not analyze images. Due to this, my analysis of these images may be superficial in terms of me reading into these images. While rhetorical analysis does not traditionally analyze images, some images were quite powerful in terms of the appeal to pathos and ethos in combination with the text provided. To identify the use of pathos, I accounted for particularly violent and graphic images or alternatively fairly peaceful and joyful images that would potentially move the reader. To identify the use of ethos, I accounted for images of more prominent leadership or popular figures in the group as well as images that projected the group as a strong military power. In these cases, I referred to Longaker and Walker's (2011) guide regarding images in order to identify the particular appeal. The following list of questions posed by Longaker and Walker (2011) assisted me with identifying this particular appeal in issue 7:

- Are there any detailed/realistic images? Are there any detailed (particularly visual) descriptions? Any especially realistic scenes or images? (Longaker & Walker, 2011, p. 230).
- What does the rhetor want the audience to feel when reading or seeing them – fear, discomfort, revulsion, affection, joy, sorrow? (Longaker & Walker, 2011, p. 230).
- If there are particularly graphic images, what focuses the audience's attention here and not elsewhere? (Longaker & Walker, 2011, p. 230).

I faced an ethical challenge as I made the decision to include images in this thesis as many images in the issue were particularly graphic and violent. As I did not want to reproduce all of the violent images of suffering that are used in the issue, I decided to include two carefully selected images to demonstrate the violent type of visual content *Dabiq* magazine provides to the reader.

For ethical purposes, when I found particularly powerful violent images to include in my analysis I provided a written description of the images, rather than choosing to reproduce the original image.

One particular challenge to these methods I faced was the acknowledgment that a reading of issue 7 is completely subjective to each individual reader. It was a very personal experience to look at the images and text and identify which general emotions would be invoked in readers.

### **3.6 Limitations**

As the process of reading this magazine was a very personal experience, one limitation I experienced was that separating rhetorical styles, strategies, and justification strategies in some cases was not as straightforwardly observable. Many examples in the text could perhaps be interpreted as appealing to multiple strategies, depending on how the reader interprets the text. For example, judicial and epideictic rhetoric can be frequently embedded in each other as there can naturally be an element of blame (epideictic) when establishing guilt (judicial). In order to account for this, I used straightforward terms such as ‘retribution’ or ‘guilty’ to identify judicial rhetoric and a judgment of past actions. For each article in the issue, I separately identified and coded each instance of a particular rhetorical style, rhetorical strategy, or justification strategy based on my coding manual. This ensured that I captured the specific language that was being used to appeal to any particular style or strategy. After coding each article, I would look at the entirety of the article to identify the general theme of what a particular article was trying to accomplish. To account for this limitation, my thesis supervisor frequently assessed my coding of issue 7 for consistency and

accuracy of the rhetorical styles, rhetorical strategies, and justification strategies that were included in the text.

While *Dabiq* magazine is written for English readers, there were instances of some anglicized Arabic terms and concepts not being defined for the reader. This posed as a limitation as my background is not in Islamic or religious studies, I had to rely on the popular opinion of Google to distinguish the general consensus of the meaning of some terms. This limited my capacity to provide as nuanced an analysis as someone with the appropriate background but it might reflect better the understanding of readers with limited understanding or knowledge of Islam which is in fact the target audience of *Dabiq*.

## Chapter 4: Rhetorical Analysis

This thesis aims to answer the research question: how does *Dabiq* magazine attempt to persuade non-Arabic readers of directly or indirectly supporting and/or joining ISIS? In order to answer this question, I will begin by presenting my examination of the ‘form’, the manner in which ideas or messages are disseminated by looking at the rhetorical strategies (epideictic, judicial and deliberative) deployed and the rhetorical styles (ethos, logos and pathos) used throughout the magazine.

### 4.1 Rhetorical Style

In the following section, I analyze the means of persuasion that *Dabiq* deploys in issue 7 by focusing on Aristotle’s three rhetorical styles including epideictic, deliberative, and judicial rhetoric.

#### 4.1.1 Epideictic

Recalling Aristotle (2006), epideictic rhetoric is speech that assigns praise and/or blame. The following section will present how *Dabiq* uses epideictic rhetoric and the role this rhetorical strategy plays in legitimizing the Islamic State as an organization, their actions, methods, and ways of life.

Throughout issue 7, *Dabiq* consistently attributes blame on non-Islamic State groups or entities for their actions while at the same time holding them responsible for what ISIS presents as their ‘forced hand’ response to those actions. The actions to which *Dabiq* attributes blame include military attacks as well as lifestyles and policies that ISIS disagrees with. For instance, in the article dedicated to the execution of Japanese prisoners, *Dabiq* blames the Japanese government and the

current Prime Minister Abe Shinzo for the execution of two Japanese prisoners by pointing to Japan's negligence in daring to go up against ISIS and supporting the US led coalition (*Dabiq*, February 2015). The article frames the prisoners' execution as resulting from the actions of the Japanese government: "...no one to blame but the political leaders of their lands who strive to appease and serve the American crusaders" (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 4). Furthermore, the article places blame of all future attacks against Japan and its citizens on Shinzo's "foolishness" who, through his actions, has rendered all Japanese interests a "target for the soldiers and patrons of the Khilāfah everywhere" (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 4). Similarly, the report "Major Operations in Libya and Sinai", establishes blame for the death of Abū Anas al-Lībī on what the reader can assume to be government forces, as the article makes special reference to the symbolic target that was chosen to attack, stating:

In Libya's Wilāyat<sup>22</sup> Tarābulus, an assault took place in the Corinthia Hotel – known to house the murtadd<sup>23</sup> "prime minister," Omar al-Hasi and other murtadd "government officials," frequented by kāfir<sup>24</sup> foreign diplomats, and used by the crusader support mission in Libya (UNSMIL). The assault, carried out in revenge for the death of Abū Anas al-Lībī (rahimahullāh<sup>25</sup>), saw two of the Islamic State's inghimāsiyyin – Abū Ibrāhim at-Tūnusī and Abū Sulaymān as-Sūdānī (may Allah accept them both) – storm the hotel and lay waste to a number of apostates and crusaders inside. This prompted the murtadd security forces to rush to the location, where they were greeted by a car-bomb that was waiting for them outside the hotel (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 40 – 41).

*Dabiq* uses epideictic rhetoric to deflect blame from ISIS and attributes it instead to apostates or crusaders. This attribution of blame aims to persuade readers that the actions of ISIS

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<sup>22</sup> Meaning 'Province/Region'

<sup>23</sup> Meaning 'Apostate'

<sup>24</sup> Meaning 'Disbeliever'

<sup>25</sup> Meaning 'Allah have mercy upon them'

are legitimate while simultaneously attempting to erode the legitimacy of the Japanese and any other government, particularly from Muslim countries, that attacks ISIS.

Throughout various articles, epideictic rhetoric serves also to attribute blame on an outside group for intolerable lifestyle choices while simultaneously praising the actions taken by ISIS against those engaging in said lifestyles. In one of its articles, *Dabiq* denounces and blames the West for a surge in ‘sexual deviance’ and its consequences on the lives of Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

With the advent of the ‘sexual revolution’ five decades ago, the West was plunged into a downward spiral of sexual deviance and immorality. With it came a whole slew of sexually transmitted diseases – including as yet incurable AIDS – as men and women let their lusts overwhelm their judgment and lead them to engage in fornication and ‘experiment’ with a myriad of shaytānī<sup>26</sup> methods of fulfilling their desires (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 42).

Aside from attributing blame to the West for an increase in ‘sexual deviance’ and depravity, *Dabiq* describes ISIS as protectors of Islam and praises its efforts to prevent these ‘social ills’ and live accordingly to Islamic law.

In the midst of this widespread affront to the fitrah (natural human disposition), the Islamic State continues its efforts against these deeds of misguidance – which Western ‘Civilization’ regards as a part of their ‘values’ – by implementing the rulings of Allah on those who practice any form of sexual deviancy or transgression (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 43).

*Dabiq* relies not only on placing blame on the West or apostates and indirectly praising ISIS, it also uses epideictic rhetoric to directly praise ISIS and its members on three fronts. First, *Dabiq* praises the continued expansion and growth of ISIS.

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<sup>26</sup> Meaning ‘satanic’

The battle on the Sinai and Libyan fronts was recently intensified as the soldiers of the Islamic State carried out multiple operations that shattered any hope or confidence the crusaders could have in their murtadd<sup>27</sup> puppets maintaining control in the face of the Khilāfah's expansion. (...) The coordinated attacks, part of a string of operations dubbed 'We Swear We Will Take Revenge,' led to the killing and wounding of hundreds of murtadd soldiers – including multiple high ranking officers – and the destruction of a number of police and military facilities (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 40-41).

In a unique demonstration of epideictic rhetoric, the “In the Words of the Enemy” section featuring Patrick Cockburn uses the words of ISIS enemies to praise their advances in territory as well as the increase in foreign fighters coming to join ISIS (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 52). Although the author of the excerpt is not actually stating their support for ISIS, the manner in which *Dabiq* presents those passages appears as a celebration of victory and strength achieved by ISIS. The following excerpt is an example of this rhetorical style:

According to the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, the number of foreign fighters joining Isis in Iraq and Syria has risen from 15,000 last October to 20,000 today. A fifth of these come from Western Europe (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 53).

As demonstrated from the above excerpt, the article relies more on facts rather than speaking generally about the group's gains. In other sections, the article 'praises' the resilience of ISIS by stating the exact amount of days the 'siege' in Kobani took as well as the exact amount of airstrikes carried out by the US that the group withstood.

Second, it celebrates new members who have abandoned competing groups in order to join ISIS: “When they saw, however, that their leadership had no intention of giving bay'ah<sup>28</sup>, they resolved to fulfill this obligation themselves without fearing the blame of any critics” (*Dabiq*,

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<sup>27</sup> Meaning 'Apostate'

<sup>28</sup> Meaning 'Pledging allegiance'

February 2015, p. 35). Finally, it lauds actions taken on a more global scale by individuals in the West:

Indeed, you saw what a single Muslim did with Canada and its parliament of shirk, and what our brothers in France, Australia, and Belgium did – may Allah have mercy upon them all and reward them with good on behalf of Islam (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 37).

This is a clear nod to readers in the West that encourages further action by praising actions that have already taken place, therefore demonstrating that their contributions to Islam are known and valued.

Epideictic rhetoric thus plays a role in presenting ISIS as successful through its continued growth and legitimate by fulfilling their pledge to live accordingly to Islamic law and protecting Muslims from various ‘social ills’. Consequently, *Dabiq* uses epideictic rhetoric to provide the reader with an alternative and positive presentation of ISIS that contradicts the way it is typically presented by Western media and news outlets.

#### **4.1.2 Judicial**

Recalling Aristotle (2006), judicial rhetoric is concerned with judgment of past action to determine guilt or innocence. Throughout issue 7 *Dabiq* attributes guilt to various enemy groups while presenting themselves as innocent so as to further their goal of persuading readers that ISIS is the righteous and rightful caliphate.

In the article addressing the execution of the Jordanian pilot, Moaz el-Kassasbeh, *Dabiq* specifically assigns guilt to the pilot: “...burn him alive as retribution for his crimes against Islam and the Muslims, including his active involvement in crusader airstrikes against Muslim lands” (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 5). In doing so *Dabiq* actively distances the Jordanian government and

Kassasbeh from ‘true Islam’ and working in cooperation with Western forces. The following excerpt demonstrates *Dabiq* using judicial rhetoric to establish guilt to the Jordanian pilot for his assumed actions against Muslims, stating:

In burning the crusader pilot alive and burying him under a pile of debris, the Islamic State carried out a just form of retaliation for his involvement in the crusader bombing campaign which continues to result in the killing of countless Muslims who, as a result of these airstrikes, are burned alive and buried under mountains of debris. This is not even to mention those Muslims – men, women, and children – who survive the airstrikes and are left injured and disabled, and in many cases suffering from severe burns that cause them pain and anguish every minute of every day (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 6 – 7).

Recalling a limitation of using these rhetorical styles, the previous excerpt could perhaps be interpreted as appealing to both judicial and epideictic rhetoric, revealing a grey area for establishing guilt, as it is only complimentary to have an element of blame when establishing the guilt of an entity. Acknowledging this grey area, cues that help me identify judicial rhetoric in this excerpt focus on the language that *Dabiq* uses such as, “retaliation for his involvement”, specifically identifying a guilty party (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 6).

The article titled “Interview with a Spy Working for the Israeli Mossad” uses judicial rhetoric to establish the guilt of a supposed spy (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 26). This interview, in question and answer format, is used as a warning to future spies but also works to position loyalty to ISIS as the rightful path to pursue. The question and answer format takes the reader through an account of the accused journey on becoming a spy against ISIS. The article details the recruitment process, the training process, how he eventually became a spy against ISIS, and how he was eventually uncovered to be a spy (*Dabiq*, February 2015). The following excerpt establishes the guilt of the accused in a response to a question asking how his cover was blown, in supposedly his own words, stating:

Not long after I had arrived I began acting in a manner that wasn't typical of a muhājir despite the training I had received from the Mossad. I also failed to follow some orders that my amīr had given me, and then became worried that as a result he had become suspicious of me. I was afraid I would be punished for not listening and obeying as was required of me and possibly be monitored thereafter. So I went and called my father and told him what had happened, and he told me to come back, but it was too late, as I was being watched. The mujāhidīn put me in prison and moved me from one prison to another. During the interrogations, I confessed that I was a spy working as an agent for the Israeli Mossad, and confessed to the things that I had done in my country (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 28).

While the fate of the accused man was not detailed in this article, the reader can assume the man was punished for his actions as in one of the last responses, the accused warns others not to follow the path he took stating, “In the end, they’ll capture you and implement the hadd<sup>29</sup> on you. Stay away from this path. Stay away from helping the Jews and the murtaddīn<sup>30</sup>. Follow the right path” (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 28).

In a final expression of judicial rhetoric, *Dabiq* details the guilt and punishment of several people found guilty of forms of ‘sexual deviancy’ in the article titled “Clamping Down on Sexual Deviance” (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 42). The following excerpts show the language that is used to establish guilt of the accused as well as rulings that are used in response as a punishment stating, “...where the Islamic State carried out the hadd on a man found guilty of engaging in sodomy. He was taken to the top of a building and thrown off, as was one of the traditions of the noble companion Abū Bakr as-Siddīq (radiyallāhu ‘anh<sup>31</sup>) with those who committed this filthy deed” (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 43).

Judicial rhetoric in the three examples described above are being used to attribute guilt to various groups in an effort to persuade the reader of the permissiveness of the violent actions

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<sup>29</sup> Meaning ‘Punishment’

<sup>30</sup> Meaning, ‘Apostates’

<sup>31</sup> Meaning ‘May Allah be pleased with him’

committed by ISIS. By establishing guilt to these various groups or individuals, the reactions of ISIS appear as a legitimate response to a blameworthy enemy. By demonstrating that an individual is guilty, readers are left with the impression that the response from ISIS would not have occurred if the group had not been provoked in the first place.

#### 4.1.3 Deliberative

Deliberative rhetoric is observed as a “judge of future action”, encouraging the audience to carry out a specific action or urging the audience to not carry out a specific action (Aristotle, 2006, p. 20). The following section will present instances of *Dabiq* using deliberative rhetoric to encourage not only violent actions carried out against enemy groups but also in a more positive way, used to encourage an overall code of conduct among its leadership on the battlefield as well as encourage desirable opinions, lifestyles and values among its male and female audience.

Issue 7 consistently provides readers with clear statements of what good Muslims should do and should not do. One particular form in which *Dabiq* uses deliberative rhetoric is by creating an ‘us vs. them’ mentality through conferring certain groups or individuals ‘enemy status’, often using words such as apostates, crusaders, and murtadd, and then urging the reader to carry out specific actions against them. For instance, through the article “From the Pages of History” *Dabiq* calls for the murdering of apostates or anyone who does not accept Allah and encourages a certain behaviour, treatment, and action that the reader should adopt towards the featured enemy (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 17).

I have sent to you so and so [Khālid Ibn al-Walīd] with an army of the Muhājirīn, the Ansār, and their good followers, and I’ve ordered him to not fight anyone or kill anyone until he calls him to the call of Allah. Whoever answers him, accepts the truth, halts his evil, and does good, my envoy will accept this from him and will aid him in it. If he refuses, I’ve ordered him to wage war against them over their refusal, to not spare anyone he is able to kill, to burn them alive with fire, to kill

them in a severe manner using all means to enslave their women and children, and to not accept from any one of them anything but Islam (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 18).

Similarly, in the article “Islam is the Religion of the Sword not Pacifism” *Dabiq* encourages readers to undertake their obligation to fight non-believers, specifically calling to strike them in the neck with a sword with statements such as, “I am with you, so strengthen those who have believed. I will cast terror in the hearts of those who disbelieved, so strike [them] upon the necks and strike from every fingertip” (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 21).

Through the article “Wilayat Khurasan and the Bay’at from Qawqaz”, *Dabiq* compels true Muslims to engage in violent jihad wherever they may be located (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 37).

We will argue, before Allah, against any Muslim who has the ability to shed a single drop of crusader blood but does not do so, whether with an explosive device, a bullet, a knife, a car, a rock, or even a boot or a fist. (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 37).

As demonstrated from the above excerpt, the article urges the reader to not undertake a certain action (which is inaction), as well as encourages violent action on behalf of Islam, providing examples of the various methods that the reader can use to carry out their action. *Dabiq* uses deliberative rhetoric in these examples to persuade the reader that the use of violence is not only correct but that it is their duty as true Muslims to use it against non-believers.

*Dabiq* uses deliberative rhetoric in the article “Advice for the Leaders of the Islamic State” to urge readers and particularly leaders, to follow specific actions in their daily life, in military operations and in leadership (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 9). The article provides readers with an overall ‘code of conduct’ that is encouraged by leaders of ISIS. The article addresses a range of

issues, providing readers with both daily operational advice as well as more general advice that highlights good qualities of leadership, such as:

[23] Reward those who perform very well, be generous to a detachment that achieves victory, and honor a brave person publicly. In contrast, punish those who do wrong for their actions, even if by boycotting them, since it's permissible for a leader to punish those who disobey his orders. If you don't do so, those who perform well will begin to slack, and those who do wrong will become emboldened, things will get worse and your work will be ruined.

Furthermore, when rewarding those who perform well, do so publicly and when punishing those who've done wrong, do so privately, especially when it comes to the virtuous ones amongst them. As for the corrupt amongst them, then punish them publicly, for this is what the Shari'ah has come with (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 14 – 15).

Deliberative rhetoric as demonstrated in the above example serves to persuade readers to adopt a general guideline of admirable and desirable behaviour, particularly among leadership. In fact, by providing more than 30 different instructions on how leaders and true Muslims must act, *Dabiq* is furthering ISIS' legitimacy by portraying it as caring, knowledgeable and perhaps more organized than Western readers would have thought. Due to this effort to establish legitimacy of ISIS, this more general application of deliberative rhetoric may be used for encouraging the recruitment among readers, presenting the group as established and organized.

In addition to using deliberative rhetoric to persuade readers of violent actions, *Dabiq* deploys deliberative rhetoric in an effort to persuade both males and females to adopt various opinions and values. In the article "The Extinction of the Grayzone", *Dabiq* attempts to persuade the reader to be skeptical and to reject people in general, and specifically religious leaders, who do not support opinions that are friendly to ISIS (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 54). The following excerpt is an example of *Dabiq* attempting to delegitimize religious leaders, who readers may already have access to in their own communities, stating:

They forgot that the hypocrites are not to be addressed with respect nor appointed as leaders. Rasūlullāh (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam<sup>32</sup>) said, “Do not refer to the hypocrite with the words ‘our sayyid’ (our leader), for if he is your sayyid, then you have angered your Lord” [Sahīh: Reported by Imām Ahmad, Abū Dawūd, and an-Nasā’ī] (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 65).

Deliberative rhetoric is demonstrated in the article titled, “A Brief Interview with Umm Basīr al-Muhājirah”, appealing to *Dabiq*’s female audience (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 50). The article features an interview with Amedy Coulibaly’s wife, who arrived in ISIS territory prior to her husband committing attacks in Paris. Addressing “Muslims in general and Muslim sisters in particular” (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 51), she provides advice on how women should act and the values they should adopt, and encouraging the reader to emulate model women throughout history, stating:

It is essential for you to love Allah and His Messenger more than your own selves, your husbands, your children, and your parents. Follow the example of Āsiyah – the wife of Pharaoh – who left the Dunyā<sup>33</sup> for Allah and the Hereafter although she was a queen and had the wealth of the Dunyā. She was tortured and killed because of this choice but Allah kept her firm and raised her above many women. And all praise is due to Allah, the Forgiving and Generous (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 51).

Follow the example of Maryam (‘alayhas-salām<sup>34</sup>) in her chastity, modesty, obedience of Allah, and truthfulness, which was one of her greatest traits, and so Allah chose her and raised her above many women. And all praise is due to Allah, the Majestic. There were many righteous women in history, so follow their example (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 51).

This section has provided insight into the way that *Dabiq* uses the three rhetorical styles. These various rhetorical styles provide a particular angle through which readers are invited to see ISIS and its actions. *Dabiq* presents a perspective largely based on a dichotomous logic, establishing a

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<sup>32</sup> Meaning ‘Peace be upon him’

<sup>33</sup> Meaning ‘Earth/world’

<sup>34</sup> Meaning ‘Peace be upon her’

clear line between good and bad, guilt and innocence, friend and enemy, true believer and heretic. The rhetorical styles work in complementary ways using different angles to persuade the reader to adopt ISIS' point of view. The use of epideictic rhetoric and judicial rhetoric attribute blame and guilt to various enemy parties and in doing so, it deflects potential blame or guilt from being assigned to it for its own violent actions. In doing so, ISIS is always justified in its actions towards the enemy. Deliberative rhetoric also persuades readers of the legitimacy of ISIS in its use of violence but more importantly, in combination with epideictic rhetoric, it further reinforces that the ISIS' way of life is the only way to be a true Muslim. Finally, deliberative rhetoric does more than legitimize ISIS in the eyes of *Dabiq*'s readers, it persuades, and in some instances, it might compel its readers to engage in violent jihad, to support and when possible join ISIS, and to live according to ISIS' interpretation of Islam. Through its call to action, deliberative rhetoric is a key factor in *Dabiq*'s goal of mobilizing support and action from Western readers.

## **4.2 Rhetorical Strategy**

*Dabiq* uses rhetorical strategies in a different way that it uses rhetorical styles. Although at times *Dabiq* deploys rhetorical strategies individually, in most cases it deploys them in conjunction with another appeal. However, instead of using them in complementary ways as it does with rhetorical styles, *Dabiq* uses rhetorical strategies as layers where one sets the foundations to maximize the effect of the other and consequently the reach and efficiency of the message. First, *Dabiq* uses ethos to establish credibility with the reader. Then, it deploys pathos to set the reader in an emotional state receptive of the message *Dabiq* is attempting to communicate. Lastly, *Dabiq* relies on logos to convince the readers through evidence that ISIS claims, beliefs, procedures and policies are not only legitimate but also well founded.

### 4.2.1 Ethos

Recalling Aristotle, ethos relies on the “moral character” and the trustworthiness of the speaker to persuade the reader (Kennedy, 2011, p. 148). Ethos relies on the “reputation, credentials, knowledge of the subject, intelligence, fair-mindedness, honesty, goodwill, and general moral quality” of the speaker (Longaker & Walker, 2011, p. 45). *Dabiq* deploys ethos to demonstrate that its sources are credible and therefore their message is legitimate. The following section will show how *Dabiq* relies on religious text and excerpts from well-known leaders to elicit trust and therefore be in a position to persuade its readers. *Dabiq* established ethos through a combination of referencing Allah and the Prophet, various historical figures, ISIS leadership, and occasionally ‘famous’ personalities of ISIS. In addition to these predictable sources to establish ethos, *Dabiq* uses the unique perspective of known enemy groups in a section called “In the Words of the Enemy”; with prominent Western political figures being the most featured (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 52).

*Dabiq* systematically establishes ethos through citing Allah and the Prophet. In an article responding to criticism for the burning of a Jordanian pilot (Moaz el-Kassasbeh), *Dabiq* relies on religious text to provide credibility to the justification and legitimacy to the manner in which the pilot was executed. In the following two excerpts, there is a heavy reliance on chapters of the Quran to persuade the reader of the credibility in *Dabiq*’s statements supporting the method in which ISIS used to execute the pilot. Both of the excerpts are supporting a case to bring harm to individuals in the same manner in which they have harmed you. As the Jordanian pilot is accused of killing Muslims through engaging in airstrikes, the excerpts attempt to provide legitimacy to the burning execution method that was used to punish the pilot with an ‘eye for an eye’ type approach, as the pilot is accused of also using fire to bring harm to people.

{And if you punish [an enemy], punish with an equivalent of that with which you were harmed} [An-Nahl: 126]<sup>35</sup> (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 7).

{So whoever has assaulted you, then assault him in the same way that he has assaulted you} [Al-Baqarah: 194]<sup>36</sup> (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 7).

Additionally, the use of excerpts from famous figures in the group serves to persuade the reader that the message carries the seal of approval of senior ISIS officials:

In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Gracious

From Abu Bakr, the Khalīfah of Rasūlullāh<sup>37</sup> (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam<sup>38</sup>):

To whomever this letter reaches of the general public and individual figures, whether they have remained upon their Islam or turned back from it: (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 17).

Shaykh Abu Muhammad al-‘Adnani<sup>39</sup> said, ‘Likewise, we renew our call to the muwahhidin in Europe and the disbelieving West and everywhere else, to target the crusaders in their own lands and wherever they are found (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 37).

In this case, excerpts taken from a senior leader in ISIS establishes credibility as *Dabiq* reiterates the advice and support from top leadership in the group. Recalling Kuznar (2017), the “ideological corpus of IS thought leaders” and the role of religion plays an important role in developing content for online magazines such as *Dabiq* (p. 41). Contributing to the establishment of ethos, we see with these excerpts that ISIS leadership not only relies on their own reputation but also uses religion to stress the need for violence through using terms such as “disbelieving West” and “crusaders” (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 37).

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<sup>35</sup> Chapter of the Quran

<sup>36</sup> Chapter of the Quran

<sup>37</sup> Meaning ‘Successor’

<sup>38</sup> Meaning ‘Peace be upon him’

<sup>39</sup> Now deceased, was official spokesman and senior leader in the Islamic State group

In the article providing 30 pieces of advice to leaders, *Dabiq* does not rely strictly on religious text but instead on the intention and goodwill of the author who has pieced together knowledge based on sacred books and men.

My dear mujāhid brother, these are some pieces of advice that I've gathered from the mouths of men and the pages of books, although I do not claim to be a man of wisdom. I ask Allah to make you and me benefit from these pieces of advice. And Allah knows all intentions (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 10).

In this example, ethos relies on the general intention of goodwill that the writer provides to the reader. Furthermore, *Dabiq* presents the advice as the collective voice of the “mouths of men”, as sincere advice from the men who have had experience in leadership on the battlefield (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 10).

*Dabiq* uses ‘famous personalities’ to persuade the reader of the credibility and moral character of individuals who have acted in allegiance to ISIS and committed violent actions. In expressing the high moral character of these actors, *Dabiq* attempts to legitimize their actions and show support to those who act in allegiance to ISIS. The following excerpt taken from the article “The Good Example of Abū Basīr al-Ifriqī” demonstrates Amedy Coulibaly’s<sup>40</sup> dedication to Islam, comparing his traits to the traits in the “Companions” of the Prophet Muhammad (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 68).

#### His Fasting

He would fast Mondays and Thursdays in accordance with the hadīth reported by Abū Hurayrah (radiyallāhu ‘anh<sup>41</sup>). Rasūlullāh (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam<sup>42</sup>) said, ‘Deeds are presented to Allah on Monday and Thursday, so I like that my deeds be

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<sup>40</sup> Coulibaly is suspected in killing a police officer and taking and killing several hostages at a Jewish supermarket in France in 2015.

<sup>41</sup> Meaning ‘May Allah be pleased with him’

<sup>42</sup> Meaning ‘Peace be upon him’

presented while I am fasting’ [Reported by at-Tirdmidhī] (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 70).

In addition to the content of the texts, *Dabiq* attempts to establish credibility by relying on large images showcasing these ‘famous’ figures.



(*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 68)

In a more unique attempt to establish credibility with the reader, *Dabiq* uses the “In the Words of the Enemy” section featuring Patrick Cockburn to affirm their successes and strength by using excerpts of the surprising opinion of a stated enemy (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 52). This excerpt provides credibility to the reader, as the reader is offered an unconventional perspective of the featured enemy ‘boasting’ (assumed to be nonintentional but is presented in that context by *Dabiq*) of the near impossible task of defeating ISIS stating:

Western analysts are encouraged by the number of experienced Isis commanders killed last year, but its ideology is built around martyrdom, and the high casualty rate among leaders shows that they fight in the frontline. President Obama says America’s main effort is in Iraq but unless it can rebuild the Iraqi army then it will be near impossible to defeat Isis (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 53).

As demonstrated from the excerpts above, *Dabiq's* use of general goodwill, religious text, and prominent figures and images give the reader an opportunity to buy-in to the credibility of ISIS and their messages from more than one source.

#### 4.2.2 Pathos

Recalling Aristotle (2006), persuasion occurs through eliciting emotion. Whether it is by appealing to love, anger, jealousy or any other emotion, “the mood or feeling motivates the audience to believe or do something” (Longaker and Walker, 2011, p. 46). *Dabiq* deploys pathos through the use of text and images that work as emotional triggers. Emotions such as anger, power, and revenge are intended to be provoked by showing the violence committed by the enemy and then their vulnerability at the hands of ISIS. Fear is intended to be provoked through *Dabiq's* visualization of the extreme violence that the group is willing to commit. Guilt, embarrassment, and contempt are intended to be provoked through exploiting the readers' inaction, leaving vulnerable groups such as women and children unprotected. Lastly, joy and excitement are intended to be provoked in the reader as *Dabiq* celebrates successful actions as well as their overall expansion as more and more groups pledge allegiance to ISIS.

Demonstrating the vulnerability of the enemy, pathos is used to primarily lay the blame of these executions on the Japanese government demonstrated largely through the use of images to accompanying text that is meant to “humiliate the arrogance of Japan” and perhaps encourage anger and a sense of vengeance in the reader (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 4). The two images provided below are of the two Japanese hostages. One image features hostage Haruna Yukawa being held with a long blade to his throat. The other image of the second hostage, Kenji Goto Jogo, features Kenji on his knees, being held by the collar of this shirt by a man dressed head to toe in

black, holding a large blade. These images demonstrate the vulnerability of Japan, on its knees, to the threat of the powerful ISIS<sup>43</sup>.



(*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 2)



(*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 3)

In the article describing the capture and execution of 21 Coptic Christian prisoners, pathos is demonstrated both by celebrating the deaths of Christians in the Baghdad attack with statements such as, “So more than one hundred crusaders were killed and injured by just five brave *istishhādiyyīn*<sup>44</sup> from the Islamic State. And the different Christian churches had no one to truly blame but Shenouda for the deaths of their brethren in *kufur*<sup>45</sup>...” (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 31). In

<sup>43</sup> I have chosen these two images to demonstrate the type of visual content *Dabiq* magazine issues provide to the reader. For ethical purposes, I will continue the inclusion of images in my analysis by providing a written description of them, rather than reproducing the original image.

<sup>44</sup> Meaning ‘martyr operation’

<sup>45</sup> Meaning ‘disbeliever’

addition to celebratory text, images are provided that show each prisoner in orange jumpsuits being accompanied by what we can presume to be ISIS soldiers, completely dressed in black, escorting the prisoners on what can be assumed to be their ‘final walk’. The prisoners are then pictured all on their knees, with each ISIS soldier pictured placing one hand upon the back of the prisoners’ neck. Similar to the photos featuring the two Japanese prisoners, the photos convey a sense of power and strength over the vulnerability over the enemy not only in the physical position of the soldiers but the numbers as well as each prisoner is matched with an ISIS soldier.

Similarly, in justifying the burning execution method of Moaz el-Kassasbeh, pathos is demonstrated in the article as the text invokes anger and a feeling of vengeance in the reader by providing a description of the atrocities that Kassasbeh has been judged in contributing to. The following excerpt is an example of this appeal to pathos in the article titled, “The Burning of the Murtadd Pilot”:

...his involvement in the crusader bombing campaign which continues to result in the killing of countless Muslims who, as a result of these airstrikes, are burned alive and buried under mountains of debris. This is not to even mention those Muslims – men, women, and children – who survive the airstrikes and are left injured and disabled, and in many cases suffering from severe burns that cause them pain and anguish every minute of every day (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 6 – 7).

Contributing to this appeal to pathos, accompanying this excerpt are several large photos of what appears to be a teenage boy and an infant, deceased, possibly burned, and covered in blood and debris. The photos are captioned, “The murtadd pilot was killed in retaliation for airstrikes against Muslims such as those pictured above”, providing a shocking visual image that displays the consequences of purportedly “crusader bombing campaigns” (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 6). In addition to these photos featuring deceased children, pathos is demonstrated through the images of Moaz el-Kassasbeh being burned alive. This particular image could potentially elicit a range of

emotions in the reader including both a feeling of fulfilled revenge for the deaths of many Muslim men, women, and children who endured a similar fate to the pilot at the hands of “crusader bombing campaigns” (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 6). Alternatively, this image could potentially elicit an emotion of fear in the reader, as *Dabiq* visually demonstrates the measures the group is willing to take.

The article “Interview with Abu ‘Umar al-Baljiki” features a last testament of the two deceased attackers killed by Belgian officers and provides religious encouragement to commit violent acts, stating:

Go forth for jihād and defend your Islam wherever you may be.

Where is your jealousy for your religion? You will be judged by Allah for your inaction. Allah said, {O you who have believed, what is the matter with you that, when you are told to go forth in the cause of Allah, you adhere heavily to the earth? Are you satisfied with the life of this world rather than the Hereafter? But what is the enjoyment of worldly life compared to the Hereafter except a [very] little} [At-Tawbah: 38] (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 75).

This article also attempts to establish feelings of guilt, embarrassment, and anger in the reader for their inaction, stating:

Do you not see the Qur’ān being trampled upon, the Prophet (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam<sup>46</sup>) being cursed, and our mother, ‘Ā’ishah, being dishonored?

Our children have been dismembered by bombardment everywhere. The chastity of our sisters has been violated. Our lands and wealth have been stolen. Yet you do not do anything!

How do you live with these criminals, the enemies of Allah and His Messenger, while they wage war against Islam and the Muslims? (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 75).

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<sup>46</sup> Meaning ‘Peace by upon him’

Anger is established in the example above as the text references the murder of children, the sexual violence that Muslim women experience, and being robbed of land and wealth. Including language such as “our children”, “our sisters”, and “our land”, personalizes this anger for the reader as they are being singled out and addressed as a member of their community (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 75). In addition to this anger, guilt and embarrassment is established in the reader as they are faced with being confronted for their inaction and complacency as these atrocities continue.

The examples of pathos described above attempt to persuade the reader of the legitimacy of the various violent actions and methods that were used by the group using anger, vengeance, and fear to validate their violence. In addition to validating violent actions and methods, pathos is used to persuade the reader in a call for action. Readers are provided with both violent images of deceased children as well as text that shames the reader for their inaction, perhaps attempting to invoke a feeling of guilt and embarrassment that aims to persuade the reader to act.

Establishing a more positive sentiment, in several instances throughout the issue there is a celebratory sentiment, providing the reader with a feeling of success, excitement, strength, and growth as the articles celebrate victories or various pledges of allegiance that come in to ISIS from various groups. In articles specifically addressing pledges of allegiance to the group a type of ‘rallying cry’ is provided, reassuring the reader of the larger adoption of ISIS from various parties across the world. The following excerpt is an example of this attempt to influence excitement in the reader, that ISIS is successful and growing:

The mujāhidīn of Khurāsān are up to it. The mujāhidīn of Qawqāz are up to it. The mujāhidīn of Iraq, Shām, Sinai, the Arabian Peninsula, Yemen, Libya, and Algeria are up to it. The mujāhidīn walking in the midst of the crusaders – in their homelands and on their streets – are up to it. Allah has soldiers in every land who are up to it, ready to fight and terrorize the crusaders wherever they find them in defense of their Khilāfah (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 37).

In addition to the text, there are various images that portray this sentiment with the inclusion of photos that feature groups of men pictured together, committed and united in the decision to pledge allegiance, as pictured below.



(*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 34)

The use of pathos in issue 7 in a more ‘positive’ context plays a role in persuading the reader that the group is more than violence. Showcasing the popularity of the group as more members pledge allegiance, *Dabiq* encourages recruitment into the group as there is a sense of collaboration, unity, peace, and a good life for those who follow the rightful path that ISIS inspires. As the application of pathos as described above demonstrates, *Dabiq* celebrates the continued expansion of the group and the support they have received. This particular demonstration of pathos attempts to persuade the reader of the legitimacy of the group, emphasizing the buy-in the group is receiving on a global scale.

### 4.2.3 Logos

Longaker and Walker (2011) describe logos as the reasoning itself – in direct argumentation, it is the “stated reason or reasons and/or evidence given in support of a conclusions; in indirect argumentation, it is the unspoken relationships between the speakers’ statements and the conclusions (inferences) they encourage the audience to draw” (p. 47). *Dabiq* uses logos to demonstrate ISIS’ ‘correct’ interpretation of Islam as a “religion of the sword” and to justify its actions, policies and ways of life (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 20)

One of the biggest shubuhāt propagated by the heretics is the linguistic root for the word Islam. They claim it comes from the word salām (peace), when in actuality it comes from words meaning submission and sincerity sharing the same consonant root (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 22).

Logos is frequently found as a delivery tactic for the justification of various violent actions. The use of logos is demonstrated in the ‘Foreword’ section as the article makes a historical case for the execution of the two Japanese prisoners. Presenting the execution as more of a ‘history repeating itself’ situation, the article includes the criticism of the actions of both a past Prime Minister of Japan as well as the current Prime Minister of Japan. In both of these cases, the Japanese government was accused of supporting the Western efforts against Afghanistan as well as more recently against ISIS. In a similar article dedicated to the burning execution method of Moaz el-Kassasbeh, logos is heavily represented in the article with much of the text dedicated to providing arguments and clear evidence as to why exactly the burning method is grounded in religion, and therefore, is acceptable. This article acknowledges the criticism the group has received for using this particular method, and defends the method by providing five historical cases of fire being used as punishment.

In addition to logos being applied as a method used to justify past violent actions, logos is used to justify and encourage future and continued violence against various enemy parties. In one particular application of logos, *Dabiq* argues for their ‘correct’ interpretation of Islam as the religion of the sword. The introduction to the article “Islam is the Religion of the Sword not Pacifism” sets up their arguments for this article by establishing their position on the interpretation of the word Islam and gives the reader an expectation of the strong evidence they are likely to take away from the text (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 22):

There is a slogan repeated continuously by apologetic “du’āt” when flirting with the West and that is their statement: “Islam is the religion of peace,” and they mean pacifism by the word peace. They have repeated this slogan so much to the extent that some of them alleged that Islam calls to permanent peace with kufr and the kāfirīn. How far is their claim from the truth, for Allah has revealed Islam to be the religion of the sword, and the evidence for this is so profuse that only a zindīq (heretic) would argue otherwise (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 20)

The use of logos in issue 7 plays a role in persuading the reader of the legitimacy of various violent actions and the methods used to carry out those actions.

Allah (ta’ālā)<sup>47</sup> also described what should be struck with the sword, {Remember when your Lord revealed to the angels, ‘I am with you, so strengthen those who have believed. I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieved, so strike [them] upon the necks and strike from every fingertip’} [Al-Anfāl: 12] (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 21).

The article, “The Extinction of the Grayzone” provides reasoning and evidence to the reader as to why with the establishment of the Islamic State, it is not acceptable to remain in a ‘grayzone’ and be neutral but rather to pick a side – either you are with Islam or you are against Islam (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 54). *Dabiq* acknowledges the prior existence of living in a

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<sup>47</sup> Meaning ‘The most glorified’

‘grayzone’ and somewhat accepts it due to a previous state where Muslims did not have an Islamic state to turn to. The following excerpt clearly presents *Dabiq*’s arguments, reiterating that there is no longer an acceptable excuse:

Then came the announcement of the Islamic State’s expansion to Shām followed by the subsequent announcement of the Khilāfah...bringing the grayzone to the brink of permanent extinction... by reviving the great body of Islam and so no Muslim had any excuse to be independent of this entity embodying them and waging war on their behalf in the face of kufr<sup>48</sup>. Now, a stance of ‘neutrality’ or ‘independence’ would doom him, as it entailed major sin, which would cause him to commit greater sins until he could commit kufr for the sake of his sinful interests, as the scholars stated, “The reward for sin is another sin,” and “Sins are the gateway to kufr” [Al-Jawāb al-Kāfi – Ibnul-Qayyim] (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 55).

Throughout the article, religious text and an interpretation of that text is used to persuade the reader of *Dabiq*’s arguments providing the reader with a clear conclusion that *Dabiq* would like the audience to infer. The following excerpt describes the consequences of existing in the ‘grayzone’, such as being labeled an apostate and therefore not a true Muslim, as well as persuades the reader of the legitimacy of the attacks at Charlie Hebdo. While the attack on Charlie Hebdo office is not explicitly mentioned in this section, the two paragraphs of this excerpt are broken up by a photo of an individual who condemned the assault:

{Indeed, those who reverted back to disbelief after guidance had become clear to them – Shaytān<sup>49</sup> enticed them and prolonged hope for them. That is because they said to those who disliked what Allah sent down, “We will obey you in part of the matter.” And Allah knows what they conceal. Then how [will it be] when the angels take them in death, striking their faces and their backs? That is because they followed what angered Allah and disliked [what earns] His pleasure, so He rendered worthless their deeds} [Muhammad: 25 – 28].

This āyah<sup>50</sup> explains the condition of one who says that he won’t mock the Messenger (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam<sup>51</sup>) himself, but he will only participate in

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<sup>48</sup> Meaning ‘Disbelief’

<sup>49</sup> Meaning ‘Antichrist’

<sup>50</sup> Meaning ‘Verse’

<sup>51</sup> Meaning ‘Peace be upon him’

the rallies that the crusaders call to against the mujahidin, in “solidarity” with the mockers. He obeys the kuffār “in part of the matter” – a part that is still kufr – and thereby apostatizes (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 61).

The use of ethos, pathos, and logos in issue 7 of *Dabiq* all play a contributing role in efforts to persuade the reader; whether through establishing credibility, placing the reader in various emotional states, using reason to support claims, or through a combination of these strategies. While I have presented these three rhetorical strategies as separate strategies of persuasion, it is quite common to see a combination of these strategies being used in each article. The combination of these strategies seems inevitable in efforts to persuade the reader as they complement each other; for how persuasive would a logical appeal be without a credible figure to support it. The following excerpt from the article justifying the capture and execution of 21 Coptic Christians is an example of a combination of styles used at one:

This month, the soldiers of the Khilāfah in Wilāyat Tarābulus captured 21 Coptic crusaders, almost five years after the blessed operation against the Baghdad church executed in revenge for Kamilia Shehata, Wafa Constantine, and other sisters who were tortured and murdered by the Coptic Church of Egypt (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 30).

In this particular passage, pathos was used perhaps in an effort to induce feelings of anger or revenge in the reader for the murder of Muslim sisters. In that same passage, logos was demonstrated as the reasoning behind the capture and execution of prisoners was provided to the audience.

I have presented the ‘form’ of the message that is used to deliver the content of *Dabiq* to the reader. Independently identifying the rhetorical styles and strategies that are used in issue 7 gave me an opportunity to better identify both the main purpose of various statements as well as how those statements were delivered. What is important to retain from this chapter is that while I

presented each style and strategy separately, the form of the messages in *Dabiq* frequently overlap with a variety of styles and strategies being used to complement each other. The styles and strategies that are used in issue 7 work together to reinforce the legitimacy of ISIS, not only in the group's use of violent actions but also in regards to the desired lifestyle that *Dabiq* encourages. Furthermore, the form of the messaging plays a key role in actually persuading the reader to act, whether to engage in violent actions, to support or join ISIS, and to live accordingly to ISIS' interpretation of Islam. Having identified the rhetorical styles and strategies used by *Dabiq* and their specific role in persuading the reader of their goals, I will now present the actual content of issue 7 with a particular focus on how this content is framed. In the next chapter I will present an analysis of the content through frame analysis and motive talk.

## Chapter 5: Content

As this thesis aims to answer how *Dabiq* attempts to persuade readers of directly or indirectly joining and/or supporting ISIS, this chapter will analyze the content, arguments, and ideas that are delivered to the reader. I begin by describing the way in which *Dabiq* frames ISIS as well as their enemies. I then present *Dabiq*'s analysis of the 'problem' that Islam is currently facing and the solution they advocate to mitigate this problem. Finally, I identify the underlying logics of the justifications provided for its violent and non-violent actions as well as its motivations to act.

### 5.1 Diagnostic Framing

In the following section I analyze how ISIS presents itself, as well as its leadership, male members, and female members through *Dabiq*. Following this description, I explore how *Dabiq* portrays their problems as resulting from the actions of their enemies.

#### 5.1.1 Presentation of ISIS

A major goal of *Dabiq* magazine is to present ISIS not only as a legitimate organization but as the righteous and rightful caliphate. *Dabiq* presents ISIS as a legitimate, well-run, well-organized entity. This is done by emphasizing the principles ISIS lives by, the expansion and growing popularity of the organization which is constantly attracting new members and groups, as well as its military strength and effectiveness on the battlefield.

Central to *Dabiq*'s claims is the presentation of ISIS as a true Muslim community – the only group in the area to fully live by and truly implement Islamic law. The presentation of the implementation and enforcement of Islamic law in the issue is used to position ISIS as the rightful caliphate, and therefore, the only legitimate organization. Using 'sexual deviance' as an example,

the report, “Clamping Down on Sexual Deviance” is used to stress the important role that ISIS plays in preventing various ‘social problems’ that are associated with ‘sexual deviance’ and the part that punishment plays in this prevention (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 42). The punishments for various ‘crimes’ are appropriate based on the “rulings of Allah” which describe the manner in which those found guilty of ‘sexual deviance’ should be punished:

It is the implementation of Allah’s rulings and the adherence to His guidance, bi idhnillāh, that will protect the Muslims from treading the same rotten course that the West has chosen to pursue. (...) This was demonstrated recently in Wilāyat Ar-Raqqah, where the Islamic State carried out the hadd<sup>52</sup> on a man found guilty of engaging in sodomy. He was taken to the top of a building and throw off, as was one of the tradition of the noble companion Abū Bakr as-Siddīq (radiyallāhu ‘anh<sup>53</sup>) with those who committed this filthy deed. Also in Wilāyat Ar-Raqqah, a woman was stoned after being found guilty of zinā<sup>54</sup>. In Wilāyat al-Khayr, meanwhile, a man was recently flogged as a ta’zīr (disciplinary punishment) after he was found to be in possession of pornographic material (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 43).

Accompanying this text, photos provided the reader with a visual representation of various punishments such as being thrown off of a building, being stoned, and being flogged, demonstrating the group’s commitment to implementing and punishing according to Islamic law as well as the apparent acceptance of these punishments by the public witnessing them.

Various articles take the opportunity to present the implementation and enforcement of Islamic law as a factor that is contributing to more and more members pledging allegiance to ISIS. The following excerpt taken from the report, “Dozens of ‘Nusrah’ and ‘Ahrar’ Fighters Repent and Join the Islamic State” not only points to the increasing amount of fighters coming to join the

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<sup>52</sup> Meaning ‘Punishment’

<sup>53</sup> Meaning ‘May Allah be pleased with them’

<sup>54</sup> Meaning ‘sexual relations between an unmarried man and woman’

Islamic State group but also highlights these members as coming to join them from competing groups, in part due to ISIS fully implementing shariah:

As one of the repentant brothers declared, ‘We used to say that Amīrul-Mu’minīn<sup>55</sup> is a persons whose identity was unknown, but now his lineage and identity have been made public, and everyone – near and far – knows who he is. So what are we waiting for? We used to say that we don’t know the methodology of the Islamic State and that its methodology is hidden. The Islamic State, however, has declared Islam as its law, religion, and methodology. It has implemented the hudūd<sup>56</sup>, waged jihād for the cause of Allah, and raised the banner of truth. It does not differentiate between an amīr and a faqīr (a poor person); the Sharī’ah is obligatory upon everyone (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 38).

The presentation of the implementation and enforcement of Islamic law positions ISIS as the protectors of Islam. This serves to legitimize the organization and give credibility and authority to it. Additionally, readers are provided with personal accounts that attest to the implementation and enforcement of Islamic law as a contributing factor in members’ decisions to pledge allegiance to the group. By showcasing the perspective of members coming from competing groups, the reader is provided with unlikely testimony as ‘former’ enemy members praise ISIS.

A demonstration of the global celebration of the increasing number of people pledging allegiance to ISIS and the application process that perspective groups go through contributes to positioning ISIS as a legitimate, well-organized entity. Boasting of their expansion, the report “Wilāyat Khurāsān and the Bay’āt from Qawqāz” states, “As the news of bay’āt<sup>57</sup> continue to pour in from around the world, the unity of the Muslims upon the truth is further consolidated and the camp of kufr<sup>58</sup> and nifāq<sup>59</sup> is further weakened” (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 36). Emphasizing the

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<sup>55</sup> Leader of the Islamic State group

<sup>56</sup> Punishments under Islamic law

<sup>57</sup> Meaning ‘pledge of allegiance’

<sup>58</sup> Meaning ‘disbelief’

<sup>59</sup> Hypocrisy

application process that these new groups went through to officially claim themselves as ISIS affiliated, the report has an air of exclusivity to it; stressing a strict process a group has to go through to be officially recognized as member of ISIS, stating:

Furthermore, it does not give any person or group permission to announce a wilāyah<sup>60</sup> or present themselves as officials representing the Islamic State leadership until the aforementioned process has concluded. The same process is currently underway for the region of Qawqāz, as well as other regions whose announcements of expansion will – bi iidhnillāh – bring further joy to the Muslims, as was the case with Wilāyat Khurāsān and the wilāyāt announced before it (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 35).

Complementing this theme of growth, *Dabiq* presents ISIS as an organized, well trained, well equipped group with strong military knowledge. This is achieved largely through showcasing the strength of ISIS through select images such as the one below.



(*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 41)

As pictured above, images of ISIS soldiers in *Dabiq* usually have matching uniforms with matching rifles, similar to how uniforms and weapons are issued among soldiers of conventional national militaries. The presentation of the group as soldiers similar to conventional militaries plays a role in persuading the reader of the group's legitimacy as well as encourages recruitment

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<sup>60</sup> Territory/region/province

as the group visually presents themselves as organized, functional, strong, and well supported by resources.

### **5.1.2 Presentation of Islamic State Group Leadership**

There is a large effort in *Dabiq* to present the leadership of ISIS as structured, disciplined, and organized, providing the reader with a sense that the soldiers of ISIS operate as an effective organization with strong and credible leadership on the battlefield. The following section will present instances of *Dabiq* describing desired characteristics that ISIS expects of their leaders.

The article, “Advice for the Leaders of the Islamic State” provides 30 key pieces of advice for leaders on the battlefield and provides readers with a sense of how ISIS leadership operates (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 9). It provides the reader with a sense leadership, structure and organization, helping the group establish trust and legitimacy, reassuring the reader that it is not just ‘a bunch of guys’ going on the battlefield without any strategic military knowledge. While it is peculiar that this article was targeted to active English speaking ISIS leaders at the time of this issue release, the 30 key pieces of information help shape ISIS leadership as effective, knowledgeable, true Muslims who are encouraged to consult, discuss, gather ideas, look for new opinions, and listen to others. It is a form of leadership that resonates with Western views.

*Dabiq* provides operational advice, specifically addressing battlefield knowledge, as well as advice that contributes to good leadership qualities in general. The following excerpts provide examples of the general sense of operational knowledge that ISIS leadership are encouraged to adopt:

[13] The leader should appoint a commander for each squad, and should inspect their vehicles, weapons and supplies, especially prior to battle. Nothing should be taken that will become too much of a burden when the situation become serious

and difficult, and nothing should be left that you will need when something breaks down or when the distance is very long, especially if the leader anticipates a long battle (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 13).

[14] You should not have more than three fighters in any car, unless there's an overriding benefit in doing so. The leader should establish a secure, elaborate method of communication between each of the detachments, and establish code words for them to use when communicating, and slogans to shout when they're fighting (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 13).

*Dabiq* presents an overwhelming positive treatment of faithful ISIS soldiers, both in regard to the caring treatment of soldiers as well as the gentle punishment of them when necessary:

[12] One who provides his brothers with a supply of food and drink that will strengthen them throughout their day is undoubtedly a wise leader. Indeed, when we searched the pockets of some fighters who were under the command of an Afghan leader that was fighting the Taliban, we found raisins (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 13).

[23] (...) Be extremely cautious of over-punishing a soldier, or of pardoning him and then regretting it. And beware of letting your harshness become repulsive, for indeed the purpose of punishment in the Sharī'ah is to bring reform, not to quench one's thirst for revenge...

So you need to be gentle, dear brother, in all of your affairs, even when it comes to punishment. Allah (ta'ālā<sup>61</sup>) says, {And had you been severe and harsh-hearted, they would have dispersed from around you} [Āl-'Imrān: 159] (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 14 – 15).

Demonstrating an almost democratic quality – something that would resonate with Western readers – *Dabiq* encourages ISIS leadership to seek various opinions.

[3] Seek consultation and hold discussions, for discussion is the partner of consultation. One should sit in a gathering to exchange ideas, then each person comments on the opinions put forth by others, or puts forth a new opinion, and at the end of the gathering the correct opinion will become clear. Allah (ta'ālā) said, {And consult them concerning the matter} [Āl 'Imrān: 159]. Allah has directed His Prophet to consult those under him despite the Prophet's prudent intellect. So what about you? (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 10).

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<sup>61</sup> Meaning 'the most glorified'

[4] Beware of only consulting a person who always agrees with your opinion, and beware of bad company. Get accustomed to being patient with any advisers who disagree with your opinion, and swallow the bitterness of their words and their criticism. But don't be casual in that regard except with people who are virtuous, intelligent, chivalrous, senior in age, and trustworthy with secret (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 10 – 11).

While the article is very text heavy, the few photos that are displayed, such as the one below, feature photos of ISIS soldiers, all with the same gear and wearing a camouflage type uniform. This image gives the reader the impression that ISIS soldiers are organized, disciplined, and are successful as they have the resources to provide their soldiers with equal gear.



(*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 13)

### 5.1.3 Presentation of Male Members

*Dabiq* demonstrates an effort to present the male members of ISIS as having distinct desirable characteristics, on the battlefield as well as in general character. General character traits such as highlighting the commitment of these men to ISIS and more importantly Islam, the desire to live by and implement correct Islamic rulings, the need to sacrifice, engage in charity, and the necessity of confronting evil are all provided to the reader as desirable traits to emulate. The presentation of these characteristics is accomplished mainly through ‘case study’ type examples featuring a selected ISIS member. Oftentimes, background information about the featured

individual is provided and includes details on where they grew up and how they came to join and/or support ISIS. Additionally, the article describes desirable characteristics and how the featured individual embodied those positive traits.

The article “The Good Example of Abū Basīr Al-Ifriqī” praises the character traits of Amedy Coulibaly<sup>62</sup> (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 68). While the article does not directly describe the actions that were undertaken by Coulibaly, the article likens Coulibaly to the traits that “were present in the Companions” of the Prophet Muhammad; highlighting his devotion to Islam, which ultimately led him through the path of violent jihad (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 68). The following excerpts demonstrate the traits of Coulibaly’s that were praised by ISIS, including “the constant worship of Allah, recitation of His book, voluntary prayers, charity, dhikr<sup>63</sup> of Allah, and seeking knowledge of the Qur’ān and Sunnah” (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 68). Each of the traits of the Prophet Muhammad’s Companions is presented with religious text. Directly under the religious text is a description of how Coulibaly met the expectation of that specific trait.

#### His Enjoining of Good and Forbidding of Evil

{And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful} [Āl ‘Imrān: 104]<sup>64</sup>

In his home, amongst his family, with the Muslims, on the street, if he saw an evil, he would not leave it be, rather – with wisdom and humility – he would enjoin good and forbid evil (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 69).

#### His Thirst for Seeking Knowledge

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<sup>62</sup> A suspect in an attack on a police officer and the hostage taker and gunman at the Hypercacher Kosher Supermarket in France in 2015.

<sup>63</sup> Recitation of phrases/prayers

<sup>64</sup> Chapter of the Quran

Mu'āwiyah (radiyallāhu 'anh<sup>65</sup>) reported that the Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam<sup>66</sup>) said, 'Whomever Allah wants good for, He grants him understanding of the religion' [Al-Bukhārī and Muslim<sup>67</sup>]

He would ask many questions related to fiqhī<sup>68</sup> rulings and would research issues himself. Allah gave him comprehension by which he was able to compare the different issues and derive the different shar'ī causes behind rulings. The brother was very intelligent in this regard (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 70).

In a similar presentation of desirable characteristics of members, there is an obituary styled article, "Shuhadā' – Among the Believers are Men: Abū Qudāmah al-Misrī" that documents one man's journey to ultimately achieve his desire for martyrdom (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 46). Highlighting the man's firm commitment to ISIS and to Islam, the article provides the reader with a narrative that expresses and praises the desired qualities of the group's members. Addressing the man's commitment to ISIS, the following excerpt highlights the journey from the United Kingdom and the family sacrifice he gave up in order to "fight for the cause of Allah" (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 46):

When Abū Qudāmah al-Misrī embarked on the hijrah<sup>69</sup> to Shām with his best friend Abū Mu'āwiyah al-Misrī in 2012, little did they expect that both, by Allah's grace, would become shuhadā'<sup>70</sup> while fighting in the ranks of the very men who would go on to revive the Khilāfah. Abū Qudāmah was a strong young man who left West London, United Kingdom in 2012 with his best friend Abū Mu'āwiyah to answer the call of jihād in Shām. So driven was Abū Qudāmah to fight for the cause of Allah and to seek the greatest of rewards, that he left the UK two months before his baby daughter was born (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 46).

The article both addresses the desired characteristics of members in general as well as praises the man's actions on the battlefield. The following excerpt reinforces the general character

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<sup>65</sup> Meaning 'Allah is pleased with him'

<sup>66</sup> Meaning 'Peace be upon him'

<sup>67</sup> Hadith collection

<sup>68</sup> Human understanding of shariah law

<sup>69</sup> Migration

<sup>70</sup> Meaning 'martyr'

traits that are praised by ISIS, highlighting both the devotion to Islam as well as the commitment to the group:

Although Abū Qudāmah's joking nature was known to always entertain his brothers, he would take his relationship with Allah very seriously, never missing the fast of Dāwūd ('alayhis-salām<sup>71</sup>) nor enjoying a single night's sleep without spending a portion of it remembering his Lord either through prayer or recitation of the Qur'an. He was known to seek the correct Islamic rulings in everything he did, and would never knowingly allow any doubts or falsehood to hold firm in his presence.

On watching the early videos release by al-Furqān Media<sup>72</sup>, Abū Qudāmah would always express his love for the Islamic State of Iraq even before the announcement of its expansion to Shām (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 47).

Similar to an obituary, the deceased group member is portrayed as a devout man from the United Kingdom who always put other people ahead of himself, ultimately leading to his martyrdom. Written almost like a story, the article highlights the love that the deceased had for the group and the religion:

With one loud call of takbīr<sup>73</sup>, all the brothers started shooting, trying to place as much suppressive fire in the direction of the sniper as possible so that the medic could make his attempt. The medic started his run, then hesitated. He regained his composure and attempted against but hesitated once more. Abū Qudāmah saw this and took over, beginning his own attempt, moving closer and closer to the injured brother while continuously shooting, until there was nothing between him and the sniper's scope. His magazine ran out so he quickly reloaded, not wanting to go back behind cover as he was so close to the injured brother he could almost touch him. And then it happened. (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 49).

Further documenting the final moments of his death, *Dabiq* states how Abu Qudamah finally reached his desire for martyrdom, putting the lives of other before his:

He was breathing for about 15 minutes on his way to the hospital. A brother who stayed with him the entire time testified that despite his severe head injury and with the back of his skull totally shattered, Abū Qudāmah repeatedly uttered the

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<sup>71</sup> Meaning, Peace be upon him'

<sup>72</sup> Media group of the Islamic State

<sup>73</sup> Meaning 'God is greatest'

shahādatayn<sup>74</sup> just before he stopped breathing. ‘This is how I always pictured a shahīd<sup>75</sup> to be both in life and death,’ the brother who was in the ambulance with him later said. Abū Qudāmah was buried next to his companion Abū Mu’āwiyah, as he requested in his will and their companion in this world had finally come to an end. They had both achieved their dreams of shahādah<sup>76</sup> for the cause of Allah, and they would now continue their lifelong companionship in Paradise, bi idhnillāh<sup>77</sup>, after being resurrected together (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 49).

The examples I presented above all praise and legitimize the actions of men who took up the call to engage in violent actions, acting as shining examples of male members of ISIS who ultimately sacrificed themselves in order to defend Islam. While a call for action is not explicit in the excerpts above, readers are encouraged to adopt similar principles that these exceptional men lived by.

#### **5.1.4 Presentation of Female Members**

In a similar but far less prominent focus, *Dabiq* addresses female membership in the group, largely through the “To Our Sisters” section (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 50). Comparable to the description of desirable characteristics in male members of ISIS, the article, “A Brief Interview with Umm Basīr al-Muhājirah” takes the opportunity to reiterate the important position of being a woman in ISIS self-proclaimed territory (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 50). Ideal female characteristics such as taking care of the needs of male family members, providing comfort and peace, staying brave, loving Allah above all else, and the encouragement to adopt virtues such as chastity, modesty, and obedience are all presented in the featured article directed at female readership (*Dabiq*, February 2015). The article demonstrates this through featuring the perspective of Umm Basir al-Muhajirah, the wife of Amedy Coulibaly. After praising the actions of her

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<sup>74</sup> Meaning ‘Declaration of faith’

<sup>75</sup> Meaning ‘Martyr’

<sup>76</sup> Meaning ‘Maryrdom’

<sup>77</sup> Meaning ‘Gods will’

husband, the article highlights her safe journey to ISIS self-proclaimed territory. Addressing Muslim sisters in particular, the interview is used to solidify the important position and expectations a female represents in a supporting role to male figures such as the woman's husband, father, brother, or son (*Dabiq*, February 2015).

My sisters, be bases of support and safety for your husbands, brothers, fathers, and sons. Be advisors to them. They should find comfort and peace with you. Do not make things difficult for them. Facilitate all matters for them. Be strong and brave. It is essential that you make all your deeds sincerely for Allah's face and hope for His reward. Know that the Companions (radiyallāhu 'anhum<sup>78</sup>) did not spread Islam except with their righteous wives behind them (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 51).

The reader takes from this article a sense of the virtuous traits that are desired in females in ISIS self-proclaimed territory. The article provides examples of exceptional women throughout history that are held in high esteem and encourages readers to adopt these same traits. This article plays a role in persuading its female readership to also join ISIS. Perhaps acting as a counter narrative to a long held Western narrative of women from these areas being oppressed, the article provides the female reader an important identity role in ISIS, one that is not oppressed but is a valued partner in a supporting role to their male counterparts.

This section has provided a discussion of how ISIS represents themselves in the *Dabiq* publication. The various characteristics and traits that the magazine portrays, from the presentation of ISIS in general, the presentation of its leaders, and the presentation of its members, all contribute to producing a narrative that presents ISIS as a legitimate, well-defined entity. Once ISIS and their representation of Islam is rendered legitimate and adopted, their interpretation of the situation, their diagnostic framing and prognostic framing becomes legitimate and credible to the reader.

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<sup>78</sup> Meaning 'May Allah be pleased with them'

## 5.2 The Point at Issue

Diagnostic framing aims to assign blame and responsibility to perceived problems or issues (Snow & Benford, 2000). In order to explore the issues and problems that ISIS perceives, we must look at how *Dabiq* describes their enemies. Recalling Hegghammer (2009), while recognizing that various groups fight for various reasons, two common discourses in the literature focuses on a discussion of a so-called “near enemy-far enemy divide” or to avoid geographic confusion, the “global jihadist ideology” and “revolutionary Islam” (p. 26 – 28). Within issue 7 *Dabiq* is continuously discussing their various enemy groups. One common element in addressing these various enemy groups is that Islam is currently under attack, by both the “near enemy” and “far enemy” groups (Hegghammer, 2009, p. 28).

The following section provides an understanding of how enemy groups are represented and blamed for ‘problems’ in *Dabiq*. Before my analysis addresses any specific groups, I will present a type of blanket enemy group that overlays across the entire magazine. This enemy group broadly includes anyone who does not accept specifically ISIS’ representation of Islam, and warns of the general danger of being in this group. While the article “An Explicit Ultimatum from the Salaf to the Apostates” does not specifically address any particular group, *Dabiq* presents the reader with both the rewards and consequences of turning your back on Islam stating the “deviant”, “afflicted”, and “abandoned” label of those who do not accept Allah (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 17 – 18):

And whoever worships Allah alone, who has no partner, then let him know that Allah is ever watchful of him. He is living and eternal; He does not die. Neither tiredness nor sleep overtakes Him. He guards His religion and exacts revenge upon His enemy. I advise you with taqwā<sup>79</sup> of Allah, your duty towards Allah, and what your Prophet (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam<sup>80</sup>) came with. And I advise you to take as guidance his guidance and grasp the religion of Allah, for anyone whom Allah

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<sup>79</sup> Consciousness of Allah

<sup>80</sup> Meaning ‘Peace be upon him’

does not guide is deviant, anyone whom He does not decree wellbeing for is afflicted, and anyone whom Allah does not aid is abandoned. So whomever Allah guides is guided and whomever He leaves astray is deviant. Allah (ta'ālā)<sup>81</sup> said, {He whom Allah guides is guided, but he whom He leaves astray – never will you find for him a protecting guide} [Al-Kahf: 17]<sup>82</sup>, and no deed will be accepted from him in the Dunyā<sup>83</sup> until he accepts Him. And no repentance or ransom will be accepted from him in the Hereafter (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 17 – 18).

*Dabiq* prominently asserts that Islam is currently under attack from both the West as well as from other various 'false' Muslims. Throughout various articles, *Dabiq* assigns blame and unfavourable characteristics to Western entities, all contributing to a greater effort to separate those who practice Islam from those who do not. The article "Clamping Down on Sexual Deviance" specifically assigns criticism of the West for an escalation in 'sexually deviant' behaviour (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 42). In a demonstration of the danger that the West represents, the article writes to the consequences of the "sexual revolution" in the West such as disease and the break-up of families (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 42):

Disease became rampant, the rate of children born outside of marriage skyrocketed, and the nuclear family was on its way to becoming a relic of the past. Rather than taking heed upon witnessing the destruction of their social fabric, and changing their 'way of life,' the kuffār defiantly persisted on their mission to eradicate their morals. They used their entertainment industry to mock and belittle those against the sexually deviant fringe, used their shirk-based parliaments to legalize sodomite marriage, used their education system to corrupt their children right from kindergarten level by introducing books into the curriculum to combat 'homophobia,' and used their churches and clergy to bless these sins via 'revisionism.' (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 42 – 43).

These excerpts not only assign blame to Western society in general, but also to specific facets that contribute to the make-up of Western society such as the entertainment industry, the

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<sup>81</sup> Meaning 'the most glorified'

<sup>82</sup> Chapter in the Quran

<sup>83</sup> Meaning 'the earthly world'

legal system, the education system, and the inclusion of churches and clergy. All of these entities are included in assigning blame for ‘sexual deviance’ all contributing to the “rotten course that the West has chosen to pursue” (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 43).

The article “The Anger Factory” provides a unique criticism of Western governments, and specifically the government of the United Kingdom (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 76). This criticism is provided by John Cantlie, a British photojournalist who was kidnapped by ISIS in 2012 (*Dabiq*, February 2015). Throughout the article, Cantlie emphasizes with the anger that people can harbor towards their own government, reflecting on his own experience. Cantlie criticizes his own British government for poor decision making and rationalizes the associated violent attacks that are sometimes committed in response to these poor decisions. Cantlie’s piece provides the reader with a narrative focusing on the feeling of being ‘left behind’ by your government, presenting an uncaring attitude of the UK government. Noticeably less concerned for his own well-being, his anger primarily stems from how the British government has treated his own family during this hostage process:

I’ve been allowed access to a number of news reports and Twitter feeds regarding my situation, and about the only thing I’m aware that the British government has done in my case is to comment pointlessly on the release of my videos.

‘We are aware of the release of another video and we are studying its contents,’ a Foreign Office spokesman will say. Awesome. Good job. Family and friends have done far more for the other Britons and myself who were imprisoned out here. I’m even aware of an online campaign that’s been launched by some of my old friends to try and get my story represented before the government. Thanks guys, I hope it has some effect but really, asking the government to help when it’s they who set the rules in the first place may prove fruitless (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 79).

Cantlie’s piece also attributes a lot of blame and critique to Western governments not only for the situation he is in but also for attacks happening in Western countries, stating:

Their response is often violently reactionary instead of forward-thinking. Following the attacks the French government responded by flooding the streets with troops and tanks, a completely pointless move that will only raise panic levels amongst its citizens. Following the capture of a Jordanian pilot by the Islamic State, the coalition responded by launching a night of intensive airstrikes on the city of ar-Raqqah in Syria that will only prompt the mujāhidīn to shoot down more aircraft and execute more pilots (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 78).

The previous excerpt provides context to expected criticisms such as airstrikes and poor decisions of Western governments. Perhaps more importantly though is the perspective that is being conveyed throughout the entire article. John Cantlie is a citizen of the United Kingdom and a prisoner of ISIS. Readers are presented with this negative perspective of Western involvement in campaigns against ISIS, through the eyes of a Western citizen. Cantlie establishes credibility with the reader, providing a first-hand account of what it is like to feel abandoned by your own government. While Cantlie describes the growing “anger factory” among a wider population, he specifically uses his own experience to reflect on his growing anger with his government, emphasizing a ‘before’ and ‘after’ stage, previously not being involved or concerned with the decisions of Western governments to now being more critical and aware of the impact certain actions can have (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 76).

I’ve seen dozens of videos of Cameron saying how much he values the lives of the British public, but actions sometimes speak louder than words and that isn’t what I’ve witnessed when it comes to the families of British citizens held in Syria. It’s a strange thing, to harbor real anger towards your government. For me it’s a new sensation, politics never touched me before because I lived blissfully under the radar. I’d never voted in my life because I figured that all politicians were, by nature, public school liars who would just say whatever needed to be said to get into power and then do exactly the same as the leader before them except wearing a different-colored tie (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 81).

*Dabiq* targets ‘false’ Muslims as enemy groups, presenting the reader with a clear ‘with us or against us’ type narrative. The article “The Extinction of the Grayzone” targets people

existing within the ‘grayzone’, or neutral people who have neither sided with the Islamic State opposition (crusaders) or with ISIS itself (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 54). Addressing these ‘grayzone’ individuals, the article positions them as hypocrites who are disbelievers and should be massacred, stating:

And a sword was also revealed to deal with the grayish hypocrites if they openly exposed their dark hypocrisy. {O Prophet, fight against the disbelievers and the hypocrites and be harsh upon them. And their refuse is Hell, and wretched is the destination} [At-Tawbah: 73]. {If the hypocrites and those in whose hearts is disease and those who spread rumors in al-Madīnah do not cease, We will surely incite you against them; then they will not remain your neighbors therein except for a little. They are accursed; wherever they are found, they are to be seized and massacred completely. This is the established way of Allah with those who passed on before; and you will not find in the way of Allah any change} [Al-Ahzāb: 60-62]<sup>84</sup> (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 56).

Shaykh Sulaymān Āl ash-Shaykh (rahimahullāh<sup>85</sup>) said, ‘The meaning of the āyah<sup>86</sup> is apparent. It means that if a man hears the verses of Allah being denied and mocked and sits with the kāfir<sup>87</sup> mockers without being coerced, without forbidding them, and without getting up and leaving until they change the subject, then he is a kāfir like them even if he does not do the same as them, because his remaining with them entails approval of kufr. And approval of kufr is kufr’ [Ad-Durar as-Saniyyah] (*Dabiq*, Issue 7, p. 60).

Throughout this article there are several images of American Muslim scholars in particular, such as the one displayed below, who have been targeted and labelled as apostates by ISIS for condemning the attack at the Charlie Hebdo office, perhaps in an effort to resonate with Western readers who may be more familiar with these particular scholars or be able to easily obtain and read their work.

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<sup>84</sup> Chapter in the Quran

<sup>85</sup> Meaning ‘Allah have mercy upon him’

<sup>86</sup> Meaning ‘verse’

<sup>87</sup> Meaning ‘infidel’



(*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 61)

*Dabiq* takes the opportunity to criticize various other violent Islamist ‘claimant’ groups. Perhaps in an attempt to attract new recruits, and therefore, more resources, the article “Dozens of ‘Nusrah’ and ‘Ahrār’ Fighters Repent and Join the Islamic State” highlights not only the new recruits supporting ISIS but also their transition to ISIS from competing violent Islamist groups (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 38). Taking the opportunity to stress again that ISIS is the only group in the region who truly actively implements Islamic law, the article confronts and positions opposition groups as liars, responsible for circulating “lies” about ISIS in regards to the safety of fighters who abandon opposition groups and join the group (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 38):

Even as the deviant factions in Sham continue to wage war against the Khilāfah, at times coordinating their efforts with the communist PKK, scores of fighters from within the Sahwah and the Jawlani Front continue to abandon their misguided mission only to join the Islamic State...They made this choice after seeing through the lies being propagated by their respective groups against the Islamic State (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 38).

The article provides a caring sentiment to the reader – warning those who leave opposition groups of potential consequences to their family members due to the communication between Jabhat an-Nusra and the Free Syrian Army (FSA). *Dabiq* contrasts this by positioning opposition groups as retaliatory, imprisoning and threatening the family members of individuals who shift their allegiance to ISIS stating:

Also, my beloved brothers for the sake of Allah, I'd like to make mention of the issue of those who left Jabhat an-Nusra while their names are known to Jabhat an-Nusra's l'āmiyyin (media personnel), especially in the northern countryside of Halab. There's been more than one case where a brother arrives, leaving Jabhat an-Nusra and coming to join the Islamic State, and his name is immediately handed over to the Free Syrian Army. Consequently, they (the FSA) make things difficult for his family, or his father is thrown in prison, or they threaten to kill his family. Why? Because he joined the ranks of the Islamic State (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 39).

In addressing what needs to be done to protect attacks on Islam from these various enemy groups, there is one clear path the reader is presented with – to protect Islam with the sword, meaning violence (*Dabiq*, February 2015). The article, “Islam is the Religion of the Sword not Pacifism”, justifies and encourages violence against those who do not submit to Allah alone (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 20). *Dabiq* features a discussion of the linguistic root of the word ‘Islam’, presenting a counter narrative against, as argued by the article, “a slogan repeated continuously” that “Islam is the religion of peace” (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 20). The following excerpt demonstrate the Islamic State’s group commitment to use violence when necessary, as the issue aims to argue that Islam is “the religion of the sword” (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 20).

It is clear then that salām (peace) is not the basis of the word Islam, although it shares the same consonant root (s-l-m) and is one of the outcomes of the religion’s sword, as the sword will continue to be drawn, raised, and swung until ‘Īsā (Jesus – ‘alayhis-salām<sup>88</sup>) kills the Dajjāl (the Antichrist) and abolishes the jizyah<sup>89</sup>.

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<sup>88</sup> Meaning ‘peace be upon him’

<sup>89</sup> Tax on non-Muslims

Thereafter, kufr and its tyranny will be destroyed; Islam and its justice will prevail on the entire Earth (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 23 – 24).

This section has provided insight into the way ISIS presents their enemies in *Dabiq*. The various characteristics that the magazine portrays, from the presentation of those who do not accept Islam in general, to specifically addressing Western forces, ‘false’ Muslims, and competing ‘claimant’ groups, all contribute to producing a narrative that presents all of these opposition groups as illegitimate and not accepting of Islam. By positioning these groups as enemy groups, *Dabiq* lays the groundwork for justifying violent action against these groups. This perspective provides the reader not only with an outlet to direct their anger but encourages an acceptance that these groups need to be either converted or killed out of God’s will. Despite having documented the need to protect and defend Islam and true Muslims from all types of attacks, including protection not only from military attacks but also from cultural attacks, and despite having demonstrated that Allah calls for and justifies jihad in defense of these attacks, *Dabiq* further justifies past and future actions and methods by drawing from a series of neutralization techniques. What follows is a presentation of the concrete and abstract responses that are used to justify specific actions that have taken place as well as justify and encourage potential future actions

### **5.3 Motivational Framing**

The final framing element involved in the attempt to create consensus and mobilization requires motivational framing, providing compelling accounts and the rationale for engaging in action (Benford & Snow, 2000). *Dabiq* attempts to justify both specific actions that group has taken responsibility for as well as justifies and encourages any potential future actions. The following section provides a presentation of these justifications using Sykes and Matza’s (1957)

*Techniques of Neutralization* including the denial of responsibilities, the denial of victim, the appeal to higher loyalties, and the denial of injury.

### **5.3.1 Denial of Responsibilities**

Recalling Sykes and Matza (1957), denial of responsibility consists of an individual denying responsibility for an act by blaming forces outside of their control, thereby mitigating or reducing the disapproval of that act. *Dabiq* deploys the denial of responsibilities as various articles deflect blame by framing their actions as a response to the actions of another government or group. In doing this, the other government or group is framed as bearing the responsibility of ISIS actions and of the negative outcome. The following section will present instances of *Dabiq* deploying the denial of responsibilities as a response to actions in support of crusaders, as a response to violent attacks being committed against ‘real’ Muslims, and as a response to a refusal to negotiate with ISIS.

The article addressing the execution of two Japanese prisoners aims to justify both the execution of the prisoners as well as all future violent action towards Japanese citizens at the hands of ISIS. The execution of the prisoners is justified by placing the blame explicitly on the actions of the Japanese government and current Prime Minister Abe Shinzo. The article deflects responsibility by positioning the Japanese government as arrogant, negligent, and risking their own citizens’ lives by choosing to support another “crusader coalition against the Muslims” (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 3). The following excerpt provides an example of this justification strategy:

Almost a decade later, ‘pacifist’ Japan has once again defied wisdom by entering into another crusader coalition against the Muslims, but this time under the leadership of the ‘Nobel Peace Prize’ winner Obama. And so a ‘pacifist’ country is led by a ‘peace’ prizewinner in a war doomed to fail. What interests did Abe Shinzo expect to achieve for Japan by publicly committing more than 200 million dollars to be explicitly used in the war against the Islamic State, as if the Khilāfah were not

a dangerous entity to anger? What kind of hubris blinded him to make his thoughtless announcement from a podium erected by the tāghūt Sisi who wages war against the soldiers of the Khilāfah in Wilāyat Saynā'? What begot him into 'forgetting' that the Islamic State had two Japanese prisoners inside its jails awaiting the blunders of Japanese leadership? (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 3).

*Dabiq* denies responsibility of various violent actions against its enemies by positioning their violent actions as an appropriate response to attacks committed against 'real' Muslims. *Dabiq* justifies the capture and execution of 21 Coptic Christian prisoners as well as justifies all future violent attacks on Coptic Christians in the article "Revenge for the Muslimāt Persecuted by the Coptic Crusaders of Egypt" (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 30). The article deflects responsibility for the murder of the 21 Coptic Christians by positioning the leader of the Coptic Christians as the party who 'started it', based on the murder of specifically "Kamilia Shehata, Wafa Constantine, and other sisters" who were purportedly tortured and murdered by the Coptic Church in Egypt (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 30). The following excerpt provides an example of this justification strategy:

Therefore, the Islamic State leadership decided to target the Catholic Christians of Baghdad so as to teach the tāghūt<sup>90</sup> of the Copts – Shenouda – that the price of Muslim blood is costly and so accordingly, if his church persecuted any Muslimah in Egypt, he would be directly responsible for every single Christian killed anywhere in the world when the Islamic State sought its just revenge...And the deaths did not begin until after the crusaders had expressed their arrogance and refusal to execute the righteous demands of the mujāhidīn" (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 31).

*Dabiq* deploys the denial of responsibilities to justify the violent actions that were undertaken by three men as well as encourage continued violent action in the article, "Interview with Abū 'Umar al-Baljīkī" (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 72). Denial of responsibility is used to

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<sup>90</sup> Used to denounce someone who worships an entity other than Allah

broadly blame the Belgian government, not for one specific action as applied to the Coptic Christians but for generally attacking Muslims in Iraq and Syria. This article is broken up into two different sections. The first section features a fairly brief interview with Abdelhamid Abaaoud (Paris attack, 2015) discussing his experience in Belgium, as well as his journey to Syria. The interview focuses more on the logistics and questions about the raid and journey through Europe, posing questions such as “Dābiq: Was it difficult for you to go to Belgium?”, “Dābiq: What happened on the day of the battle with the Belgian authorities?”, and “Dābiq: Tell us about your journey to Shām” (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 73 – 74). In a response to a question posed by *Dabiq*, asking why the interviewee went to Belgium, the interviewee responds:

Alhamdulillah<sup>91</sup>, Allah chose me, Abuz-Zubayr al-Baljīkī (Khālid), and Abū Khālid al-Baljīkī (Sufyān) to travel to Europe in order to terrorize the crusaders waging war against the Muslims. As you know, Belgium is a member of the crusader coalition attacking the Muslims of Iraq and Shām (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 73).

Denying responsibility, Abaaoud attributes blame to all of Belgium for taking part in any coalition efforts against ISIS.

*Dabiq* similarly deploys the denial of responsibility in the article, “The Anger Factory”, purportedly written by John Cantlie (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 76). This particular article is used to justify the growing anger and the resulting attacks that are being carried out against Western countries, with Western actions and responses only further encouraging future attacks. The following excerpt is an example of the denial of responsibility when applied more broadly for general attacks against real Muslims:

Governments are breeding more anger every single day with their increasingly hawkish viewpoints that simply do not work in the real world. They refuse to

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<sup>91</sup> Meaning ‘all praise is due to Allah’

change or adapt. Confronted with a complex, developing situation that needs to be addressed intelligently or differently, Western governments just revert to form, and use heavy-handed police tactics or support military intervention abroad when it is exactly those responses that have been making the situation worse for decades.

Their response is often violently reactionary instead of forward-thinking. Following the attacks the French government responded by flooding the streets with troops and tanks, a completely pointless move that will only raise panic levels amongst its citizens. Following the capture of a Jordanian pilot by the Islamic State, the coalition responded by launching a night of intensive airstrikes on the city of ar-Raqqah in Syria that will only prompt the mujāhidīn to shoot down more aircraft and execute more pilots (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 78).

The denial of responsibility provides the reader with a framework to position their future actions by providing examples of where readers can direct their anger. *Dabiq* deflects responsibility from themselves by blaming outside forces. This plays a role in persuading the reader of the legitimacy of past violent actions that the group has endorsed as the position of the group demonstrates that there was nothing inherently wrong with their actions in the first place and that these actions were simply a retaliation to actions from the enemy.

### **5.3.2 Appeal to Higher Loyalties**

Recalling Sykes and Matza (1957), the appeal to higher loyalties is demonstrated when “internal and external social controls” are “neutralized by sacrificing the demands of the larger society for the demands of the smaller social groups to which the delinquent belongs” (p. 669). The appeal to higher loyalties is consistently found throughout issue 7. The appeal is generally applied in two different methods. One application of the appeal to higher loyalties is used when calling for future action or for justifying teachings or actions in general, outside of addressing a specific event. In this application of the appeal to higher loyalties, it will be frequently found alone. *Dabiq* demonstrates this justification strategy in the article, “An Explicit Ultimatum from the Salaf to the Apostates” that uses religious text to justify the principle of murdering apostates or anyone

who does not accept Allah (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 17). The article reiterates an ‘us vs. them’ discussion with no ‘gray zone’ – you are either with Islam or against Islam. Religious text provides the reader with guidance on how one should treat those who remain both firm in their religion as well as provides guidance on how to treat those who have “turned back” from religion (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 17):

And He said, {Indeed, Shaytān<sup>92</sup> is an enemy to you; so take him as an enemy. He only invites his party to be among the companions of the Blaze} [Fātir: 6]<sup>93</sup>. I have sent to you so and so [Khālīd Ibn al-Walīd] with an army of the Muhājirīn, the Ansār, and their good followers, and I’ve ordered him to not fight anyone or kill anyone until he calls him to the call of Allah. Whoever answers him accepts the truth, halts his evil, and does good, my envoy will accept this from him and will aid him in it. If he refuses, I’ve ordered him to wage war against them over their refusal, to not spare anyone he is able to kill, to burn them alive with fire, to kill them in a severe manner using all means, to enslave their women and children, and to not accept from any one of them anything but Islam. Whoever follows it, then it is best for him. And whoever leaves it, then he cannot incapacitate Allah (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 18).

[I’ve said to my army] if the Muslims perform adhān<sup>94</sup> and they [the apostates] do not perform adhān, then rush to kill them. And if they [the apostates] perform adhān, then restrain yourselves from attacking them until you ask them to deliver what is obligatory upon them [the zakāh<sup>95</sup>]. If they refuse, then rush to kill them. If they agree, it will be accepted from them, and my envoy will make them carry out their duties (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 18).

Similarly, within the article “The Salvation from Fitnah is Khilāfah and Jihād”, *Dabiq* uses the appeal to higher loyalties to encourage the reader to commit violence when fighting evil (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 44). *Dabiq* demonstrates this appeal through the use of solely religious text encouraging readers to reject evil and be faithful to true Islam, as well as encourage this salvation from evil primarily through “the sword [meaning jihad]” (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 45):

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<sup>92</sup> Meaning ‘antichrist’

<sup>93</sup> Chapter of the Quran

<sup>94</sup> Call to prayer

<sup>95</sup> Meaning ‘tax’

I said, ‘O Rasūlullah, what do you advise I do if I reach that time.’ He said, ‘Stick to the jamā’ah [the khilafah] of the Muslims and their imām [the khalīfah].’ I said ‘What if they have no jamā’ah nor imām?’ He said, ‘Then abandon all of those sects even if you have to bite the root of a tree until death comes upon you while you are in that condition.’ [Reported by al-Bukhārī and Muslim] (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 44).

I said, ‘O Rasūlullah, do you see this good that Allah gave us, will there be evil after it like there was before it?’ He replied, ‘Yes.’ I said, ‘What is the salvation from it?’ He replied, ‘The sword [meaning jihād].’ (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 45).

This application of the appeal to higher loyalties plays a role in persuading the reader to act by providing legitimacy to both past and future violent actions, specifically by providing the reader with religious text to reference and draw reasoning from. In conjunction with the religious text, the reader is provided with a target as well as the potential means of how the violent action should be carried out.

In the second application of the appeal to higher loyalties, this justification strategy will often be used in combination with another justification strategy, such as the denial of victim or the denial of injury, when addressing a specific event. While the article “The Burning of the Murtadd Pilot” is used to generally justify the execution of the Jordanian pilot, Moaz el-Kassasbeh, the article focuses largely on justifying the actual means through which ISIS executed the pilot (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 5). *Dabiq* acknowledges that the group has faced some criticism in burning the pilot to his death and presents arguments that support this method of execution, all of which are grounded in religion. Acknowledging the criticism that the group has faced, the article states:

While the execution of Sājīdah and Ziyād became the focus on international headlines, the focus for many ignorant hizbiyyīn<sup>96</sup> became the manner in which the pilot was executed. Amongst them was the Jordanian Abū Sayyāf Muhammad ash-Shalabī, who stated, “The manner in which he was executed and the subsequent production of a video displaying his execution is a matter that opposes the teachings of the pure religion. Jihād was legislated to make the people enter the religion, not

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<sup>96</sup> Meaning ‘partisans’

to make them turn away from the religion or to distort its image” (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 6).

Using religious text, *Dabiq* provides multiple examples throughout history grounded in religion, where burning is used as an appropriate execution method. The following excerpt provides a demonstration of this appeal:

Likewise during his khilāfah, Abū Bakr (radiyallāhu ‘anh<sup>97</sup>) gathered a number of his advisors from amongst the Sahābah<sup>98</sup> and consulted them about the case of a man found guilty of committing sodomy. The one who had the most severe position was ‘Alī (radiyallāhu ‘anh) who said, “this is a sin that no nation had committed before except for one nation, and you know how Allah dealt with them. I view that we should burn him alive.” So the Sahābah agreed with his position, and Abū Bakr wrote to Khālid ordering him to burn the man alive [Al-Bayhaqī] (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 7).

The denial of victim is frequently used in tandem with the appeal to higher loyalties, particularly when positioning the punishment of an act through the use of religious text as moral. Recalling Sykes and Matza (1957), denial of injury is demonstrated when the actor accepts that the act in question is illegal but not immoral. Denial of injury is not prevalent throughout *Dabiq* as it would require *Dabiq* to acknowledge an act as illegal. There is only one instance in which this justification technique may be applied in issue 7. While the article “The Burning of the Murtadd Pilot”, does not specifically recognize the burning execution method as illegal, *Dabiq* acknowledges that the method was widely criticized as being contrary to true Islam and reassures the reader that the method was not immoral but an accepted method of Allah’s Messenger, therefore, a justified method (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 5). The following excerpt demonstrates *Dabiq*’s initial response to the method being criticized:

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<sup>97</sup> Meaning ‘May Allah be pleased with him’

<sup>98</sup> Meaning ‘Companions’

While the execution of Sājidah and Ziyād became the focus of international headlines, the focus for many ignorant hizbiyyīn became the manner in which the pilot was executed. Amongst them was the Jordanian Abū Sayyāf Muhammad ask-Shalabī, who stated, “The manner in which he was executed and the subsequent production of a video displaying his execution is a matter that opposes the teachings of pure religion. Jihād was legislated to make the people enter the religion, not to make them turn away from the religion or to distort its image.”

This type of rhetoric is typical of hizbiyyīn – even those masquerading as supporters of the mujāhidīn – who continue to live under the authority of the murtadd puppets, and the defeatist Muslims who reside in the lands of kufr under the authority of the crusaders themselves, with no intention of making hijrah to those lands in which the world of Allah is the highest. Such people have had their religion diluted and, not surprisingly, are always amongst the first to speak out in any case where the mujahidin display their harshness towards the crusaders, attempting to disguise their criticism towards the mujahidin as concern for the image of Islam (*Dabiq*, February 2015, pg. 6)

After providing several examples of the burning execution being made in history, provided by religious text, the article states:

Thus, the Islamic State not only followed the footsteps of Allah’s Messenger (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam<sup>99</sup>) in his harshness towards the disbelievers, but also emulated the example of his righteous Sahābah<sup>100</sup> (radiyallāhu ‘anhum<sup>101</sup>) by punishing with fire in retaliation, and for the purpose of terrorizing the murtaddīn and making examples out of them.

We ask Allah to take revenge for the Muslims and mujāhidīn, and rain fire and destruction upon the kuffār<sup>102</sup> and murtaddīn<sup>103</sup> wherever they are (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 8).

The use of religious text and religious themes as demonstrated in the above excerpts strengthens the findings of previous scholars that the use of religious verses or teachings in Islamic State publications encourages and reinforces an us vs. them mentality that permits the use of violence under a certain set of conditions (Kuznar, 2017; Kuznar &

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<sup>99</sup> Meaning ‘Peace be upon him’

<sup>100</sup> Meaning ‘Companions’

<sup>101</sup> Meaning ‘May Allah be pleased with them’

<sup>102</sup> Meaning ‘Disbelievers’

<sup>103</sup> Meaning ‘Apostates’

Moon, 2014; Spier, 2018). This is demonstrated in *Dabiq* both by the use of specific religious verses urging readers to fight against evil as well as through the use of terms such as ‘kuffār’ and ‘murtaddīn’ that is used to identify an enemy based on their non-association with the Islamic State’s interpretation of Islam.

### 5.3.3 Denial of Victim

Recalling Sykes and Matza (1957), the denial of victim is demonstrated when the actor accepts responsibility for their actions and knows that harm will come from their actions but deflects responsibility by maintaining that the act is not wrong in the particular circumstance but rather a “rightful retaliation or punishment” (p. 668). The denial of victim is used throughout *Dabiq* to redefine the actions of ISIS as various articles deflect blame by not only justifying the need for punishment, retaliation, or retribution but also to justify the techniques used to carry out retaliation or punishment.

The denial of victim is found in the article addressing the burning execution of the Jordanian pilot as an appropriate retribution for his actions against Islam and Muslims in general:

This week, the Islamic State released a video depicting the execution of the Jordanian crusader pilot, Mu’ādh Sāfī Yūsuf al-Kasāsibah. As displayed in the video, the Islamic State had resolved to burn him alive as retribution for his crimes against Islam and the Muslims, including his active involvement in crusader airstrikes against Muslim lands (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 5).

In a final presentation of the denial of victim, *Dabiq* urges readers to ‘pick a side, demonstrating a clear ‘with us or against us’ type narrative in the article “The Extinction of the Grayzone” (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 54). *Dabiq* justifies the murder of anyone, emphasizing Imams, targeting the people existing within the ‘grayzone’ or the neutral people who have neither

sided with Islamic State opposition (crusaders) or the Islamic State group itself (*Dabiq*, February 2015). Using a combination of justification strategies, the denial of victim is used to both justify the murder of crusaders as well as used to encourage readers to distance themselves from crusaders in general. *Dabiq* demonstrates this strategy as the article presents religious text to provide support for the call to readers to choose a side, with or against, and act accordingly. The following excerpt is an example of this strategy, distancing the reader from those in the ‘grayzone’ stating:

And a sword was also revealed to deal with the grayish hypocrites if they openly exposed their dark hypocrisy. {O Prophet, fight against the disbelievers and the hypocrites and be harsh upon them. And their refuse is Hell, and wretched is the destination} [At-Tawbah: 73]. {If the hypocrites and those in whose hearts is disease and those who spread rumors in al-Madīnah do not cease, We will surely incite you against them; then they will not remain your neighbors therein except for a little. They are accursed; wherever they are found, they are to be seized and massacred completely. This is the established way of Allah with those who passed on before; and you will not find in the way of Allah any change} [Al-Ahzāb: 60-62] (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 56).

In each of these examples above, the articles explain the wrong deed and presents arguments for the appropriate punishment or retribution. In doing so, *Dabiq* redefines their violent actions as an appropriate and justified response to the situation. *Dabiq* uses the denial of victim to both justify specific events such as the necessity of executing the pilot due to his crimes against Islam as well as justify and encourage violent action against a very broad enemy, such as anyone who does not side with ISIS. This section has provided insight into the motivational framing that is used in issue 7 of *Dabiq*, providing examples of compelling accounts and rationale for various specific and potential actions using Sykes and Matza’s (1957) *Techniques of Neutralization*.

Throughout my presentation of various enemy groups, I found that *Dabiq* quite similarly applied a ‘near enemy’ ‘far enemy’ conceptualization as I explored in the literature review with an overarching criticism focusing on Islam being under attack by both of these distinguished

enemy groups, both Western countries and their allies as well as ‘illegitimate’ Muslim regimes (Hegghammer, 2009; Page, Challita, & Harris, 2011; Sageman, 2004). Similar to what Wagemakers (2008) found, *Dabiq* is concerned with both the religious threat, or the “portrayal of non-Muslims as potential enemies of the purity of Islamic rituals and customs” (p. 5) as well as the political threat, the threat coming from leaders of Muslim countries “who they consider to be apostates (*murtaddun*) and unbelievers (*kuffar*) because of their loyalty to ‘infidel’ states” (p. 7). *Dabiq* demonstrates their concern with the religious threat in the article justifying the punishment of individuals who have been judged as ‘sexually deviant’, holding the West responsible for a the erosion of moral values (*Dabiq*, February 2015). In response, *Dabiq* implements “Allah’s rulings” and guidance in order to protect Muslims from Western attempts to corrupt “Islamic purity” (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 43; Wagemakers, 2008, p. 6). *Dabiq* demonstrates a concern with the political threat as the article “Major Operations in Libya and Sinai” documents successful attacks on politically symbolic targets and officials, describing the political nature of the attacks (*Dabiq*, February 2015).

In Libya’s Wilāyat Tarābulus, an assault took place in the Corinthia Hotel – known to house the *murtadd*<sup>104</sup> “prime minister,” Omar al-Hasi and other *murtadd* “government officials,” frequented by *kāfir*<sup>105</sup> foreign diplomats, and used by the crusader support mission in Libya (UNSMIL) (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 40).

One prominent appeal of *Inspire* magazine that Sivek (2013) found emphasized an “ordinary guys turned superheroes” narrative that ‘glamorized’ a secret identity and those who acted on behalf of al-Qaeda (Sivek, 2013, p. 15). This attempt to appeal to the reader was not evident in *Dabiq*. *Dabiq* clearly recognizes and celebrates individuals who commit violent actions

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<sup>104</sup> Meaning ‘apostate’

<sup>105</sup> Meaning ‘disbeliever’

in allegiance to ISIS. However, the actions and sacrifice of these individuals are always positioned as a fulfillment of a duty that is required of all Muslims and not one that is self-serving to reach a ‘celebrity’ type status in the group.

Throughout my analysis, it became apparent that there are issues with distinguishing singular neutralization techniques for actions that *Dabiq* aims to account for. Oftentimes, I found *Dabiq* appealing to a combination of justification techniques, to account for one specific action. Recalling the article justifying the burning execution method of the pilot, *Dabiq* uses the denial of victim by positioning the act of executing the pilot as an appropriate punishment for his stated crimes against Islam and Muslims, judged for participating in bombing campaigns. In addition to this technique, *Dabiq* uses the appeal to higher loyalties to reaffirm the reader that the actual burning execution method is just and permissible as it is based in religious text. *Dabiq* similarly demonstrates this in the article justifying the appropriate punishment of individuals who have been judged to be ‘sexually deviant’, confirming to the audience that the punishment is appropriate as it is grounded in religious text. While I found using Sykes and Matza’s (1957) *Techniques of Neutralization* helpful to categorize how *Dabiq* accounts for actions in general, I found that accounting for motives was not as neatly defined as demonstrated in Sykes and Matza’s (1957) work. Recalling Cohen’s (2001) work on the expansion of Sykes and Matza’s *Techniques of Neutralization*, moral indifference is added as a neutralization technique. Moral indifference highlights the absence of the appeal to neutralize behaviour – “no neutralization because there is nothing to neutralize” (p. 77). Moral indifference does not deny moral codes such as “(‘I didn’t know rape was wrong’)” but denies their moral legitimacy (p. 98). Specifically addressing fundamentalist religion, Cohen (2001) states that moral indifference is used when there is no real requirement to neutralize an act because “there is no morally legitimate universe outside the

ideology” (p. 98). Throughout my analysis I have presented various techniques of neutralization that are used to appeal to the audience to justify and call for various actions. Contrary to Cohen’s (2001) moral indifference, my observations have demonstrated that in the case of ISIS, the group opts to provide justifications. While the leadership of ISIS may not feel a need to actually justify the actions of the group, there seems to be an acknowledgement to provide justifications for another purpose and are used as a teaching tool directed towards Western readers. *Dabiq* provides Western readers with an alternative, more positive and thoughtful perspective of ISIS that would not be consistent or strongly represented within mainstream media outlets. Through publishing *Dabiq* on the internet, ISIS operates independently from traditional mainstream media outlets, taking advantage of the opportunity to craft and publish their messaging, offering readers an unfiltered representation of the group, their issues, and their desired solutions.

Furthermore, *Dabiq* may feel the responsibility to provide justifications to an audience that may otherwise find the group’s act questionable, without any context. This is apparent in the article justifying the burning execution method of the Jordanian pilot. Acknowledging the negative press coverage of the method used to execute the pilot, *Dabiq* ensures that the reader is provided with reasoning as to why the method is acceptable and grounded in religion and is not the exceptionally inhumane murderous act that is described in popular news outlets. In the particular use of justification strategies, it shows us that these are being used not only to help legitimize ISIS as an organization but are also being used as a teaching tool, targeting Western readers who may be wary of the group’s reputation for nonsensical violence or questionable lifestyle values.

*Dabiq* did not utilize other elements of motive talk that I explored in my theoretical framework such as the use of excuses or disclaimers. Recalling Hewitt and Stokes (1975), individuals will use disclaimers when they know in advance that the audience will find their

behaviour problematic and characterized in a negative way. Recalling Scott and Lyman (1968), excuses are used when the actor knows their behaviour is problematic but denies taking full responsibility, often appealing to outside forces to account for their conduct. Both of these elements of motive talk involve mitigating their actions to appease the audience. What became apparent throughout issue 7, is that *Dabiq* does not ‘bow down’ to their audience for forgiveness in an attempt to reconcile their actions. Rather, *Dabiq*’s use of Sykes and Matza’s (1957) Techniques of Neutralization became apparent as the reader was provided with arguments that did not acknowledge or take responsibility for wrong or criminal acts but rather justified their actions by framing their acts as morally correct.

### **Conclusion**

This thesis has explored how the Islamic State’s publication *Dabiq* magazine attempts to persuade non-Arabic readers of directly or indirectly supporting and/or joining ISIS. In order to achieve this, I examined the ‘form’, the manner in which ideas or messages are disseminated by looking at the rhetorical styles that are used and the rhetorical strategies that are deployed throughout the magazine as well as the content, the messages and ideas that *Dabiq* is using to persuade its readers.

Rhetorical analysis, frame analysis, and justification techniques was helpful in my efforts to explore my research goals. Identifying rhetorical styles and strategies that are used in *Dabiq* assisted me with breaking down and organizing the purpose of various statements and how those statements were delivered. Frame analysis provided me with an understanding of *Dabiq*’s worldview perspective and how the audience is encouraged to interpret and adopt that perspective. While I found it occasionally problematic to clearly identify justification techniques,

overall it was helpful as a tool to identify when *Dabiq* was attempting to mitigate responsibility for their actions in general. Certainly, I came across statements that a variety of neutralization techniques could be applied to. Ultimately, I am not convinced of how critical it is to this thesis to specifically differentiate the use of a denial or victim technique from a denial of responsibility technique. What is critical to this analysis was being able to identify when *Dabiq* was attempting to justify an action, and whether denial of victim or denial of responsibility was applied, the techniques of neutralization in general assisted me with identifying and conceptualizing how *Dabiq* accounts for ISIS actions.

This thesis includes a lot of repetition between specifically the methods chapter and the content and form analysis chapters. There are two reasons for this. As a researcher, I wanted to provide my reader with the best possible examples of a specific strategy, style, or justification being used. Furthermore, I believe that the repetition reinforces the awareness of how critical it is to look at both the form and the content of the messaging in *Dabiq* in attempts to persuade the reader. The repetition of articles and excerpts only highlights how greatly these different elements overlap and work together to provide the reader with a strong and full process of interpreting the world differently.

My analysis of the rhetorical styles *Dabiq* uses provides insight to a particular angle through which readers are invited to comprehend ISIS and take in information. The rhetorical styles work in complementary ways, using different angles to persuade the reader to adopt ISIS' point of view. Quite prominently, *Dabiq* uses epideictic (blame) and judicial rhetoric in order to assign blame and guilt to various enemy groups in order to deflect responsibility from ISIS and persuade the reader of the legitimacy of the oftentimes violent reactions of ISIS. By deflecting responsibility, *Dabiq* presents ISIS as always justified in its actions towards various enemy groups.

Deliberative rhetoric contributes to persuading the reader of the legitimacy of ISIS in its use of violence and also reinforces ISIS' way of life as the only way to be a true Muslim. Throughout issue 7, *Dabiq* uses deliberative rhetoric to urge the audience to take up certain violent actions as well as to live accordingly to the lifestyle and values deemed desirable by the leadership of the organization. Through its call to action, deliberative rhetoric plays a key role in attempting to actually mobilize support and action from Western readers.

In my analysis of the rhetorical strategies that *Dabiq* uses to actually deliver its content, I found that in most cases, *Dabiq* deploys a strategy in conjunction with another strategy in an effort to persuade the reader. These strategies work together to establish credibility, to push the reader into various emotional states, or to provide reasoning and evidence in order to support its claims. It is inevitable that these strategies would work to complement each other for how persuasive would a logical appeal be without a credible figure to support it? Ethos is prominently used to establish credibility with the reader, most frequently referencing religious scholarship and text, as well as prominent group leadership and occasional 'popular' figures. Pathos is prominently used to elicit various emotions such as anger, a sense of power, and revenge, all provoked through demonstrating the vulnerability of the enemy. Additionally, guilt and embarrassment are used to shame readers for their inaction in protecting or defending Islam. In a more positive context, joy and excitement are used to celebrate the expansion of ISIS. Lastly, *Dabiq* uses logos primarily to provide evidence in support of their conclusions, to demonstrate ISIS' 'correct' interpretation of Islam as a "religion of the sword" and to justify various actions, policies, and ways of life (*Dabiq*, February 2015, p. 20).

This analysis presented the elements of frame analysis that are used by *Dabiq* in an attempt to persuade their readers that ISIS actions are well founded and legitimate. My analysis of the

content, the messages and ideas, that *Dabiq* uses to persuade its readers relies on frame analysis to explore the way in which *Dabiq* frames both ISIS and its enemies, describes *Dabiq*'s analysis of the 'problem' that Islam is currently facing and the solution ISIS is advocating for, and identifies the underlying logics of *Dabiq*'s justifications provided for both violent and non-violent actions. In an analysis of how *Dabiq* represents ISIS, the presentation of the group in general, its leadership, and its members (both male and female), all contribute to producing a narrative that positions ISIS as a legitimate, well-defined entity. In contrast, *Dabiq*'s description of the enemy positions various enemy groups such as Western forces, 'false' Muslims, and competing 'claimant' groups as all illegitimate and not accepting of true Islam. In order to mitigate this threat, violent action is frequently encouraged, with *Dabiq* providing accounts and rationale for encouraging readers to engage in military action or to contribute in different ways to the organization.

This analysis presented the elements of motive talk that were used by *Dabiq* to justify and encourage violent action in readers. Using Sykes and Matza's (1957) Techniques of Neutralization, I explored how *Dabiq* persuades the reader of the legitimacy of their actions largely through framing their acts as not criminal, but a morally justified response to a problem. As *Dabiq* consistently provides an explanation of the wrong deed and presents arguments for the appropriate punishment or retribution, *Dabiq* redefines their violent actions as an appropriate and justified response to the situation, persuading the reader that there is nothing inherently wrong or immoral in what ISIS is doing. *Dabiq* does not apologize for their actions or present their actions as unjustified. Rather, the justification appeals are used as a teaching tool for the reader, offering an alternative perspective to a Western reader who would not normally be exposed to such viewpoints through mainstream media sources.

While I provided a separate analysis for each element relating to the form and content of *Dabiq*, it is apparent that both form and content work together to persuade readers to join and/or support ISIS. To illustrate this, I will recall an excerpt provided in the presentation of how *Dabiq* represents its male members. The following excerpt praises the actions of Abū Qudāmah, a man who took up the call to engage in violent actions in order to defend Islam, finally fulfilling his desire for martyrdom as he put the lives of other before his own life.

With one loud call of takbīr<sup>106</sup>, all the brothers started shooting, trying to place as much suppressive fire in the direction of the sniper as possible so that the medic could make his attempt. The medic started his run, then hesitated. He regained his composure and attempted against but hesitated once more. Abū Qudāmah saw this and took over, beginning his own attempt, moving closer and closer to the injured brother while continuously shooting, until there was nothing between him and the sniper's scope. His magazine ran out so he quickly reloaded, not wanting to go back behind cover as he was so close to the injured brother he could almost touch him. And then it happened. (*Dabiq*, February 2015, pg. 49).

He was breathing for about 15 minutes on his way to the hospital. A brother who stayed with him the entire time testified that despite his severe head injury and with the back of his skull totally shattered, Abū Qudāmah repeatedly uttered the shahādātayn<sup>107</sup> just before he stopped breathing. 'This is how I always pictured a shahīd<sup>108</sup> to be both in life and death,' the brother who was in the ambulance with him later said. Abū Qudāmah was buried next to his companion Abū Mu'āwiyah, as he requested in his will and their companion in this world had finally come to an end. They had both achieved their dreams of shahādah<sup>109</sup> for the cause of Allah, and they would now continue their lifelong companionship in Paradise, bi idhnillāh<sup>110</sup>, after being resurrected together (*Dabiq*, February 2015, pg. 49).

The actual content of this excerpt plays a role in persuading the reader of both the legitimacy of violent actions that were carried out as well as encourages recruitment and action. Epideictic rhetoric is evident in this particular excerpt as *Dabiq* praises the principles by which

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<sup>106</sup> Meaning 'God is greatest'

<sup>107</sup> Meaning, 'Declaration of faith'

<sup>108</sup> Meaning 'Martyr'

<sup>109</sup> Meaning 'Martyrdom'

<sup>110</sup> Meaning 'Gods will'

these men chose to live by, specifically sacrificing themselves for their brothers, and more importantly Islam. Additionally, we see pathos as *Dabiq* fulfills a feeling of admiration in readers, detailing the sacrifice and love that this man had for his brothers and, more importantly, for Islam.

There are numerous examples in *Dabiq* of different elements of content and form working together to frame overarching themes that were presented such as the necessity for violent jihad, urging readers to emigrate, celebrating the expansion of the group, and discrediting opposition groups. As presented by Aristotle (2006) and Mills (1940), central to acknowledging this variation of different components of content and form working together, is the element of choice as the speaker or writer can tailor their content to the form that would be the most well received by their audience. While it is impossible for me to gain a direct understanding of why writers of *Dabiq* used specific styles or strategies to convey their messaging, Aristotle (2006) and Mills (1940) tells us that there may have been a strategic choice to tailor their messaging in an effort to best reach readers.

This analysis has demonstrated that a combination of both the form and content of *Dabiq* plays a critical role in understanding the fuller efforts to persuade Western readers in supporting and/or joining ISIS. An analysis of the rhetorical styles and strategies that were used in issue 7 revealed what *Dabiq* was trying to accomplish by praising fellow ISIS members, attributing blame or guilt to enemy groups, and calling on the reader to take specific actions. Furthermore, the rhetorical strategies provided insight to how *Dabiq* specifically appeals to the reader in the delivery of their messaging.

The content of *Dabiq* sets the foundation in which readers can consume and understand their messaging. The content simplifies complex issues by presenting a dichotomous worldview, establishing a clear line between good vs. evil, enemy vs. friend. Appreciating the content of this

perspective facilitates a more meaningful understanding of the purpose of *Dabiq*'s statements – a call to commit a violent act is not a single call to commit a violent act. It is part of a larger effort to educate the reader and persuade the reader's buy-in based on a fundamental alternative view of the group, one this is not only legitimate but also justified in their actions.

While analyzed separately, this thesis has contributed to the literature by presenting how content and form work together to communicate and connect with their targeted Western audience. Furthermore, this analysis has paid particular attention to the underlying logic of arguments that are used to justify and render legitimate the use of violence. This analysis demonstrates that ISIS is not 'brain washing' and recruiting naïve or disgruntled individuals. Rather, *Dabiq* has provided a well-thought out presentation of ISIS and their beliefs. Both the form and content of the messaging provides the reader a process of seeing the world differently so as to legitimize and persuade the need for violent political action as well as to help them negotiate the social pressure that interprets the situation differently.

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