

Framing the Western Jihad: A Grounded Theory Analysis of Inspire, Dabiq,
and Rumiyyah Magazines

by

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Abstract

From skilled propagandists to self-trained lone wolf attackers to armies of foreign fighters, so-called homegrown terrorists (or Western supporters of al Qaeda and Daesh) have played important roles in each movement's promotion, development and strategy. This dissertation project uses grounded theory analysis to examine the ways that al Qaeda and Daesh (also known as ISIS, ISIL, or IS) present their respective movements to English-speakers in Western societies. Ten issues of al Qaeda's *Inspire*, five issues of Daesh's *Dabiq* and five issues of *Rumiyah* (*Dabiq*'s successor publication), published between 2011-2017, are studied. The analysis suggests that al Qaeda and Daesh employ three overlapping sets of frames in these English-language magazines. These frames position themselves within broader historical trends, establish their legitimacy as actors, and establish actors and actions (defining enemies, threats, heroes and recommended activities).

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Table of Contents	
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Background	2
Research Approach and Limitations	3
Rationale and Significance	5
Dissertation Chapters	6
Chapter 2: Understanding Al Qaeda and Daesh	8
Al Qaeda and Daesh	10
Terminology	18
<i>Terrorism</i>	20
<i>Islamism</i>	25
<i>Jihad</i>	26
<i>Radicalization</i>	28
The Impact of Online Media	37
Conclusion	50
Chapter 3: Media and Terror	52
Media and Terror	53
Imagined Communities and Identity	59
Al Qaeda and Daesh's Media Systems	64
The Magazines	70
Magazine Studies	72
Conclusion	84
Chapter 4: Theoretical Framework and Methodological Approach	87
Theoretical Framework: Framing	87
<i>Symbolic Interactionism</i>	88
<i>Framing</i>	93
<i>Social Movements and Framing</i>	94
<i>The Cultural Turn and New Social Movements</i>	97
<i>Framing versus Frames</i>	100
Methodological Approach	106
<i>Grounded Theory</i>	106
<i>The Constructivist Turn</i>	109
<i>Limitations</i>	110

<i>Methodology</i>	111
<i>Phase 1: Open Coding and Memoing</i>	112
<i>Phase 2: The Development of Conceptual Categories</i>	112
<i>Phase 3: Theoretical Coding/Building a Conceptual Framework</i>	113
Conclusion	114
Chapter 5: Introducing Inspire, Dabiq, and Rumiyah	115
The Selected Texts	115
Inspire Magazine	116
<i>Inspire 8: Targeting Dar Al-Harb Populations (Fall 2011)</i>	117
<i>Inspire 9: Winning on the Ground Winter 2012</i>	117
<i>Inspire 10: We are all Usama (Spring 2013)</i>	118
<i>Inspire 11 (Special Issue): Who & Why? (Spring 2013)</i>	119
<i>Inspire 12: Shattered a Story about Change (Spring 2014)</i>	120
<i>Inspire 13: NEUROtMESIS: Cutting the Nerves and Isolating the head (Winter 2014)</i>	120
<i>Inspire 14: Assassination Operations (Summer 2015)</i>	121
<i>Inspire 15: Professional Assassinations (Spring 2016)</i>	122
<i>Inspire 16 (Special Issue): The 9/17 Operations (Autumn 2016)</i>	122
<i>Inspire 17: Train Derail Operations (Summer 2017)</i>	123
Inspire Magazine Features	123
<i>Invitations to Participate</i>	124
<i>Hear the World</i>	125
<i>“Did You know?”, “Numb3rs speak louder than words”, and “Questions we should be asking”</i>	126
<i>News Flash/Mujahid’s notes</i>	127
<i>Open Source Jihad</i>	129
<i>Articles</i>	131
<i>Interviews</i>	132
<i>Statements</i>	132
<i>Inspire Reactions</i>	133
<i>Advertisements</i>	134
Daesh Publications	135
Dabiq	135
<i>Dabiq 5: Remaining and Expanding (Muharram 1436 / October 2014)</i>	136
<i>Dabiq 6: Al-Qa'idah of Waziristan: A Testimony from Within (Rabbi Al Awwall 1436/ December</i>	

<i>2014 -January 2015)</i>	136
<i>Dabiq 7: From Hypocrisy to Apostasy (Rabi al akhir 1436/January -February 2015)</i>	137
<i>Dabiq 8: Shari'ah Alone will Rule Africa (Jumada Al Akhira 1436/March-April 2016)</i>	138
<i>Dabiq 9: They Plot and Allah Plots (Shaban 1436/May-June 2016)</i>	138
Rumiyah	139
<i>Rumiyah 9: The Ruling on The Belligerent Christians (Shaban 1438 /April -May 2017)</i>	139
<i>Rumiyah 10: The Jihad in East Asia (Ramadan 1438 May-June 2017)</i>	139
<i>Rumiyah 11: The Ruling on Ghanimah, Fay, and Ihtitab (Shawwal 1438/ June-July 2017)</i>	140
<i>Rumiyah 12: It will Be a Fire that Burns The Cross and Its People in Raqqah (August 2017/ Dhul Qadah 1438)</i>	140
<i>Rumiyah 13: Allah Cast Terror into Their Hearts (August-September 2017/ Dhul Hijjah 1438)</i>	140
Dabiq and Rumiyah Features	141
<i>In the Words of the Enemy (Dabiq)</i>	141
<i>John Cantlie (Dabiq)</i>	142
Features in Both Rumiyah and Dabiq	142
<i>Islamic State reports</i>	142
<i>For Sisters</i>	143
<i>Among the Believers are Men</i>	144
<i>Advertisements</i>	144
<i>Interviews</i>	144
Rumiyah-specific Features	145
<i>Infographics</i>	145
<i>Just Terror Tactics</i>	146
<i>Military and Covert Operations</i>	146
Chapter 6: Perceptions of Historical Origins	148
Theory	149
Historical Continuity: The Continuous War	151
<i>Al Qaeda</i>	152
<i>Daesh</i>	159
Inevitable Victory	165
<i>Al Qaeda</i>	166
<i>Daesh</i>	168
<i>Apocalyptic Narratives</i>	173
Chapter 7 Movement Legitimacy	178

Theory	178
Evidence of Relevance: Outside Commentary	180
<i>Al Qaeda</i>	181
<i>Daesh</i>	185
Reputation Management	189
<i>Al Qaeda</i>	190
<i>Daesh</i>	193
How al Qaeda and Daesh Discuss Each Other	200
<i>How al Qaeda Discusses Daesh</i>	201
<i>How Daesh Discusses Al Qaeda</i>	205
Chapter 8: Enemies Heroes and Actions	214
Theory	215
Enemies	218
<i>Al Qaeda</i>	218
<i>Daesh</i>	220
Movement Expansion and Selection of Social Issues	223
<i>Al Qaeda</i>	223
<i>Daesh</i>	231
Martyrs	234
<i>Al Qaeda</i>	235
<i>Daesh</i>	236
Participation	239
<i>Hijrah</i>	239
<i>Promoting Lone Wolf Attacks</i>	242
<i>Media Jihad</i>	248
Chapter 9: Conclusion	254
Research Contributions	259
Limitations and Future Studies	265
Concluding Thoughts	268
Sources Cited	271
Appendix 1: Summary of Research Tables	305

Chapter 1: Introduction

From al Qaeda's lone wolf attackers and YouTube clerics to Daesh's army of foreign fighters and Twitter fanboys (and girls), individuals from the West have played an important role in al Qaeda and Daesh's movements. While some have traveled abroad to train and fight in places like Iraq and Syria, others have conducted individual attacks in their home countries. Whether these individuals traveled or stayed home to act on Daesh or al Qaeda's behalf, many have connected to the movement online.

My dissertation will examine how al Qaeda and Daesh¹ (also known as ISIS, ISIL, or IS) present their respective movements to English-speakers in Western societies through a grounded theory analysis of their online English-language magazines, al Qaeda's *Inspire* and Daesh's *Dabiq* (and *Rumiyah*) magazines, published between 2011-2017. These magazines are published by Daesh and al Qaeda's official media foundations al Malahem and al Hayat, respectively. While both movements operate on online forums and social media platforms like Telegram (and formerly on Twitter and Facebook), analysing materials produced and distributed by official media organizations like *Dabiq* and *Inspire*, provide important insights into what the "official" or centre of the movement wants to present to its English-speaking audiences.

In the first section of this chapter, I will provide brief background information on the roles of Western supporters in al Qaeda and Daesh's activities. The second section outlines my research approach and limitations. This will be followed by a research rationale. The last section provides an outline of the upcoming chapters.

¹ Daesh is an acronym of ad-Dawlah al-Islamiyah fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham, or Arabic for Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

Background

Individuals' from "Western" countries involvement in al Qaeda or Daesh, or what some call "home-grown terrorism," is a relatively new issue. Many al Qaeda and Daesh-inspired plots in the first decades of the twenty first century have been carried out by individuals either born or raised in "the West." After the official establishment of its Caliphate in 2014, and official break from its predecessor al Qaeda, Daesh was able to recruit thousands of foreign fighters from around the world to live and fight in its new territory (as well as inspire individuals to conduct attacks in their home countries). The migration of fighters to Daesh's so-called Caliphate resembled the response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980's where individuals from around the Muslim world (including al Qaeda's founders) travelled to Afghanistan to fight. However, unlike the Soviet-Afghanistan war, fighters that travelled to Daesh's territory included thousands from Western Europe and hundreds from North America (Barrett, 2017, pp. 10-11).

Daesh claimed to be reviving the old Caliphate, which was a Muslim religious-political empire with a history that roughly spans the seventh century (following the death of Prophet Muhammad) to the fall of the Ottoman empire following the first World War. After Muhammad's death, an inner circle of his followers chose a successor: Abu Bakr, one of his most respected and earliest converts (Lewis, 2000, p. 54). They gave him the title of Khalifa (Caliph in English), an Arabic word that combines notions of successor and deputy making him the Khalifatu Rasul Allah (the successor of the Prophet of God) (Lewis, 2000, p. 54). After Abu Bakr's death in 634, his successor, Umar ibn al Khattab, developed a type of imperial government where the institution of the Caliph held political, military, and religious authority (Lewis, 2000, p. 62). The Caliphate extended from the Middle East to parts of Africa and Europe to Southwest Asia (Lewis, 2000, p. 55). It was a significant global player—not only in terms of

political power, but also in areas like culture, trade, law, art, and science—from the seventh to the eighteenth century until its decline and fragmentation with the rise of forces like European colonialism and the development of modern nation-states (Esposito, 2002, p. 40). That said, Daesh's Caliphate was radically different from the old Caliphate, lacking the intellectual culture and other advances of the original.

At the time of writing, Daesh has lost most of its territory and many of its foreign fighters are dead, missing, in hiding, in Internally Displaced Persons camps or have returned home (Tonnessen, 2019; de Azevedo, 2020). Though Daesh has lost its territory, it is still active in Iraq and like al Qaeda, has affiliate groups fighting in local insurgencies in different regions including North and West Africa and parts of South Asia.

Research Approach and Limitations

This dissertation project is a grounded theory analysis of al Qaeda's *Inspire* magazine and Daesh's *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* magazines published between 2011-2017. I have selected ten issues of *Inspire* and five issues each of *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*. The aim of the study is to generate a theoretical framework for examining al Qaeda and Daesh's recruitment narratives and potentially those of other movements. Details on the research approach and limitations will be raised in the methods section. My research questions are: *How do al Qaeda and Daesh promote and adapt a bipolar (Islam versus the West) yet flexible movement narrative, to connect diverse audiences in Western societies meaningfully to their respective movements? What are the common frames al Qaeda and Daesh use to appeal to these audiences?*

I make several assumptions while conducting this research. The first assumption being that these magazines are geared towards Western audiences, I base this assumption on the

literature and observations I have made about the magazines' content. The second assumption I make is that both magazines are actually produced by media organizations central to each movement. This assumption is based on expert opinions in the literature (Lemieux, Brachman, Levit, and Wood, 2014; Ingram 2017)

The main limitation of grounded theory is that it is limited to recorded messages and that it cannot examine the relationship between audiences and the texts, nor can it determine causal effects. That said, I am looking at the narratives and strategies that these groups employ in their publications rather than how these texts impact particular audiences or the psychology of those involved in these movements. The aim of the project to look at the narrative that Daesh and al Qaeda are trying to present as I understand it, not to measure effects of a given text. Another potential limitation of grounded theory could be that my observations and the theories I develop are based on my own constructions of the given text (Berg, 2007). Having said this, my background as a researcher is another important issue to address. As a female Canadian of Muslim origin, I bring a particular understanding and certain preconceptions to this research. Having studied al Qaeda and Daesh for several years, I also bring an informed perspective to this study. As I conduct my research, I read these texts as a potential yet critical audience. My potential biases and background may lead me to focus on some aspects of these texts over others, however this can occur in any other study, quantitative or qualitative, where the researcher decides what information is more relevant. It is impossible for the researcher to try to be objective, but the researcher's perspective offers valuable insights into the study.

It is important to note that this study cannot determine the propensity for these magazines to radicalize or mobilize, the reach of the magazines (i.e. how widely read it is), or their actual impacts on audiences. This is a study of one small part of Daesh and Al Qaeda's media

operations, which function both off and online in multiple languages and on multiple platforms. English-language texts are significant because many young Muslims and converts in Western countries do not speak Arabic; therefore, the use of English by Daesh and al Qaeda is important for reaching out to these audiences. The examination of these magazines can draw out major themes in the movement strategy and narrative that can potentially be applied to other online Daesh and al Qaeda materials.

Rationale and Significance

With al Qaeda being overshadowed by Daesh and Daesh's decline in territory and media production (Winter, 2018), some may argue that these groups are no longer relevant. However, the study of *Inspire*, *Dabiq*, and *Rumiyah* provide an interesting case study of how groups with global followings frame their movements to appeal to wider audiences. This contributes not only to the study of other jihadist groups, but other extremist movements. It is also important to note that the fact that Daesh and al Qaeda do not hold as much power as they did in the past—when al Qaeda had a base of operations and Daesh held large swathes of territory—means that they have disappeared or cannot re-emerge.

Studying the movement culture of two major global violent extremist movements—taking an in-depth look at the frames that they apply—contributes to literature not only in terrorism studies, but also in the study of global social movements. The analysis of these narratives can also contribute to the development of new paradigms for terror and media studies. In particular, this study outlines how while Daesh and al Qaeda claim to be movements that reject the West or “the secular world,” they are still deeply engaged with it and rely on Western media coverage and commentary to establish their legitimacy as a threat. Understanding how al Qaeda and Daesh adapt their narrative to Western audiences with appeals that not only include

religious prophecy, but wider existential and social issues relevant to these audiences, sheds light on how global violent extremist movements weaponize legitimate causes (e.g. human rights, poverty, economic inequality etc.) to provide potential pathways into the movement. This has implications for policy makers and those working in countering violent extremism as it outlines how extremist groups draw from different contemporary issues and cultural currents to construct radicalizing narratives and how these radicalizing narratives can be adapted to different societal and/or national contexts.

Dissertation Chapters

Chapter one, introduced the topic, background information, research questions, and the study's limitations and implications. Chapter two provides background information on al Qaeda and Daesh, including their history and their relationship with each other. This chapter also includes a discussion of key terms used in discussions of Daesh and al Qaeda: terrorism, jihadism, Islamism, as well as notions of "the West" and the "Islamic world." It also outlines debates in the literature regarding radicalization and how online media have impacted al Qaeda, Daesh and other movements. The third chapter outlines the media environment in which Daesh and al Qaeda operate, providing background information on their respective media systems. This includes theories of terror and media, media and the formation of global communities, as well as the role of diasporas and global social movements. The last section of this chapter discusses the evolution and establishment of Daesh and al Qaeda's media organizations, including previous studies of *Inspire*, *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*.

The fourth chapter outlines my theoretical framework and methodology. My theoretical framework focuses on framing, which has its origins in symbolic interactionism. This chapter includes discussions of the development of frame analysis by Goffman, how social movement

theorists use framing, new social movement theory, and how framing works. This chapter also outlines my methodological approach, grounded theory, and how I have applied it in this study. The fifth chapter provides a summary and analysis of the selected issues of *Inspire*, *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, including the issues' main themes and the regular features in each magazine.

Chapters six to eight outline the findings of the study, the categories of frames that al Qaeda and Daesh use to appeal to their Western audiences: frames to position themselves within broader historical trends, frames to establish their legitimacy as actors; and frames to establish actors and actions (defining enemies, threats, heroes and actions). In the sixth chapter, I will discuss how Daesh and al Qaeda construct their movements within a set of broader historical trends: historical continuity, promises and signs of victory; and apocalyptic prophecies. The seventh chapter addresses the way that Daesh and al Qaeda establish movement legitimacy in terms of their legitimacy as a threat, how they manage their reputations, and how they define themselves in relation to each other. The eighth chapter outlines how each group defines enemies, heroes, and desired actions supporters should take. This will be followed by a conclusion.

Chapter 2: Understanding Al Qaeda and Daesh

The purpose of this chapter is to outline relevant areas of literature –including literature on terrorism, media use by terrorist groups, and radicalization— and to discuss key terms. Because this study is a grounded theory analysis of ten issues of *Inspire* and ten issues of *Dabiq* (and *Rumiyah*), these areas of literature need to be explored in order to contextualize and develop the concepts for my analysis. *Inspire*, *Dabiq*, and *Rumiyah* represent one small part of al Qaeda and Daesh’s larger media operations that create and distribute content in multiple formats, languages, and across several platforms. This media universe includes major media foundations like al Qaeda’s al Sahab and Daesh’s al Hayat media and smaller media foundations for their “provinces” or affiliated groups. Daesh and Al Qaeda’s media system will be further expanded upon in the next chapter. The study of *Inspire* and *Dabiq* is important because these magazines provide multiple formats of movement materials in a centralized medium capturing different aspects of the movement from reporting on battlefield gains to more personal issues like child rearing or religious practises. *Inspire*, *Dabiq*, and *Rumiyah* present an interesting case of how each group constructs a wider global movement forming an identity that incorporates those with little to no ties (e.g. ethnic, linguistic, kinship) to the land where they are fighting in (e.g. Iraq, Somalia, Libya, Afghanistan); the struggle goes beyond the theatre of conflict and it can be enacted almost anywhere from a lone wolf attack in a residential street to an attack on a military base.

The first section provides background information on both movements, their relationship, and how they have evolved over time. This will provide a better understanding of the two groups behind each publication. The second section is a discussion of important terms: terrorism, jihadism, Islamism, as well as notions of “the West” and the “Islamic world.” A discussion of the

terminology is imperative as these terms are not only used in academic literature regarding Daesh and al Qaeda, but in discussions by the mainstream media and other public figures. The use/misuse of these terms tends to shape discussions of Daesh, al Qaeda, and their supporters.

The third section examines the radicalization literature, which is imperative as it is an important concept used not only by those researching terrorist groups, but also policy makers and law enforcement, to understand the recruitment process. Radicalization is said to play a role in recruitment, which many assume is the main purpose of these magazines and other Daesh and al Qaeda materials. Understanding the debates and complexity surrounding the concept of radicalization provides a more informed perspective on messaging and the appeals employed by authors of *Inspire*, *Dabiq*, and *Rumiyah*.

The final section addresses literature on online media's impact on al Qaeda, Daesh and other terrorist and extremist movements. This literature provides an understanding of the context in which these magazines are created and the how the affordances of online media have changed forms of participation in each movement; for example, potentially lowering the barrier of entry into the movement by promoting online activity. With easier and faster access to online information, Daesh and al Qaeda have extended their audience of potential supporters and can now form different kinds of communities and relationships with these and other audiences.

The literature for this research was mainly accessed through the Summon feature on Carleton University's library website. The Summon Search feature searches for relevant literature in all databases purchased by Carleton University's Library as well as the library catalogue. Search terms like Terror AND Media, Terror AND the internet, al Qaeda AND media, ISIS AND Media, Dabiq, and Inspire were used. I also gathered sources recommended by the committee and from my past Masters' thesis research on al Qaeda's *Inspire* magazine.

Additionally, I snowballed sources like articles and journals from the sources I accessed. I have also examined reports and articles from terrorism scholars and organizations researching terrorism like the United Nations International Centre for Counter Terrorism- The Hague (ICCT), International Centre for the Study of Radicalization (ICSR), and EU-VOX Pol Network of Excellence.

Al Qaeda and Daesh

Daesh (also known as the Islamic State, ISIS, or ISIL or ad Dawlah² al Islamiyah fi al Iraq wa al Sham) and al Qaeda have been successful in influencing individuals in the West to act on behalf of their movement. Both groups represent a type of global social movement against what they may see as the hegemonic, Western construction of the state (Archetti, 2014). This section outlines the origins and history of al Qaeda and Daesh.

Al Qaeda was created following the end of the Soviet-Afghan war (1979-1989). It emerged out of a small organization, known in English as the Services Bureau, originally established by Abdullah Azzam and Osama bin Laden to assist Arabs who wanted to join the jihad³ in Afghanistan (Wright, 2006, p. 154; Seib, 2009, p.75). During this conflict, many young men, mostly from surrounding countries and other parts of the Islamic world, migrated to Afghanistan to fight the Soviet army. Following the war, members of the Services Bureau, including the late Osama bin Laden and Ayman Zawahiri (the current leader of al Qaeda at the

² According to Middle East scholar Will McCants (2015), the term “Dawla” came to mean state because of the Abbasid Caliphate in the eight century. After the overthrow of the Umayyad Caliphate, the Abbasid Caliph proclaimed himself the Mahdi (the Muslim saviour who appears in the years leading up to the apocalypse) (p. 22, 27). This was called the “blessed revolution” *dawla mubarak*, from which the empire then took its name: Dawla Abbasiyya (McCants, 2015, p. 27). According to McCants, Daesh shares quite a bit in common with the Abbasids including the symbols and colours (e.g. black flags), apocalyptic propaganda, and insurgency in Iraq and Syria. McCants claims that the Abbasids “... created a blue print for how to overthrow a Muslim Ruler, establish a Caliphate and justify both” (p. 27).

³ This term is explained in a later section of this chapter.

time of writing⁴) planned for the future of the jihad following the Soviets' retreat from Afghanistan (Wright, 2006, p. 152). Unlike previous movements before it, which focused on the "near enemy" or local regimes in the Islamic world, it decided to target America and its allies or the "far enemy", planning and executing several attacks including the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington (Gerges, 2006). With the destruction of its bases in Afghanistan after 9/11, al Qaeda became more of a decentralized organization (Sageman, 2008; Bergen, 2011).

After losing its main base, al Qaeda started to promote and claim so-called homegrown terrorist attacks. According to scholar of Middle East politics Fawaz Gerges (2006) and forensic psychologist Marc Sageman (2008), there was an emergence of so-called "homegrown terrorism", which occurred shortly after the American-led invasion of Iraq. According to terrorism scholars Crone and Harrow (2011) this wave of homegrown terrorism began with the 2004 Madrid train bombings⁵ and the London 7/7 bombings in 2005.⁶ Homegrown terrorism is typically defined as individuals committing terrorist acts against fellow citizens in the country they were born and/or grew up in, typically Western countries (Crone and Harrow, 2011). In addition, many of these perpetrators had little to no concrete ties to al Qaeda's leadership. Some examples of this include the 2008 foiled Toronto 18 plot in Canada⁷ and the 2013 Boston

⁴ In November 2020, there were rumours of Zawahiri's death, but this has not been confirmed by al Qaeda (Hamming, 2021).

⁵ On March 11, 2004 ten bombs were set off on a commuter train killing 193 and injuring more than 2000. The attack was planned by a terrorist cell with loose connections to al Qaeda. Al Qaeda later claimed responsibility for the attack. (CNN, 2020).

⁶ On July 7, 2005 Mohammad Sidique Khan, Shehzad Tanweer, Hasib Hussain, and Germaine Lindsey detonated four bombs, three in the underground and one in a double decker bus, killing 52 people injuring hundreds more (BBC, 2015).

⁷ On June 2, 2006 Canadian Security forces and law enforcement conducted a raid in Toronto and Mississauga foiling a terrorist plot. A group of 14 adults and four underage youth in total were arrested. The group had created an al Qaeda- inspired cell and planned an attack which included bombing the Toronto Stock exchange, attacking CBC head quarters and beheading the Prime Minister (CBC, 2011).

marathon bombing.⁸ Though many believed that al Qaeda had been overshadowed by Daesh (Hamming, 2017), al Qaeda is still active. Al Qaeda had an affiliate in Iraq and Syria with Jabat al Nusra⁹ and has affiliates active in different regions including Yemen, Afghanistan, Somalia, the Islamic Maghreb (North Africa), The Sahel (Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger), and parts of South Asia; most of these affiliates are battling against Daesh's affiliates in the same region (Nsaibia and Weiss, 2020; Hoffman 2018). Al Qaeda also claimed responsibility for attacks in 2015 at the Charlie Hebdo newspaper in Paris¹⁰ (Hoffman 2018).

Daesh was once part of al Qaeda, starting out as as Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad led by abu Musab al Zarqawi in 2003 during the American-led invasion of Iraq. After Zarqawi pledged allegiance to bin Laden in October 2004, the name was changed to AQI (Al Qaeda in Iraq). Zarqawi's leadership of AQI created tension with al Qaeda's high command. Bin Laden found Zarqawi's tactics, like beheadings (and recording and distributing them), too brutal and his heavily sectarian focus on fighting against Shias was said to divide instead of win over the hearts and minds of Muslims, something bin Laden saw as an important aim (McCants, 2015, pp. 7-11). AQI continued to change after Zarqawi's death in 2006 when the group changed its name to ISI (Islamic State in Iraq) after merging with other local insurgent groups. The group grew with increasing sectarianism in Iraq and the start of the Syrian uprising and civil war in 2011. In April 2013, ISI leader Abu Bakr al Baghdadi changed the name of ISI to ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) splitting from then al Qaeda affiliate Jabat al Nusra. ISIS then officially broke from al

⁸ On April 15, 2013, brothers Tamerlane and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev detonated two pressure cooker bombs at the finish line of the Boston Marathon killing three people and injured more than 260 (Associated Press, 2020).

⁹ At the time of writing Jabat al Nusra has broken ties with al Qaeda.

¹⁰ In January 7, 2015, brothers Said and Cheriff Kouachi attacked the headquarters of satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris killing 12 people. The attacks were in response to the magazine printing cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammad (Schofield, 2020).

Qaeda when it declared itself a Caliphate in 2014 under then Caliph Abu Bakr al Baghdadi¹¹ (Hamming 2017; McCants, 2015, pp. 32-33). The last Caliphate, the Ottoman empire, was dismantled following the First World War. Daesh's so-called Caliphate was a major source of contention between the group and al Qaeda's high command. Bin Laden believed that setting up a state would make the group more vulnerable to attack and that the declaration of the Caliphate was something that should happen in the distant future (McCants, 2015, p. 28). After Daesh announced its Caliphate, al Qaeda leader Zawahiri published *The Islamic Spring*, a nine-part publication series running from March 2015 to July 2016 rejecting the legitimacy of Daesh's Caliphate and its methodology of establishing its Caliphate, which Zawahiri claimed caused disunity and confusion among Muslims (Hamming, 2019, p. 4).

Daesh's 2014 declaration of the Caliphate led to a large migration of fighters from the surrounding areas and an unprecedented number of fighters from Western countries including America, Australia, The United Kingdom, Canada, France, and Germany. According to a 2017 study, an estimated 5,718 Western European and 439 North American foreign fighters had migrated to Syria and Iraq and as Daesh lost more territory, many have returned to their home countries (Barrett, 2017, pp. 10-11). In addition to fighting in Iraq and Syria and its Wilayats, or provinces, in places like Libya and Egypt, Daesh has claimed responsibility for several planned and inspired attacks outside of Iraq and Syria like Paris¹² (2015), Brussels¹³ (2016), and

¹¹ Abu Bakr al Baghdadi was killed after detonating a suicide bomb during a US-led raid of his safe house on October 26, 2019 (El Deeb, 2019).

¹² On November 13, 2015 gunmen and suicide bombers hit a Paris concert hall, major stadium, restaurants and bars leaving 130 dead and 494 wounded. Three coordinated groups, most of them French and Belgian nationals, carried out the attacks. The ringleader Abdelhamid Abaaoud spent time in Syria. Daesh claimed responsibility for the attacks (CNN, 2019).

¹³ On March 22, 2016 Khalid el-Bakraoui, Ibrahim el-Bakraoui, Najim Laachraoui, Mohamed Abrini, and Osama Krayem carried out bombings of the Brussels airport and a Metro station killing 32 people. Daesh claimed responsibility for the attacks (BBC, 2016).

Manchester¹⁴ (2017). At the time of writing, Daesh had not carried out any major attacks in the West. After losing most of its territory in early 2019, Daesh operated as it had done in the past: as a terrorist organization conducting sporadic attacks to regain control of its former territory (Tonnessen, 2019, p. 5; de Azevedo, 2020, p. 48). From March 2019, after losing the last of its territory, to March 2020, Daesh claimed around 2,000 attacks in Iraq and Syria (de Azevedo, 2020, p. 49) and has claimed several attacks in Afghanistan during the fall of 2021 (Gardner, 2021).

At the time of writing, many Daesh supporters displaced from its main territory in Iraq and Syria—the majority being women and children—are being held in underresourced IDP (Internally Displaced Persons) camps—al Hawl and al Roj—run by the Syrian Defence Forces (SDF) in Northeastern Syria. These camps also hold individuals who were fleeing Daesh (de Azevedo, 2020; Alexander, 2021). According to international relations scholar and PhD candidate, Christian Vianna de Azevedo (2020) most of the residents are from Syria and Iraq, but the camp is also home to foreign women and children from up to 62 different countries (de Azevedo, 2020, p. 43). According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs (OCHA), as of October 2020, 64,619 individuals live in al Hawl. Of these individuals, 48% are Iraqis, 37% are Syrians and 15% are third country nationals (TCNs) (OCHA, 2020). Most of the inhabitants (94%) are women and children. Thousands of IDPs (largely Syrian) and around 746 TCNs (the number could be higher) have left the camp (OCHA, 2020). The TCNs leaving the camp included individuals from Russia, Canada and the UK, many being transferred

¹⁴ On May 22, 2017 Salman Abedi detonated a shrapnel-laden bomb in the foyer of Manchester Arena where thousands of children were leaving a concert killing himself and 22 others and wounding 100. Daesh claimed responsibility for the attack the next day on its Telegram messaging app channel (Samuelson and Malsin 2017). In August of 2020, his brother, Hashem Abedi, who had helped plan the attack, was given a life sentence for the murder of 22 people (Rawlinson and Walker, 2020).

initially to al Roj Camp (OCHA 2020). According to Audrey Alexander (2021), a researcher at West Point's Combating Terrorism Center, there were two general divisions of al Hawl camp: one for locals (Syrian and Iraqi citizens) and the other was a makeshift area, or what was known as the "foreigners' annex," where non-Syrian and non-Iraqi Islamic State detainees typically lived (p. 4). Families in al Hawl's foreigner's annex, almost exclusively women and children, were transferred to al Roj. Al Roj is smaller than al Hawl and located in a more isolated part of Northeastern Syria (Alexander, 2021, pp. 4-5) holding 2,376 people as of October 2020 (OCHA, 2020a).

Camps like Al Hawl has been compared to Camp Bucca, a US-run prison in Iraq during the 2003 Iraq war (also known as "Jihadist University") where many Daesh figures, such as the late Abu Bakr al Baghdadi were detainees; poor living conditions, the presence of jihadists, and prisoners harshly enforcing religious laws led to widespread radicalization amongst the inmate population (de Azevedo, 2020, p. 47). However, unlike camp Bucca, women conduct Daesh activities in al Hawl and al Roj like passing on Daesh's teachings to children, recruitment, smuggling, creating and distributing propaganda; and harshly enforcing religious laws (de Azevedo, 2020, p. 43; Alexander, 2021, p. 5). Daesh still has affiliates active in regions like the Sahel, Libya, the Philippines, Afghanistan, and parts of South Asia (Pandya 2020; Nsaibia and Weiss, 2020).

Daesh and Al Qaeda come from the global jihadist movement and both have a similar goal of restoring the old Caliphate. Though both are apocalyptic, Daesh is more millenarian¹⁵ in its orientation where they believe that they have already established the Caliphate —something al Qaeda thinks will happen much later— and that the end of days is happening right now (Berger 2015, Kaplan and Costa 2015). Both al Qaeda and Daesh use the notion of a “global Islamic community” or ummah to reach out, or perhaps “sell” the movement, to Muslim diasporas in the West (as well as converts). The Islamic ummah is a concept originating from the first Islamic community in Medina, which expanded and established authority— through both military and diplomatic means— over central Arabia uniting followers under a common faith, ideology, and law. With the development of empires and sultanates in the seventh and eighth centuries, and the development of Muslim empires, the term took on a more “transnational dimension” (Esposito, 2002, pp. 39-40). During the twentieth century, after the breakup of Muslim empires by European colonization and the development of modern nation-states, the concept of ummah became “a more distant ideal” (Esposito, 2002, p. 40). The term was revived in the twentieth century with the resurgence of Islamic movements led by ideologues like Sayyed Qutb and the spread of international communication, which “...reinforced and reinvigorated Muslim awareness and identification with the worldwide Islamic community” (Esposito, 2002, p. 40). This sense of Islamic community was reinforced through international media coverage of world events like the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the struggles of Muslim communities in places like Bosnia, Chechnya, Kashmir, and Palestine (Esposito, 2002, p. 41).

¹⁵ According to Berger (2015, p. 68) most apocalyptic cults “only hope for the imminent arrival of their perfect, world-transforming society” which they try to model in their own closed communities whereas “ISIS creates the impression it has already arrived, and adherents can immerse themselves in its details.”

This global “Islamic” identity Daesh and al Qaeda present is stripped of most of its cultural, historical, or national contexts and is very narrow in terms of whom they consider a “true Muslim.” At the same time, this version of Islam, which they present to their audiences and “defend” by conducting individual attacks or migrating to fight with the group, is said to solve a multiplicity of problems from economic downturns to human rights abuses. For example, al Qaeda and Daesh contend that the destruction of their enemies (mainly America) and the establishment of the Caliphate will lead to peace for Muslims in places as diverse as Palestine, Burma and Kashmir, global economic prosperity, the end of racism, and even the end of environmental destruction (Lemiux et al. 2014).

Despite coming from a similar movement, Daesh and al Qaeda are separate and competing movements. An analysis by international political science scholar Tore Refslund Hamming (2017) found that the rivalry between the two groups, especially after their separation in 2014, was defined by competition to be *the* Sunni jihadist movement and contestation of the other group’s authority. While many jihadists focus on the near enemy and the far enemy, Hamming adds the category “internal enemy” to this discussion; the internal enemy being rival jihadist groups. Intra-jihadi competition between Daesh and al Qaeda emerged around 2014 (Hamming, 2017, p. 47). While Daesh targets both local (near enemy) and global enemies (far enemies), al Qaeda on the other hand—especially since the Arab spring—has continued to focus locally. At the same time, al Qaeda still promotes global jihad rhetorically calling for attacks on the West despite losing its capability to launch such attacks (Hamming, 2017, p. 63). Hamming (2017) asserts that al Qaeda is focused on the far enemy following al Qaeda ideologue Abu Musab al Suri’s decentralized jihad of smaller unaffiliated cells attacking the West while Daesh follows the strategy from the work of Abu Bakr al Naji (originally an al Qaeda ideologue), which

emphasizes the importance of holding territory from which an Islamic state will emerge and the jihad campaign will continue (p. 64). At the time of writing, Daesh does not hold any major territory, but continues to, carry out insurgency campaigns across the Middle East, Africa, and Asia.

For both groups, the internal enemy has become increasingly important (Hamming, 2017, p.76). This notion of the internal enemy "...has forced jihadi groups to find legitimising rationales for fighting actors that naturally and historically have been considered allies and, in extreme cases, it has even entailed labelling other jihadists as apostates" (p. 76). This has impacted both Daesh and al Qaeda's military and communication strategies. Hamming (2017) also mentions that when Daesh experienced successive failures, many al Qaeda leaders increased their discursive attacks on the West and "The most prominent agitator for renewed attacks in the West has been Hamza bin Laden, the son of Osama" who was working his way up the al Qaeda hierarchy (p. 77). According to Hamming (2017), five out of six of Hamza bin Laden's speeches released around the time of his study had called for attacks against the West (p. 77). However, in 2018 US Officials had reported that Hamza bin Laden had been killed some time between 2017 and 2019 (Borger, 2019).

Terminology

This study involves several contentious terms. This section will discuss important terms like "the West", terrorism, and jihadism. These discussions are essential as these terms are commonly used in discussions of Daesh and al Qaeda's activities.

It is important to acknowledge that terms like the "the West", and "the Islamic World" simplify large culturally diverse groups of people. As Karim and Eid (2014) contend, the

dominant discourse in discussing the “the West” and “Islam” tends to portray both sides as polar opposites and in constant conflict with each other. This view is promoted by many politicians, policy makers, and journalists in the West as well as militant groups like al Qaeda and Daesh (p. 10). As Karim and Eid (2014) contend, “Whereas the dominant Western image of Muslims is constructed in terms of an alien other, history provides multiple examples of personal, social, cultural, political, military, commercial, and intellectual alliances” (p. 4). Much like the Western powers they oppose, al Qaeda and Daesh situate themselves within a bipolar order in which “Islam” struggles against the “The West.”

Viewing the West and Islam as two mutually exclusive and conflicting “sides” is by no means a new concept as it can be traced back to the Crusades, and later, European colonization and the development of Orientalism. As Edward Said (2003) contends in his study of Orientalism, “For Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, ‘us’) and the strange (The Orient, the East, ‘them’)” (pp. 43-44). According to Said (2003), it was through orientalism that “...European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off the orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self” (p. 2). In other words, the West is co-constituted by the East. Said (2003) notes how this division of the West and East (or Occident and Orient) was, and continues to be, applied to Islam and “the Arab world” (also known as the Near Orient): “One the one hand there are Westerners, and on the other there are Arab-Orientals; the former are (in no particular order) rational, peaceful, liberal, logical, capable of holding real values without natural suspicion; the latter are none of these things” (p. 49). Orientalism provided justification for colonization and further entrenched the idea of Islam and the West being diametrically opposed. There are more contemporary versions of these ideas in the Post-Cold War—and later,

Post-911— era, such as Karim’s (2003a) concept of “The Islamic Peril.” As Karim Contends (2003a) “In the aftermath of the Cold War, the ‘Islamic Peril’ has become a convenient common enemy of the West and Eastern Europe since it can be presented as a fundamental threat to civilization” (p. 12). In this case Islam, like Communism, presents a civilizational threat to the West. Al Qaeda and Daesh are reliant on the narrative of a continuous conflict between Islam and the West as it plays an important role in how they frame their respective movements for Western audiences.

Given this history, I am aware of the complexity of terms like the West and that “the West” and “Islam” share many historical and cultural connections. As well, the definition of Western countries changes over time; for example, during the Cold War, countries like Ukraine, Poland, or Hungary, which were part of the Soviet Bloc and considered part of the East, can now be seen as part of the West or as Western countries. In addition, many Muslims born in Western countries, like Canada or the United States may also see their home country as part of the Islamic world.

Terrorism

Daesh and al Qaeda are known by most states as terrorist groups and struggles against them are often considered part of the wider War on Terror. This is a heavily politicized term, but there are some important elements of this term to take into account when studying terrorist violence. This term is significant, mostly because the literature and mainstream discussion about these insurgent groups define Daesh and al Qaeda as terrorist groups. Additionally, both groups often use this term or variations of it to describe themselves and their actions; for example, *Inspire* magazine’s feature on using online technology to support al Qaeda is written by an author who goes by the name “Terr0r1st” and *Rumiyah*’s attack manual feature is entitled “Just

Terror Tactics.” The definition of terrorism as a communicative act of violence is another reason why this term is useful (Heath and O’Hair 2008; Weiman 2006; Dowling 1986). Because of its highly politicized and complex nature, it is hard to find a consistent definition for terrorism. As terrorism expert Martha Crenshaw (2011) contends terrorism is not a term that is solely discussed and studied by scholars or a particular academic discipline, but it is often shaped by events and policy interests; terrorism research takes place “...in a mixed messy world of academics, think tanks, government analysts, journalists and pundits” (p. 1).

Defining terrorism is often driven by state interests and geopolitical factors. Often definitions of terrorism within the international community are created by international bodies like the United Nations and national governments. It is often referred to as violence by non-state actors, but again, what is a legitimate state and what is not is also determined by the international community, where recognition of a given state is often driven by the interests of more established or dominant states. In addition, this definition excludes cases of state terrorism.

In public discussions of terrorism by media organizations and public figures, often the decision on whether or not to define a violent attack as an act of terrorism depends on the perpetrator’s identity. Calling an act terrorism is often used as a way to label the other where groups who are “against us” are employing terrorism and those who are “with us” are not (Eid 2014, p. 17). Often the attack is more likely to be called an act of terrorism if it involves a Muslim perpetrator (Freedman and Thussu, 2012; Karim, 2003a, p. 78).

Nonetheless, despite its controversial nature, scholars have tried to create working definitions of terrorism. For some, like psychology and terrorism scholar Ariel Merari (2007), terrorism is simply a tactic that could be used for a variety of political causes. Crenshaw (2011) provides a definition of terrorism that is relevant to a communication perspective,

Terrorism is a form of violence that is primarily designed to influence an audience. Its execution depends on concealment, surprise, stealth, conspiracy, and deception.

Terrorism is not spontaneous, nor does it involve mass participation. The act itself communicates a future threat to people who identify with the victims. The choice of time place, and victim is meant to shock, frighten, excite, or outrage. Psychological impact is central to both the aspirations of its users and its effectiveness. It is an asset to those who challenge authority, in part because it maximizes effect while minimizing effort. Its inherent transgressiveness makes it attractive to those out of power, who see in disorder the path to future gain and who often wish to do away with the norms they violate (p. 2).

Crenshaw's definition highlights the communicative nature of terrorism, with the focus on the actor's strategic choices of victims, targets, and sites in order to convey a message to their given audience(s). The psychological impact is another important factor as the act must violate certain norms in order to shock an audience, as has been seen in the 9/11 attacks and what some have called "atrocities porn" by Daesh (Cottee, 2015). Crenshaw's definition of terrorism is helpful as it acknowledges the communicative and strategic aspects of terrorist violence, but the role of the media is not included in this definition.

While recognizing that the use of the term "terrorism" or "terrorist" is often a pejorative and morally loaded term, communication scholar Mahmoud Eid develops a definition of terrorism that not only highlights its communicative aspects, but also addresses the role of the media. According to Eid (2014a),

Terrorism is the persistent, shocking, premeditated, covert and/or overt, individual and/or collective, and direct and/or indirect threat and/or use of conventional and/or modern and military and/or non-military tactics of violence, force, and/or coercion that is/are initiated and/or retaliated by and against individuals, groups, organizations, governments, and/or states, on national, transnational, and/or international levels, resulting in complete or partial severe loss/injury of lives, destruction/damage of properties, and/or other physical atrocities and inducing terror and/or other psychological effects, in order to gain wide-ranging public attention beyond that of immediate targets, through the use of and/or by traditional and/or new media communicating messages that may (or not) be rooted in specific motivations, aiming to help achieve specific pre-determined agenda and/or desired ends (p. 26).

Eid, like Crenshaw stresses the psychological impacts of the attacks and the communicative nature of terrorist violence. Eid's definition also acknowledges the role of media as it is an important component of terrorism and a way for actors to gain attention and publicity for their cause when conducting an attack. This definition is relevant to Daesh and al Qaeda's media releases as well. When Daesh carries out and records beheadings to distribute to a wider audience, the attack on its own is an execution of one individual, but the recording and distribution of this attack to a wider audience makes it a more like a terrorist attack. The attack is meant to shock and it is a statement of Daesh's power¹⁶, not only to the victim and the people it rules over, but also the wider international community.

¹⁶ Conducting acts of violence to shock is not only committed by terrorist groups. States can also commit terroristic acts of violence to intimidate or shock their given target, be it their own citizens or another state.

The notion of symbolic targets is important in both political and/or religiously motivated terrorism. As scholar of religious terror Mark Juergensmeyer (2017) contends, religious terrorist acts are symbolic as they are "...intended to illustrate or refer to something beyond their immediate target: a grander conquest, for instance, or a struggle more awesome than meets the eye" (p. 154-55). Juergensmeyer (2017) describes these acts as a type of ritual, or performance violence, where terrorist acts are dramas (like religious rituals or street theatre) designed to impact several audiences, including those who witness it from a distance via news media. These audiences' interpretations are part of the event because, like public rituals, religious terrorist acts have different meanings for different observers (p. 155). The notion of a public enactment as part of a wider narrative is particularly relevant, not only to how this event was received by the audience or the perpetrator's enemies, but how such an attack is presented to audiences of presumed and potential supporters.

Taken as a whole, this demonstrates the typically complex, moralised, and highly politicized nature of using the terms "terrorism" or "terrorist." As demonstrated by Thussu and Freedman (2012), Karim (2003) and Eid (2014), the term terrorist can be very problematic as it often applied to some groups more than others. This term should not be discarded as demonstrated by Eid's (2014) and Crenshaw's (2011) definitions of terrorism as a communicative act of violence that can be used by different actors for a variety of purposes. This definition is a valuable one for this project as it relies on framing and coverage of the act by individual groups and media organizations. Framing, which I will discuss in a later chapter, is not only an important aspect of how these acts and other events are imagined by the group, but also how the given group's enemies' reactions to these attacks are then imagined by the group.

Islamism

Some critics (Ingram 2016) refer to Daesh and Al Qaeda as “Islamist” movements. Though I do not use this term to describe either group, it is another common term and therefore needs to be discussed. Islamism is a very fluid term and has been used to describe phenomena ranging from terrorism in the name of Islam to “fundamentalist Islam” to establishing Islamic norms within a society without necessarily resorting to “extremism” or challenging authority (Karim, 2014, p. 165). For some scholars like Esposito (2002), “Islamism” is generally defined as political Islam and it can be used for a wide variety of political objectives¹⁷(p. 170). According to Karim (2014), defining Islamism as political Islam “...is problematic because it implies that ‘Islam’ otherwise, has nothing to do with politics” when historically, interweaving political and religious thought was an important characteristic of Islam (p. 165). At the same time, Karim (2014) asserts that “The difference, however, is that contemporary ‘Islamism’ is politicizing the religion to an extent that did not occur historically” (p. 165). Not only is the term “Islamism” too broad, by using the word “Islam,” it is associating these violent groups with Islam, which paints a large portion of the global population as potential terrorists. This term is also problematic because it gives insurgent groups a form of religious legitimacy. This is not to say that Daesh and al Qaeda’s actions and motives have nothing to do with religion as religious motives, regardless of whether it reflects the values of the majority of Muslims, play an important motivating factor in an individual’s choice to support or join Daesh or al Qaeda (Dawson 2010; Dawson and Amarasingham 2016).

¹⁷ Some may use Islamism to refer to more conservative or fundamentalist movements, however this is still inaccurate as many so-called “fundamentalists” that are critical of the West are very critical of groups that employ violence like Al Qaeda and Daesh (Gerges 2011, Seib and Janbeck 2011, p. 106).

Jihad

“Jihadist” and “jihadism” are also commonly used terms, both in the literature and the media. Jihad is often translated incorrectly to mean “holy war” (Karim, 2014, p. 157). This interpretation ignores the fact that jihad is a term that has many definitions and has been debated for centuries. The concept of jihad has been used for causes ranging from personal struggle to be a better person, to armed conflict for causes ranging from anti-colonial struggles for independence to war against the West by many insurgent groups like al Qaeda and Daesh (Karim, 2003). Jihad is often divided into personal struggle against internal evil (the greater jihad) and armed struggle (the lesser jihad) (Karim, 2003a; Peters, 2005). There are different forms of jihad, like the “jihad of the sword” (armed conflict) and “jihad of the tongue” or “jihad of the pen” (encouraging good deeds or bettering of Islamic society) (Karim, 2003a, p. 42; Peters, 2005, p. 1).

Use of the term ‘jihad’ has also undergone many shifts in Western discourses. In her study of the framing of jihad in the *New York Times*’ coverage of Afghanistan from 1987-2015¹⁸ Batoul Hreiche (2017) found that Western use of the term jihad had changed over time. During the Soviet-Afghan war, it was used favourably and depicted as a solution to the Soviet presence whereas after the end of the war, it was presented as a violent phenomenon that targeted individuals who were religiously and ideologically different.

Both Daesh and al Qaeda use the term “jihad” when defining their cause, so it is important to acknowledge how they use this concept. This notion of jihad stemmed from twentieth century ideologues like Sayyed Qutb and Abul A’la Mawdudi who saw problems in

¹⁸ The study focused on Afghanistan coverage including the Soviet-Afghan war, Afghanistan civil war, rise of the Taliban, the Afghanistan war between 2001 and 2014, and general coverage of Afghanistan between 2013-2015.

the Islamic world as a result of neglecting jihad's definition as a violent struggle and they set a precedent for groups like al Qaeda, who see jihad as an armed struggle (Esposito, 2002, p. 62). Sayyed Qutb (1906-1966), according to scholar of Islam Joseph Esposito, was known as the "God Father of Militant Islam" (2002, p. 46). Qutb was a member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and believed that violent jihad was essential for removing corruption from Egyptian society (Esposito, 2002, p. 57). Another significant event took place shortly after Qutb's execution, this was the 1967 Six-Day War, when Egypt, Jordan, and Syria suffered a humiliating loss against Israel. To many, this defeat marked the failure of secular pan Arabism espoused by leaders like Nasser, Egypt's president at the time. It was from this moment that Islamic fundamentalism increased in popularity in Egypt and elsewhere. For many, the fact that a small nation like Israel beat a coalition of several countries was a sign that God had turned away from Muslims and the only way back was through pure religion (Wright, 2006, p. 44-45)

Another ideologue in this movement was Abul A'la Mawdudi (1903-1979), a Pakistani journalist who worked in Egypt. Mawdudi saw the West and Western governing systems as forces corrupting the Islamic world and claimed that violent jihad was essential to religious practice as well as removing this corruption (Armstrong, 2001, p. 237). According to Gerges (2006), though ideologues like Mawdudi and Qutb were critical of the West, they were focused on local regimes. It was not until the 1990s when al Qaeda, as mentioned previously, began to shift its focus to destroying the "far enemy" or America, Israel and their allies, when jihad "went global" (Gerges, 2005, pp. 125-129). In 1996 bin Laden and Zawahiri signed the declaration of war on America and Americans and absorbed other fringe groups within the jihadist movement resulting in several embassy bombings and the 9/11 attacks (Gerges, 2005, p. 125).

This is an important discussion as it acknowledges the very fluid and complex nature of the term jihad. When I use the term “jihad” or “jihadist”, I am referring to its more violent variant coming from al Qaeda’s leadership beginning in the 1990’s and continuing with Daesh’s efforts following the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Radicalization

Radicalization is a term that appears quite often in discussions about individuals who join or act on behalf of al Qaeda or Daesh. Organizations or centres working to prevent radicalization tend to focus on media production and messages produced by terrorist groups. Many experts refer to the process of radicalization and/or radicalization to violence¹⁹ leading individuals to act on behalf of these groups. “Radicalization” and “radical” (or extremist) are terms that are constantly changing and have a very complex history. The term has been used in different ways by a variety of actors; for example, according to Karim (2014, pp. 163-64), terms like radical (or extremist), have been used by actors ranging from some Western journalists referring to Muslims who speak or act against Western interests to some Muslim groups referring to other groups who have a different interpretation of Islam from their own. The term “radical” or radicalization often changes with the political context as international affairs scholars Awan, Hoskins, and O’Loughlin (2011) contend:

¹⁹ Some individuals may be radicalized and support Daesh or al Qaeda, but not act on those beliefs where others may be radicalized and act on behalf of these movements either through an individual attack or fighting with these groups in one of their theatres of conflict.

In fact to trace a genealogy of the terms is to reveal its application to having certain strength of character, in espousing radical principles in UK and US, eighteenth and nineteenth century politics, for example. Yet, it is in the twenty-first century that radicalization has suddenly emerged in its least-benign form as a key concern of policy makers, security services, and journalists, notably as a threat to the stability and security of countries around the world. Radicalization, of these groups, is often constructed as a *process* which a person (or persons) undergoes that may result in their committing violent, and moreover “terrorist” acts [Authors’ emphasis] (p. 3).

Post-9/11 definitions of “radicalization” are often tied to a process leading to terrorist violence. This highlights the changing and highly complex nature of this term.

The term radicalization in the study of jihadist media is often discussed in the context of law enforcement. In light of the number of foreign fighters from Canada migrating to fight with groups in Iraq and Syria, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) released a report in 2018. They studied 100 Canadians who mobilized to violence in Canada including lone wolf attacks and travel, mostly to Syria and Iraq. In this report, they make a distinction between mobilization and radicalization. According to CSIS (2018) “Radicalization is a highly individualized process through which a person becomes convinced that violence is a legitimate (and eventually individually obligated) means to advance their ideological cause or beliefs” (p. 4). CSIS (2018) contends that factors like personal history, peer pressure, grievances, charismatic ideologues and international events influence radicalization (p. 4). They make an important distinction in terms of mobilization. They define mobilization as “...the process by which a radicalized individual moves from an extremist intent to preparatory steps to engage in terrorist activity such as an attack, travel for extremist purposes or facilitating the terrorist activity of

someone else” (CSIS, 2018, p. 5). The authors also mention that these two processes are not linear, but they are linked. In this case, radicalization is the formation of beliefs justifying and, in some cases, the precursor, to violent action.

The definition of radicalization and how the term is used often shifts with the geopolitical and historical context as demonstrated by Karim (2014) and Awan et. al (2011). The law enforcement perspective from organizations like CSIS (2018) see it as a process or precursor to violent action while stressing that action is more significant to law enforcement rather than radicalizing beliefs. It is hard to know exactly what changes an individual’s views and how distinct the line is between radicalizing ideas and action. *Dabiq*, *Rumiyah*, and *Inspire* present readers with a particular set of beliefs, though some may already hold these views before reading the magazines. These publications reinforce these beliefs and provide encouragement and, in many cases, specific instructions to act.

As many experts contend, radicalization is a very complex, highly-individualized process involving several factors, rather than an instant change (i.e. an epiphany) or a linear progression. (Sageman 2008; Taylor and Horgan 2006; Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010). In other words, there is no common, concrete “radicalization process” as it is a difficult process to define. Having said this, some experts have developed lists of “risk factors” that may contribute to radicalization. Psychologist John Horgan (2008) highlights certain risk factors that impact initial involvement in terrorist activities. These include emotional vulnerability, for example, anger, alienation and disenfranchisement; disaffection from political or social protest or the belief that conventional political activity will not work; sympathising with victims (e.g. victims of a given conflict or police brutality); the belief that violence against the state is “...not inherently immoral” (Horgan 2008, p. 85); the sense of reward that comes from being a part of this movement (e.g. achieving

more with death than they could with life in the case of suicide attacks in terms of fame for the movement and personal glory); and finally having familial or social ties to those involved in the movement (Horgan, 2008, p. 84-85). Horgan (2008) notes that it is important to recognize that these factors vary and "...becoming involved in terrorism will reflect a dynamic, though highly personalized, process of incremental assimilation and accommodation" (p. 85). In a similar light, in his study of al Qaeda terrorists, Marc Sageman (2008) also lists four major dynamics of radicalization, while noting that "...each dimension of this process of radicalization can occur at its own pace and often in parallel with other dimensions" (Sageman, 2008, p. 72). These dynamics are moral outrage; for example, seeing footage of suffering and humiliation of fellow Muslims, perceived war against Islam or international conspiracy (rather than war of political interests), resonance with personal experience of persecuted individuals, and being mobilized by networks (online or face-to-face) (Sageman, 2008, p. 84).

In their study examining the connections between radicalism and activism psychologists Sophia Moskalenko and Clark McCauley (2009) disagree with the common perception of radicalization as "a conveyor belt" or a linear series of stages. Instead, Moskalenko and McCauley (2009) use the conception of a pyramid of participants where those who are "unpolitical sympathisers" make up the base and those who are the most active make up the top portion of the pyramid. In this model, Moskalenko and McCauley (2009) recognize that an individual can move to "the apex of radicalization" from any level, even the lowest level of unpoliticized sympathizers; for example, someone can be moved to the apex of the pyramid by something like a major personal loss or simply being invited to join a group by a radicalized loved one (p. 241). Moskalenko and McCauley (2009) also stress that many activists never

become radicals, and, more importantly many radicals do not have a history of activism (p. 241). A variety of factors can lead to an individual going from the bottom of the pyramid to the apex.

In their major synthesis of studies on radicalization and homegrown terrorism, national security researchers Mohammad Hafez and Creighton Mullins (2015) suggest a puzzle metaphor for dealing with issues of radicalization, as opposed to the linear model purported by other scholars. Hafez and Mullins (2015) suggest that four factors work together to form a puzzle, they are: personal and collective grievances, networks and interpersonal ties, political and religious ideologies, and enabling environments and support structures. Personal and collective grievances refer to issues like anti-foreigner sentiment, xenophobia, and foreign policy decisions towards Muslim countries like the invasion of Iraq and Israel-Palestine issues. These factors are not enough to start radicalization, rather they are the “landscape that frames proximate causes of radicalization...” (Hafez and Mullins, 2015, p. 962). Networks and interpersonal ties refers to pre-existing kinship and friendship ties facilitating recruitment including family, friends, sporting teams, prison, work places, and social movement organizations. According to Hafez and Mullins (2015) “radical Islamist” groups in Europe recruit amongst three groups: recent immigrants, second- and third-generation “born-again” Muslims, and converts to Islam (p. 966). The last two categories are often converted in prisons after experiencing a life of crime. Many come from a “...rebellious subculture that combines antisocial behavior such as drug-taking or petty criminality with support for anti-mainstream rebels such as gangster rappers, Osama bin Laden’s Al Qaeda, and, more recently, ISIS” (p. 966). Ideology is what they refer to as “...a set of political beliefs about the world, usually anchored in worldly or transcendental philosophies that are presumably universal, comprehensive, and idealistic (even utopian).” Islamic fundamentalism harkens back to “a mythical Golden Age when Muslims were pious, unified, and

empowered” (Hafez and Mullins, 2015, p. 966). Al Qaeda and Daesh use mythology and symbols, and help individuals form new identities. Mythology and symbols are also used as strategic framing tools to interpret events blending the current time with sacred history. Enabling support structures, including social media and access to training camps, also aid in recruitment, . With movements being restricted in places like mosques and community centres, more recruiters look online to recruit or connect with like-minded militants (Hafez and Mullins 2015, p. 969).

Focusing on extremist group messaging, scholars like J.M. Berger (2017) and Haroro Ingram (2016) examine radicalization through a linkage-based approach examining the relationships between different identity groups. In his study of two Daesh audio messages, J.M. Berger, using linkage based analysis, examines the message’s radicalizing potential by looking at linkages between an extremist in-group (Daesh supporters), eligible in-group (those who could potentially be part of the in-group, in this case, Sunni Muslims) and out-groups (those excluded from the eligible in group often responsible for the in group’s problems like Western governments, Shias, non-Muslims, Islamic scholars who disagree with them etc.). According to Berger (2017) radicalization into extremism can be defined as “The escalation of an in-group’s extremist orientation through the endorsement of increasingly harmful actions against an outgroup or groups” (p. 4). In extremist ideology and propaganda out-group(s) are held responsible for creating a crisis that negatively impacts the eligible in-group. In order to resolve this perceived crisis, the extremist in-group argues that the eligible in-group must join the Extremist In-Group (Berger, 2017, p. 5). According to Berger (2017) elements of a given text can have the propensity to radicalize or further radicalize based on the elements of the narrative. This conception of radicalization is pertinent to this study not only because it addresses these elements in recruitment materials, but also categories like the Eligible In-group and out-groups

are useful for outlining particular recruitment narratives; for example, if a particular piece focuses more on targeting an out-group or uniting the eligible in-group.

There is another body of radicalization literature that focuses on pull (attracting) rather than push (being forced into) factors of radicalization. This approach tends to look at jihadism as part of a type of counterculture or a form of rebellion rather than something “traditional.” Aside from religious narratives, like the notion of jihad or the establishment of a Caliphate, these movements also borrow from other movements like anti-globalization or other countercultural movements. As international terror expert Roland Jacquard (2002) states, some followers of the late Bin Laden “... would perhaps be much more anti-imperialist, much more anti-American, than Islamist (p. xii). In their study of online chatter of American al Qaeda supporters on forums, foreign affairs scholars Lorenzo Vidino, Joshua Kilberg, Josh Lefkowitz, and Evan Kohlman (2015) found that there were different appeals and causes that drew each supporter to the movement. Among their sample was a young man coming from a White supremacist background who admired anti-Semitic elements of the movement and an economist who admired its anti-capitalist aspects.

In their study of foreign fighters Amarasingam and Dawson (2016) interviewed twenty foreign fighters from Canada (6), The United States (3), United Kingdom (3), Europe (4), and others in unspecified areas of Africa (2), the Middle East (1), and India (1) who had travelled to Syria and Iraq. They found that their justifications for hijrah (migration) were more moral and religious rather than political. Dawson and Amarasingam (2016) believe that researchers should look beyond factors that are typically associated with the rise of terrorism and radicalization like low social and economic prospects, or “push” factors, and examine “pull factors” like ideology and religion; and deeper existential issues (p. 3). In their study, three features stood out amongst

their participants: extensive use of religious discourse and considerations, solidarity with fellow Muslims, condemning their past lives and focusing on moral rather than economic limitations, and looking at their journey to Syria and Iraq as a personal journey for self-fulfilment rather than a political activity (p. 13).

In her interviews with individuals involved in Danish terrorism cases, scholar of violent extremism Sophie Hemmingsen (2015) claims that jihadism can be understood as a type of counterculture. Hemmingsen (2015) states, “In addition to being a political project, a religious interpretation and something justifying the use of violence, it is a social phenomenon, an identity, a subculture, a rebellion against restricting traditions and norms, and much more” (p. 3). According to Hemmingsen (2015) understanding jihadism as a counterculture provides a better understanding of “seemingly illogical” aspects of jihadism, that may be lost if this issue is only examined through other perspectives. Hemmingsen (2015) claims that the counterculture of the 1960s strongly resembles the contemporary jihadism in her study in that the individuals involved did not trust authority and leadership, regarded their parents’ generation with contempt, opposed traditional roles, and were critical of capitalism, and finally both movements included violent extremists (p. 7).

Radicalization’s definition is constantly shifting. Karim (2014) and Awan et al (2011) contend that the definition is impacted by factors like historical context and the political climate. Authors like Horgan (2008), Sageman (2008), and McCauley and Moskalenko (2009) contend that, there are multiple factors and processes that may lead to an individual “radicalizing.” Hafez and Mullins’ (2017) puzzle metaphor examines radicalization, not as a path or process, but a combination of different converging factors. These studies provide important insights into al Qaeda and Daesh’s potential audiences, but they do not directly address the role of movement

texts. Berger (2017) and Ingram's (2016) linkage-based approach addresses radicalization, not in terms of processes or risk factors, but looks at the elements that make up radicalizing narratives. Berger's work outlines two speeches and the potential audiences for tactical and ideological strategy, but it does not include the deeper cultural concepts and appeals leveraged by Daesh to appeal to an eligible in group. As well this analysis is limited to two translated audio speeches and not a whole publication dedicated to English speakers.

In their study of Western al Qaeda and Daesh supporters, Dawson and Amarasingam (2016), Vidino et al. (2015) and Hemingsen (2016) look at how radicalization or the appeal of jihadist movements can be more about individuals' finding aspects of the movement that align with their existing values rather than the individual being "pushed" to adopt another set of values. These studies are valuable as they draw attention to "pull" factors or countercultural elements of these particular movements. At the same time, they do not address the messaging or materials made by Daesh and al Qaeda's official media organizations targeted towards individuals like their research subjects.

Radicalization literature provides insights into the diverse values and motivations of *Dabiq* and *Inspire*'s potential audiences. Moreover, examining radicalization literature provides a more informed perspective when approaching the messaging and themes outlined in each groups' promotional materials. Though this study cannot determine the direct effects of these particular texts on audiences, it can identify the prevalence of certain appeals and how they are showcased in the magazines' narratives. This study will contribute to literature on radicalizing narratives as it provides a comparative analysis of how each group's narrative and appeals shift over the movement's life cycle, as well as how other cultural elements are incorporated into their respective narratives.

The Impact of Online Media

Though *Dabiq* and *Inspire* are in PDF form resembling a print magazine, they are produced and distributed online. This section addresses how online media impact al Qaeda and Daesh's operations, including recruitment and the promotion of their respective causes. Online communication has expanded Daesh and al Qaeda's reach and it has also given them the ability to present themselves without media manipulation (Eid, 2014, p. 2). At the same time, before wide use of the Internet, terrorist groups produced their own media for their followers through cassettes, videos, and print media (Sageman, 2004, p. 160; Hegghammer 2010). The Internet increases a movement's reach, and like more traditional forms of media, it helps build a narrative of who the group is along with its grievances and aims. The first section addresses how online media play a similar facilitating role to older media. This is followed by a discussion of how internet forums helped establish virtual communities and how the Internet has increased production and access to English-language jihadist media. The second section examines how greater accessibility to terrorist materials—attack manuals and other online media—afforded by the Internet has impacted participation in terrorist movements. This is followed by a discussion of how the interactive nature of online media, specifically forums and social media, have created different forms of participation in and interaction with terrorist groups.

Online information does not necessarily “radicalize” an individual directly, but it facilitates different kinds of functions. Forensic psychologist and terrorism expert Marc Sageman (2004) highlights one important impact of the Internet, which he claims is similar to the impact of older media like magazines, newspapers, cassettes, and videos in older jihadist movements (p. 160). As Sageman (2004) states, “This virtual community plays the same role that ‘Imagined Communities’ played in the development of the feeling of nationalism, which made people live

and die for their nations as well as hate and kill for them” (p. 160). Sageman uses Anderson’s notion of the imagined community that focuses on the role that newspapers or print media played in uniting nationalist movements. According to Anderson (1983), reading a newspaper was a shared ritual carried out by individuals who were all part of a nation, but unable to know all of its citizens (p. 35). This is somewhat applicable to groups like al Qaeda—and now Daesh as it loses territory— where they are seen as a diffuse network held together by online media. This phenomenon has been labelled as “Leaderless Jihad” by Marc Sageman (2008) or “al Qaeda 2.0” by American national security analyst Peter Bergen (2011). Publications like *Inspire* and *Dabiq* help connect supporters in a type of imagined community.

In her study of Storm Front, an extremist right-wing forum, psychologist Lorraine Bowman-Grievies (2009) found that virtual communities play an important role in terrorist movements as they provide a source of validation and facilitate the creation of political and ideological discourses used to justify the use of terrorist violence (p. 990). These forums help those who are already radicalized or show interest in the group to confirm their ideas and develop important narratives as well as a sense of community with likeminded people. In a similar light, media scholar Lina Khatib’s (2003) study of al Qaeda and affiliated groups’ websites found that “...the Internet is used by the groups as a ‘portable homeland’ that allows them to strengthen their global ties and communicate with one another, and also to communicate with the connected world at large” (p. 389). The online atmosphere has allowed these groups to reach wider audiences, while facilitating relationships between their supporters, and affiliates.

Despite the new affordances of social media, some scholars claim that social media play a similar role that online forums did in the late 1990’s and early 2000’s. In his study of 59 Twitter accounts of Western foreign fighters, Klausen (2015) noted “four out of every five tweets

reported from the warzone made references to jihadist dogma” (p. 10) and that a significant portion of their Twitter feed contained content that breaks down jihadist dogma into simple terms through text and images (Klausen, 2015, p. 10). Klausen (2015) claims “Their Twitter usage is surprisingly comparable to the way jihadists used online forums in the Web 1.0 environment” (p. 10). Despite major changes in the technology, the function of proselytizing and teaching others proper jihadi belief systems were still important functions. Messaging remained tightly controlled and consistent despite the decentralized nature of the technology and users (Klausen, 2015, p. 2).

Though English-language jihadist material did exist in the past, for example, magazines calling individuals to join the Afghan jihad in the 1980s were printed in English as well as Arabic (Hegghammer, 2010, p. 83), it is now more abundant and accessible online. In his study of Daesh media releases, terrorism scholar Aaron Zelin (2015) states that though the vast majority of Daesh’s material is produced in Arabic, English is the second most popular language for media releases (p. 89). Increased availability of jihadist material in other languages can be seen in terrorism scholar Benjamin Ducol’s (2012) study of French-language “jihadispheres”. According to Ducol (2012), as groups like al Qaeda lost influence in Muslim majority countries where they were seen as a dangerous threat, they began to pay more attention to Western audiences and this resulted in the creation of multilingual “jihadispheres” (p. 66). According to Ducol (2012),

The rise of these numerous online jihadi media has given birth to a vibrant ‘jihadsphere’: an online community of militants and sympathizers united by their common adherence to a global Salafi jihadi ideology; a virtual space where one can easily share thoughts and ideas and thus an important channel for jihadi proselytization and violent radicalization (p. 51-52).

The distribution, and in some cases, the production of *Inspire* and *Dabiq* take place within an English-language “jihadsphere.” The affordances of the Internet make the movement more accessible to wider audiences—in particular those in the West—and help create ties to other movements and supporters hence solidifying the idea of a global jihadist movement.

One important debate surrounding online jihadist media is whether increased access to these online resources, attack manuals in particular, increase transnational terrorism. Though the presence of the Internet may expand the reach of a movement (Bergen 2002; Sageman 2008; Hoffman 2006; Archetti 2013), the Internet does not necessarily increase transnational terrorism. As David Benson (2014), a counterterrorism expert, contends, “Since the Internet is ubiquitous, it would be strange if today’s terrorists did not use the Internet, just as it would be strange if past terrorists did not use the postal service or telephones” (p. 311). The Internet does not necessarily spread transnational terrorism, but it makes materials associated with these movements more accessible and allows for different forms of participation. In her analysis of al Qaeda and global media, media scholar Christina Archetti (2013) claims that online media play an important facilitating role “...particularly in terms of organization fundraising, distribution and sharing of content, and providing an initial meeting place for likeminded individuals” (p. 45) while also emphasising that these characteristics are not exclusive to the internet.

With the wide availability of online instructional material, the Internet is often perceived as a type of training ground especially in the case of so-called lone wolf terrorists. In response to this, Benson (2014) states that these attacks are difficult to plan, rarely succeed and "... frequently those few completed attacks that do occur are largely futile" because conducting an effective attack "... is hard work, requiring a combination of skills not usually found in average Internet users" (p. 327). Although it is important to note that Daesh-inspired attacks using vehicles (which are also outlined in *Rumiyah*) may not require much technical skill. Much like in regular Internet use, the presence of manuals and other materials on tactics like building explosives do not necessarily mean people will be fully able to successfully carry out attacks with the instructions alone. The contents of the Internet are not necessarily a training ground in themselves, but a resource of information.

Though training manuals or even attack instructions in *Inspire* or *Rumiyah* (*Dabiq* does not include manuals) may be difficult to carry out effectively, the presence of online manuals may play another role. It is important to look at what the presence of manuals in the magazine "says" about the movement and its aims. In their content analysis of online manuals in *Rumiyah* and *Inspire* Alastair Reed and Haroro Ingram (2017) note that instructional material makes up a small section of each magazine (p. 9) and "... violent extremists embed instructional material within a broader sea of narratives that are designed to legitimise, justify and inspire engagement in violence" and "...post-incident messaging from groups like ISIS and AQAP are designed to inspire a 'copycat' effect in audiences while reinforcing the group's overarching message" (pp. 12-13). The attack instructions in these magazines as well as reporting on other "successful" attacks are embedded in the group's wider narrative. Attack manuals are readily available

online, so the fact that they are included in the magazine is a “bonus” and not the sole purpose of the magazine (Reed and Ingram, 2017, p. 12).

As Ingram and Reed (2017) contend, the availability of attack materials is by no means a new issue; for example, there was the 19th century Anarchist Movement’s *The Mini Manual of the Urban Guerilla*, *The Anarchist’s Cookbook* in the 1970s, and the Irish Republican Army’s ‘*An T’Oglach*’ magazine that contained explosives manuals, and *The Turner Diaries* a White supremacist dystopian novel, which also contained attack instructions used by Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh²⁰ and others.

As Reed and Ingram (2017) contend, *Turner Diaries* is similar to *Inspire* and *Rumiyah* as McVeigh did not simply get operational guidance, but also a competing system of meaning in the novel’s narrative (p. 3). In his study of the *Turner Diaries*’ legacy J.M. Berger (2016) states,

The novel hollows out White nationalist ideology, creating a flexible structure that operates as a call to action for racists with widely varied beliefs, while the dystopian format serves to magnify the book’s rational-choice proposition. That specific types of violence are urgently necessary (p. 35).

Having said this, it is important to examine the flexible narratives in which these manuals are embedded. Like the White nationalist ideology in the *Turner Diaries*, *Dabiq*, *Rumiyah*, or *Inspire*’s overall narrative— though it presents a very narrow idea of what “true Islam” is—can be flexible enough to draw in a wider audience and incorporate a variety of causes and grievances ranging from Palestine to anti-racism. In a similar light, political scientist Olivier Roy

²⁰ On April 19, 1995, Timothy McVeigh, much like the main character in *The Turner Diaries*, detonated a truck bomb and blew up a federal building in Oklahoma city killing 168 people and injuring more than 500 (Juergensmeyer, 2017, p. 26).

discusses the vague notion of an ummah or Muslim community that groups like Daesh promote to Western audiences in his study of young French jihadists. Roy (2017) contends that the Muslim community attackers claim to represent is often left undefined, he states, “It is a non-historical and non-spatial reality. When they rail against Western policy in the Middle East, when jihadists use the term ‘crusaders,’ they do not refer to French colonisation of Algeria” (p. 45). The jihadists in Roy’s study use an adaptable and non-specific definition of the ummah and its enemies, much like White nationalist identity in *The Turner Diaries*. Attack manuals do not exist in isolation, but they are embedded in flexible narratives surrounding equally undefined communities (e.g. “the ummah” or “the White race”); these narratives must be examined.

Similar to the *Turner Diaries*, *Dabiq* and *Inspire*, though they are in magazine and not novel form, create a narrative that incorporates very diverse regional conflicts and past conflicts from different historical and cultural contexts. In addition, these publications create a sense of urgency for individuals to attack while also providing the means (instructional manuals) for individuals to act on these beliefs. This study will outline the broad flexible structure that makes up both *Inspire* and *Dabiq*’s conception of the Muslim community they claim to represent and protect. Though Reed and Ingram provide an insightful analysis into manuals, they briefly touch on the articles surrounding the attack manuals and do not provide an in depth look at the contents of the rest of the magazine and how each attack manual fits the overall narrative of the given magazine issue and the group producing it.

Online media have also impacted the radicalization process. Von Behr, Reding, Edwards, and Gribbon (2013) conducted an empirical study of how convicted terrorists actually used the Internet and the relationship between the Internet and radicalization. They conducted a study of 15 individuals: nine were offenders under the UK Terrorist Act, both from “Islamist” and

extreme right backgrounds, five were individuals who were referred to the Channel²¹ program in the UK, one was a former member of al Qaeda who was active in Bosnia, Afghanistan and South East Asia before disengaging from the group (Von Behr et al., 2013, p. 22). Von Behr et al. (2013) found that radicalization is often facilitated online through communicating with supporters and seeking information, but most cases involved offline activity that could have played a role in the individuals' radicalization; for example, receiving a disc with extremist information, meeting a recruiter at a mosque, or following in their father's footsteps; very few were self-starters (p. 29). Von Behr et al (2013) conclude that the internet facilitates the radicalization process, but it cannot drive radicalization on its own (p. 29).

In another extensive study of terrorist use of the Internet Gill, Corner, Conway, Thornton, Bloom, and Horgan (2017) studied 223 UK-based terrorists including Daesh and al Qaeda-inspired attackers and extreme right terrorists. They looked at cases from 1990-2014 excluding IRA (Irish Republican Army) actors. Gill et al (2017) focused on how these individuals used the Internet for the commission of their crimes testing whether the affordances that they exploited from the Internet differed. Through the examination of a database built from existing terrorism databases, court transcripts, media articles, they found that 61% of cases showed evidence of online activity and/or attack planning, 32% prepared for attacks using online resources like bomb making videos, assassination guidebooks, downloading issues of *Inspire*, 30% accessed extremist ideological content and in many cases, too much material for any person to consume and understand thoroughly; for example, one perpetrator had total of 17,779 computer files and 1,152 contained extremist materials downloaded using bit torrents; 29% communicated with

²¹The Channel programme is UK government intervention program targeted towards individuals identified as vulnerable to violent extremism by the police (Von Behr et al. 2013, p. xi).

other radicals (15% through email, 8% forums, and chatrooms 9%) (Gill et al. 2017, p. 108). Gill et. al's (2017) results suggest 14% of offenders opted to engage in violence after watching something online, but they admitted that they cannot identify the time elapsed between the perpetrator watching the video and the perpetrator committing the attack (p. 114). They also found that 9% of their sample recruited others online (Gill et. al, 2017, p. 114). Their results further suggest that many went online, not to have their beliefs changed but rather to have them reinforced (Gill et. al, 2017, p. 114). Gill et al.'s (2017) study provides important data on how the Internet is actually used by different terrorist actors.

The online forum allows for different kinds of participation in the movement. Al Qaeda and Daesh supporters can continue to support the movement online without having to travel to their respective theatres of conflict. Terrorism scholar Jaret Brachman (2009) uses the term "jihobbyist" to refer to al Qaeda supporters who solely support the movement online through media production, like hosting websites, editing and translating videos, designing websites and posters etc. Brachman (2009) claims that these individuals "...help to form the base that keeps the movement afloat" (p. 18). Jihobbyists only participate online, but advance the movement by making it more accessible and creating important promotional material. Terrorism and political violence expert Anne Stenersen (2008) discusses this trend in her study of encyclopaedias and resources created by al Qaeda supporters,

This is not a phenomenon which is unique to training, but rather a process that takes place within the framework of the larger "media jihad" in which individuals and "media organizations" constantly produce and re-issue jihadi material in slick and easy formats in order to make it accessible to as large an audience as possible (p. 217).

By framing these activities as a “media jihad,” “jihobbyists” and “media jihadists” see their actions as spreading the truth or fighting a battle to win over the hearts and minds of their audiences. In their extensive literature review of online radicalization, terrorism scholars Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens and Nick Kaderbhai (2017) point to how ideologues like al Qaeda’s Anwar al Awlaki promoted “media jihad” as a significant form of participation in the movement. As Meleagrou-Hitchens and Kaderbhai (2017) contend, in an attempt to increase the movement’s base of supporters, Awlaki lowered the bar for involvement “...by giving near-equal significance to other forms of jihad, such as the online dissemination of jihadist propaganda” (p. 30). Online media products do not only function as a form of promoting the movement or recruitment, but their creation is also seen as a significant contribution.

Around 2011 many jihadist groups started to move to social media platforms (Klausen, 2015, p. 3). The shift from websites and forums to increasing use of social media platforms has changed the media environment in which Daesh and al Qaeda’s texts are produced and distributed. This is not to say that websites and forums are no longer used. Daesh has often been credited for using Twitter efficiently for recruitment and spreading its message (Berger, 2015). According to extremism scholar J.M. Berger (2015), Daesh was the first, and will not likely be the last, group to use Twitter for media output on an industrial scale. Many groups have been able to take advantage of the affordances of other social media platforms. However as demonstrated by Torres-Soriano’s (2015) study of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb’s (AQIM) Twitter use, not all groups have been successful on this platform.

In their study of al Muhajiroun YouTube jihadists (al Muhajiroun is a Salafist group in the UK which has been linked to several terrorist plots and attacks in the UK and abroad) Klausen, Barbieri, Reichlin-Melnick and Zelin, (2012) found that “Redundancy is one of the

critical features of the network and indicative of a coordinated effort to build an online proselytising network resistant to disruption” (p. 49). Al Muhajiroun supporters were able to take advantage of YouTube’s affordances, like the ability to share content across multiple accounts and platforms, to prevent disruptions of the group’s narrative. Efforts to prevent disruptions in messaging can also be seen in what terrorism scholar Ali Fischer refers to as “swarmcasting.” Fisher used big data techniques including network analysis to examine both ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra (al Qaeda’s affiliate in Syria) supporters on Twitter. Fisher (2015) states that “...the networks through which jihadist groups operate have evolved to allow them to maintain a persistent presence online” (p. 2). So-called “media mujahidin” use swarmcasting to maintain their online presence. According to Fisher (2015), they do this through speed (spreading a video to multiple accounts and devices before it is removed), agility (the ability to move across multiple platforms like justpaste.it and the Internet Archive), and resilience (to survive deletions and account suspensions or reconfiguring like a swarm of birds when one node is taken down). Much like jhobbyists or those conducting media jihad to produce materials, these social media users work to spread the movement’s message and maintain its online presence.

Social media’s interactive nature and its functions allowing for users to contact and access other individuals privately has complicated the notion of social/in person versus online recruitment. Many critics have claimed that the majority of recruitment happens in person or in the real world. However, Gill et al. (2017) note that the offline versus online violent radicalization dichotomy might be a false one because plotters are active in both domains. For example, plotters may interact face-to-face in order to engage in discussions about the ideological or religious legitimacy of their actions while interacting and corresponding online when discussing technical aspects of the attack like site locations and bomb making (p. 114).

Face-to-face interactions are still key to the process; for example, recent investigative reporting highlights Daesh recruitment of Western individuals through face-to-face interactions via Skype (Gill et al., 2017, p. 114). Even in the online space, face-to-face interaction matters. However, scholars like Maura Conway (2017) note that the tendency of those who are skeptical of online impact to privilege “real world” or “social” interactions make the problematic assumption that the Internet is not social. As Conway (2017) states,

They are either unaware of or have misunderstood the “social” aspects of “social media.” Today’s Internet does not simply allow for the dissemination and consumption of “extremist material” in a one-way broadcast from producer to consumer, but also high levels of online social interaction around this material (p. 80).

This is seen in the case of terrorism scholars Seamus Hughes and Alexander Melegrou-Hitchens’ (2017) study of what they term “virtual entrepreneurs” of Daesh and their involvement in terrorist related activity in the United States. Virtual entrepreneurs are described as “members of jihadi terrorist groups, mainly affiliated with the Islamic State, who use social media and applications with encryption capabilities to reach out to and correspond with radicalized Westerners” (Hughes and Melegrou- Hitchens, 2017, p. 1). According to Hughes and Melegrou-Hitchens (2017),

Along with helping to inspire radicalized westerners, the work of Islamic State virtual entrepreneurs has given the group new ways to take ownership of their attacks, ensuring that they continue to receive attention and media coverage. Crucially, virtual entrepreneurs require few resources and offer a very favourable balance between cost and benefit (p. 6).

The affordances of certain social media platforms allow supporters to reach out to and build relationships with other supporters. Though my project does not focus specifically on social media or online recruitment, this work is relevant as social media platforms are where Daesh and al Qaeda's media organizations typically distribute their products like videos and magazines. In addition, understanding shifts and changes in the dynamics of recruitment and forms of participation brought about by social media better informs my understanding of their recruitment narrative.

These bodies of literature address the types of relationships and communities that are developed through online media. As Benson (2014), Sageman (2004), Archetti (2013), Khatib (2003) as well as Ingram and Reed (2017) and Klausen (2015) point out, online materials tend to perform some of the same functions as older media, such as spreading the message, forming a type of imagined community, and developing common movement narratives. Ducol (2012), Stenersen (2008), Brachman (2009), Bowman-Grieves (2009), Fischer (2015), Klausen et.al (2012) and Khaderbhai and Melegrou-Hitchens (2017) examine how certain affordances of online media not only make information more accessible and increase the spread of materials, it also allows for the formation of different communities and forms of participation. *Dabiq* and *Inspire* are examples of older media products produced and distributed via new media. They are one part of a larger media system made up of more "official" products created by media organizations like al Hayat and al Sahab and material produced by and for supporters or fan communities, which may in turn impact the nature of products like *Dabiq* and *Inspire*.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter is to provide the background information necessary to contextualize my research questions: How do al Qaeda and Daesh promote and adapt a bipolar (Islam versus the West) yet flexible movement narrative to connect diverse audiences in Western societies meaningfully to their respective movements? What are the common frames al Qaeda and Daesh use to appeal to these audiences? An understanding of the emergence and evolution of al Qaeda and Daesh and past movements from which they stem are imperative to understanding each movement's narrative and their respective publications *Inspire* and *Dabiq* (and *Rumiyah*). To contextualize the debate about al Qaeda and Daesh not only by academics, but public figures and members of the public, an interrogation of widely contested terms like jihad and terrorism is essential as these words are often used/misused, claimed, and reclaimed in different ways.

Studies of the different definitions of and contributing factors to radicalization shed light on what particular frames a group may employ; for example, framing the struggle as more of an immediate crisis. Studies like Hemmingsen's (2015) work on jihadist countercultures not only shed light on what elements may pull rather than push individuals into a particular movement, it provides insights into how authors of these magazines might imagine their recruits and what kind of common identity the authors may employ; for example, seeing recruits as not only protecting the Islamic world, but also fighting for a greater sense of justice, or moving to the Caliphate to live more authentically as demonstrated in Dawson and Amarasingam's (2016) study.

As previously mentioned, this study only looks at one element of al Qaeda and Daesh's media organizations. It is important to know the context in which these texts are produced and how these online technologies facilitate new forms of participation and community promoted by these movements. In addition, this literature outlines how online media is used by terrorist actors

for purposes like attack planning and recruitment. Studies on the impact of online media on each movement's strategy, provides background knowledge on the types of involvement each respective group may promote in its magazines. In addition, insights from the study of *Dabiq* and *Inspire* could potentially be applied to other media products be it materials produced by Daesh or al Qaeda's media organizations or their fans and supporters.

The next chapter will address al Qaeda and Daesh's media systems, theories of media and terror, the formation of global communities via media, and previous studies of *Dabiq*, *Rumiyah*, and *Inspire*. This will establish important context for how Daesh and al Qaeda construct a wider movement narrative.

Chapter 3: Media and Terror

The purpose of this chapter is to conceptualize the media environment in which Daesh and al Qaeda operate, provide background information on the development of their respective media systems, and outline existing studies on *Dabiq*, *Inspire*, and *Rumiyah*. In order to understand the frames that al Qaeda and Daesh employ, it is important to see how they construct themselves and their enemies in their own media productions as well as how both groups incorporate interpretations of events by mainstream media organizations.

The first section addresses theories of terror and media, which examines the relationship between terrorist groups, their opponents, supporters, and mainstream media organizations. Media coverage is not only an essential element of most terrorist groups' strategy, but it is also an important source of conventions and narrative frames for Daesh and al Qaeda to employ in their media productions. *Dabiq* and *Inspire* are not working in isolation, but in a larger media system with which their intended audiences are familiar. Therefore, an understanding of the different interactions between al Qaeda and Daesh and mainstream media organizations is key in examining the content of their magazines in terms of the stories they cover and the incorporation of current events coverage from other media organizations.

The second section addresses media and the formation of global communities and the role of diasporas and global social movements in order to understand how al Qaeda and Daesh construct a global identity. Both groups use the notion of a global Islamic community or ummah to reach out, or perhaps "sell" the movement to Muslim diasporas in the West (as well as converts).

The third section discusses the evolution and establishment of Daesh and al Qaeda's media organizations and their different components, in order to provide an understanding of the media environment that *Dabiq* and *Inspire* emerged from. This is followed by a discussion of existing literature on *Dabiq*, *Inspire*, and *Rumiyah*.

Media and Terror

Literature on terror and media is relevant to this study as media coverage is strategically essential for terrorist groups because it gives their movement more exposure to wider audiences and makes their actions more significant. Though the focus of my project is on al Qaeda and Daesh's own media productions, *Inspire*, *Dabiq*, and *Rumiyah*, and not necessarily mainstream media coverage of these groups, media coverage has important strategic impacts on each group's operations (e.g. which attacks to conduct or claim) and their own media productions. *Dabiq* (and *Rumiyah*) and *Inspire* are not working in isolation, but in a larger media system in which their intended audiences are familiar. Therefore, an understanding of the different interactions between these groups and media organizations is key to understanding the content of these magazines in terms of the stories they promote and the incorporation of coverage by other media organizations.

Terrorist attacks are often orchestrated for an audience and many scholars have conceptualized such attacks as a form of theatre. In his study on the rhetorical nature of terrorism, communication scholar Ralph Dowling (1986), claims that terrorism "is less mass murder as it is theatre" because it uses violence rhetorically (p. 13-14). Terrorism scholars Gabriel Weimann (2006) and Conrad Winn, use the "theatre of terror" metaphor to examine modern terrorism as "...an attempt to communicate messages through the use of orchestrated violence" (p. 39). The audience is essential for an attack to have any impact. Though terrorist

attacks often involve killing or severely injuring their victims, the primary target of the attack is not so much those killed or injured in the attack, but those made to witness it, be it firsthand or mediated (Archetti, 2014, p. 34; Eid, 2014, p. 5; Crenshaw, 2011, p. 23; Jurgensmeyer, 2017, pp. 154-155). News coverage is essential for groups to send a message to their audiences, namely the nature of the group as a significant threat and the threat of more attacks. As such, in order to receive attention, these groups must internalize certain media logics as Dowling (1986) states, perpetrators commit "...acts that closely fit news agencies' definition(s) of news: being timely and unique, involving adventure or having entertainment value" (p. 14). Internalizing media logic is relevant to each group's strategy; for example, the need for an attack to be newsworthy may serve as legitimacy for past attacks and impact guidance to supporters and/or would-be attackers. Taken as a whole, this literature outlines the importance of media coverage to al Qaeda and Daesh, and their attacks in particular, where mainstream media coverage is not only a form of staying relevant, but also incorporated into their own media organization's narrative to establish their legitimacy.

Mainstream media coverage is an important factor in conceptualizing an act of violence; for example, deeming it a terrorist attack. In their study of terrorism and media Daya Thussu and Des Freedman (2012) state that, "... media are not simply external actors passively bringing the news of terrorist incidents to global audiences, but are increasingly seen as active agents in the actual conceptualization of terrorist events" (p. 10). In the same vein, scholars of critical terrorism studies Spencer and Hulsse (2008) contend, "... geopolitical phenomena, from war to terrorism, must be understood as discursive 'constructions' rather than as objective events virtually programmed by the operation of some greater international system" (p. 576). Interpretations of these events are often shaped by public officials, media organizations, and their

audiences. Interpretations of geopolitical phenomenon can also be interpreted according to certain cultural and historical frames. In her study of Daesh and the United States' coverage of the U.S. coalition-Daesh conflict, media scholar Barbie Zelizer (2018) contends that the media apparatuses of the United States (conventional media outlets and “news upstarts” like *VOX*, *Buzzfeed*, *Vice*, and *International Business Times*) and Daesh (Official, mostly English-language, news relays)—have adopted a Cold War frame for covering each other. According to Zelizer (2018) the Cold War frame is “a set of interpretive tenets for making sense of the complex and ambiguous violence of contemporary public life” (p. 8). Global conflicts are often described using interpretive means like the Cold War frame in order to condense or simplify larger conflicts involving several groups into one conflict of good versus evil.

According to Zelizer (2018a), the features of Cold War mindedness, or the Cold War Frame, are enmity, invisible war, and media impact. Enmity refers to a clear cut idea of which “side” one should be on; these sides are based on the formation of a dichotomous enemy. This perspective does not consider where these dichotomies begin and end “...and for whose ends they prevail” (Zelizer, 2018a, p. 141). The formation of a dichotomous enemy ignores many complexities including conflicts within certain “sides”; for example, conflicts between (or within) al Qaeda and Daesh, or varying opinions on the War on Terror in America. The second feature, the invisible war, points to how the conflict has fewer attributes of a traditional war such as recognized governments or symmetrical rules of military conduct, as well there are new aspects of this unseen war such as drones, smart bombs and digital monitoring (Zelizer 2018a, p. 141). With the invisible war, both Daesh and American news outlets are selective in what they depict or deem relevant in their media output. Media events such as terror attacks or beheading videos only highlight partial moments in the prosecution of the war. One example Zelizer

(2018a) shares is Western media's focus on spectacularly violent Daesh material like beheadings when they make up only 2% of Daesh's media output (p. 141). The rest of the material, including daily activities like markets and state building activities like schools and agriculture, are ignored, which impacts mainstream understandings of Daesh's appeal (Zelizer, 2018a, p. 141). The last feature is media impact or what Zelizer (2018a) refers to as, "An uncritical assumption of media influences— the idea that media reach is equivalent to media impact— undergirds much about the war and terror" (pp. 141-42). This idea of the "Struggle for the minds of men" is central to the Cold War notion that winning the war involves making contact with those who are "under the grip of the other side" (Zelizer, 2018a, p. 142). This "struggle for minds" could be accomplished by the activities of organizations like the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, and journalists across the media (Zelizer, 2018a, p. 142). This notion of media impact can be seen not only in Daesh and al Qaeda's notion of media jihad and reaching out to the ummah, but ideas behind anti-radicalization information campaigns and the building of counter-narratives to reach out to those who have been "radicalized" by Daesh or al Qaeda. The Cold War frame influences the ways in which we understand al Qaeda and Daesh and the media landscape in which Daesh and al Qaeda operate.

Determining whether an attack was an act of terrorism or discussing the incident itself does not involve a discussion of facts, but interpretations of these events. These interpretations can either increase or decrease the legitimacy of a given group. Though Daesh and al Qaeda have their own news organizations, it is the reaction from or coverage of mainstream media organizations that help solidify their role as a legitimate threat and provides more material for their own publications. Terrorist groups' dependency on news media is not one-sided. The

codependent relationship between insurgent groups and media organizations is explained in Mahmoud Eid's (2014a) concept of Terroredia, which he explains is,

...the interactive, codependent, and inseparable relationship between terrorism and the media, in which acts of terrorism and the media coverage are essentially exchanged to achieve the ultimate aims of both parties—exchanging terrorism's wide-ranging publicity and public attention (i.e., oxygen) for media's wide-ranging reach and influence (i.e., airwaves) (p. 1).

The intensity and impact of a given terrorist attack may be exaggerated by media organizations to generate ratings and more viewers, but this may unintentionally increase the publicity for the perpetrators.

Terroredia as a phenomenon is particularly relevant in regards to “inspired” or “lone wolf” attacks where individuals with no concrete ties to the main group conduct attacks; some examples of Daesh-inspired attacks include Ottawa²² (2014), Nice²³ (2016), and London²⁴ (2017). As Haroro Ingram (2017) contends, in the case of inspired attacks, irresponsible media reporting and political rhetoric increases the group's publicity as it presents “...skilled propagandists with an opportunity to portray the attack as part of not only a larger politico-military struggle, but a global revolution” (p. 18). Ingram uses the example of the London attack

²² On October 20th, 2014 Martin Couture-Rouleau drove his car into two Canadian soldiers in a parking lot, killing one. Two days later, Michael Zehaf-Bibeau fatally shot a soldier guarding the National War Memorial before storming Parliament Hill (Gollum, 2014).

²³ On July 14, 2016 Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel drove a cargo truck into a crowd of people celebrating Bastille Day in Nice, France killing 84 and wounding 202. Daesh claimed responsibility for the attack and though evidence suggested Lahouaiej-Bouhlel planned the attack, there was no evidence that he or his accomplices had direct contact with Daesh (Sanchez, 2016).

²⁴ On March 22, 2017 Khalid Masood drove a car over Westminster Bridge, near the Houses of Parliament and began to hit pedestrians on the sidewalk indiscriminately. He killed six and injured more than 50. Masood was shot dead by police after fatally stabbing a police officer and running towards Parliament (BBC, 2017).

in 2017 by Khalid Masood. Before Daesh officially claimed responsibility for the attack, it was described by public officials as an “attack on parliaments, freedom, and democracy everywhere” as opposed to being a desperate or cowardly act by a disturbed individual. As Ingram (2017) states, “Other statements by politicians similarly condemned the Westminster [London] attack as a reminder of a ubiquitous threat with media reports further fuelling this narrative” (p. 20). In this case, media can often work as an amplifier to fuel the given group’s publicity and their narrative as a global movement.

It is also important to note that extended coverage of these events may inspire other individuals to act. This can be seen in what terrorism scholar Brigitte Nacos (2014) describes as terrorism contagion. As Nacos (2014) states: “...besides personal contacts and cooperation between various groups, mass media reports are the most likely sources of information about the efficacy of terror methods and thus important factors in the diffusion of terrorist tactics” (p. 115). Highly publicized attacks are often copied; it is another way that insurgent groups grow their influence (either intentionally or unintentionally). As well, publications like *Dabiq*, *Rumiyah*, and *Inspire* may conceptualize generally unconnected, “copy cat” attackers as soldiers of a wider global revolution. Interestingly enough, tactics used by Daesh-inspired individuals— vehicle attacks in particular— have not only been used by those allegedly conducting attacks on Daesh’s behalf, but those on the extreme right like Darren Osborne’s 2017²⁵ attack on London’s Finsbury Mosque and Alex Fields’ 2017²⁶ attack in Charlottesville.

²⁵ On June 18, 2017 Darren Osborne drove a van into a crowd in front of a mosque leaving midnight prayers killing one and injuring 12 (Dodd and Rawlinson, 2018).

²⁶ On August 12, 2017 Alex Fields drove his car into a crowd of peaceful protestors protesting a white nationalist rally killing one and injuring others (BBC, 2019).

The relationship between mainstream media organizations and terrorist groups is an important aspect of studying al Qaeda and Daesh's media productions because they incorporate mainstream media narratives into their communication strategy in order to establish their legitimacy as a threat. For example, *Dabiq* and *Inspire* each dedicate a section, respectively, to showcase how their organization is discussed by mainstream news organizations in the West. Dowling (1986), Weiman and Winn (2006) stress how terrorist acts are orchestrated as a type of theatre made for media coverage. Hulse and Spencer (2008), Thussu and Freedman (2012), and Zelizer (2018) claim that events like terrorist attacks are constructions which are given a particular meaning by public figures and media organizations; these constructions are often influenced by certain cultural and historical frames. Ingram (2017), Nacos (2014), and Eid (2014a) outline how media coverage can act as an amplifier, be it increasing a group's publicity or inspiring others to act. Most studies in terror and media tend to focus on the relationship between terrorist groups and mainstream media organizations with an emphasis on media coverage of terrorist groups. This project adds one more element to this paradigm and that is coverage by terrorist groups "official" media organizations. More specifically, an examination of the ways Daesh and al Qaeda incorporate coverage of their attacks by mainstream media organizations and how they cover each other in their respective publications.

Imagined Communities and Identity

Both groups appeal to the notion of the ummah, or global Islamic community, even though their conception of who is "truly Muslim" is very narrow. This notion of the ummah is a type of imagined community. Though Anderson's notion of the imagined community is referring to nationalism and the nation-state and these movements are not "national movements" per se, both of them appeal to some notion of an imagined community. As well, several scholars

have used the concept of the imagined community to describe connections between members of diasporic communities, be it religious, national, or cultural, through different forms of media (Karim, 2003, p. 2). As Anderson (1983) contends:

...I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of the communion (p. 5-6).

Daesh and al Qaeda promote their groups as a larger global entity or another type of imagined community. For example, each group, under the direction of its leadership, may pledge baya'a, or allegiance, to other groups, which may be involved in insurgencies specific to a particular state or geographical area such as Daesh's affiliate in the Sinai province in Egypt or al Qaeda's affiliate al Shabaab in Somalia. Despite the differences in the actors, historical and cultural context, or geographical location of these insurgencies, Daesh and al Qaeda present these groups' struggles as a part of their wider movement; their connection to these groups are mostly imagined. This can also be seen in the strategy of promoting or claiming lone wolf attacks. So-called lone-wolfs function as an extension of the main group, as these isolated attacks are imagined as part of one grand strategy against its enemies. As opposed to this being, for example, an isolated incident where an individual committed murder, it is seen as an act that is part of the group's wider efforts. This relationship is often stressed, not only through Daesh and al Qaedas' media coverage but also in "mainstream" coverage (Eid, 2014a).

Another important element of Anderson's theory is the role of media, more specifically print media. Anderson (1983) describes the significance of newspapers:

The significance of this mass ceremony—Hegel observed that newspapers serve modern man as a substitute for morning prayers—is paradoxical. It is performed in silent privacy, in the lair of the skull. Yet each communicant is well aware that the ceremony; he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion. (p. 35)

Though Daesh and al Qaeda do not have a traditional “national” print newspaper, their media products and social media presence help solidify the connection between members of a global imagined community. As previously mentioned, many authors have pointed out how different forms of jihadist media like the print magazines during the Soviet-Afghan war (Hegghamer, 2010), VHS and cassette tapes distributed amongst al Qaeda supporters (Sageman 2004), websites (Khatib, 2003) and forums (Ducol, 2012) create a type of imagined community. *Dabiq* and *Inspire* are distributed online, but they are like traditional print magazines in that they are distributed in PDF form and they are not interactive like an online forum or online article, where individuals can comment, change the content, or directly interact with other readers and authors. However, these magazines can reach more audiences much faster than traditional print magazines. While it is not clear whether this format is an intentional choice or not, it allows Daesh and al Qaeda to widely distribute official messaging while maintaining some control over the content.

As Anderson (1983) notes, newspapers are a cultural product and stories on the front page, though they happen independently of each other, are all linked based on the connection imagined by the nation (p. 33). This is also the case of *Dabiq*, *Rumiyah*, and *Inspire* where

events going on outside of these groups and their affiliates will also be covered, because they share an imagined linkage to the movement. For example, both groups continue to cover issues around Palestine when neither of the groups is heavily involved in that specific region.

Daesh and al Qaeda, like many contemporary violent social movements or terrorist groups, see their cause as a global one that transcends nation-states or national boundaries (something they see as illegitimate). In her research on social movements and political violence, social movement scholar Donatella della Porta (2008) contends that the nation-state is no longer a central unit of analysis. As she states “This is no longer tenable, as both terrorism and counter terrorism go global, and geopolitical issues as well as wars, diasporas and the like acquire more explanatory power” (della Porta, 2008, p. 224). Daesh and al Qaeda often appeal to the notion of a transnational ummah. However, as Peter Mandaville (2011) in his study of Muslim transnational movements contends, transnationalism is not in and of itself based on the rejection of the nation-state. When discussing the notion of ummah in transnational movements Mandaville (2011) states,

People have not given up on the nation, but their imagination of social solidarity and public normativity no longer – if it ever did – proceeds primarily from national sources. Therefore, Islamic aspirations that cross national borders must often be understood not as the expression of loyalty to an umma or higher form of social affiliation (in other words, this is not a ‘levels of analysis’ problem), but rather as one among many discourses – such as human rights, social justice, ecology – that names the hope for a different and better world (p. 23).

Daesh and al Qaeda promote similar forms of global solidarity using different approaches. Al Qaeda claims to focus on “winning the hearts and minds of Muslims”, a necessary step before

the establishment of the caliphate (and a step they claim Daesh neglected) (McCants, 2015, p. 7). On the other hand, Daesh has a large network of enemies (including “the West”, Islamic scholars who do not agree with them, moderates, and Shias) and has a narrow definition of what a “true Muslim” is, but it still manages to promote this greater goal of a united community of believers making the world a better place. Though Daesh, at least while it held territory, may appear to function like a state, the group’s aims and aspirations may not necessarily fit the notion of the traditional nation-state. Daesh often accuses other jihadist groups like al Qaeda of being nationalistic because they see nationalism as an evil as it is based on Western, man-made laws and not God’s law (or their interpretation of Shariah). The ummah in this case is a historic/cultural concept used to challenge their opponents and gain sympathy from potential supporters.

Overall, the notion of the imagined communities and how these communities are maintained through media are essential to this project. In particular, with al Qaeda’s lack of an “official” state despite holding some territory in places like Yemen and Syria (Soufan, 2017) and Daesh losing most of its physical territory, both groups increasingly rely on their followers made up of affiliate groups and lone-wolf actors to stay relevant to their global audiences.

The imagined connections that Daesh and al Qaeda have to specific causes, their affiliates, and potential recruits in diasporas are connected to how they frame their respective movements. Issues that are seemingly far removed from their audiences are made relevant with appeals to identity, religious identity in particular, and other values like anti-imperialism or anti-capitalism. These narratives are essential to selling an insurgency to an audience far removed from the conflict.

Al Qaeda and Daesh's Media Systems

Both movements, Daesh in particular, have been known for their ability to reach supporters through their media productions. Daesh is well known for being savvy with its use of social media, especially Twitter (Morgan and Berger 2015, Berger 2015, Zelin 2015). Though more recently, Daesh has moved to other platforms like Telegram and justpaste.it due to Twitter's crackdown on Daesh material (Conway, Khawaja, Lakhani, Reffin, Robertson, and Weir, 2017;). However, in 2019 Daesh and al Qaeda's Telegram presence took a severe hit when an operation by Europol targeting jihadi telegram channels significantly reduced their Telegram activity (Amarasingam, Maher, and Winter, 2021). Daesh, and to a certain extent al Qaeda's, so-called social media savvy receives quite a bit of attention and is subject to much examination. Studies of each group's social media operations provide a glimpse into the scale of their media distribution and provides valuable insights into the conversations and viewpoints presented by their supporters or fans. However, analysing materials produced and distributed by their official media organizations like *Dabiq*, *Rumiyah*, and *Inspire*, provides important insights into what the "official," or centre of the movement, wants to present to their English-speaking audiences.

This section outlines al Qaeda and Daesh's media systems examining how they worked in the past and the institutions that make up their respective media operations. *Dabiq*, *Rumiyah*, and *Inspire* are small elements of a larger multilingual, multiplatform media ecology. Therefore, it is important to understand the other elements of each group's media operation in order to situate my study. First, I will discuss al Qaeda's media system and the different shifts that have occurred over time. This will be followed by a discussion of Daesh's media system. I will then discuss the literature on *Dabiq*, *Rumiyah*, and *Inspire*, including the history and recent studies on each publication.

Al Qaeda's media system and the different organizations that make it up, shape its past and present media strategy. One major study conducted by Daniel Kimmage (2008), an analyst with Radio Free Europe in 2007, takes a snapshot of al Qaeda's Arabic-language media distribution online, or what he calls the al Qaeda media nexus. Kimmage studies its media production in July 2007. Though Kimmage covers only one month of media output, his study provides insights into the functioning of the al Qaeda media nexus and how media productions were distributed and branded. According to Kimmage (2008), the al Qaeda media nexus is made up of armed groups and media production and distribution entities (MPDEs) (p. 21). Armed groups include the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) (now Daesh) and Ansar al Sunnah in Iraq, the Young Mujahadin movement in Somalia, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Saudi Arabia and the Taliban (Kimmage 2007, p. 3). MPDEs include Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF), Sawt al Jihad (Taliban), and al Sahab institute for media production. In order to boost credibility and ensure message control, the quasi-official MPDEs create a consistent branding system (Kimmage 2007, p. 21). For example, when ISI posts a statement on a jihadist forum on a "Martyrdom seeking operation," the statement not only includes ISI's logo, but at the bottom of the statement will be a source or MPDE, al Fajr Media Centre, marked with the al Fajr's logo. When an MPDE like al Fajr Media Centre distributes statements by several groups operating in different theatres, it implies a link between them all and suggests a larger movement (p. 17). Though Kimmage focuses on Arabic-language material, his study outlines how al Qaeda's media system broadly operates.

One important element of al Qaeda's media system is al Sahab media, al Qaeda's central media department (Seib 2008; Ciovacco 2009). Al Sahab according to national security analyst Carl Ciovacco (2008) is a highly mobile media wing formed by al Qaeda with the specific goal

of connecting its global audiences (p. 853). When al Qaeda was formed in 1988, bin Laden founded a media department, from which later al Sahab emerged (Seib, 2008, p. 75). According to Philip Seib (2008), the organization's first messages were that al Qaeda was "...a brave underdog facing the monstrous Soviet Union" (p. 75). In the mid 1990's al Qaeda announced its resolve to take on other "enemies of Islam" when "Bin-Laden issued his 'Declaration of War on the United States' and used Al-Qaeda media machinery to spread the call for jihad" (Seib, 2008, p. 75). According to Ciovacco (2008), when al Qaeda central lost most of its bureaucracy and bases of operations, they had to rely on their global message, so to aid them in this endeavour, they founded al Sahab (p. 855).

In the mid to late 2000's al Qaeda started to reach out to Western audiences. In 2007 there was an increase in al Sahab's video production and quality, as well videos started to include subtitles in multiple languages including English (Ciovacco, 2009, p. 866). Awan, Hoskins and O'loughlin (2011) also note that from 2008-2010, al Sahab media releases started to include English subtitles (p. 87). Al Sahab not only started to provide English subtitles and translations, they also started to incorporate issues of relevance to Western audiences. As Philip Seib (2008) notes in his study of al Qaeda's media production, in the mid 2000's there were more efforts to target British and American Muslims. One example of this was a video released in 2006 to mark the first-year anniversary of the 7/7 attacks in London describing rapes and murders allegedly committed by US soldiers in Iraq. It featured Ayman Zawahiri, Briton Shehzad Tanweer, one of the London bombers who died during the attack and Adam Gadahn²⁷ (aka Azzam the American) who grew up in California (Seib, 2008, p. 78). Another example of

²⁷ Gadahn joined al Qaeda in the late 1990's after converting to Islam. He worked closely with al Qaeda's leadership in Afghanistan as a translator and was a member of al Qaeda's media committee (Michael, 2009). Gadahn had taken a leadership role after bin Laden's death. According to American officials, he was killed in a US drone strike in 2015 (Grimson, 2015).

this was a video released around 2008, entitled “To Black Americans”, which featured Zawahiri criticizing Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice and included video clips of Malcom X during the Vietnam war years talking about the unfair treatment of African Americans (Seib, 2008, p. 78). Al Qaeda web forums started to pull information from Western news reports such as poll results showing lack of public support for the Iraq war and information on weapons systems (Seib, 2008, p. 77). Before the creation of *Inspire* magazine, al Qaeda’s media organizations have attempted to create material relevant to Western audiences.

Another important shift in al Qaeda’s media operations occurred with the rise of Daesh. In his study of al Qaeda’s media strategy during the rise of Daesh, starting in April 2013, international relations scholar Donald Holdbrook (2015) found that al Qaeda’s media narrative changed in two significant ways. First, al Qaeda’s leadership decided to frame their movement as “... an intangible, ideational project that exists independently of, and will outlive, its present office-holders” (p. 100). Holdbrook (2015) notes that in the past, this decentralized idea of al Qaeda had been prominent in analytical and scholarly accounts (e.g. Sageman’s 2008 “leaderless jihad”) of the movement, but was often resisted in al Qaeda’s own discourse. However, with the rise of Daesh, al Qaeda embraced this conception of their movement (p. 100). The second change occurred when the violent excesses of Daesh had taken attention away from al Qaeda’s own violence and made it possible for al Qaeda to present itself as a more “moderate option,” relatively speaking (Holdbrook, 2015, p. 100).

Daesh has been known for having a very extensive and effective media operation. Terrorism scholar Aaron Zelin conducted a large study on Daesh’s media operations. Zelin (2015), like Kimmage, examines a snapshot of Daesh media output in a one-week period. Zelin examines the different components of Daesh’s media apparatus and how they work together.

According to Zelin (2015), Daesh's media apparatus is decentralized through its provincial level media offices and 88% of their releases are visual (mostly photos and some videos) (p. 85). All of Daesh's material was released in Arabic with a small proportion being translated into other languages with English being the second most common language (p. 85). Though most of Daesh's media operations happened online, they did have a significant offline presence; for example, they would organize viewing parties in Daesh-controlled territories (p. 86). They also had several nuqatal lamiyyah (media kiosks) in a number of cities and villages and small shacks in a roving car or large recreational vehicle where they would distribute CDs, DVDs, and/or USB drives of Daesh official media to locals, with a target audience mainly comprised of children and young teenagers (p. 86). With most of its territory gone, it is hard to say whether these operations still occur.

Zelin (2015) notes that social media, especially Twitter, plays an important role in distribution. According to Zelin (2015), Twitter was the central distribution platform and this was quite different from a few years prior to his study when the majority of media releases and conversations with jihadis took place on password-protected forums (p. 86). For its Twitter strategy, Daesh had created a "centralized decentralization" plan creating several official dissemination accounts for when other accounts are taken down (Zelin, 2015, p. 86). According to Zelin (2015), Daesh's official media apparatus has a number of media wings which includes al Furqan Media (their original media wing from when it was the al Qaeda-affiliated Islamic State in Iraq), as well as al I'tisam Media, Ajnad Media, and al Hayat Media, the creator of *Dabiq* magazine (p. 88). In addition, there are also Daesh's media offices for each province as well as its news agency A'maq and its radio station al Bayan (Zelin, 2015, p. 88). During the span of Zelin's study, Daesh released content from 24 provinces within its caliphate system. At the time

of this study, Daesh had 33 provinces which included provinces in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Egypt, Afghanistan/Pakistan, and Nigeria (Zelin, 2015, p. 87). Zelin (2015) contends that this is a much more decentralized system compared to 2013 when Daesh was only using al Furqan media. Zelin (2015) also notes that despite Western media's emphasis on violent content, a large part of Daesh propaganda focused on promoting the Caliphate as a desirable place to live focusing on public works programs, social services, and even picturesque sunsets and cityscapes, or what he called the "Instagrammification" of Daesh media (p. 93).

Like Kimmage's (2008) snapshot of al Qaeda's media operation in 2007, Zelin captures an overview of media output and organizations that make up the Daesh media nexus. Like al Qaeda and its predecessor ISI, Daesh's media production is still centrally controlled by different organizations, however most of its material is distributed to a larger, and more public audience through social media, as opposed to relatively private online jihadist forums.

Many things have changed for Daesh since Zelin's 2015 study, in particular, large territory losses in Iraq and Syria in 2016 and the deaths of major figures central to its media apparatus by coalition air strikes (Winter, 2018, p. 117). Charlie Winter (2018) provides an in-depth account of how Daesh's media strategy has changed in terms of output and messaging. Winter (2018) studies an 18-month period of Daesh propaganda production between mid 2015 and early 2017. Winter (2018) found that not only was Daesh's media apparatus less productive, there was also a thematic shift in terms of the content it produced. As part of his study, Winter (2018) built a 2015 archive from a previous study and assembled a 2017 archive collecting materials like Twitter output, radio bulletins, electronic magazines, videos, and photo essays, coding materials using three themes: victimhood, utopia, and warfare (p. 107). Winter (2018) noted that there was an "almost across the board collapse" of their central media offices (p. 108).

Overall, the utopian theme was predominant in materials from the 2015 archive where there was a focus on moving to the Caliphate as an alternative lifestyle choice with a focus on civilian life including building schools, wild bird conservation programs, street cleaning, and agriculture (p.110). These utopian themes were no longer central in 2017. Instead, the 2017 archive was less utopian and more focused on warfare. Overall, Daesh presented itself as an embattled Caliphate with a focus on sustaining the morale of true believers rather than attracting new adherents (Winter, 2018, p. 116). Though Daesh's media apparatus is not as prominent as it used to be, it still continues to function, and like al Qaeda's media apparatus, it continues to shift both thematically and in terms of output with different structural and geopolitical shifts.

The Magazines

Inspire was the first English-language magazine published by al Qaeda or an affiliate. It was published in mid 2010 by al Malahem Media, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's (AQAP) media arm (Ingram, 2017a, p. 358). The magazine was founded by the late Anwar al Awlaki and Samir Khan. Al Awlaki and Khan were both Americans who migrated to Yemen to be a part of AQAP. Before migrating to Yemen, Khan created *Jihad Recollections*, an online magazine first published in 2009 (Lemieux, Brachman, Levit, and Wood, 2014, p. 356). According to the first issue, which Khan published in April 2009, the series was aimed at "English speaking Muslims who are interested in gaining heights in their religious, political, economic, social, technological, strategic, historical, biographical and health awareness" (Lemieux et. al, 2014, p. 356). The magazine featured in-depth political commentary, biographies on key al Qaeda figures, selfhelp advice, and ideological discussions (Lemieux et al., 2014, p. 356). The magazine became a hit in the online jihadist community, but most of the feedback on the forums showed a demand for more of the "doing" of terrorism, not just the underlying politics (Lemieux et al., 2014, p. 356).

Khan published the fourth and final issue of jihad recollections in September 2009, right before he migrated from the United States to Yemen where he met Awlaki. Shortly after this, *Inspire* was born. According to terrorism scholars Lemieux, Brachman, Levitt, and Wood (2014), what made *Inspire* unique was not the do-it-yourself terrorism manuals, which were not a new phenomenon, it was the fact that these manuals along with the ideology were packaged in “...one modern-looking format, presented in colloquial language replete with Americanisms” (p. 357). Lemieux et al. (2014) also note that another feature that distinguished *Inspire* from other publications was how humour and pop cultural references were integrated into the magazine, something that was said to be more of Khan’s, not Awlaki’s, style (p. 358). According to Ingram (2017a) *Inspire* caught the attention of other “Islamist” groups and influenced publications such as the Taliban’s *Azan*, and of course Daesh’s *Dabiq* (p. 358).

Dabiq was produced by al Hayat Media, Daesh’s media foundation. *Dabiq*’s predecessor was *Islamic State Report*, which offered mostly photo reports and short articles updating English-speakers on Daesh’s political and military campaigns (Ingram, 2017a, p. 358). *Al Hayat* released several issues of *Islamic State Report* between May and June 2014. In July 2014 they transitioned to a larger periodical format and *Dabiq* was born (Ingram, 2017a, p. 358-359). *Dabiq* also has editions published in Arabic, German, and French (Heck, 2017). As *Daesh* lost territory in 2016— including the town of *Dabiq*, which was said to be the site of a final battle during the end of days with “the Romans” (i.e. “the West”)—the magazine was relaunched as *Rumiyah* (or Rome). The magazine is mostly made up of English translations of articles originally published in al-Naba, Daesh’s Arabic-language magazine, along with some exclusive content in English.

Issues of *Rumiyah* magazine are much shorter than a typical issue of *Dabiq* and include more instructional material on how to conduct an attack, something that was not as common in *Dabiq*.

Dabiq and *Inspire* provide a centralized source of material. These online magazines are a fusion of old and new media. They are produced and distributed online and distributed rapidly to a larger audience, but like a traditional magazine, they are designed to be read and not edited. It provides the readers with the goings on in the movement and in many cases, guidance of how to best support the movement. *Dabiq*, *Rumiyah*, and *Inspire* are rich texts; these magazines present a variety of stories pulled together in each issue to form a wider narrative.

Magazine Studies

This section addresses research on *Dabiq* and *Inspire*. There are a number of studies on *Inspire* magazine assessing its narrative themes and radicalizing or mobilizing potential. In their examination of *Inspire*, terrorism scholars Lemieux, Brachman, Levitt, and Wood (2014) analyzed eleven issues of the magazine using the Information, Motivation, and Behavioural skills model (IMB), which has been applied to a range of behavioural change interventions (Lemieux et. al, 2014, p. 355). According to the IMB model “...in order for information and motivation to influence actual behaviours, there must be a sufficient level of behavioural skills to allow someone to perform the behaviour in question.” (p. 366). They study how these factors play out in *Inspire*. For information, many features in the magazine feature those in the West critical of American and Israeli policy, which gives the impression that AQAP is providing accurate and reasonable information and perspective on foreign affairs (p. 362). Motivation refers to when the individual feels that the action they must take is in their self interest and in line with the interests and norms of their cultural or social setting. *Inspire* tends motivate its readers with the idea of

terror as obligatory—citing negative spiritual consequences for not following through—and as part of performing a mandatory duty to help the ummah (p. 365). This is combined with the skills and technical advice in the magazine’s attack manuals for an individual to execute a successful attack (p. 368). Overall, Lemiux et al. (2014) argue that the magazine pulls together all elements of the IMB model for a DIY (do it yourself) jihadist to plan and carryout a successful attack (p. 368)

Sociology scholar Xander Kirke (2015) examined *Inspire* magazine through the lens of political myth. According to Kirke (2015) “...political myths are dramatic and figurative narrative processes which provide significance to collective political conditions of existence” (p. 288). Kirke (2015) looks at both the cognitive and integrative function of myths. The cognitive function of myth provides order to the world in order to organize and map experiences and the integrative function creates a collective identity in which individuals are said to belong (as well as an identity for “others” who do not belong) (p. 288). When it comes to the cognitive function of the magazine, the authors tend to present the current conflict (The War on Terror) as the continuation of a series of violent confrontations between the ummah and its enemies (e.g. crusaders, colonialists etc.); for example, connecting bin Laden and Saladin²⁸ as “heroes” in an epic conflict (p. 289). This is also seen in the “DIY lone wolf terrorism” presented in the magazine where the reader is “...able to take his/her position as a heroic figure within the mythology without traveling abroad” (p. 290). In terms of integration, the magazine creates an identity of the good Muslim who defends the ummah through violent Jihad (p. 292). In terms of illegitimate “others”, there are two groups. The first being “hostile non-Muslims”, those who are

²⁸ Saladin was a Kurdish officer who in 1172 established himself as the ruler of the then Fatimid caliphate in Egypt (which he abolished). In 1187 he launched a “jihad against the Crusaders” recapturing Jerusalem and expelling the Crusaders (Lewis, 2000, p. 91).

seen as launching a Crusade against the ummah, in particular, those from the West. The second is occupied by “false” Muslims who are actively betraying the ummah, such as regimes that are seen as colluding with the West (p. 292). This study provides an interesting perspective into the culture of the movement and how al Qaeda creates a shared historical struggle and collective identity for its Western audiences.

Other studies on *Inspire* look at specific features and themes in the magazine. Jan Andre Lee Ludvigsen (2018) looks at the presentation of drone warfare in seventeen issues of *Inspire* magazine. Ludvigsen (2018) concludes that *Inspire* portrays drones as ineffective tools demonstrating the U.S.’s weakness, targeting innocent Muslims and civilians, and a cowardly or inhumane way of waging war (p. 35). Ludvigsen (2018) examines how drones are depicted by AQAP and what implications it could have for the effectiveness of drone campaigns. Scholars of law and criminology Maura Conway, Jodie Parker, and Sean Looney (2017) conducted a study on *Inspire*, *Jihad Recollections*, and al Shabab’s *Gaidi M’taani*. Conway et. al. (2017) focus on these magazines’ instructional manuals and found that AQAP magazines, *Inspire* in particular, contained the most instructional materials.

Overall, the literature on *Inspire* provides different insights into the magazine. Studies like Lemieux et al.’s (2014) try to assess the magazine’s radicalizing potential looking at how it uses motivational factors and particular information to potentially change its readers’ behaviour, but this study does not examine other functions of the magazine outside of recruitment and mobilization. Kirke’s (2015) study examines the mythical elements of *Inspire*’s narratives that give the movement meaning. However, there is no comparison to other publications and his study does not include later issues of *Inspire*. In addition, these studies do not examine how *Inspire*’s narratives shift over time. Ludvigsen (2018) and Conway et.al (2017) examine specific

features or themes in the magazine, which may be useful for identifying the ways in which the authors discuss particular issues or the content they choose to include. However, they are only focused on one aspect of the publication.

Dabiq is also a widely studied publication. West Point international affairs scholar Brandon Colas (2016) conducted a content analysis of the first fourteen issues of *Dabiq*. In this study Colas identified *Dabiq*'s main three audiences: English-speaking second-generation Muslims and converts, Western policy makers, and current members of Daesh who are not integrating or functioning well in the organization (Colas, 2016, p. 6). Colas points out that the last category is unusual as *Dabiq*'s authors reaching out to this audience may expose weaknesses in the group. Haroro Ingram (2016a) conducted a study of nine issues of *Dabiq* using radical narrative analysis to look at how magazine authors drive radicalization by employing certain narratives. As Ingram (2016a) states,

The reinforcing narratives within and across *Dabiq*'s issues plunge its readers into a bipolar world, characterized by cosmic war and on the verge of end times, that demands sunnis choose between the forces of good and evil. Through this lens, becoming a foreign fighter or lone wolf terrorist is obligatory for any true sunni based on identity and rational choice reasoning. (p. 474)

The magazine presents a narrative where action is required to destroy the enemy. It is presented as a rational choice for the audience in order to defend the in-group (Sunni Muslims) from a large group of "others" or enemies (including governments in "the West" and "the Islamic world", Shias, and moderates). Fighting for and settling in Daesh's caliphate is presented as a rational choice for the reader as it is not only the way to defeat the enemy, it is also a more "honourable" way to live. Ingram's study though thorough, has been critiqued by other scholars

as it only focuses on the magazine's use as a recruitment tool while ignoring other functions (Heck 2017, Droogan and Peattie 2017).

According to political science scholar Axel Heck (2017), *Dabiq* functions as a creator of a collective identity like an imagined community, not just a recruitment tool (p. 246-47). Heck conducted a visual iconological study of two *Dabiq* articles where Daesh legitimizes its existence (Issue 1 Foreword) and when they justify the 2016 terror attack in Brussels (Issue 14 Foreword). According to Heck (2017), Daesh builds a narrative identity made up of two dimensions: legitimacy to exist and justification of terrorist acts (p. 245). According to Heck's (2017) approach, narrative identity in international relations, emerged from debates about collective action of nation states, which includes the construction of "we" and representations of the other (p. 246). Heck (2017) identifies three overall narrative identities: The West has subjugated or victimized Muslims and the Caliphate was found to protect Muslims and to fight back against Western dominance, the religious supremacy of Daesh's interpretation of Islam, where humanity is divided into real Muslims or followers of the Caliphate and others, and finally Daesh's aspiration for global dominance due to its religious supremacy.

International relations scholars Julian Droogan and Shane Peattie (2017) conducted an in depth and nuanced analysis of *Dabiq*. They conducted a qualitative study of thirteen issues of *Dabiq* using their own method, thematic network analysis, which is similar to grounded theory (p. 594). Thematic network analysis involves two phases: first, using open coding using very specific small codes and then organizing these small codes into larger thematic networks. Droogan and Peattie (2017) identified four organizing themes (religion, enemies, call to arms, building the caliphate) and one central global theme (Islam is at war) (p. 614). They also identified different phases through the publication's history starting with establishing legitimacy

of Daesh's leadership and state building project, anti-Western views, and a call to arms including emigration, killing civilians, and collecting spoils of war (Droogan and Peattie, 2017, p. 614).

Journalism scholar Douglas Wilbur's (2017) conducted a study on one issue of *Dabiq* (issue 11) using ethnographic content analysis. This involves thematically analyzing a text by using research tools developed for ethnographers modified for textual analysis. Wilbur (2017) claims that Daesh uses *Dabiq* as a form of strategic communication to advance its organization as being superior to rival ones; much like non-extremist organizations (p. 210). Wilbur (2017) claims this study furthers understanding of how extremist groups use propaganda as strategic communication to achieve organizational goals (p. 220).

International relations scholar Joana Westphal (2018) conducted a study examining the way Daesh's ideology justifies the use of violence. She does so through discursive frame analysis of audio speeches and issues of Daesh's magazines *Dabiq* and *Dar al-Islam*. Westphal (2018) contends that Daesh constructs a collective action frame that uses othering and collective identity (p. 30). Daesh uses grievances like power loss in Iraq and Syria, sociopolitical and economic disadvantages, and assigns them meaning using Islamic symbolism. Daesh's ideology claims that these problems can be alleviated through the establishment of an Islamic State and complete obedience to its authority (Westphal, 2018, p. 30). They justify the use of violence through concepts like tawhid, takfir and jihad. Tawhid supports Daesh's claim of the singular truth and creates an exclusive group of "true believers", takfir (or excommunication) creates distinct "others or non-believers and poses them as an existential threat", and jihad calls for violence in the name of God (Westphal, 2018, p. 30). Violence is justified as necessary to defend Islam and obligatory for "true Muslims" (Westphal, 2018, p. 30). This study provides an analysis of how Daesh uses particular frames to justify its actions.

International relations scholar Nadia Al Dayel and English scholar Aaron Anfinson (2018) conducted a study of *Dabiq* magazine's "In the words of the enemy" feature, which presents quotes from Daesh's enemies, mostly consisting of American politicians and public figures as well as prominent figures from the United Nations. Al Dayel and Anfinson (2018) conclude that Daesh uses the words of its enemies "to construct the identifications and characteristics of a 'state'" (p. 59). They tend to use statements that highlight areas that position Daesh as influential and having the characteristics of a state such as territory, revenue and immigration. Al Dayel and Anfinson (2018) also note that using quotes from its enemies in a centralised publication verifies Daesh's sense of statehood as they state, "In this case, individuals of high sociopolitical standing – operating as mouthpieces of established, competitive nation states – construct knowledge on the characteristics of the Islamic State" (p. 60). In other words, by quoting discussions of Daesh by powerful heads of state and high-ranking members of the United Nations, Daesh is using these figures' authority to establish itself as a powerful state-like entity. This study demonstrates the reliance of groups like Daesh on media coverage and public discourse from "the West."

There is a small but growing literature on *Rumiyah*, *Dabiq*'s successor publication. Linguistic scholars Wigness, Tan, O'Halloran, and Lange (2017) conducted a comparative analysis of all fifteen issues of *Dabiq* and six issues of *Rumiyah* using a mixed methods approach, which included qualitative social semiotic discourse analysis and quantitative information visualisation, to examine changes in both magazines over time. They found that *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* are more similar than they are different. According to Wigness et al. (2017), Daesh's core values of "...intolerance and an antagonistic world view are constant across all

issues of *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*,” and both magazines used selective Islamic scripture to justify their position (p. 18). However, where the magazines differ is in the strategies that they promote. In *Dabiq*, when Daesh was expanding, the fight took place on the battlefield and in *Rumiyah* when Daesh was under attack from coalition airstrikes, it shifted its focus to Daesh-orchestrated and lone-wolf attacks providing instructional material for potential lone-wolf terrorists (Wigness, et al, 2017, p. 18). As demonstrated in other studies like Winter’s (2018), Daesh’s narrative often shifts with changes in the movement like territory loss.

Political science PhD student Tyler Welch (2018) conducted a qualitative analysis of *Dabiq* (15 issues, 2014–2016) and *Rumiyah* (13 issues, 2016–2017) using a typology to analyze and categorize different types of articles in each magazine. The five categories were: Islamic theological justification and inspiration for violence, descriptions of community, belonging, and meaning, stories of progress or heroism, establishment of a common enemy, i.e., the West and Muslim “apostates,” and instructional and inspirational articles empowering individual violent action (Welch 2018, p.186). Welch (2018) concluded that a focus on unity and community as well as tales of heroism and progress were more common in *Dabiq*, while instructional articles encouraging lone wolf attacks and a focus on Islamic justification and call for loyalty and sacrifice appeared more often in *Rumiyah*.

Taken as a whole, this literature provides a valuable analysis of *Dabiq*. Colas (2016) offers a glimpse into the types of audiences *Dabiq* may appeal to while Ingram (2016a) examines Daesh’s strategic logic with regards to the publication’s potential to radicalize. The focus of my project is not specifically on radicalization per se, but how other social issues and notions of shared identity are incorporated into the movement’s narrative. Heck (2017) provides insights into how Daesh forms a particular narrative identity in *Dabiq*, but his study only focuses on two

features. In a similar light, though Wilbur's (2017) study addresses *Dabiq*'s function as an organizational strategic communication tool, his study only focuses on one issue of *Dabiq*. Al Dayel and Anfinson (2017) provide an account of how Daesh forms notions of statehood using its "enemies words", but it only focuses on one feature in the magazine. Westphal's (2018) study examines the collective action frames used by Daesh, but concentrates on its justification of violence, which is an important issue, but it may not capture other elements of the movement's appeal. Perhaps the richest and most comprehensive study is Droogan and Peattie's (2017) as they examine themes emerging from multiple issues and how these themes change over time. However, their analysis does not include issues of *Rumiyah* and does not compare *Dabiq* to other publications like *Inspire*. Though Wigness et al. (2018) discuss *Rumiyah*, it is only the first six issues. While Welch's (2018) study includes more issues of *Rumiyah*, his study, like Wigness et al., only discusses one jihadist publication.

Many studies comparing *Dabiq* and *Inspire* have been published. Celine Novenario a researcher at New York University's Centre for Global Affairs conducted a study comparing *Inspire* and *Resurgence* (another al Qaeda English-language publication) to *Dabiq*. She looks at *Inspire* issues 1-14, two issues of *Resurgence*, and *Dabiq* issues 1-13. Novenario examines *Inspire* and *Dabiq* from a strategic point of view looking for what kinds of terrorist strategy each group promotes. She uses five strategic logics employed in terrorism by Kidd and Walters to structure her content analysis. Novenario (2016) found that al Qaeda prioritized attrition (strategies aimed at convincing the enemy that the terrorists are able and willing to inflict a high cost if a specific policy continues to be enforced) to force changes in the West while Daesh focused on outbidding (strategies to demonstrate a terrorists group's greater commitment to fight an enemy in order to draw supporters to its cause and away from its rivals) and intimidation

(demonstrating terrorist strengths and enemies' weaknesses usually through things like battle victories) to increase the population living under the caliphate (p. 962).

In a similar study, Haroro Ingram (2017a) conducted a content analysis of the first fourteen issues of *Inspire* and the first thirteen issues of *Dabiq*. Like his previous study on *Dabiq*, Ingram employed radical narrative analysis as an interpretive framework. According to Ingram (2017a),

...*Inspire* and *Dabiq* provides their readership with a “competitive system of meaning” (i.e., an alternative perspective of the world compared to that presented by their opponents), that acts as a “lens” through which to shape their supporters’ perceptions, polarize their support, and, ultimately, convince them to mobilize. ...the subtle differences between *Inspire* and *Dabiq* offer crucial insights into not only the unique ways each tries to influence their audiences, but the different strategic logics that underpin their respective campaigns (p. 358).

According to Ingram, *Inspire* prioritizes identity choice appeals and *Dabiq* also prioritizes identity choice appeals while also emphasizing rational choice appeals (Ingram, 2017a, p. 357). In other words, *Inspire* will emphasise identity choices by framing what they call individual jihad as obligatory for all Muslims living in the West and calls for readers to prioritize their “Muslim” identity above all others (Ingram, 2017a, p. 366). *Dabiq* also makes similar identity choice appeals making migrating to the Islamic State obligatory for Western Muslims. At the same time, *Dabiq* emphasizes rational choice appeals where the choice to join Daesh and migrate to the Caliphate is presented as an honourable way to live and would be recruits would be joining a group that tangibly addresses Sunni crises; therefore, the decision to join is a rational one (Ingram, 2017a, p. 365).

Linguistics scholars Lorenzo-Dus, Kinzel, and Walker (2018) studied how jihadist groups discursively represent “the West” and “non-believers” in their online magazines by conducting a quantitative discourse analysis of 13 issues of *Inspire* and 9 issues of *Dabiq* looking at which groups al Qaeda and Daesh “they-fied/othered” and which identities they “they-ified/othered” on religious grounds (pp. 522-523). Lorenzo-Dus et al. (2018) conclude that while both *Inspire* and *Dabiq* authors construct an “us versus them” dichotomy between their respective groups and Westerners/non-believers, “*Dabiq*’s discursive representation of ‘the West’ targets a wider variety of individuals and groups of people and geographical locations than *Inspire*’s” and that “*Inspire* places a greater focus on the pejorative construction of ‘the West’ than *Dabiq*, suggesting that Al-Qaeda places more emphasis than ISIS on presenting ‘the West’ as the enemy of jihad” (Lorenzo-Dus et al., 2018, p. 521).

Political scientist Matteo Vergan and social psychologist Ana-Marie Bliuc (2018) conducted a two part study, which involved a computerised analysis of the language used in articles from *Inspire* (issues 1-13) and *Dabiq* (issues 1-10); and interviews with 146 participants (who were given assessments to determine personal levels of “authoritarianism” and “religiousness”) on their impressions of researcher selected texts “that were highly typical of the language they [al Qaeda and Daesh] use” (p. 526). In the first part of the study, Vergan and Bliuc (2018) found significant differences in each publication’s language with Daesh’s language being higher in authoritarianism and its level of religiousness. The results from the second part of their study found that “...being more religious and more authoritarian predicts more positive attitudes towards the language of ISIS, but not towards the language of al-Qaeda” (p. 535). They conclude that their research results are reflective of other qualitative studies on al Qaeda’s

ideology and mobilisation, as al Qaeda “...was found to share ideological elements with rebellious left-wing, anti-imperialist social movements” (Vergan and Bliuc, 2018, p. 535).

These comparative studies provide an in depth look into how each group’s strategic logic—be it combat, recruitment, or communications—can be gathered through its publications. Novenario’s study outlines what terrorist strategy each group prioritizes, but her approach does not capture the kinds of appeals authors use to create a shared sense of identity with their audiences (e.g. shared cultural references or frames). Like Novenario (2016), Ingram (2017a) also focuses on strategic logic, but he identifies types of appeals employed by each group and how they motivate individuals to mobilize. Lorenzo-Dus et al (2018), provide a detailed analysis of how Daesh and al Qaeda represent their enemies, and while defining enemies is an important part of Daesh and al Qaeda’s respective causes, other elements of their narrative like how they define heroes and potential allies, are missing from this study. Vergan and Bliuc (2018) provide insights into how these texts could be perceived by Western audiences, however this study does not include issues of *Rumiyah* and focuses on the use of specific words as opposed to larger thematic elements of the two publications. Though motives and appeals to mobilize are an important part of these magazines, I am more interested in studying the overall movement’s culture and how it shifts over time through a deeper thematic analysis of the magazine’s contents. In addition, like previous studies on *Dabiq*, both Novenario (2016) and Ingram (2017a) and Lorenzo-Dus et al (2018) do not include *Rumiyah* in their respective analyses, which may have an impact on the overall narrative.

Conclusion

Overall, this chapter lays down the foundation for understanding *Inspire*, *Dabiq*, and *Rumiyah* and the media environment in which they are produced, consumed, and distributed. This media environment is made up of mainstream media organizations, al Qaeda and Daesh's media foundations, and supporters producing and distributing material online. When examining the frames al Qaeda and Daesh employ to reach their audiences in Western societies, it is important to understand the culture, structure, and functioning of the media environment in which they are constructed.

Daesh and al Qaeda's attacks are often orchestrated with certain media logics in mind as demonstrated by Dowling (1986) and Weiman and Winn (2006). These media logics are not only internalized in each group's attack strategy, but also in their own media coverage. This media coverage may rely on frames employed by mainstream media organizations as demonstrated by Zelizer's (2018) study of the incorporation of Cold War frames by American and Daesh media organizations, as well as Al Dayal and Anfinson's (2018) study of Daesh's use of major heads of state, or its "enemies'" words. As demonstrated by Hulse and Spencer (2008) and Dayan and Thussu (2012), terrorist events and other geopolitical events are often interpretations, which are influenced by public leaders, media organizations, and particular historical, cultural, and political frames (Zelizer 2018a).

As demonstrated by Eid (2014a) and Ingram (2017), mainstream media coverage, sensationalized coverage in particular, can act as an amplifier or increase the legitimacy of a given group. Having said this, *Dabiq* and *Inspire* are produced within a particular media system incorporating mainstream media frames and logics, in order to build their legitimacy as a threat and global movement.

Daesh and al Qaeda's media organizations, and the products they create, work to connect supporters in a type of imagined community as articulated by Anderson (1983). Both movements tend to reject the notion of the nation-state, claiming to work beyond borders established by a hegemonic international system, but at the same time, both aim to create a caliphate, a state-like entity. Though, this is more applicable to Daesh, especially at the height of its power, when it promoted itself as a legitimate state. These movements often use notions of diaspora or the Islamic ummah to unite potential supporters. As transnational movements, they tend to build a sense of a global community through imagined connections between al Qaeda and Daesh central, inspired attackers, supporters, and affiliate groups. It is this sense of global community that is often used to convince individuals to fight or act on behalf of the movement in regions where many foreign fighters, especially those from the West, do not share any sort of kinship, cultural, or linguistic ties with the population.

Dabiq and *Inspire* are one small part of a larger jihadist media system. One that attempts to create a more professionalised and centralized message as demonstrated by Kimmage (2008) and often shifts thematically and in terms of productivity with factors like technological, geopolitical, and structural changes as demonstrated by Zelin (2015) and Winter's (2018) study. Overall, both groups have a central media apparatus aimed at promoting the movement's aims. As well, before the emergence of these publications, efforts have been made by media foundations like al Sahab to reach out to Western audiences (Seib 2008). *Dabiq* and *Inspire* are part of this wider system and elements of other al Qaeda or Daesh media products may even be incorporated into these publications.

Current studies on *Dabiq* and *Inspire* have provided accounts of the magazines' different functions such as strategic outlook (Novenario, 2016; Ludvigsen, 2018), mobilizing or radicalization potential (Lemieux, et al. 2014; Ingram, 2017; Westphal, 2018; Vergan and Bliuc 2018), and narrative production (Kirke, 2015; Heck, 2017; Droogan and Peattie, 2017). This study expands on these existing studies by examining both publications over a longer period of time, comparing the frames each group employs and how the use of these frames shift over time, as well as how these groups discuss and respond to each other. This study contributes to work not only on al Qaeda and Daesh's media, but also theories of terror and media as both of these magazines are produced while, internalizing, reacting to, and incorporating mainstream media formulations of events.

Chapter 4: Theoretical Framework and Methodological Approach

This chapter outlines this study's theoretical framework and methodological approach. The theoretical framework is based on framing. This framework shaped the research process including the methodological design, data collection, and analysis. The method I have selected derives from grounded theory. Grounded theory is a method and an approach to analyze texts like interview and focus group data, and documents. In the first section of this chapter, I will outline my theoretical framework, this will be followed by a discussion of my methodological approach and how I have applied it to this study.

Theoretical Framework: Framing

My theoretical perspective is based on framing, which has its origins in symbolic interactionism, and is employed by different scholars in areas such as social movement theory and public policy theory. I have chosen framing analysis from Goffman (1986), social movement framing theory from authors such as Benford and Snow (1988), concepts of movement culture from new social movement theorists like Rhys Williams (2004) and Doug McAdams (1994), and framing (or the creation of frames) from public policy theorists Merlijn van Hulst and Dvora Yanow (2016). This set of theories examines the dimensions of frames and their creation addressing my research questions: How do al Qaeda and Daesh promote and adapt a bipolar (Islam versus the West) yet flexible movement narrative to connect diverse audiences in Western societies meaningfully to their respective movements? What are the common frames al Qaeda and Daesh use to appeal to these audiences?

Symbolic interactionism and Goffman's frame (1986) analysis will be helpful in determining how meaning is constructed and how frames are formed. Social movement framing

theory identifies the ways that frames can be used by a movement to present itself to its various audiences. New social movement theory addresses the important dimensions of movement culture that play an essential role in presenting a movement like al Qaeda or Daesh to audiences in Western societies who typically do not have any cultural, kinship, or linguistic ties to the lands in which these movements operate. In addition, it outlines the elements like culture, emotion, performance, and identity, which tend to be involved in the framing process. Van Hulst and Yanow's (2016) public policy framing approach theorizes the creation of frames, providing elements of frame creation, which will provide a deeper understanding of the framing process and the meanings it generates.

First, I will discuss the origins and basic tenets of symbolic interactionism, and the development of frame analysis by Goffman. Second, I will discuss how Goffman's concept of framing has been used by social movement theorists like Snow and Benford. Third, I will discuss elements of new social movement theory. The fourth section is a discussion of van Hulst and Yanow's approach focusing on *framing* as opposed to *frames* and how frames are constructed in public policy debates. In the second section, I will discuss the methodological approach, grounded theory. This section will provide background information on grounded theory followed by a discussion of how I have applied this method to this study.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is a theoretical perspective, which has made significant contributions to theory in areas like dramaturgy, cultural studies, postmodernism, gender studies, and the study of social movements (Carter and Fuller, 2016, p. 931). Symbolic interactionism research began with the work of George Mead and Herbert Blumer in the mid twentieth century. In their survey of past and present research in the symbolic interactionist tradition, sociologists

Carter and Fuller (2016) state that “Symbolic interactionism is a theoretical perspective in sociology that addresses the manner in which society is created and maintained through face-to-face meaningful interactions among individuals” (Carter and Fuller, 2016, p. 931). As opposed to studying how individuals are impacted by institutions, symbolic interactionists study how individuals make sense of the world from their own perspective (Carter and Fuller, 2016, p. 932). Overall, there are four central tenets of symbolic interactionism:

(1) individuals act based on the meanings objects have for them, (2) interaction occurs within a particular social and cultural context in which physical and social objects (persons), as well as situations, must be defined or categorized based on individual meanings, (3) meanings emerge from interactions with other individuals and with society, and (4) meanings are continuously created and recreated through interpreting processes during interactions with others (Carter and Fuller, 2016, p. 932).

Essentially, symbolic interactionism examines how meaningful interactions amongst individuals contribute to the definition of a society.

In his discussion of symbolic interactionist theory’s contributions to social movement theory David Snow (2003) simplifies and expands the meaning of the four central tenets. Snow’s work is significant because it widens the application of these tenets, which can be applied to larger groups as opposed to individual micro interactions. Going beyond Blumer’s premises, Snow develops four broader orienting principles: human agency, interactive determination, symbolization, and emergence.

Human agency focuses on human actors' (collective or individual) active, willful, and goal seeking character (Snow, 2003, p. 812). Snow (2003) highlights agency as a central dimension of human social behaviour, while also not ignoring biological, structural and cultural constraints in determining social action (p. 813). Using examples from social movements Snow (2003) claims that action can be indirect or seemingly disconnected like sabotage or foot dragging while being led away by authorities—actions that may not have a direct impact—what Scott (1985) refers to as “weapons of the weak” or large-scale mobilization like a coordinated protest (p. 813). Symbolic interactionism is typically focused on situations where individuals act based on particular meanings. Human agency highlights the different ways that varying degrees of action are employed in certain situations.

Interactive determination refers to how “...important objects of analysis like self-concepts, identities, roles of social movements, organizational practices must be understood in terms of ... [a] ‘web of relationships’ or interactional contexts in which they are ensnared and embedded” (Snow, 2003, p. 814). Concepts like self and other and individual and society can only be understood in relation to each other and terms of their interaction “whether actual, virtual, or imagined” (Snow, 2003, p. 814). Snow (2003) uses the example of the highly interactive relationship that social movements have with different audiences or publics where they might make changes to their messaging or approach in response to these groups’ perceptions (Snow, 2003, p. 817). Social movements and other entities do not exist in isolation, but shape and are shaped by their interactions with other actors, institutions, and audiences.

Symbolization is said to be at the heart of Blumer’s conceptualization of symbolic interactionism (Snow, 2003, p. 818). According to Snow (2003) symbolization “...highlights the process through which events and conditions, artifacts and edifices, people and aggregations, and

other features of the environment take on particular meanings, becoming objects of orientation that elicit specific feelings and actions” (p. 819). Symbolization is needed to interpret and clarify ambiguities and uncertainties in social life. Snow uses the example of framing (which will be discussed later) and “symbolic crusades.” The term symbolic crusade, coined by Gusfield, refers to causes that are more symbolic rather than economic or utilitarian; for example, religious movements aimed at normalizing creationism in schools or the temperance movement (Snow, 2003, p. 820). Framing, more specifically, frame alignment processes involve, bridging or using the movement’s interpretive frame to connect other groups or social clusters, amplifying beliefs, extending a movement’s interpretive framework to incorporate interests not directly relevant to its main goals, and transforming old meanings to generate new ones (Snow, 2003, p. 822). Symbolization is a key part of symbolic interactionism.

Snow (2003) links emergence to Mead’s emphasis on “the novel and emergent nature of the act” and Blumer’s conceptualization of different forms of collective behaviour as not only emergent phenomena, but also creating new forms of social life (p. 824). Emergence refers to the emergence of alternative forms of organization and action: “It encompasses processes out of which new, novel, or revitalized social entities, or cognitive and emotional states, arise that constitute departures from, challenges to, and clarifications of transformations of everyday routines, practices, or perspectives” (Snow, 2003, p. 824). Emergence not only refers to new forms of social life and systems of meaning, but also transformation in existing forms of social organization. Social movements are often seen as an example of a major social medium through which new forms of organization and transformation and social changes occur (Snow, 2003, p. 824).

Snow's organizing principles of symbolic interactionism provide a framework for how individuals or entities like social movements create meaning. Though this study is based on texts created by a group and not the direct actions of the movement itself, these concepts are still applicable to *Dabiq*, *Rumiyah*, and *Inspire*. Human agency, though focused on collective or individual acts within "society," is still significant as one of the functions of the magazines is not only to call individuals to action, but also to imbue past, present, and future actions with meaning regardless of the scale (i.e. individual attack, joining the movement as a fighter, or promoting the movement online). Interactive determination is particularly relevant to a publication defining al Qaeda and Daesh's situation using a type of "civilizational clash" narrative or what Karim and Eid (2012) refer to as "a clash of ignorance" to develop concepts within the movement like notions of self and other. In addition, these groups may change their messaging or approach according to developments like current events or even developments within other jihadist groups like territory loss or civil wars. Symbolization is also key for groups like al Qaeda and Daesh that do not have as much strength as their adversaries and work based on a religious or symbolic cause especially in their promotion of the movement to individuals in the West. This is not to say that al Qaeda, Daesh, or any of their affiliates do not have some concrete demands. Emergence or changing forms of organization and systems of meaning can also be found in studying *Dabiq* and *Inspire* and the changes within the publications over time. These tenets of symbolic interactionism have influenced other theories including framing and frame analysis, which will be discussed in the next section.

Framing

The development of framing theory and analysis is often credited to Erving Goffman. According to Goffman's theory "...frames organize interpretations of everyday life and simplify objects, events, and actions by selectively highlighting specific phenomena" (Carter and Fuller, 2016, p. 940). Goffman (1986) examines social reality as an individual's definition of the situation – or the answer to the question "what is going on here?"— his approach to framing looks at the definition of the situation to determine how individuals will proceed or act (p. 8).

According to Goffman, the definition of a situation, or frames, are made from strips of experience. Goffman (1986) defines strips as "...any arbitrary slice or cut from the stream of ongoing activity, including here sequences of happenings real or fictive, as seen from the perspective of those subjectively involved in sustaining an interest in them" (p. 10). Strips of experience are selectively highlighted to frame a particular situation. Goffman gets the term frame from the work of Gregory Bateson who drew on animal behaviour to study human social interaction (Goffman 1986, p.7; van Hulst and Yanow, 2016, p. 94). As Goffman (1986) contends:

I assume that definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with principles of organization, which govern events— at least social ones— and our subjective involvement in them; frame is the word I use to refer to such of these basic elements as I am able to identify. That is my definition of frame. My phrase "frame analysis" is a slogan to refer to the examination in these terms of the organization of experience (pp. 10-11).

Individuals organize their experience of events using frames. Though Goffman is referring to social experiences, framing analysis is also relevant to other texts; Goffman (1986) analyzes

texts like newspaper articles and movies in his study. This is relevant to the analysis of *Dabiq* and *Inspire* and the question of the frames they employ. Framing analysis will be helpful in outlining the principles used to organize al Qaeda and Daesh's respective definitions of the situation including religious and geopolitical issues. This notion of framing has been used by other scholarly traditions most notably social movement theory.

Social Movements and Framing

Though Daesh and al Qaeda are often seen as terrorist groups, or sometimes pseudo state structures, the way they function and promote themselves is very much like an international social movement. Many recruits see different appeals and different causes that draw them into the movement ranging from religious reasons, to more secular ones like anti-capitalism (Vidino et. al 2015). Scholars of terrorist and insurgent groups have pointed out the resemblance of these groups to social movements (Archetti 2013; Snow and Byrd, 2005). In her study of Al Qaeda and how they use new media, communication scholar Cristina Archetti (2013) states that though we often see terrorists as isolated individuals particularly in the case of homegrown terrorists or lone wolves, "... they still belong to networks within an overlapping, broader set of relationships... In this perspective, terrorist groups are, effectively social movements" (Archetti, 2013, p. 4). Groups like Daesh and al Qaeda are not only motivated by religion, but they can be seen as an international social movement resisting the Western-dominated system.

Framing is an important concept in social movement theory. Borrowing from Goffman's (1986) concept of framing, social movement theorists David Snow and Robert Benford (1992) describe frames as "interpretive schema that simplifies and condenses the world 'out there' by selectively punctuating and encoding objects and situations, events, experiences, and actions within one's past or present environment" (Cited by Tarrow, 1998, p. 110). Framing is an

important component of a social movement as it allows members of a movement to come up with a common definition of a problem and the prescription to solve it.

Frames are essential to how a social movement presents itself to its supporters, opponents, and potential supporters. As Snow and Benford (1988) contend, “Movements function as carriers and transmitters of mobilizing beliefs and ideas, to be sure that they are also actively engaged in the production of meaning for participants, protagonists and observers” (p. 198). In order to mobilize their target audiences, movements have to use ideas and beliefs that are meaningful to their target audiences; for example, Daesh and al Qaeda use religious obligation or the prospect of creating a just society in an attempt to motivate their audiences.

According to Snow and Benford (1988), movements have three common framing tasks. They must create diagnostic frames which are “A diagnosis of some event or aspect of social life as problematic and in need of alteration,” prognostic frames that are “a proposed solution to the diagnosed problem that specifies what needs to be done,” and motivational frames that are “a call to arms or rationale for engaging in ameliorative or corrective action” (p. 199). These concepts will be useful for this project as they establish the elements that make up these movements’ narratives. These frames can reveal how these groups imagine themselves; for example, using a diagnostic frame, they may imagine themselves as a globally persecuted group. Prognostic frames shed light on the type of movement that they are judging by the solutions they propose, whether it is state building or lone wolf attacks, and motivational frames could offer some insight into the movement’s appeal whether it is being part of a truly perfect and just society or destroying the system.

Social movements also build legitimacy by portraying their movement as part of a larger historical movement. This is known as a master frame, as Doug McAdam (1994) states where groups will "...reinterpret their situation in light of the available master frame and to mobilize based on their new understanding of themselves and the world around them" (p. 42). One example McAdam provides is the "civil rights" master frame following the 1960s in the US. The "civil rights master frame" was used by other movements like gay rights, the American Indian Movement and anti-war movement. Members of these movements presented themselves as one component of a larger civil rights movement (p. 42). As part of this study, it is useful to identify the types of master frames these insurgent groups employ and identify the movements they see as having common cause with them. As Snow and Byrd (2007) note in their study of "Islamic terrorist movements," despite portraying themselves as sharing a common cause against the same enemy with other related groups, in reality terrorist groups are quite divided not only between groups, but within the group itself (which is typical of other movements). This perception of a unified cause is also employed by al Qaeda and Daesh's opponents; Snow and Byrd (2007) share an example of an Israeli Defense Forces spokesman equating the conflict with Hezbollah in 2006 with the American struggle against al Qaeda, despite the major differences between the groups (one being Shiite and one predominantly Sunni, one being nationalist and locally based where the other had global ambitions) (p. 125). In other words, he was using a "War on Terror" master frame to associate this conflict with a wider global struggle. This can also be applied to Zelizer's (2018a) notion of the Cold War frame. Al Qaeda and Daesh employ a "Fighting against the West's War against Islam" master frame, which condenses a variety of conflicts from different historical periods and regions into one conflict. The master frames these groups employ could reveal important insights into their communication strategy; for example, they may also use other

master frames relevant to Western youth to position their movement with “progressive” and traditionally secular causes like anti-capitalism, environmentalism, and human rights.

Social movement framing theory presents an underlying strategy and the types of frames that can be used by a social movement to present itself to various audiences. However, diagnostic, prognostic, motivational, and master frames may be limited as they tend to focus on recruitment and calling individuals to action. Though the call to action and recruitment are essential parts of a movement’s communication strategy, there are other perhaps less “practical” or “action-focused” frames or types of meanings that can be established from a group’s messaging. As well, theories like Snow and Benford’s frame categories, though somewhat applicable to al Qaeda and Daesh, were not necessarily developed for groups with certain religious or apocalyptic aims, which could leave out other elements of the movement’s messaging.

The Cultural Turn and New Social Movements

Frames offer categories for how movements call individuals to action, but developing an understanding of a movement requires an understanding of new social movement theory. What makes new social movement theory “new” is that it focuses on areas like culture, emotions, and identity (McAdams, 1994). According to social movement scholar Rhys Williams (2004), the cultural turn in social movement theory pays attention to the “cultural environment” where movements occur and how that environment shapes collective action (p. 91). According to Williams (2004), “Public enactments form much of the cultural context that shapes substance, form, and trajectory of movement challenges and the meanings of the cultural resources movements use” (p. 91). Movements like Daesh and al Qaeda often rely on public enactment, be it a lone wolf attack or releasing a high-quality produced video, to showcase their movement’s

strength. This is also relevant to this particular study because magazines like *Dabiq* and *Inspire* are not only made to inform supporters of the movement, they are also a presentation or performance of the movement's strength to opponents and bystanders, their other intended audiences (Colas, 2016). Both movements rely on a number of cultural resources in order to develop their messaging. In the case of this study, these cultural resources include the jihadist movement, Islamic history, as well as cultural resources from Western pop culture.

It is also important to note that though these movements align themselves with some “traditionally secular” causes, the majority of their appeal and legitimacy come from religious ideals. Not only do religious beliefs play an important role in how members of these movements and recruits frame their experiences (Dawson and Amarasingam, 2016), notions of cultural public enactments, ritual and symbolism, elements of new social movement theory, are important features of religious violence or terrorism as well as “normal,” more mainstream religious practices (Juergensmeyer, 2017, pp. 154-55). Having said this, it is important look at the religious significance of these frames as well as the groups' more “concrete” or “secular” appeals and motives for recruitment. This is not to say that religion is the only appeal, rather it is a very significant appeal and framework that cannot be ignored.

Another factor brought out by the cultural turn is the emotional appeals and impacts on individuals joining a movement. Emotion is another factor in social movement theory that was historically understudied. According to Goodwin, Jasper, and Polleta (2001), this was due to the assumption that political action was always “rational” and that emotions are not part of rational action (p. 6). Emotions often drive many processes in social movements such as creating bonds in social networks, creating a collective identity, which often involves emotions like fighting

shame and guilt; framing injustices, which involves directing anger towards the individuals to blame; and mobilizing people to act (p. 8). According to Goodwin et al. (2001)

...the emotions most directly connected to moral sensibilities such as shame, guilt and pride are especially pervasive as motivators of action. Other emotions help channel action because they offer familiar situations and narratives: we know what indignation is, or compassion or fear, and act in certain ways once we know we have these emotions (although the causal direction here is not always clear). (p. 10)

Social movements do not only involve emotions like outrage, but also more “pleasurable” emotions like pride; for example, a group finding pride in standing up to the oppressor regardless of the outcome of the protest. Terrorist attacks obviously have psychological impacts and often generate emotional reactions. According to Ariel Merari (2007) emotions are more important motivators than rational or political planning, for carrying out an act of terrorism “expressed an emotional state, rather than serving as an instrumental tool in the framework of a strategy of insurgency” (p. 39). Terrorism in particular requires a kind of pathos not only in the emotional reactions to the attack, but what drives people to stay committed to the cause. This is not to say that terrorism is wholly irrational, but the force behind the attack is highly emotional. It is important to note that this type of pathos and highly emotional commitment to the cause also play a significant role in forms of state sanctioned violence like warfare.

New social movement theory contributes to this work by deepening understanding of the cultural, symbolic, performative, and emotional aspects of these movements as presented in *Dabiq* and *Inspire*. The cultural elements of the magazines, like the use of particular symbols, whether it is the use of black flags or Guantanamo prison style jumpsuits, offer insights into how the given group frames its situation and presents its cause. The issue of performance is relevant

to this study as the magazines often play a performative role presenting Daesh and al Qaeda as strong and united causes functioning effectively across borders. The emotional appeals often shed light on different, not-directly-political, motives for joining the movement like a quest for meaning or finding personal fulfillment as outlined in Dawson and Amarasingam's (2016) study of Western foreign fighters. New social movement theory adds another layer to the understanding of these movements' framing strategies going beyond strategic framing theory, that is typically associated with more traditional movements as opposed to movements that go beyond concrete political/strategic gains and invoke a higher, divine cause.

Framing versus Frames

Some scholars emphasize the importance of moving beyond the use and categorization of frames and focus on how these particular frames are created. Public policy scholars van Hulst and Yanow (2016) believe that the frames perspective from social movement theory ignores actual framing and focuses "...on the strategic—conscious, intentional, cognitive—character of the different frame groups..." (p. 95). Van Hulst and Yanow (2016) contend that the Goffmanian "definitions of the situation" social movement theorists create are built to increase the possibility of building alliances or coalitions (p. 95). The strategic aspect of this approach takes away from the intersubjective and creative process of framing.

Van Hulst and Yanow (2016) claim that two elements of theorizing from Goffman's theory are lost in this framing approach. These are: "...that frames develop through highly situated interactional processes of communication, rather than being intentionally created, cognitively, outside an (inter)action context" and "...that situated frames might not lend themselves well to taxonomizing, a universalizing that relies on a sort of 'trait list' approach that ends up both essentializing specific frames and reifying their content" (van Hulst and Yanow,

2016, p. 95). Regarding the first point, certain categories are created outside of a specific situation and framing something general about the movement; for example, diagnosing a larger problem rather than defining the specific situation. For the second point, having a taxonomy of frame types like diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational may not be suitable to all frames of a given situation leaving out certain frames that may not fit within these categories.

Van Hulst and Yanow (2016) contend that these two elements are missing from social movement theory: intersubjective processes of frames and how they are situated to a particular situation can be found in the policy analytic approach (p. 95). As they state:

In our reading of these approaches, social movement theorizing chief among them, “frames” are often treated as objects people possess in their heads and develop for explicitly strategic purposes. By contrast, the policy analytic approach we engage in here shifts the focus to “framing” the interactive, intersubjective processes through which frames are constructed (van Hulst and Yanow, 2016, p. 93).

The policy analytic approach’s focus on framing emphasizes the generation of frames from a given situation as opposed to applying specific categories of frames. This approach is relevant to this project, in particular, the use of grounded theory, as I will not be searching through materials and applying existing frames, but looking at the actual framing generated from the text.

Van Hulst and Yanow (2016) derive their approach from Rein and Schon’s work. Rein and Schon examined policy talk and how “worries” are turned into problems (p. 96). In their policy-focused frame analysis, they highlight the “active work” involved in framing. These are: “...(a) highlighting certain features of a situation, (b) ignoring or selecting out other features, and (c) binding the highlighted features together into a coherent and comprehensible pattern” (p. 96).

According to Rein and Schon's theory, there are three processes involved in the active work of framing: naming, selecting, and storytelling. Rein and Schon focus on policy "talk" (including its written versions), looking at how situation-specific framing might contribute to divisions between policy relevant actors and how conflict between individuals or groups are promoted and maintained in frame-based communication (van Hulst and Yanow, 2016, p. 96).

Van Hulst and Yanow (2016) add to this theory by "...fleshing out three concepts that Schön and Rein introduced but left under-theorized—naming, selecting, and storytelling—and bringing in two related ones—sense-making and categorizing" (p. 99). According to van Hulst and Yanow (2016), selecting is a political act where individuals select certain aspects of a "worrisome situation." Focusing on certain aspects of the situation impacts the groups of decision makers and "worried" societal groups that get involved. It is also practical as it "...reduces the range of stimuli bombarding actors' 'sense (and sense-making) receptors'" this helps them "...frame the situation they are engaging with in ways that they can act in and on" (p. 99). Selection is an important step in the framing process that selects key aspects of the situation for actors to define and act upon.

Features selected for attention need to be named. Policy naming often involves invoking metaphors and applying them to a given situation (van Hulst and Yanow, 2016, p. 99). In order to clarify what is going on, political decision-makers will use metaphors that are commonly used in their own socio-political communities or cultures and draw on metaphors from past occasions "...reflecting their accustomed ways of dealing with situations" (van Hulst, 2016, p. 99). Naming a situation using a particular metaphor, for example terms like "moral decay", presents the situation or problem in a way that is relatable to their audiences and can link the issue at hand to other events in the past.

Storytelling frames and narrates a given situation while explaining to audiences what is going on and needs to be done (p. 100). As van Hulst and Yanow (2016) contend,

That plot weaves story elements together into a text that makes sense as a whole: sketching out the situation in which actors find themselves, establishing a situation's beginnings, tracing its development from something unnoticed or perceived as normal to something perceived as worrisome and/or experienced as problematic, and suggesting or pointing to a possible resolution or "end" (p. 101).

Storytelling is important in texts like *Inspire*, *Rumiyah*, or *Dabiq* that often present Daesh and al Qaeda's struggles as part of one continuous story spanning several historical periods from the crusades to the war in Iraq involving the unchanging enemy loosely defined as the West.

Storytelling is also relevant to individual stories or features in the magazine used to convey the movement's strength or to make sense of certain events or problems including how they have developed and how they should end. In addition, it is relevant to al Qaeda and Daesh's split, more specifically examining what elements of the movement's story they incorporate into their own (e.g. Daesh's incorporation of bin Laden into their story).

Sense-making develops a model of the world reflecting prior sense-making and a model for subsequent action in that world (van Hulst and Yanow, 2016, p. 98). This relates to one of the four tenets of symbolic interactionism: that people act towards things according to meanings that they have acquired in the course of sense-making (van Hulst and Yanow, 2016, p. 98). It is a highly interactive process to create meaning:

...the sense making work of framing can be seen to unfold as actors engage *in a conversation with the situation*, where “the situation” intermingles persons, acts, events, language, and/or objects. At a certain point in the process, actors attribute some initial meaning to the situation at hand, looking to see what happens as a result (van Hulst and Yanow, 2016, p. 98).

Through “engaging in a conversation” with materials, actors, events, and objects, actors make sense of a given situation and decide how to act on it. It is not a stable meaning; it is created through sense-making through interaction as well as past knowledge. *Dabiq* and *Inspire*’s authors are engaging in a conversation with the situation across multiple features and issues to make sense of their situation.

Categorizing is seen as a form of naming that often draws distinctions, while also organizing elements of the situation into meaningful categories. As van Hulst and Yanow contend (2016), “Differences are thereby established between, for instance, natives and immigrants, friends and enemies, victims and perpetrators, normal and abnormal, old and new, work and pleasure, fight and play—whatever is relevant to the issue at hand” (p. 99-100). Categorization is relevant to al Qaeda and Daesh’s coverage of each other, where they may place each other in a particular category of enemies based on categorizations of their allies or affiliates.

Van Hulst and Yanow’s (2016) framework comes from policy framing and public policy discussions, this theorizing is applicable to other settings like social movements and dispute resolutions (p. 105). Though *Inspire* and *Dabiq* are not traditional examples of “public policy talk” the framework from this approach is still applicable to these texts. The dynamic frame construction process of naming, selecting, storytelling, sense-making, and categorizing provides important insights into framing and frame analysis. Selecting establishes what parts of a

particular event are highlighted and what importance the authors give it. Naming processes will help examine the common metaphors and names used to describe their situation, this is where concepts from new social movement theory such as the use of symbols may be useful. Categorizing identifies significant categories outlined by the group, namely self and other, in other words, notions of identity. Sense-making or conversations these actors have with their situation provides an account of the kind of world they build, what it ought to be, and how individuals can act in or on it. Storytelling is another key concept in *Dabiq* and *Inspire*, whether it is a story found in an individual issue, or spanning across several issues, the stories each group tells showcase how they frame particular movement goals or situations.

When identifying what frames Daesh and al Qaeda employ in their publications, symbolic interactionism and its premises by Blumer and Mead and its expansion by Snow (2003), break down the interactional process of meaning making, which underlies the development of frames. Goffman's (1986) notion of the frame and framing analysis outlines and builds an understanding of how these groups may make sense of their situation. Drawing on Goffman's work, Snow and Benford illustrate how such frames can be employed to promote a particular movement. However, movements are not always looking at concrete or "practical" issues and may not necessarily fit within Snow and Benford's (1988) diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frame categories. Having said this, other elements like movement culture, performance, symbols, and emotions from new social movement theory as outlined by Williams (2004), Goodwin et al. (2001) and McAdams (1994) must also be taken into account. Van Hulst and Yanow (2016) illustrate the dynamic process behind framing rather than focusing on established types of frames. An understanding of the framing process will be helpful in analyzing these texts and identifying al Qaeda and Daesh's situational and movement specific frames and

how the themes and patterns from these frames can provide insights into each group's general narrative.

Methodological Approach

The theoretical perspectives of symbolic interactionism and framing, as outlined in the previous section, are integral to grounded theory as they both involve the generation of meaning and concepts like frames to make sense of a larger situation. Simply put, grounded theory involves developing theory from data. Grounded theory has been successfully employed in other studies of extremist groups; for example, J.M. Berger (2017) employed a grounded theory analysis in his study of texts from the Christian Identity movement to develop a theory of how particular movements change over time from non-violent to violent. Both *Inspire* and *Dabiq* provide a rich data set for generating theory. Not only can I study the evolution of these movements through time, I can also examine how they generate a larger narrative.

The first section is a brief introduction to grounded theory. This will be followed by a discussion of different trends within grounded theory, which will be followed by discussion of this method's limitations and how I have applied it to this study.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory was first developed by Barony Glaser and Anselm Straus in their 1967 book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. According to grounded theory scholar Kathy Chamraz (2014), Glaser and Straus "...proposed that systemic qualitative analysis had its own logic and could generate theory" (p.7). Grounded theory scholar Ian Dey (1999), contends that Glaser and Straus's book was a polemical work, because it countered dominant forms of theorizing in

sociology at the time, which involved speculative or deductive forms of theorizing, where theories were developed and “tested” against the data (p. 12).

Grounded theory was not only a new method, it also presented a new approach to addressing qualitative research. This approach evolved in studies of health, with a focus on nursing, where it was first applied by Glaser and Strauss (Dey, 1999, p. 12). The purpose of this approach is to engage with the data – be it interview or focus group responses, or documents – in order to develop a theory, rather than testing or applying a theory to this data.

There are many types of grounded theory, grounded theory scholar Kathy Charmaz (2014) presents a fairly comprehensive definition.

Stated simply, grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories from the data themselves. Thus researchers construct a theory grounded in their data. Grounded theory begins with inductive data, invokes iterative strategies of going back and forth between data and analysis, uses comparative methods, and keeps you interacting and involved with your data and emerging analysis (p. 1).

With grounded theory, the researcher uses their background knowledge to reflect on the data and the analysis of the given data. This method works for this study because *Inspire*, *Rumiyah* and *Dabiq* provide rich data on how each group presents itself. Using this data, I can continuously interact with it and develop new insights into the ways that Daesh and al Qaeda develop their ideas and promote their respective movements.

The defining components of practising grounded theory according to Glaser and Strauss are:

- Simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis
- Constructing analytical codes and categories from data, not from preconceived logically deduced hypotheses
- Using the constant comparison method, which involves making comparisons during each stage of the analysis.
- Advancing theory development during each step of data collection and analysis
- Memo-writing to elaborate categories, specify their properties, define relationships between categories, and identify gaps
- Sampling aimed towards theory construction (theoretical sampling), not for population representativeness
- Conducting the literature review after developing independent analysis (Charmaz, 2014 p. 7)

Analysis happens while the data is being collected and this is an ongoing process where the researcher continues to generate categories and constantly compare data gathered from the analysis with more data collected throughout the project. Instead of a specific research question, the researcher presents a general issue and questions emerge in the process. Though in classical grounded theory the literature review is delayed and typically written after the analysis, this idea has changed as I will explain below.

The Constructivist Turn

Grounded theory, like other methods has generated many disputes – even amongst its founders (Dey, 1999, p. 2) —and has gone through many shifts. One example of this would be the constructivist turn. According to Charmaz (2014), the constructivist turn with respect to grounded theory, developed in the 1990s when scholars tried to move grounded theory away from the positivism of Glaser and Straus’s version (Charmaz p. 13; Dey, 1999, pp. 14-15). The constructivist turn highlighted the flexibility and resisted the mechanical application of the method. According to Charmaz (2014), the constructivist approach to grounded theory rejects the notion of a “neutral” and “value free” observer, which means researchers need to examine their values and preconceptions rather than erase them and acknowledge that these values may shape how they identify certain facts (p. 13). The researcher is not “objective” nor do they attempt to shed their values or preconceptions; research is constructed rather than discovered. As a researcher, I am studying Daesh and al Qaeda’s construction of the world and my view of it is a construction in itself. This is because my preconceptions are constantly changing, but they add to the understanding of the subject and must be acknowledged.

One debate stemming from the constructivist turn is the role of the literature review (Charmaz, 2014, p. 309). As mentioned previously, in classical grounded theory, it is argued that the literature review should not be conducted until after the analysis to avoid the researcher importing and imposing ideas on their work as opposed to developing their own ideas (Charmaz, 2014, p. 306). According to Charmaz (2014), many grounded theory scholars have rejected the practice of delaying the literature review as they believe Glaser and Straus may have “naively viewed the researcher as a tabula rasa” (p. 306). In addition, disputes over delaying the literature review make the incorrect assumption that the reader of the literature is not a critical reader and

lacking familiarity with a body of literature is nearly impossible and very unlikely as the researcher typically has knowledge in the field before beginning their project (Chamraz, 2014, p. 306).

According to Chamraz (2014) including both a literature review and theoretical framework in a grounded theory study can be useful for sources of comparison and analysis as comparing other scholars' evidence shows "... how their ideas illuminate your theoretical categories and how your theory extends, transcends, or challenges dominant ideas in your field" (p. 305). For this study, the literature review and theoretical framework inform my analysis of these texts and provide me with concepts that will help in explaining the theories that emerge from this research. I use the existing theory for this project to develop generative insights to guide the research and the literature review helps in explaining the significance of these concepts.

Limitations

Like any method, grounded theory has limitations. According to Bruce L. Berg (2007), the main limitations of qualitative content analysis and grounded theory are that they are limited to recorded messages and that it is "ineffective for testing causal relationships between variables" (p. 328). Addressing the first limitation, I am looking at fixed, recorded texts, but I am not looking to understand the psychology of the individuals involved in this movement or how they interact with particular audiences, issues that might be better addressed through observation or in-person interaction. I am looking at the narratives and strategies that these groups employ in their publications, so looking at *Dabiq*, *Rumiyah* and *Inspire* is a better way to examine these issues. With regards to causal effects, I am not examining how these texts impact or are

perceived by audiences, but looking at the story that they are trying to present as I understand it; the purpose of my project is not to measure effects of a given text.

Another possible limitation of grounded theory could be that my observations and the theories I develop are my based on my own constructions of the given text. Though I am reading the text critically, it is still subjective. It is nearly impossible to be completely objective and often different perspectives bring new insights into the understanding of a given text; the text is not a fixed object with one meaning, but open to all new kinds of interpretations. As well, this issue is applicable to other methods where the researcher may consciously or unconsciously focus on one aspect of a given phenomenon.

Methodology

This section outlines how I conducted my research. After downloading the magazines from jihadology.net, a clearinghouse of jihadist group material provided for free, run by terrorism scholar Aaron Zelin, I placed the documents into NVIVO, a software program typically used for qualitative analysis. NVIVO allows the user to code material using nodes, which are labels used to categorize material that fits under a specific theme. I labeled the nodes using the codes I developed, which I then applied to the relevant text in order to organize it under that specific code. I closely read each magazine in its entirety, but my analysis focused on written texts in the magazines such as articles, reports, interviews, and opinion pieces. Though the images were very rich, I focused on themes in the written text to keep the project within a manageable scope. Using a grounded theory process, I conducted my research in three major phases: open coding and memoing; the development of conceptual categories; and theoretical coding (Stern and Porr, 2011, p. 62). It is important to note that grounded theory is quite emergent and flexible as a method. Having said this, new insights emerge from the text and

throughout the process. These phases that may not always be linear as new concepts emerge from the text, which may involve a return to earlier phases.

Phase 1: Open Coding and Memoing

Open-coding consists of generating and assigning codes to particular data segments as the researcher reads through the text. In grounded theory studies, data collection occurs simultaneously with data analysis. The reading of subsequent texts was influenced by the reading of the first text. I developed codes as I read through the text. The codes were based on relevant themes that emerged from a close reading of the text, which was informed by my knowledge of the literature on al Qaeda, Daesh, and the wider jihadist movement. As the project went on, these codes were applied to subsequent texts and new codes were added for any newer themes that appeared. I ended up with a total of 247 initial codes (See Appendix: Table 2 for the list of my initial codes) while also keeping track of their frequency. I read the al Qaeda publications first in chronological order followed by the Daesh publications. I read the magazines from each group together to capture the progression of the group's recruitment narratives over time and how each movement describes the other (i.e. how al Qaeda discusses Daesh in their publications and vice versa). I started with al Qaeda's publications as the first few issues in my sample preceded the launch of *Dabiq* and Daesh's establishment of their so-called Caliphate. As I read through each issue, I wrote memos, which are notes on insights and patterns I observed.

Phase 2: The Development of Conceptual Categories

The second phase involved consolidating and organizing the information I had collected. I read through my list of codes and sorted and condensed them into larger conceptual categories. I was able to do this by comparing the different codes and the text to which the code is applied.

When I clicked on the code (or node), NVIVO would display the text I ascribed to that code. Based on the subject of the code itself and the reading of coded material, I sorted these different codes into larger categories for example taking the concept of “critiquing al Qaeda” and “Daesh as a legitimate threat” and placing it under “Daesh as a legitimate movement.” I ended up with a total of 24 condensed conceptual categories (See Appendix: Table 3 for the condensed codes).

Phase 3: Theoretical Coding/Building a Conceptual Framework

During this phase, I analyzed the conceptual categories, memos and other data to build a theoretical framework. More specifically, I examined the relationships between particular conceptual categories, or families of codes, and sorted my memos (Stern and Porr, 2011, p. 63). When sorting and comparing conceptual categories and codes, I looked at their relationships with each other; for example, if there are codes that reflect the main themes of a specific conceptual category, or if there are relationships between certain conceptual categories (Stern and Porr, 2011, p. 63). I sorted out the memos into conceptual categories to discover themes that will provide more insights into the sorting of existing conceptual categories and the eventual building of a theoretical structure. As mentioned previously, because this is an emergent and flexible process, this involved going back to read coded material and comparing conceptual codes as well as writing new memos or insights during the process of framework development. It is also worth noting again that this process is also influenced by insights gathered from the literature review and theoretical framework developed in the previous chapters.

Grounded theory is the most suitable approach for this project because it focuses on how theory emerges from data like documents or texts like *Dabiq*, *Rumiyah* and *Inspire*. Grounded theory is suitable for the theoretical perspective, symbolic interactionism, because it is a way to make sense of particular situations emerging from the texts; not necessarily in terms of applying

a frame to a situation, but van Hulst's ideas of framing and the creation of meaning emerging from a particular situation, or in this case, a specific text.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the goal of this theoretical framework and methodological approach is to develop a way to analyze *Dabiq*, *Rumiyah*, and *Inspire* magazine to answer the questions: How do al Qaeda and Daesh promote and adapt a bipolar (Islam versus the West) yet flexible movement narrative to connect diverse audiences in Western societies meaningfully to their respective movements? What are the common frames al Qaeda and Daesh use to appeal to these audiences? The evidence I gathered through this research outlines how each group develops common frames. A grounded theory analysis can pull from themes emerging from the text that reveal how these groups build a collective identity and narrative, which could shed light on what brings supporters together. Daesh and al Qaeda often see themselves as protectors of the ummah working on a transnational level spanning across culturally and geopolitically diverse areas, yet they rally around a narrow religious identity. Though it is impossible to boil down one's identity to one facet, it is interesting how a group built around a type of rigid identity can expand its reach by finding commonalities with other groups around the world. I believe that this requires a form of strategic framing and meaning making. These frames not only shed light on global jihadist movements, but could also apply to other groups; for example, White nationalists uniting under a banner, or particular frames, around defending the "White race" sharing their struggles with groups in countries with different political and historical contexts like the United States, Denmark, the United Kingdom, and Germany.

Chapter 5: Introducing Inspire, Dabiq, and Rumiyyah

The purpose of this chapter is to familiarize the reader with the selected texts, al Qaeda's *Inspire* and Daesh's *Dabiq* and *Rumiyyah*, as well as their common themes and features. In the first section, I will briefly describe the issues of *Inspire*, *Dabiq* and *Rumiyyah* that I have selected for this study. The second section provides summaries of the main themes in the selected issues of *Inspire* magazine followed by a description of *Inspire*'s common features. This will be followed by a summary of the selected issues of *Dabiq* and *Rumiyyah*; features exclusive to *Dabiq*, features found in *Rumiyyah* and *Dabiq* and features exclusive to *Rumiyyah*.

The Selected Texts

I have selected ten magazines from each group: ten issues of *Inspire* and ten Daesh publications (five issues of *Dabiq* and five issues of *Rumiyyah*) (See the magazine guide and list of Islamic calendar months in Table 1). For *Inspire*, I examined issues 8-17, this roughly spans Fall of 2011 to Summer of 2017, a period that overlaps with the rise of Daesh (when it announced the formation of its Caliphate in 2014) and its separation from al Qaeda. I also examined *Dabiq* issues 5-9 (October 2014-May 2015) and *Rumiyyah*'s issues 9-13 (May-August 2017). My intention is to capture Daesh's narrative in its early days when it still held major territory and a later period, starting around 2016, when Daesh lost significant territory. These issues provide a good sketch of both Daesh and al Qaeda's narratives.

As mentioned previously, *Inspire* was first published in mid 2010 by al Malahem Media, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's (AQAP) media arm (Ingram, 2017a, p. 358). It was the first English language publication published by al Qaeda or an affiliate. The magazine was founded by American al Qaeda members Anwar al Awlaki and Samir Khan. *Inspire* authors' use

of American colloquial language, humour, and pop cultural references distinguished it from other jihadist publications (Lemieux et al. 2014, p. 358). The magazine influenced other Jihadist publications including *Dabiq*. *Dabiq* was produced by al Hayat Media, Daesh's media foundation. It was a successor to Islamic State Report, an English-language newsletter featuring photo reports and short articles on Daesh's political and military campaigns (Ingram, 2017a, p. 358). After losing territory in 2016 the magazine was relaunched as *Rumiyah* (or Rome).

Both Magazines are in PDF form, with graphics and images. Though the imagery is quite rich, I focus on the written text to keep this project within a manageable scope. I downloaded these magazines without payment from terrorism scholar Aaron Zelin's *jihadology.net*, which is an online clearing house of jihadist material. When I conducted my analysis, the magazines were available on the site, but now the magazines are only available to those who register for an account.

Inspire Magazine

Overall *Inspire* presents a DIY (do it yourself) ethic in their publication meaning that the authors almost exclusively promote lone wolf attacks over travel to al Qaeda's theatres of operation. The publication itself—its detailed weapons and attack manuals and articles providing ideological support for these attacks— is presented as a powerful tool for individuals to act on al Qaeda's behalf. *Inspire's* tone is very casual with frequent use of American slang, and references to American popular culture. Al Qaeda's DIY ethic is fairly consistent across all ten issues in my sample. This theme is more pronounced in the later issues that feature types of lone wolf attacks (e.g. derailing trains, assassinations etc.) as cover stories and focus most of the issue's features around this theme.

I examined *Inspire* issues 8- 17, for ten issues in total. At the time of writing, *Inspire* had seventeen known issues. These issues were published between Fall of 2011 (*Inspire 8*), or 1432 according to the Islamic calendar, and the last issue, *Inspire 17* was published in the Summer of 2018 (1438). *Inspire*'s authors date their publications using both Gregorian calendar years and Islamic calendar years paired with the season (i.e. Summer, Spring, Fall/Autumn, and Winter). The *Inspire* issues selected for this study ranged from 38-112 pages in length (an average of 73.1 pages per issue). Overall, the magazine is quite glossy and professional looking, however, there are quite a few grammatical and spelling errors throughout the magazine. This section summarizes the main themes in *Inspire* issues 8-17.

Inspire 8: Targeting Dar Al-Harb Populations (Fall 2011)

The cover story "Targeting Dar Al-Harb Populations" is a piece by al Awlaki where he discusses the legality, according to his interpretation of Islamic laws, of targeting civilian populations in countries "at war with the Muslims." This issue has a long feature profiling the "martyrdom" of several al Qaeda figures. It also features a piece by Samir Khan entitled "Blended Duality: Muslim and American" where Khan argues that these two identities cannot coexist without contradicting each other.

Inspire 9: Winning on the Ground Winter 2012

The feature story "Winning on the Ground" focuses on the American government's assassination of senior jihadi figures using drone warfare. More specifically, the author argues that drone warfare is ineffective and will not destroy al Qaeda. The author argues that drone strikes are making al Qaeda stronger by bringing civilians to al Qaeda's cause. There is a

“martyrs special,” which includes pieces on Awlaki and Khan.²⁹The piece on Awlaki is a posthumously released in-depth interview where Awlaki shares his experiences in America and his journey to join AQAP in Yemen. The feature commemorating Samir Khan discusses his life and legacy and includes his martyrdom statement at the end of the article. This issue also features an article distinguishing al Qaeda members from “Christian terrorists” like Anders Brevick.³⁰

Inspire 10: We are all Usama (Spring 2013)

This issue focuses on defending the Prophet Mohammad as a continuation of “The Dust will never Settle down Campaign,” which originally started in *Inspire 1*. This is in reaction to Terry Jones (an American pastor and anti-Islamic activist, who organized controversial events like Quran burnings) promoting and screening a film “The Innocence of Muslims,” a film that was seen as insulting to the Prophet Muhammad and Muslims. Massive protests about the film happened in places like Egypt and Libya. The authors, in a statement at the beginning of this issue, and in other features, call on readers to attack those who insult the Prophet. Authors also discuss other incidents where, mostly Western, commentators and public figures have insulted the Prophet and this issue even features a black and white photo “hit list” of these major figures with their names and photographs. This issue also features articles on France’s intervention in Mali “France, The Imbecile Invader,” the American Army and their ethics (or lack thereof) in

²⁹ Both Awlaki and Khan were killed in a drone strike in September 2011 (Schone and Cole, 2011).

³⁰ On July 22, 2011 Anders Brevick attacked a youth camp near Oslo, killing 77 people by gunshot (most of them teenagers); a few drowned trying to escape. The camp was associated with a youth wing of a liberal political party that embraced multiculturalism. Within hours of the shooting, Brevick had posted a 1500-page manifesto online. The threat of Islam to Europe was a dominant theme in the manifesto (Juergensmeyer, 2017, pp. 20-21).

“American Army & War Ethics” and an article on how Awlaki's death impacts the group:

“America Will Never Profit from the assassination of Imam Anwar al Awlaki.”

Inspire 11 (Special Issue): Who & Why? (Spring 2013)

Inspire 11 is marked as a special issue, mostly covering the Boston Marathon Bombings carried out by Tamerlane and Dzhokar Tsarnaev. The Tsarnaev brothers were said to have used *Inspire 1*'s guide “Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of your Mom” to build the pressure cooker bombs used in the attack. The main cover story “Who and Why?” discusses individuals who were “Inspired by *Inspire*”, mostly focusing on the Tsarnaev brothers’ Boston Marathon bombing and others who used the magazine to plan an attack. There is a “Message to the American Nation” written by an al Qaeda commander warning America of more attacks should they continue to attack Muslims and support Israel. There is a piece entitled “Dear American Muslim,” which has an image of an equation next to it. The image reads, “Political decisions (image of Obama) + Bombarding Muslims (image of a man dead lying close to an ambulance) = Boston bombing (image of the Boston bombing). This letter portrays the Boston Bombings as a powerful example of young Muslims’ strength to take down the enemy (America) and calls on American Muslims to target American society, a society that does not accept them. This issue provides an in depth look into the Boston bombing, discussing the planning, execution and rationale behind the attack.

Inspire 12: Shattered a Story about Change (Spring 2014)

The “Story of change” may be a reference to Obama’s motto “Change” during the 2012 election. The general focus of this issue is portraying America as a weak enemy, in terms of moral, economic, and military strength. They report on the Westgate mall attacks in Nairobi³¹ in "The End of Safari" a piece written by "A Shabab Mujahid Bro." Many articles discuss America's weakness and inevitable defeat citing crimes it has committed against the Japanese and Germans in WWII and the Vietnamese during the Vietnam war. The authors claim that America’s use of drones and Obama's claims that al Qaeda has been weakened significantly are signs of America's weakness. There is a small feature on drone warfare “Drones: Firing or backfiring?”, which features quotes from advocacy groups, activists, and publications like *The Guardian* on the problems of drone warfare. It also features a parody interview with Obama using text from one of Obama's speeches as responses to questions written by the author.

Inspire 13: NEUROtMESIS: Cutting the Nerves and Isolating the head (Winter 2014)

"Cutting the nerves and isolating the head," the cover story, describes how conducting lone wolf attacks aimed at “the nerves” of America, meaning economic and military targets, will remove “their head” from the world. In other words, lone wolf attacks will drain America’s resources leading to America’s defeat. The authors promote *Inspire Magazine* as a powerful tool for targetting the West. This issue also includes an exclusive interview with the “AQ Chef” who often writes recipes for explosives and other weapons in the regular Open Source Jihad (OSJ) feature (which will be discussed in a later section). It also features “The Battle of the Marathon: A Message to the 99%” a message addressing the Occupy Wall Street movement arguing that it

³¹ On September 21st, 2013, al Shabaab militants attacked a shopping centre in Nairobi throwing grenades and firing at shoppers. The siege lasted 80 hours and a total of 67 people were killed (Howden, 2013)

should be protesting its government for funding wars against Muslim countries, rather than Wall Street bankers.

Inspire 14: Assassination Operations (Summer 2015)

The coverage and analysis of the planning and execution of the attacks on *Charlie Hebdo*'s— a satirical magazine that had published cartoons about The Prophet Mohammad— head quarters in Paris on January 7, 2015 is the central theme in this issue. On January 7, 2015 brothers Cherif and Said Kouachi opened fire on *Charlie Hebdo* staff, killing a total of twelve people including eight journalists and two police officers. After a long police chase and manhunt, the brothers were killed in a shootout with police. The *Charlie Hebdo* attack is mentioned both in a statement from al Qaeda claiming responsibility for the attack as well as the feature article "Charlie Hebdo-A Military Analysis" describing the attack's planning, strategy, and execution. This issue also features the article "The Blacks in America," which discusses the history of racism in America in light of high-profile cases of unarmed African Americans being shot and killed by police, including Michael Brown and Freddie Gray (who were killed in August 2014 and April 2015 respectively). The article begins with the history of slavery, followed by segregation and current police brutality towards African Americans. The author calls on African Americans to join in al Qaeda's battle against America as they are both facing the same racist enemy. This issue also included a written sermon entitled "Remembering Boston" commemorating the Boston Marathon bombings, praising the attacks, and presenting the Tsaernev brothers as an example for Muslim youth to follow.

Inspire 15: Professional Assassinations (Spring 2016)

The feature of this issue, Professional Assassinations, provides guidance and instructions on conducting home assassinations through various methods including parcel, car, and magnetic door bombs. Another feature, “Let Us Unite for Palestine”, a piece by Zawahiri, discusses the need for unity within the jihadist movement, which may be the first indirect critique of Daesh. Another piece describes a so-called “Revolution of the Knives” discussing knife attacks or stabbings around the world, which they call "Operations against the Jews". "Inside Obamas rationality" describes Obama as an evil dictator, but not a “crazy” dictator like Hitler or Stalin, but one who is deceptive as he allegedly creates a facade of rationality.

Inspire 16 (Special Issue): The 9/17 Operations (Autumn 2016)

This is a special issue on what the authors call “the 9/17 operations.” On September 17th, 2016, a man shouted “Allahu Akbar” and stabbed eight people in a Minnesota mall. The same day that morning, there was an explosion in the Chelsea neighbourhood in Manhattan, and in New Jersey there was an explosive device placed in a garbage can during a marathon (there were no injuries). The authors do not directly claim the attacks that occurred this day but imply a link between these attacks and *Inspire*’s calls and instructions for lone jihad. They provide an *Inspire* guide to the attacks and other articles promoting “lone jihad.” A large feature in this issue features media reactions to these incidents from several media outlets in America. This includes pages with small quotes from public figures as well as a feature showcasing significant portions of articles covering these incidents from publications like *The Washington Times*, *The Washington Post*, *CNN*, *The Daily Mail*, and *The New York Times*.

Inspire 17: Train Derail Operations (Summer 2017)

The main cover story in this issue is train derail operations. A large OSJ section and a few small features are dedicated to derailing trains; the authors describe trains that run through America (and some European countries) as ideal targets as they are difficult to secure. They include an article explaining why targeting transportation is important. Along with detailed manuals on train derail attacks, the OSJ section also features a one-page chart that features lone wolf attacks including Omar Matin's 2016 attack in Orlando³² and Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel's 2016 truck attack in Nice³³, which were alleged Daesh-inspired attacks. The chart outlines details like the attack's strengths and weaknesses, the method the assailant employed, and the issue of *Inspire* that promoted this kind of attack. In an interview with an Amir, or leader, of al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, there is a direct critique of Daesh by name and comments on President Donald Trump. This issue also features a piece entitled "Advice for Martyrdom Seekers in The West" by Hamza Bin Laden, Osama bin Laden's son.

Inspire Magazine Features

Inspire has a few regular features. Each issue has a foreword, or a type of letter from the editor, at the beginning. The magazine features articles and speeches translated into English by figures like Osama bin Laden and Ayman Zawahiri, as well as many English-language articles by figures like al Awlaki and Samir Khan. In this section, I will describe some of the main features in an average issue of *Inspire* to provide the reader some background information on the

³² On June 12, 2016 Omar Mateen opened fire in a gay night club in Orlando killing 49 and wounding 53 others. Mateen was killed in the ensuing gun battle when a SWAT team went in to rescue hostages. Mateen had allegedly made calls to 911 pledging allegiance to Daesh who later claimed the attack (Shapiro, 2016).

³³ On July 14, 2016 Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel drove a cargo truck into a crowd of people celebrating Bastille Day in Nice, France killing 84 and wounding 202. Daesh claimed responsibility for the attack and though evidence suggested Lahouaiej-Bouhlel planned the attack, there was no evidence that he or his accomplices had direct contact with Daesh (Sanchez, 2016).

publication. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of every feature, but a very general description of some of the common features.

The first section is a discussion of features that invite readers to participate in the magazine's production, which is followed by a discussion of the "Hear the World" feature and other listicle features like "Questions we Should be Asking", "Did you Know?" and Mujahid's Notes. This is followed by a discussion of "Open Source Jihad", articles, interviews, statements, "Inspire Reactions", and advertisements.

Invitations to Participate

Invitations for readers to participate in the magazine's production are common in most issues of *Inspire*. In the table of contents and the contact page at the end of each issue, there are invitations for readers to participate along with the ways that they can contact al Malahem media, including email addresses and the code for *asrar al mujahidin*, its preferred encryption software. In *Inspire* 8-11, the contact information and public key for the encryption software are at the top of the table of contents. There is a note from the editor at the bottom of the table of contents calling for "voluntary contributions" including correspondence, advice, written contributions, photographs, and illustrations. In addition, there is an invitation to participate in the last pages of the magazine. This page features the al Malahem logo and an animated image of a computer screen with a call for readers to contact them if they have any skills they can contribute, whether it is writing, research, editing, or advice. For *Inspire* 11-17, the invitation to participate changes: there is a note in the table of contents, "NOTE: DUE TO TECHNICAL AND SECURITY REASONS, WE HAVE SUSPENDED OUR EMAIL ADDRESSES TEMPORARILY" (al Malahem, 2014, p. 1). Issues 11-17 also do not contain a "contact us" page at the end of the magazine.

Hear the World

“Hear the world: Quotes from Friends and Foe” is a regular feature, which typically appears at the beginning of the magazine following the table of contents. It is a listicle type feature sharing short quotations from people within and outside of al Qaeda and the global jihadist movement. “Hear the World” features many scholars including terrorism experts like Gabriel Weimann and Bruce Hoffman, as well as other critical voices in the West like Slavoj Zizek and Noam Chomsky (who appears in this feature several times). This feature also quotes US officials like then Vice President Joe Biden, President Obama, FBI director James Comey and others. Journalists and activists who do not come from the jihadist movement, from places like the United Kingdom, United States, and Yemen, are also featured. Generally speaking, these selected quotes highlight the strength of al Qaeda— be it the through the threat of lone wolf attacks or al Qaeda gaining more recruits due to drone strikes. “Hear the World” also features critiques of America and its allies’ foreign policy or America’s social weaknesses (e.g. poverty, gun violence etc.) with most of these critiques coming from American voices. Though “Hear the World” features figures from within the global jihadist movement, most quotations come from figures outside of the movement.

In terms of the layout, “Hear the World” is displayed on a background of what looks like a website called jihadtalk.com (it is written in the browser, but at the time of writing, this website did not exist) on what appears to be an Apple laptop. The layout looks like a social media page like Twitter as the title is written like a Twitter handle, @heartheworld, with a small thumbnail photo near the handle. Each quote is displayed beside the image of the individual with their name and source under it. However, when they quoted a female journalist, Jenna McLaughlin, in *Inspire 15*, they did not include an image of her, but the logo of her news organization *The*

Intercept, an online news publication, which claims to focus on “adversarial” journalism. Many of these quotes are attributed to mainstream organizations like *CNN*, *The Huffington Post*, *CBS*, *Al Jazeera*, *WNYV News*, and *France 24*. They also collect quotes, typically those from within the global jihadist movement, from their own media outlets like *Al Sahab* or certain jihadist books.

“*Did You know?*”, “*Numb3rs speak louder than words*”, and “*Questions we should be asking*”

The “Did you Know?”, “Numb3rs Speak Louder than Words,” and “Questions we Should be Asking” features typically follow “Hear the World” or sometimes appear near other features throughout the magazine. These features are quite short and typically do not take up more than half a page. “Did You know?” shares certain statistics or “facts,” often facts that make al Qaeda’s enemies look weaker, both morally and in terms of security. For example, in *Inspire 11* the “Did you know?” feature, which was written beneath the letter from the editor, shares the following, “Did you know that America, the self-acclaimed children rights defender, exploits children under the age of 10 to plant chips on those who oppose their policies for the unmanned drones?” (al Malahem, 2013, p.2). No source is provided for this information. *Inspire 15* had a full page “Did you know?” feature, which reads, “Did you know that 77% of Americans are not confident that their government can protect them from a lone wolf attack?” (al Malahem, 2016, p. 7). This is written in the middle of an image of a big city at night and the authors attribute this information to an *ABC News/Washington Post* poll.

“Numb3rs speak louder than words” plays a similar role to “Did You Know?” and shares certain statistics. *Inspire 12* features the following stats, “In US, one in four young black men say police treated them unfairly. Moreover, 24% of black males aged 18 to 34 say that they have been treated unfairly by police in July 2013 alone, compared with 13% of young Hispani males

who say the same. Gallup Editor-in-Chief Frank Newport,” “79% of Americans believe the economy is still in recession vs. 19% do not think so. Washington Post/ABC News Poll (Dec 2013),” and “1 in 3 parents of K-12 children fear for the safety of their kids at school. Gallup (Dec 2013)” ([sic] al Malahem, 2014a, p. 12). Again, these are facts, allegedly from American news outlets, pointing out America’s social problems and weaknesses.

The “Questions we Should be Asking” feature often asks leading questions where the conclusion should be quite clear to the reader; for example, *Inspire 9* features questions like:

Will the Muslims in Libya give up their weaponry after it was one of the main reasons for the fall down of Gadafi's tyrannical regime? Will the so called “democratic elections” in Yemen change the political climate and do the Yemenis actually know that those elections are just an extension of Ali Saleh's regime? Do they really believe something will change? Why only the disgraced incidents like the burning of the Qur’an that took place in the American army base in Afghanistan will show the Afghan Muslims that their real enemy is the disbelieving Americans and not the Taliban? ([sic] al Malahem, 2012, p. 7).

Together, these features present quick “facts” about al Qaeda’s enemies, implying that al Qaeda is the movement countering, or simply standing against, these enemies and the harms they are committing.

News Flash/Mujahid’s notes

The layout for this feature is an animated desk with material written in notebooks, scattered pieces of paper, and post-its. The desk has items like pens, cups of coffee, passports, laptops, along with materials like lightbulbs, screws, nails, and batteries (items used to build

explosives) as well as handguns and grenades. This feature first starts out as “News flash” featured in *Inspire 9* and *10*. It later becomes Mujahid’s notes in *Inspire 12-15*.

Newsflash’s layout is one page of a coiled notebook on a desk. On the notebook are four to five short summaries of major events, written in what looks like handwritten text, next to a photograph relating to the respective event. In addition to happenings within the al Qaeda movement, they also cover current events outside of its territories. For example, *Inspire 8’s* “*News Flash*” featured a short report on the London riots causing “450,000 in damages and being caused by social ills,” a tornado in Oklahoma, as well as how Jabat al Nusrah (al Qaeda’s former affiliate in Syria in Iraq) has won over hearts and minds by providing fuel and bread and establishing sharia courts (al Malahem, 2011, p. 8).

“Mujahids notes,” has a similar layout to “News Flash” with brief bullet points summarizing major stories. Compared to its predecessor “News Flash,” the “Mujahid’s notes” feature is much busier as the text is not only written on a notebook in a few bullet points, but all around the page on scattered notepads and post-its. It is an interesting combination of a listicle and bulletin board made up of news items (often written in bullet point form), photographs (including images of attackers like the Koachi brothers and marked up photos of enemies like Bashar al Assad), as well as jokes and commentary (writing reactions to certain events often mocking their enemies). The authors report on different events and issues such as successful lone jihad attacks, police shootings in America, drone strikes in Yemen, American Soldiers suffering from PTSD, and other events in al Qaeda’s theatres of operation.

Inspire also has other listicle features that occur less frequently like “Words of Wisdom” featuring short quotations from people within the global jihadist movement like Bin Laden, Zarqawi, and Sayyed Qutb (on occasion they feature those outside of the movement like Malcom

X). There are also listicles for specific issues as seen in *Inspire 12*'s "In Hot Pursuit of a Mirage, Drones: Firing or Back firing?" featuring critiques of drone warfare by human rights activists and members of the American military and political establishment, "Jihadi Tweets" in *Inspire 11* showcasing reactions to the Boston Bombing allegedly from jihadists on Twitter; and *Inspire 12* "Echoes Behind Enemy Lines" , which features tweets allegedly written from those outside of the al Qaeda movement (presumably living in the West), critiquing American foreign policy, policies in the Middle East in particular.

Open Source Jihad

Open Source Jihad (OSJ) is regular feature in *Inspire*. This section provides instructions and guidance for planning and carrying out attacks. OSJ typically appears near the end of each issue. The OSJ section usually has a cover page listing the features in this section. This cover page usually features an image of a major city (perhaps a possible target); for example, *Inspire 12* shows an image of Times Square and *Inspire 10* shows an image of a highway. The cover page is usually followed by a page that looks like a large dictionary entry written on a black page with white letters. In *Inspire 10*, and pretty much every other issue, OSJ is described on this page as,

A resource manual for those who loathe the tyrants; includes bomb making techniques, Security measures, guerilla tactics, weapons training and all other Jihad related activities. Informal: A disaster for the repressive imperialistic nations: The open source jihad is the America's worst nightmare. It allows Muslims to train at home instead of risking a dangerous travel abroad: *Look no further open source jihad is now at hands reach* ([sic] al Malahem, 2013a, p. 50).

When it comes to planning and executing attacks, OSJ focuses on the “how” rather than the “why”, which is often the focus of the rest of the magazine. OSJ features detailed manuals including step by step guides featuring photos and diagrams. They present a variety of attack methods such as training with a handgun and remote control detonation (*Inspire 8*); fire bombs (*Inspire 9*), torching parked vehicles and causing road accidents (*Inspire 10*), making a hidden bomb using kitchen ingredients (*Inspire 13*), making a timed hand grenade (*Inspire 13*), making bombs for home assassination like parcel, door trap, and magnetic car bombs (*Inspire 15*), and derailing trains (*Inspire 17*).

On occasion, OSJ includes features that are not specific instructions for carrying out an attack. OSJ in *Inspire 10* had a Question and Answer type feature, “You Ask We answer,” featuring questions regarding how to plan an attack and how an individual in his current profession can help al Qaeda. Answers to the first question includes advice on mental and spiritual preparation as well as suggestions for planning attacks from OSJ sections in previous issues of *Inspire*. With regards to the second question, the authors provide two examples: a doctor and a journalist. Doctors are told that they can help al Qaeda by making poisons like anthrax and journalists are told that they can help using special access to certain areas as a surveillance method to track “the enemies of Allah.” *Inspire 13*’s OSJ section includes an interview with the regular contributor to this section, the AQ chef, who typically writes manuals for building explosives and other weapons.

Articles

Like other magazines, *Inspire* has a number of articles on topics ranging from religious guidance to current events. These articles feature al Qaeda's interpretation of selected religious rulings or precedent (in scripture or history) on certain actions, mostly so-called lone-jihad or targeting civilians. It is important to note that "religious" themes and references to scriptures are prominent throughout the magazine and its different features, not just those articles focused on providing al Qaeda's interpretations of religious guidance, rulings, or justification.

Inspire has several articles on al Qaeda's enemies and their actions. In many cases, the authors draw a connection between their enemies' current actions to the Crusades and/or past colonial rule, often labeling current actions as a continuation of colonization. *Inspire 8* features an article "Lust & Fear: An Insight into the Pakistani Army & its Role in the Crusades" that pulls from historical sources, like books and journal articles by historians, discussing Pakistan's army and its role as a continuation of British colonialism. *Inspire 10* features a piece on France's intervention in Mali, "France, The Imbecile Invader," which compares France's current actions in Mali to its actions, and eventual defeat, in places like Algeria during the colonial era (Almoravid, 2013, p. 9).

Many articles profile the main enemy, America, or certain aspects of American society. For example, "The American Army & War Ethics" in *Inspire 10*, discusses the ethics (or lack thereof) in the American Army and in *Inspire 14* "The Blacks in America" showcases the historical and contemporary struggles of African Americans (*Inspire 14*). Messages to American Muslims are not officially a regular feature, but a reoccurring type of article like "Dear American Muslim," a piece by "Jonas the rebel" in *Inspire 11* following the Boston Bombings calling on American Muslims to follow the Tsarnev's example, "Blended Duality" by Samir

Khan in *Inspire 8* discussing the incompatibility of his Muslim and American identities, and Hamza bin Laden's piece in *Inspire 17* "Advice for Martyrdom Seekers in The West" providing advice for Americans seeking martyrdom.

Interviews

Like a traditional magazine, *Inspire* features many interviews. "Why I chose al Qaeda" is a common interview feature showcasing individuals like al Awlaki and other men involved in AQAP. The interviewer often asks the interviewee about how he became involved in the movement, issues going on in his theatre of operation, and any advice he would give to those interested in joining al Qaeda and/or Muslims in the West. *Inspire* also contains constructed comedic "interviews" designed to mock its enemies where the authors will write questions and use excerpts from speeches by leaders like Barack Obama or Benjamin Netanyahu as responses to these questions.

Statements

Statements typically appear in the first few pages of each issue. They are written on a plain white page with the al Qaeda and al Malahem logos at the top. Statements contain short reports on events like a successful attack or raid on the enemy, which typically include praise for the attack, how it was planned and conducted, and religious scripture to describe the motivation and/or justification for the attack. Statements are also used to claim attacks; for example, in *Inspire 14*, al Qaeda claimed responsibility for the 2015 attacks on the Charlie Hebdo magazine in Paris in its "Statement regarding the Blessed Paris Operation: Vengeance for the Prophet Muhammad."

Some statements include another jihadist group's logo at the bottom of the page—usually the group that originally reported the event—in addition to the al Qaeda and al Malahem logos at the top. *Inspire 15* featured a statement “Statement regarding the Burkina Faso Raid: When Muslim Africa Takes Its Revenge for Its Victims” reporting on an attack on a hotel. The attack was reported by al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) through their al Andalus Media Institute (al Malahem, 2016a, p. 5). These statements function much like the online forums that formed “the al Qaeda media nexus” in Kimmage's (2008) study where different armed groups and their quasi-official Media Production and Distribution Entities (MPDEs) report on events using consistent branding.

Inspire Reactions

“Inspire Reactions” is a regular feature which shares reactions to *Inspire* from journalists, scholars, and even other jihadist groups, using excerpts from different media outlets. It is typically one to two pages in length. Most of the “reactions” come from American media outlets and often focus on the danger posed by *Inspire*. The “Inspire Reactions” section sometimes reflects the theme or cover story of the given issue; for example, in *Inspire 14* most of the reactions they shared were about the Charlie Hebdo attack featured in this issue and in *Inspire 16* on the “9/17 attacks” the “reactions” section featured several pages of media reactions to these events. In earlier issues, the “Inspire Reactions” page had an image of a globe near the top of the page. In later issues, the top of the page features an image of a man, whose face is not visible, wearing a hooded sweatshirt sitting behind a laptop with OSJ imprinted on it.

Advertisements

Inspire has quite a few advertisements ranging from ads for new media products, public service announcement style advertisements calling on individuals to conduct attacks, to short advertisements mocking their enemies. They have several advertisements for other media productions like *Inspire* Guides to particular attacks, previous issues of *Inspire*, as well as other publications and videos by al Malahem media. “A Lone Jihad” and “Call to Jihad” advertisements call on individuals to act on the movement’s behalf. These advertisements are often serious in tone and use darker colours; for example, in *Inspire 13* the lone jihad advertisement features an image from behind of a man walking down what looks like a dark street with the text at the top, “destination: airport guess whats on the menu?” [sic] (al Malahem, 2014b, p. 59-60). This advertisement appears before the OSJ section instructing readers on how to build a bomb using kitchen materials, which the authors claim will not be detectable by airport security.

“A Cold Diss” advertisements’ purpose is to mock al Qaeda’s enemies such as Benjamin Netanyahu who they refer to in *Inspire 13* as “Stinking Rottenyahu” (al Malahem, 2014c, p. 25) and Barack Obama, also in *Inspire 13*, who they mock using the nursery rhyme Humpty Dumpty (al Malahem, 2014d, p. 47). These advertisements are identified with a caption at the bottom, which reads “This message has been brought to you by A Cold Diss.”

Daesh Publications

Daesh's *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* have some similarities to *Inspire* in terms of their format and the types of articles featured in the magazine. However, they are more serious in tone. For example, Daesh publication authors do not use slang or joking to the same extent as the creators of *Inspire*. *Dabiq* only uses Islamic calendar dates without providing the equivalent Gregorian dates.³⁴ As well, *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* are relatively free of spelling and grammatical errors as compared to *Inspire*. In the first section, I will provide a summary of the *Dabiq* issues selected for this study, which will be followed by a summary of the selected *Rumiyah* issues. The next section outlines regular features exclusive to *Dabiq* and features found in both *Rumiyah* and *Dabiq*. This will be followed by a discussion of features specific to *Rumiyah*.

Dabiq

In contrast to *Inspire*, *Dabiq* is more formal in tone. The emphasis is on how Daesh is building the Caliphate and how the reader should migrate to live and/or fight in Daesh's territory. The issues of *Dabiq* I had selected for this study were 63-83 pages long (averages 66.4 pages per issue). *Dabiq's* narrative presents Daesh as a type of state that holds territory and provides services to its population; the Caliphate is presented as a place to live and raise a family as well as fight. This section will provide a summary of the five issues of *Dabiq* (*Dabiq* issues 5-9) selected for this study.

³⁴ I used Islamicfinder.org to find the equivalent Gregorian dates for *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*

Dabiq 5: Remaining and Expanding (Muharram 1436 / October 2014)

This feature story “Remaining and Expanding” discusses the pledges of allegiance to Daesh from groups in Libya, the Arabian Peninsula, the Sinai region in Egypt, and Algeria. This issue also shares reports on the Caliphate's new currency. *Dabiq 5* features a piece by John Cantlie, a British journalist who was captured by Daesh in 2012³⁵ and created Daesh media products like videos and articles. Cantlie discusses attacks by Daesh-inspired individuals: Michael Zehaf-Bibeau in Ottawa and Martin Coture-Rouleau in Saint Jean sur Richelieu, Quebec in October 2014³⁶; and Haroun Monis in December 2014³⁷ in Sydney, Australia. Cantlie presents these attacks as a direct reaction to Daesh spokesman al Adnani's statement calling on supporters to target police, military and intelligence services of the tyrants and to kill disbelievers including Americans, Europeans, Canadians, and Australians.

Dabiq 6: Al-Qa'idah of Waziristan: A Testimony from Within (Rabbi Al Awwal 1436/ December 2014 -January 2015)

“A Testimony from Within,” the main feature, is a personal story of one man's experience with al Qaeda. This individual reports on the hypocrisy and corruption within al Qaeda. This issue features another article critiquing al Qaeda, this time critiquing its officials operating in Yemen. An interview with Muath Safi Yousef al Kasasbeh, the captured Jordanian air force pilot is also featured in this issue (Daesh would later burn al Kasasbeh alive and create

³⁵ His whereabouts are unknown. In 2019, the British Security Minister, Ben Wallace reported that Cantlie was alive without providing details of why the UK Government believes he is alive or where he is being held by Daesh (Wintour, 2019)

³⁶ On October 20th, 2014 Couture-Rouleau drove his car into two Canadian soldiers in a parking lot, killing one. Two days later, Zehaf-Bibeau fatally shot a soldier guarding the National War Memorial before storming Parliament Hill (Gollum, 2014).

³⁷ December 14, 2014 Monis held 17 people hostage at gunpoint in a Sydney café killing two. Monis was killed in a shoot out with Police (Associated Press, 2014).

an infamous video about it). This issue features another article by John Cantlie where he discusses the failures of the current economic system—namely because it moved away from the gold standard of currency— and the release of Daesh's currency, implying that Daesh's currency is a way to escape a corrupt global economic system.

Dabiq 7: From Hypocrisy to Apostasy (Rabi al akhira 1436/January -February 2015)

The cover story “The Extinction of the Grayzone” critiques Muslim leaders, particularly those in the West, who condemn Daesh and other global jihadist groups. Most of the imams featured in the article are criticized for condemning the attacks on *Charlie Hebdo*. The author argues that there is no “gray zone” when it comes to Islam; they claim that “real Muslims” will support Daesh. In short, it is a type of “with us or against us” argument. This issue also features the article “Islam is the Religion of the Sword Not Pacifism” where the author criticizes those who say that Islam is a religion of peace—namely political leaders like George W. Bush, Barack Obama and John Kerry as well as other “deviant” Muslims and imams in the West. They also share reports on the execution of Japanese hostages, and the burning of the Jordanian pilot, as well as a long article on so-called apostates. The first Women's feature, “For sisters,” appears in this issue; it is an interview of Umm Basir al Muhajirah, Amedy Coulibaly's wife.³⁸ Coulibaly was responsible for carrying out an attack on a Kosher supermarket in Paris in January of 2015.

³⁸ Umm Basir al Muhajirah or Hayat Boumeddiene, left France for Syria days before her husband, Coulibaly, carried out an attack in a Paris Kosher supermarket in January 2015. Coulibaly fatally shot four at the supermarket and is believed to have killed a policewoman a day before the attack. He was killed by police following the attack. Coulibaly claimed that he co-ordinated his attack with the Kouachi brothers' attack on *Charlie Hebdo* headquarters (BBC, 2015). As of September 2020, Hayat is being tried in absentia for her role in the attacks and had been reported to be alive in Syria in the al Hawl camp for Daesh detainees (Schofield, 2020).

Dabiq 8: Shari'ah Alone will Rule Africa (Jumada Al Akhira 1436/March-April 2016)

The cover story features groups in West Africa, who have pledged allegiance to Daesh. This issue features an article about “al Qaidah's allies in al sham (Syria)” where the authors describe the allegedly nationalistic (and therefore non-Islamic) groups fighting alongside al Qaeda. This issue also covers attacks in Tunisia at the Bardo museum³⁹ by "soldiers of the khilafah," (Khilafah is another word for the Caliphate), reports on and justifies Daesh's destruction of ancient artifacts, and describes how children are raised in the Islamic State in the article "The Lions of Tomorrow.”

Dabiq 9: They Plot and Allah Plots (Shaban 1436/May-June 2016)

The cover story is based on a saying in the Quran where God has promised Muslims victory, therefore, the enemy's plots will not work. This article also features a speech by al Baghdadi on how this conflict against Daesh is the last plot of the apostates. Pictures of American presidents with leaders in the Islamic World are featured throughout the article. This issue also features part two of the “al Qaida's allies in al sham” piece from the previous issue. There is an article condemning conspiracy theories, especially 9/11 conspiracy theories, because they make the enemy seem more powerful than they are. There is a long report on healthcare in the Caliphate discussing the many services they provide and the development of Daesh's new medical school. The report also calls for those living in the West to perform hijra to the Caliphate to attend this medical school.

³⁹ On March 18, 2015, two gunmen stormed Tunis' Bardo Museum, which was a large tourist attraction. The ensuing siege and hostage situation lead to 20 deaths and 44 were wounded. Most of the victims were European tourists (Stephan, Shaheen, and Tran, 2015).

Rumiyah

Daesh's narrative changes in *Rumiyah* where authors call on readers to conduct individual attacks rather than migrate to the Caliphate. This is seen both in the magazine's articles and its incorporation of attack manuals (a feature not found in *Dabiq*). This could be due to Daesh's loss of major territory during this period. Overall, new adherents are called to conduct attacks at home and those living in Daesh territories are encouraged to stay the course and keep fighting. My sample of *Rumiyah* issues ranged from 44-60 pages (average 50.8 pages per issue). In this section, I will summarize the main themes of the *Rumiyah* issues (issues 9-13) selected for this study.

Rumiyah 9: The Ruling on The Belligerent Christians (Shaban 1438 /April -May 2017)

This issue's focus is targeting Christians while praising and promoting ongoing attacks on Coptic Christians in Egypt. *Rumiyah 9* features the fourth installation of Just Terror Tactics (JTT), Daesh's attack manual, which will be discussed later. This issue includes a piece on so-called evil Islamic scholars, a speech by Daesh's spokesman on having patience, and the first part of a series on "The Twelver Rafidah" (rafidah being a derogatory name for Shia Muslims) claiming that ithna Aashari Shias are practising a fabricated religion.

Rumiyah 10: The Jihad in East Asia (Ramadan 1438 May-June 2017)

This issue features an interview with the Amir of Daesh's East Asia Wilayat in the Philippines. This issue also covers the 2017 Manchester bombings and other attacks including those carried out in the Philippines in reaction to President Duterte's policies. It also contains part two of the Twelver Shia series and a piece critiquing the "Murtadd Taliban movement" (Murtadd meaning apostate).

Rumiyah 11: The Ruling on Ghanimah, Fay, and Ihtitab (Shawwal 1438/ June-July 2017)

The main cover story justifies theft, damage of property, and taking lives of disbelievers as religiously sanctioned, contrary to what the other "lying" religious scholars say. This feature also includes advice on how one would divide wealth stolen from enemies. Another article in this issue focuses on how fraudulent visas and documents are halal (permitted). This article features a picture of what looks like a generic application form with a visible Government of Canada logo.

Rumiyah 12: It will Be a Fire that Burns The Cross and Its People in Raqqa (August 2017/ Dhul Qadah 1438)

This issue's focus is on battles occurring in Mosul. One piece is a Mujahid's personal story of battles in Mosul. In "Muslim Society Between Human Reality and Misleading Fantasies" the author argues that though Daesh is not perfect, its movement should not be dismissed as it is still superior to other societies.

Rumiyah 13: Allah Cast Terror into Their Hearts (August-September 2017/ Dhul Hijjah 1438)

The August 17, 2017 Barcelona⁴⁰ attacks are featured prominently in this issue. The article "Shariah not Jahiliyah⁴¹" claims Daesh is establishing and defending Shariah rule. There is also a piece on how individuals should take advantage of time, using it wisely by reading the Quran and praying. In the women's feature, the writer shares her story of her hijrah (migration) from Australia to the Islamic State.

⁴⁰ Two groups of men drove vans into pedestrians at major tourist sites in Barcelona and Cambrils (outside of Barcelona) killing 14 and injuring more than 100. Daesh later claimed the attack (Lewis, 2017).

⁴¹ Jahiliyah refers to the state of ignorance or pre-Islamic society.

Dabiq and Rumiya Features

Both *Dabiq* and *Rumiya* begin with a foreword like a letter from the editor and have a major cover story or feature article. There are also religious articles discussing concepts like the end of days and religious principles. Though it is important to note that almost all articles and features have religious themes and feature scriptural references and quotes by Islamic scholars. First, I will discuss features specific to *Dabiq*: In the Words of the Enemy and John Cantlie's articles. This will be followed by a discussion of features that appear in both *Rumiya* and *Dabiq*: "Islamic State Reports", "For Sisters", "Among the Believers are Men", advertisements, and interviews. Finally, I will discuss features that are specific to *Rumiya*: infographics, "Just Terror Tactics" and "Military and Covert Operations."

In the Words of the Enemy (Dabiq)

Dabiq's "In the Words of the Enemy" feature reports on how Daesh's enemies are talking about them, much like *Inspire*'s "Inspire Responses" section. However, unlike *Inspire*'s feature, which is more snippets of text from various media organization, *Dabiq*'s "In the Words of the Enemy" covers, albeit selectively, reports and statements mostly coming from government officials and researchers at think tanks and research centres like the RAND corporation and WestPoint's Centre for Countering Terrorism. They will often share the sections of the report that portray Daesh as a unique and powerful threat. Along with sections of the report or statement, there is a preamble discussing the particular report and often an image of the "crusader" to whom the report or statement is attributed.

John Cantlie (Dabiq)

Cantlie's regular feature only appears in *Dabiq*. He mentions that he is a prisoner and on multiple occasions blames the British government for his situation—mainly due to rules prohibiting ransom payments to terrorist groups. Cantlie has also produced other media for Daesh; he discusses this work in his articles and there are advertisements in *Dabiq* for his videos. His articles appear to be written for a Western audience, as his articles focus on issues and current events in Western countries—mostly America and Britain. In his piece “If I were US president today” in *Dabiq 5*, Cantlie claims Daesh has become more successful despite Western powers and their allies' efforts (Cantlie, 2014, p. 36); he claims that a series of lone wolf attacks by individuals pledging allegiance to Daesh that happened closely together, including the attacks in Canada in October 2014, showcased Daesh's strength and ability to coordinate attacks (Cantlie, 2014, p. 36). In *Dabiq 6* Cantlie discusses the merits of Daesh's new currency in an article about economic turmoil and problems with the current global economic system (Cantlie, 2015, p. 58).

Features in Both Rumiya and Dabiq

Islamic State reports

Both magazines have reports on the goings on within the Caliphate and its Wilayah (provinces), which tend to focus on how Daesh is establishing order and gaining strength. These reports are more frequent in issues of *Dabiq* than they are in *Rumiya*. Islamic State reports are mostly made up of photos accompanied by small paragraphs of text. Reports cover events like battle victories and the acquisition of territory, the destruction of ancient artifacts, reports on the healthcare system and medical school, the establishment of the Caliphate's currency, and other

activities like burning illegal drugs, carrying out executions, and raising the next generation of fighters.

For Sisters

As mentioned previously, this feature makes its first appearance in *Dabiq 7* with an interview with Umm Basir al Muhajirah by *Dabiq* (no author is listed). After *Dabiq 7*, the “For Sisters” article is written by Umm Sumayyah al Muhajirah. In *Rumiyah*, no author is listed for this feature, except for *Rumiyah 13* where the author, Umm Sulaym al Muhajirah, shares her personal hijra story (al Muhajirah, 2017, pp. 30-35). “For Sisters” appears to be written by women for women, offering religious and emotional guidance on migrating to and living in the Caliphate. This feature focuses on different women’s issues: in *Dabiq 9* al Muhajirah advises readers on how to deal with husbands who want multiple wives and explains why the keeping of female slaves is religiously sanctioned and required (al Muhajirah, 2016, pp.44-49). The piece appears to be a response to international outrage over Daesh’s enslavement of Yazidi women. In *Dabiq 8*, she discusses the necessity of making hijrah while sharing stories of those who have made hijrah and the sacrifices they made to get to Daesh’s territory (Al Muhajirah, 2016a, pp. 32-37). The article is often featured on a pink background with dewdrop covered flowers or leaves with images of beautiful scenery—including old mosques, bodies of water, and sunsets—featured throughout the article. There are no images of women.

Among the Believers are Men

This feature showcases Daesh soldiers who have been “martyred” sharing their story from their adoption of the movement and moving to Daesh’s territory to their battlefield exploits to personal stories from their comrades. This feature showcases fighters from different countries like Malaysia, Tunisia, and France.

Advertisements

Unlike *Inspire* advertisements, those in *Dabiq* are almost exclusively for Daesh’s media productions like videos, print publications, apps for teaching children the Arabic alphabet, and radio shows. Almost every issue of *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* has a regular advertisement showcasing ten selected videos for that month. Several advertisements boast of their media products being available in different languages like Arabic, French, German, Russian, and Turkish.

Interviews

Dabiq and *Rumiyah* feature interviews with different people within the movement, this includes individual fighters, Amirs (or leaders) of other groups who have pledged allegiance to Daesh, as well as other Daesh leadership figures in Iraq and Syria. Interviews with prisoners and hostages appear regularly in Daesh’s magazines. Prisoners and hostages include journalists, members of intelligence agencies and armed forces. Sometimes the hostage interview will include a statement, allegedly written by the hostage before his execution, at the end. Prisoners and hostages are usually photographed dressed in orange jumpsuits. Some have images where the hostage or prisoner is about to be executed (i.e. kneeling in front of the executioner), and some even show the body after the execution. Hostages and prisoners are typically questioned

about their mission in the region, how they got there, and in some cases, whether or not they have seen Daesh videos.

Rumiyah-specific Features

Infographics

Rumiyah contains many listicles and infographics, which based on the logo at the bottom of the page, are created by *al Naba*, Daesh's Arabic magazine. Infographics cover subjects like Daesh's kill count and property destruction during "battles" (both within and outside of Daesh's territories) and certain ideas or beliefs. For example, *Rumiyah* 9 includes a chart on "Epic Battles of Mosul" that details the number of Shia soldiers killed and the types of vehicles, such as tanks and Humvees, they destroyed (al Hayat 2017, p. 45). *Rumiyah* 13 contained an infographic featuring a photo of Barcelona's famous Cathedral and Daesh's achievements from vehicle attacks in Barcelona sharing the number (146) of those "Killed and wounded from among the Jews and Crusaders" (al Hayat 2017a, 13). They share other "results" from the attack: "The threat level in Spain was increased to level 4, with there being 5 levels in total" (al Hayat 2017a, 13). They also share infographics on damage inflicted on "*Rafidah*." As mentioned previously, *Rumiyah* also contains infographics on certain beliefs; for example, *Rumiyah*'s ninth issue features an infographic with a short list of "Problems with Jews and Christians," each with a short quote from scripture and/or religious scholars.

Just Terror Tactics

The Just Terror Tactics (JTT) section provides guidance for individual attacks. In the first JTT section, which was originally featured in *Rumiyah*'s second issue, the authors state why they call this feature Just Terror Tactics: "Instead of using the term 'lone wolf,' we will refer to operations in Dar al-Kufr⁴² executed by mujahidin with bay'ah to the Khilafah as 'just terror operations', 'just' being the adjective form for justice" (al Hayat, 2016, p. 12). The JTT section provides readers guidance on knife, vehicle, and arson attacks as well as hostage taking.

Military and Covert Operations

The Military and Covert Operation (MCO) section is typically three pages long and provides brief summaries of battle victories by Daesh and its affiliates. This can include anything from stabbing civilians to ambushes on military personnel. The section typically opens with this statement:

As the soldiers of the Khilafah continue waging war on the forces of *kufir*, we take a glimpse at a number of recent operations conducted by the mujahidin of the Islamic State that have succeeded in expanding the territory of the Khilafah, or terrorizing, massacring, and humiliating the enemies of Allah. These operations are merely a selection of the numerous operations that the Islamic State has conducted on various fronts across many regions over the course of the last few weeks (al Hayat 2017b, p. 32).

⁴² The lands of non-belief, typically referring to "the West" or non-Daesh territory.

In this feature, they refer to all individuals involved in attacks as soldiers of the Islamic State. At the top of this feature there is an image of a world map with images of Daesh soldiers in the background. They also feature photos of these “soldiers” and the devastation from these attacks.

The purpose of this chapter is to familiarize the reader with these publications in order to gain an understanding of the texts I am examining and some of their major features. *Inspire*, *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* have features like regular magazines such as interviews, and letters from the editor. They also contain material not common in the average magazine, like attack manuals. These magazines have some original material, but not only do they rely on translated speeches and statements from al Qaeda or Daesh officials, they also rely on (mostly Western) mainstream media reporting to establish their legitimacy as a threat and to expose their enemies’ faults or weaknesses. Daesh and al Qaeda also use their publications to report on the latest news within the global jihadist movement. Both groups, though this is more common for Daesh, establish their respective groups as the “original” or official leaders of the global jihadist movement— or in some cases (mostly in the case of al Qaeda) representatives of other oppressed groups be it African Americans or underprivileged Muslim youth in France. They not only report on the goings on and the ideological motives of the movement, but how to act on the movement’s behalf, whether it is general advice in *Dabiq*, or actual detailed attack instructions featured in *Inspire* and *Rumiyah*.

Chapter 6: Perceptions of Historical Origins

To answer the questions: How do al Qaeda and Daesh promote and adapt a bipolar (Islam versus the West) yet flexible movement narrative to connect diverse audiences in Western societies meaningfully to their respective movements? What are the common frames al Qaeda and Daesh use to appeal to these audiences I applied a qualitative grounded theory analysis to *Inspire*, *Dabiq*, and *Rumiyah* magazines published between 2011-2017. Based on my analysis, Daesh and al Qaeda promote their respective movement narratives using several categories of frames to appeal to their audiences. These frames fall into three broad categories: frames to position themselves within broader historical trends, frames to establish their legitimacy as movement actors; and frames to establish actors and actions (defining enemies, threats, heroes and actions)

These research findings will be discussed in the next three chapters. . The first chapter will examine how Daesh and al Qaeda construct their movements within a set of broader historical trends. The second chapter will discuss how they establish legitimacy as movement actors. This will be followed by the third chapter, which will outline how each group establishes actors and actions (defining enemies, threats, heroes and actions).

These framing categories are central to al Qaeda and Daesh's recruitment narratives for potential audiences in that they define the field in which they act, establish legitimacy to act, define enemies within the field; and advise audiences on how to act. At the same time, it is important to note that my descriptions of how al Qaeda and Daesh define their respective movements are limited to descriptions in *Inspire*, *Dabiq*, and *Rumiyah*; the narratives in these magazines are not necessarily reflective of al Qaeda and Daesh's other media organizations or

overall movement(s). It is important to note that these categories do not exist in isolation and may overlap.

In this chapter, I will discuss how both Daesh and al Qaeda construct their movements within a set of historical trends pulling from Islamic history and prophecies from religious texts as well as significant historical events, mostly threats or invasions (e.g. Crusades, Colonial rule, Soviet-Afghanistan war, War on Terror etc.). Daesh and al Qaeda use historical themes to provide audiences with a narrative guide of how events have played out and will play out in the future. Historical frames can be divided into three overlapping categories: historical continuity, promises and signs of victory; and apocalyptic prophecies.

In the first section, I will outline relevant themes drawn from the theory and literature chapters that inform the development of these categories. The second section addresses historical continuity, or the way that al Qaeda and Daesh map out their experiences by drawing on historical events and movements to frame their struggles as a seamless continuation of these events. The third section outlines how Daesh and al Qaeda claim that they are promised victory, usually by the divine and/or historical forces, where incidents in the past are used to predict an inevitable triumph in present and future conflicts. The fourth section addresses the use of apocalyptic prophecy— which is an extension of “promised victory” framing—as a way to position events on a specific timeline leading to a final victory during “the end of days.”

Theory

Al Qaeda and Daesh employ framing techniques to organize the meanings of different historical events. This allows the reader to imagine where they are within a larger historical trajectory. The first section of this chapter pulls from symbolic interactionism—namely symbolization, the use of master frames, and storytelling—or methods to “define the situation.”

The second section pulls from themes in the literature, mainly the function of political myth and terror and media, to outline how Daesh and al Qaeda organize events in a meaningful way.

Al Qaeda and Daesh establish what Goffman (1986) refers to as a “definition of the situation” by positioning themselves within a set of broader historical trends to establish “what is going on here?” The definition of the situation determines how al Qaeda, Daesh, and their supporters should proceed or act. This is relevant to symbolization, one of Snow’s (2003) expanded principles of symbolic interactionism (from Blumer’s four principles), where events and environments take on a particular meaning becoming objects of orientation that elicit feelings and actions. According to Snow (2003), framing is a type of symbolization where groups interpret and reinterpret their situation to generate new meanings. In this case, events, like an individual attack or a raid on a military base, are placed within a larger historical trajectory and are interpreted as symbolic of a larger struggle made up of mobilizing ideas like “the West’s continuous war against Islam.”

Daesh and al Qaeda employ storytelling and master frames to define their respective movements’ role. As van Hulst and Yannow (2016) contend in their work on framing, story telling organizes story elements into a text that makes sense of a whole situation, including tracing the development of an issue from when the problem emerged to the eventual end or resolution of said problem (p. 101). This is similar to McAdam’s (1994) notion of the master frame where movements reinterpret their situation in relation to other movements as part of a larger historical trajectory. For al Qaeda and Daesh, their struggle in a war against Islam is part of a larger master frame spanning as far back as the 11th century Crusades to the 21st century War on Terror. Diverse historical events involving a variety of actors are merged into one continuous struggle for justice leading to Daesh or al Qaeda’s eventual triumph over their enemies.

Al Qaeda and Daesh place multiple conflicts within a wider frame to contextualize these events and promote future action. Like Zelizer's (2018 a) "Cold War frame", which she uses to describe how the media frame the conflict between America and Daesh, both publications use a similar frame to place conflicts in different regions (e.g. Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, United Kingdom etc.) involving a variety of participants (e.g. lone wolf attackers, foreign fighters, governments, militia groups etc.) into one two-sided conflict. This is similar to the way Daesh and al Qaeda's opponents often fold multiple conflicts into a broad "War on Terror" frame.

Kirke's (2015) description of the cognitive function of political myth, which is providing a group with an order to organize and map out its experiences, applies to the ways Daesh and al Qaeda map out their current situation in relation to past events. In this case, The War on Terror is a continuation of previous conflicts, like the medieval Crusades. The simplified two-sided struggle is another version of Samuel P. Huntington's (1993) "clash of civilizations", or what Karim and Eid (2012) describe as "a clash of ignorance" as complexities like cultural, historical, and geopolitical context are ignored in an attempt to create two defined "sides" of a historical struggle.

Daesh and al Qaeda use broader historical trends to create mobilizing ideas often drawing from historical tropes with which their audiences are familiar. *Inspire*, *Dabiq*, and *Rumiyah* present contemporary and historical conflicts as part of a continuous struggle where current events are part of an enduring "war against Islam." Select events, whether it is battle in a war zone in Afghanistan or an attack by an individual on a London street, become orienting events for Daesh and al Qaeda to map out their respective situations as part of a continuous war.

Historical Continuity: The Continuous War

Daesh and al Qaeda define their movements within a set of broader historical trends. One

common frame is that of a continuous war—a war between “Islam” and “the West” – where the current situation can be drawn back to past historical crises. Both al Qaeda and Daesh position themselves within a larger struggle, or Jihad, spanning centuries. Though both groups use similar historical events, such as the Crusades or the Soviet Afghan war, these events play slightly different roles in each movement’s narrative. This section outlines how al Qaeda and Daesh develop a “continuous war frame” and how each group selects past events and actors to define its current situation.

Al Qaeda

Al Qaeda uses a historical continuity frame to justify certain actions, mainly attacks targeting civilians. Authors portray these attacks, not as a current tactic, but a tradition tracing back to The Prophet’s time and integral to the long history of Islam itself. This argument is often made in response to condemnation of al Qaeda’s actions by Muslim religious leaders or when answering questions (said to come from *Inspire* readers) on the religious legitimacy of targeting civilians. Though al Qaeda tends to justify targeting civilians as retribution for its enemies’ actions, historical justifications for these tactics are quite common in *Inspire*.

Al Qaeda frames its actions as sanctioned killing by framing its situation as a permanent state of war, not unlike other extremist movements. Al Qaeda’s continuous war trope is a type of master frame where all efforts are part of a long war effort, justifying certain actions like targeting civilian spaces. Historical parallels extend back to tactics within a conflict as well as the larger conflict itself; for example, Al Qaeda claims that bombing civilian spaces is the equivalent of older tactics drawing back to the beginning of Islam. *Inspire* authors often parallel individual bombings with past methods of warfare; for example, in the *Inspire 8* feature “Targeting the Populations that are with War with the Muslims,” Anwar Awlaki (2011) states

that these attacks are equivalent to the use of the catapult by soldiers during previous conflicts (p. 45). In an *Inspire 12* Question and Answer page featuring Anwar Awlaki answering reader questions, Awlaki responds to a question about targeting and killing civilians,

Do we throw out 1400 years of war methods out of the window and suddenly come up with new rules? That's how they did it. Rasūlullāh ﷺ, the saḥābah, the khulafā al rashidūn, the Ummayyads, the Abbasids, the Mumlūks [sic] and the Ottomans all used catapults and later on artillery to bomb cities. That's what a catapult does, it throws a missile whether it is a rock or a container filled with combustible material into a city and it could hit a woman or a child just like it could hit a man. That is exactly what placing a bomb in Washington or London or any other Western city is. It is no different than what our predecessors used to do for 1400 years (al Awlaki, 2014 p. 18).

Groups like The Prophet and his followers, the Abbasids, the Ottomans, and current groups like al Qaeda are merged into one historical battle removing any cultural, historical, or geopolitical factors of these specific time periods. They all are united on a long progression in history leading to the present moment. Here, the lone bombing conducted by an al Qaeda-inspired individual in a street corner is equivalent to Abbasid soldiers using a catapult or artillery use by the Ottomans. By defining the current situation as a time of war and al Qaeda's lone attackers as soldiers, civilian deaths are collateral damage rather than victims of terror attacks. Al Qaeda's efforts are justified as part of an ongoing war, a more legitimate form of violence, as opposed to what some may see as less legitimate forms of violence like terrorism. Weapons and techniques are imbued with a special meaning, these techniques are part of a large, centuries old, tradition within a larger master frame of "Islamic history," rather than strategic decisions within a particular military, political and/or historical context. This continuous conflict gives al Qaeda the ethos of

its selected predecessors as the defenders of Islam in a long struggle.

While al Qaeda's struggle is often portrayed as a continuous war since the founding of Islam, certain historical events, or periods – the Crusades in the 11th century, European Colonial Rule over the 18th, 19th, and 20th century, and the Afghan-Soviet war— are used as common historical parallels for al Qaeda's current situation. From Saladin to Abdullah Azzam and the Afghan Arabs⁴³, the reader can situate themselves within of a long line of heroes. Al Qaeda uses selected historical events to illustrate the main features of its movement: defending Islam against an invasion, fighting Western control and occupation, and being a small but righteous force taking on a more powerful empire.

References to these historical events and figures are not only used to justify a technique as a part of continuous war, they also demonstrate how al Qaeda's cause is framed as interchangeable with other heroes' struggles; therefore extending the meaning of a potential recruit's participation. It is also a historical parallel used to explain the current situation as part of a longer battle. Like Zelizer's (2018a) Cold War frame, all these actors are positioned within a narrative of the ongoing war between Islam and The West (or non-believers). Al Qaeda, like its predecessors, traces its enemies' actions back to Crusades, often the first Crusades in the 11th century initiated by Pope Urban II for the "reclamation" of the holy land (or Palestine) for Christendom (Esposito, 2002, p. 74). Not only do authors refer to Americans and its allies as "Crusaders", but major figures in the Crusades like Saladin are used to explain al Qaeda's current situation. In an article on the plight of Palestine in *Inspire 12*, Samir Khan uses the Crusades to describe the situation to readers,

⁴³ The Afghan Arabs were a small group of foreign fighters, mostly from Saudi Arabia, which included the founders of al Qaeda who had travelled to Afghanistan to fight in the Soviet-Afghan War (Wright, 2006, pp. 121-22).

'What am I going to do about it?' In other words, how can you live as a practicing Muslim and let this happen. A true Muslim, like Salāhuddīn [Saladin], would stand up in the tide of blind followers. Today, most of our scholars and leaders do not want us to be as such since Islam "is not hard." Had someone had said that to Salāhuddīn during the Crusader occupation of Palestine, he would of course turned his head away honorably and continued to work hard towards his goal no matter what the people said (Khan, 2014, p. 25).

Al Qaeda and its supporters' actions are presented as the continuity of Saladin's honourable path. While ignoring the historical, political, and cultural context of the Crusades, Khan compares the readers to brave warriors (or a potential Saladin), while those religious leaders opposing al Qaeda's actions are framed as stopping another Saladin from liberating occupied Muslim lands (or reclaiming Jerusalem) and bringing about justice for persecuted Muslims in Palestine. Much like Kirke's (2015) notion of the integrative function of political myth making, al Qaeda and its supporters are integrated into a larger history where readers can imagine themselves as part of another historic struggle against injustice and occupation.

Al Qaeda is not the only group to use the Crusades to describe its struggle as leaders like former US president George W. Bush had referred to the War on Terror as a "Crusade" (Esposito, 2002, p. 75). Other terrorists like abortion clinic bomber Rev. Michael Bray used the Crusades to justify his actions (Juergensmeyer, 2017, p. 35) and Anders Breivik also referenced the Crusades in his selection of the date for his attack; July 22, which was the date in 1099 when the Kingdom of Jerusalem was established (Juergensmeyer, 2017, p. 23). The Crusades are culturally significant to many religious and non-religious movements. They are often used to

define struggles against, or resistance to, forces of disbelief, whether that is Christianity, Islam, The West, or secularism. As Esposito (2002) contends “The Significance of the Crusades is less a case of what actually happened than what the stories taught us to believe” (p. 75). In the case of al Qaeda’s retelling of the story, the Crusades are emblematic of the hegemonic nature of Christianity (and by extension, the West) and continue to the present day.

European conquests and Muslim resistance to colonial rule is another common example of paralleling al Qaeda’s present battle to past battles resisting Western interference or occupation. A feature in *Inspire 8* refers to France’s involvement in Mali⁴⁴ as a modern equivalent to French and other European colonial powers’ interference in Africa,

It would have been appropriate for France to remember the lessons from its colonial era and how it faced jihad, force and resistance especially in Algeria. France should have taken into consideration the blessed jihad incidents against Italy in the early last century, when it occupied Libya. France should remember the guerilla war fought under the leadership of the Lion of the Desert, Omar Mukhtar (Almoravid, 2013, p. 16).

Omar Mukhtar was a leader of the resistance against the Italian colonization of Libya in the early 20th century before being captured and executed in 1931. Mukhtar is seen as a Libyan national icon and a transnational icon in African, Asian and Arab struggles against colonialism as well as many contemporary struggles (Nassar and Boggero, 2008). France’s intervention in Mali is seen as equivalent to the actions of other European colonizers, and conversely, those that resist (al Qaeda affiliates) are continuing the legacy of past resisters to colonial rule. The al Qaeda-affiliated militias fighting in Mali are reframed as part of a continuous war and descendants of heroes like Mukhtar who fought colonial occupation, as opposed to one of many

⁴⁴ France sent troops to support the Mali army to fight an insurgency in the Northern region of the country by an alliance of jihadists (including Al Qaeda affiliate AQIM) and other militias (Melly, 2019)

militias trying to pursue its interests within the conflict.

Another common, and perhaps more recent, historical parallel is the Soviet-Afghan war, which has been a significant historical event for al Qaeda and its predecessors. Though the Afghan Arabs, from which al Qaeda was created, made up a small fraction of the fighters in the Mujahidin (Wright, 2006, p. 121), al Qaeda presents them as the same group. Quite often this parallel is used to demonstrate that al Qaeda, in its present situation, is once again the more pious group with little resources taking on a superpower—a type of David and Goliath scenario. Al Qaeda's current situation in Afghanistan is seen as one and the same as the Afghan-Soviet war, minus the difference in superpower: America instead of the Soviet Union (and leaving out the American and Saudi aid to the Mujahidin). This historical conflict against the Soviets is not only used to predict the outcome, but to define the current situation. In the *Inspire 13* editor's letter Yahya Ibrahim (2014) states,

25 years ago, the Soviet Army withdrew from Afghânistân heads down, defeated, after ten years of fierce fighting. They returned home to face a disintegrateing union. Today, America is withdrawing from Afghanistan, also defeated. But the difference between the two defeats is that instead of the American forces going back home, they are being dragged into the new phase of the long global war. ([sic]p.4)

According to the author, this victory was the result of the collective effort of a pious group, much like al Qaeda's current situation in Afghanistan. Both superpowers are interchangeable, but the tactics of destroying them differs (i.e. drawing Americans into a longer war to drain their resources via terrorist attacks versus defeating the Soviets on the ground). The Afghan-Soviet war was not only about Afghanistan, but it represents a larger effort by Muslims to defend the Islamic world against invasion, as foreign fighters from many Muslim majority countries fought

in the war. By connecting al Qaeda to a historical victory in Afghanistan, al Qaeda asserts its power as an agent of change, representing a collective global effort in defending Islam from a variety of “evil empires.”

Al Qaeda uses historical examples of Muslims fighting invasions or interference from “the West” (and/or other non-believers), like the Crusades, colonial occupation, and the Soviet Afghan War, to define its current situation. Each historical parallel demonstrates an aspect of how al Qaeda presents itself: it is a defender of the Islamic world against a direct invasion (Crusades), fighting occupation or subjugation by Western Powers (anti-colonial struggles), and creating a modest, but more pious, pan-Islamic struggle against an evil empire (Afghan-Soviet war).

Overall, al Qaeda employs historical parallels to position itself as a force fighting on the right side of a continuous war while carrying out the legacy of previous heroes; all the while either ignoring or disregarding historical, geopolitical, and cultural context. Selected complex conflicts and actors are pulled into a larger master frame of a continuous struggle between two sides: “Islam” and “The West.” Within this continuous war, all actions by al Qaeda (or a potential recruit) are not only religiously sanctioned, but also seen as an act of legitimate violence in the larger context of a war and not just an individual attack. These events are connected as part of a path to victory tracing back to the Crusades and earlier. This continuous war frame keeps al Qaeda relevant by drawing on past struggles, not only to present its movement as part of the historical “side of good”, but also to anticipate future victories against its more powerful, but less moral, enemies.

Daesh

Daesh, like al Qaeda, employs historical examples to justify its actions and situate itself within a longer history drawing back to past struggles. Daesh's creation, or revival, of the Caliphate figures prominently in its narrative; it is an attempt to build a future while reviving the past. When drawing back to past struggles, Daesh argues that it is living out history, but in a better, unprecedented way. This sentiment is reflected in a *Dabiq* 7 article entitled "The Extinction of the Grayzone" [sic] where the author defines the "gray zone" as a place where one does not take a specific "side." According to the author, the gray zone had disappeared after the September 11th attacks. As the author states, there were only two camps to choose "...a camp of Islam – without the body of Khilāfah to represent it at the time – and a camp of kufr – the crusader coalition" he continues to say that "Bush spoke the truth when he said, 'Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists.' Meaning, either you are with the crusade or you are with Islam" (Al Hayat, 2015, p. 54). Within this context, the revival of the Caliphate accelerated the destruction of the gray zone. As the author states,

This revival of the Khilāfah gave each individual Muslim a concrete and tangible entity to satisfy his natural desire for belonging to something greater. The satisfaction of this desire brought life back to the zeal latent in Muslims' hearts and when this entity embodying them was threatened by the crusaders, attacks were immediately carried out by the zealous Muslims in different kāfir lands in a way uniquely different to all attacks before. For years, different jihād organizations had called for individual attacks to be carried out against the crusader homelands, but their calls were met with minimal response. After the revival of the Khilāfah, numerous attacks were carried out in a period of months. This is something that the crusaders should deeply reflect over... (Al Hayat, 2015, p. 57)

Here Daesh is not just rebuilding the Caliphate, but reviving it and creating something better that has given Muslims something more concrete to belong to and fight for. Daesh portrays itself as a movement with the same goals and values of its predecessors, while at the same time, claiming that it has succeeded where its predecessors have not (i.e. successfully launching attacks in the West within a short period of time and building a Caliphate). As mentioned previously, Daesh traces its history back to al Qaeda and reveres bin Laden, but al Qaeda under its current leadership, Zawahiri (at the time of writing), is seen as illegitimate. The “extinction of the gray zone” resulting from 9/11 created two distinct sides, but it was Daesh’s establishment of the Caliphate that made it even clearer to Muslims where they should stand. For Daesh, the Caliphate is something it has revived from the past to create a better future and a stronger, more dedicated fighting force.

Like al Qaeda, Daesh looks to past historical events to define its situation. Daesh frames certain historical figures as its predecessors. In a major feature in *Dabiq 5* “Remaining and Expanding”, which is a transcribed speech by then Caliph, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, Baghdadi claims that Daesh’s Caliphate is remaining stable, but also expanding into other territories— like Algeria, Libya, and Yemen. As al Baghdadi (2014) states:

Libya and Algeria share a common history in that from North Africa, the Muslims conquered Spain and entered into Western Europe, remaining there for centuries. Two of the most important historical figures in the conquest of Ifrīqiyā (North Africa) and thereafter al-Andalus are ‘Uqbah Ibn Nāfi’ (leader of the armies that conquered Ifrīqiyā during the Khilāfah of Mu’āwiyah and his son Yazīd) and Tāriq Ibn Ziyād (leader of the North African Islamic armies that conquered al-Andalus during the Umawī Khilāfah). (p. 30)

Unlike al Qaeda who frames historical figures as resisters, Daesh connects its legacy to historical figures it frames as conquerors.⁴⁵ Much like these historical figures, Daesh is expanding its territory and influence into North Africa, which will eventually lead to the conquest of the West (Spain) as it did in the past. These past conquerors likely had different ideas or motives than Daesh, but they are still seamlessly incorporated into Daesh's narrative. Daesh claims that it will expand into territories, which had been under "Islamic rule" or part of past Caliphates, but will also push for expansion past these territories and into other parts of the world like the rest of Western Europe. Daesh works to revive the old Caliphate, but also expand it into something bigger than what it was in the past. Daesh, like al Qaeda, employs a continuous war frame, but Daesh has a different approach. Al Qaeda is continuing to defend Islam within a war spanning over centuries, and though Daesh is fighting the same enemy, it also sees itself as conquerors and builders of something better.

Daesh also reaches back to past conflicts in *Rumiyah*. However, in *Rumiyah*, there is a greater emphasis on "remaining" than there is on "expanding." In other words, there is little to no coverage of conquering new territory and the overall focus of the narrative is on enduring hardships. This trend had been identified in other studies of *Rumiyah* (Wignell et.al 2017 and Welch 2018). The focus on remaining reflects Daesh's situation on the ground at the time of *Rumiyah*'s publication where it had lost large swathes of territory. The continuous war frame in this case focuses on times where armies defending or fighting for "Islam" (or "Islamic societies" according to Daesh) faced hardships. This is evident in a *Rumiyah 11* article entitled "Important Advice for the Mujahidin", a piece by Daesh founder Zarqawi (2017):

⁴⁵ Uqba Ibn Nafi was an Arab general who led the Muslim conquest of the Maghreb, including present-day Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Morocco in 680 AD ("Al Andalus", 2019).

Tariq Ibn Ziyad was a Berber commander who led the conquest of present-day Spain and Portugal in 711. ("Tariq ibn Ziyad", 2016).

History repeats itself and the logic throughout the ages does not change. People change, actors are changed, tools evolve, but the stage of the events is constant and the story of the conflict is the same. Truth wrestles with falsehood, Islam wages war against disbelief, jahiliyyah and hypocrisy creep in, and weak, frail individuals hold the staff from its middle and ascribe themselves to their ummah, but give preference to their worldly life and wait for the silence of those shouting and for the end of the battle so that they may join the strong one, and board the ships of the dominant, and evil is what they do (p. 7).

This struggle of holding on to true believers is a constant battle tracing back to fighting jahilyah, or the pre-Islamic state of ignorance, which was said to have ended after of the Prophet Muhammad promulgated Islam. Those who abandon Daesh for “worldly lives” can be likened to those who abandoned the Prophet when he was being persecuted by the dominant culture of his time. The fact that the magazine creators are using Zarqawi’s writings in this issue (Zarqawi died in 2006), could also be a way of highlighting Daesh’s more recent struggles that it had to overcome before the establishment of its Caliphate. Essentially, within the constant battle of truth against falsehood, where Daesh represents past parties who were fighting for the truth, there will always be difficult times for those fighting for the truth and those that remain after these trials are the true believers. Unlike the narrative in *Dabiq*, which was focused on consolidating and expanding power, *Rumiyah* has more of an inward focus on fighting while strengthening the movement from within and getting rid of weaker elements. Like al Qaeda’s narrative, there is a constant war with changing actors, but the focus is on finding the true believers amongst the group. It is a type of purification, or testing of the group’s faith, which will reveal the true believers— a step Daesh must complete before it finally triumphs over its enemies.

In *Rumiyah*, Daesh draws on history to explain how, what outsiders may see as problems within the group, like the loss of territory or lack of resources, are actual strengths. This narrative is often used as a response to comments about Daesh's diminishing resources and territory at the time of *Rumiyah*'s publication. In "The Muslim Society: Between Human Reality and Misleading Fantasies," an article in *Rumiyah 12* arguing that though Daesh is not perfect, it is still running the greatest human society, the author states,

For this reason, when the Islamic State of Iraq was established, the followers of the deviant groups and the parties of fitnah⁴⁶ were among the first to defame it, and what they used to criticize about it most was the poverty it contained and the mushrikin's⁴⁷ ability to kill and imprison its soldiers, turning a blind eye to the condition which the state of the Prophet was in, and ignoring the fact that a state only becomes an Islamic state due to the rulings of the Shari'ah being superior therein, and not due to the number of gold bars or piles of dollar bills in the coffers of its central bank, nor due to the size of its army or the number of planes flying in its skies (Al Hayat, 2017c, p. 7)

Like al Qaeda, Daesh draws on history to justify elements of the present. Daesh uses the past as a reference point, namely the Prophet's time, to demonstrate the fact that they can win with faith and little material resources. This contrasts with *Dabiq* where Daesh was portrayed as a strong, state-like entity. The narrative shift in *Rumiyah* may be a possible reaction to potential disillusionment, not just of those on the ground fighting with Daesh, but also supporters outside

⁴⁶ Fitnah according to the Oxford Dictionary of Islam is "Trial or testing, temptation; by extension, treachery, persecution, seduction, enchantment, or disorder resulting from these things... In modern political terminology, allegation of fitnah can be used to discredit the actions of opponents."("Fitna", 2003). According to Esposito (2002) Fitnah also means disorder caused by civil war and sectarianism (p. 36). Having said this, this is likely a reference to Shia Muslims and/or Muslims who disagree with Daesh's version of Sunni Islam. Their disagreement with what Daesh sees as "True Islam" is seen by Daesh as creating conflict and disorder.

⁴⁷ Mushrikin comes from the word "Shirk" which can mean polytheist or according to the Oxford Dictionary of Islam, it is a "Theological term referring to the association of someone or something with God, that is, putting someone or something in the place of God, thus deviating from monotheism"("Shirk" 2003).

of Daesh's territory. By hearkening back to periods of strife in the past, Daesh frames its lack of resources as similar to that of the Prophet's time while arguing that it was the establishment of Shariah, not resources or military strength, that makes it an "Islamic State."

Rumiyah's authors, much like *Inspire* and *Dabiq's*, use a continuous battle frame.

However, *Rumiyah* authors draw back to periods of struggle within historical conflicts, where factors like the lack or loss of financial assets and territory did not weaken the resolve of the true believers. The authors are drawing back to history, not only to describe the true believers, or who the reader wants to be, but also who they do not want to be (i.e. the doubters who lose their belief in the cause).

All three publications employ a type of continuous war frame made up of the interpretation of selected historical events. For al Qaeda, its actions, namely attacking civilians, are not a current tactic, but a tradition drawing back to the origins of Islam itself. *Inspire* authors present Islamic laws regarding war (or jihad) as an unchanging and coherent body of settled knowledge with little room for different interpretations. This contrasts with the complex history of jihad. According to Karim (2003a), rules regarding the waging of jihad were developed by legal scholars based on relevant references to the Koran and hadith that covered rules on subjects like permissible weapons and classes of persons who could not be harmed. While there were some commonalities regarding these rules, there was no complete agreement amongst the various schools of Islamic law (p. 44). Al Qaeda is fighting in a continuous war that draws back to times where Muslims have defeated their enemies, mainly those from "the West." For Daesh, establishing the Caliphate is not just the revival of an important point in history, but also building upon the past to create something stronger. Daesh's narrative shifts in *Rumiyah* as the focus moves away from expanding territory and establishing a state, to defending its remaining

territory and overcoming challenges. *Rumiyah* authors point out challenges Daesh's predecessors had to overcome to further purify the movement. For al Qaeda, history is behind its actions as it fights in a continuous war of resistance against the West. Daesh, on the other hand, resurrects parts of the past in order to build a stronger force that succeeds where its predecessors have not, whether that is through further expansion and consolidation of power or through the purification of its ranks.

Inevitable Victory

Al Qaeda and Daesh not only frame their current situation as part of a continuous conflict, they also employ a type of "inevitable victory" frame. Al Qaeda and Daesh create a narrative made up of selected examples from scripture and history promising an inevitable victory for their respective causes. This type of frame is quite common and not exclusive to al Qaeda and Daesh; for example, actors like social movements, international organizations, or nation-states promote the idea that somehow freedom or justice, however they define it, will naturally prevail over oppression and injustice. Both al Qaeda and Daesh assert that victory is inevitable because God (in scripture and through divine intervention) and the forces of history are on their side. Notions of divine intervention and the forces of history tend to overlap.

Promised victory frames illustrate the inevitability of success. For al Qaeda and Daesh, this is often showcased through indicators that God is on their side through prophecies in scripture as well as historic parallels from victories in the past. Historical examples do not only justify present actions but promise future success as part of a wider master frame of Islam triumphing over evil. The "end," or victory, in this conflict is already planned out, which means that al Qaeda and Daesh can deal with setbacks. The endpoint will always be the same, but the way they reach this endpoint may change. Al Qaeda and Daesh use an inevitable victory frame

as a type of political myth providing an order to map out past and present events (Kirke, 2015, p. 288). In the first section, I will discuss how al Qaeda and Daesh use concepts like the forces of history and divine intervention to project future victories. This will be followed by a discussion of Daesh's use of "end of days" prophecies to project its inevitable triumph into the future.

Al Qaeda

Al Qaeda uses examples from the Crusades in the 11th Century all the way to the Afghan-Soviet War to assure readers that victory is guaranteed, if not by the moral strength of the mujahidin, but by divine intervention. In an *Inspire 13* piece entitled "A letter to the Americans" by Zawahiri (2014), he states:

Should the Americans not heed our advice and invitation to guidance and righteousness, then they shall suffer the curse of Bush, who has called them to a crusade in which they will be defeated by the Mujahideen, Allâh willing, just as their crusader forefathers were sent home defeated and disgraced by our Mujahid forefathers. Should the Americans not take heed, they shall meet the fate of the Soviets, who fled Afghānistān to face military defeat, political disintegration, ideological collapse, and economic bankruptcy. This has been our letter to Americans in reply to their letter. Perhaps they now understand why we resist and against which civilization of ignorance we shall be victorious, Allâh willing.

(Adhawahiri, 2014, p. 14)

In this letter directed towards an American audience, Zawahiri is setting out a pattern based on his interpretation of history. In this interpretation of historical events, "Islam" as represented by al Qaeda, has historically been the victor and is therefore guaranteed victory against "civilizations of ignorance" be it medieval Crusaders, the Soviet Army, or American military forces. This statement serves as a warning to Americans about the inevitability of al Qaeda's divinely sanctioned victory as demonstrated by Zawahiri's selective interpretation of history.

Al Qaeda not only uses scripture to provide justification for its actions, but smaller battlefield accounts of what it claims is divine intervention. Individual stories of battlefield “miracles” are presented to the reader as indicators that al Qaeda is divinely sanctioned to win, or is at least being helped by the divine. For example, in an article in *Inspire 12*, Samir Khan (2014) asks the reader,

How many times have the Mujahideen witnessed the friendly fires amongst the enemy ranks? How many times have the Mujahideen witnessed earth shattering missiles that didn't leave even a scratch on their bodies?! How many times have the Mujahideen brought despair and destruction to the enemy with just one martyrdom seeker? The miracles that we witness on the ground are spectacular and truly send us the message that Allāh is on our side as He is a Witness to our sincerity of the Islamic cause (p. 25).

Regardless of whether those events have happened the way they were described or not, Khan adds to the larger narrative of al Qaeda's mission being divinely sanctioned. However, Khan applies this concept on a micro level to incidents within the battle rather than to the larger battle itself. These events act as indicators of a larger divine plan demonstrating the righteousness and therefore, anticipated victory of al Qaeda.

Through its interpretation of past battles and individual stories of divine intervention, al Qaeda establishes itself as a group that is guaranteed victory. By presenting victories from past military struggles like the Soviet-Afghan war or the Crusades, as the triumph of “Islam” (al Qaeda's version) and not the specific strengths of those fighters— be it Saladin's troops or the Afghani mujahidin— al Qaeda is able to tie itself to past victories against powerful enemies. Al Qaeda's interpretation of these events as evidence of smaller (in the case of Afghanistan) pious Muslim groups being able to defeat well-resourced powerful empires, implies that past (and

future) victories are supported by divine forces. Al Qaeda's battlefield miracles also function in the same way to demonstrate that it is its righteousness (or connection to God) that is leading it to victory, not just its military tactics.

Daesh

Dabiq's motto of "remaining and expanding" presents a trajectory of Daesh's consolidation of power within the Caliphate and eventual expansion into other territories. Daesh's successful expansion is presented as an inevitable triumph guaranteed by divine forces and the forces of history. *Dabiq* takes a different approach than al Qaeda, which presents its struggle as one of a modest force with God on its side. Though Daesh draws from the same historical trajectory including events like the Soviet-Afghan war and the 9/11 attacks, Daesh presents itself as a powerful force that will continue to get stronger because its success is guaranteed by God. As it is stated in the feature "Remaining and Expanding,"

It will remain because Allah ta'ālā promised in His precise revelation and said, {Allah has promised those who have believed among you and done righteous deeds that He will surely grant them succession [to authority] upon the earth just as He granted it to those before them and that He will surely establish for them [therein] their religion which He has preferred for them and that He will surely substitute for them, after their fear, security} [An-Nūr: 55] (Al Baghdadi, 2014, p. 33).

Daesh argues that God will guarantee its victory and eventually, authority over its enemies as victory has been granted to previous righteous movements (or those Daesh has selected as its predecessors). In short, Daesh provides its readers with a divine promise based in scripture that Daesh, as a righteous movement, will triumph and establish authority on earth and provide security to its followers.

Much like al Qaeda, Daesh argues that it will not be defeated despite the extra military power of its enemies. On the contrary, the actions of its enemies, are said to make Daesh stronger. In an Islamic State Report entitled “Unifying the Ranks”, which describes Daesh establishing relationships with different groups in the territories they have “liberated.” The author states:

With every kāfir that is enlisted to fight the Islamic State, every bomb that is dropped onto the homes of its people, every lie that is circulated against it by the international media, and every coin that is spent to try to halt its advance, the Khilāfah and its mujāhidīn only grow stronger, more determined and more defiant. Let the forces of kufr do what they can to wage war against it, for the Islamic State, by Allah’s permission, will only continue to move forward. Remaining and expanding... (Al Hayat, 2014, p. 13)

Despite their resources and strength, Daesh’s enemies’ efforts are in vain, not only because of Daesh’s determination, but its divine guarantee of victory. The resources being put into the war against Daesh not only demonstrate Daesh’s importance as a threat, but also the level of resistance its enemies must have against Daesh’s inevitable victory.

Overall, Daesh’s notion of inevitable triumph is encapsulated in its motto “remaining and expanding.” Daesh conceptualizes its Caliphate as a force of righteousness and “the West” and its allies as those resisting the inevitable expansion of, not just Daesh’s interpretation of Islam, but “righteousness” or God’s preferred religion. In short, Daesh’s enemies’ efforts will not stop the eventual expansion and strengthening of Daesh’s Caliphate. As opposed to a modest force with God on its side like al Qaeda, Daesh is a group that possesses both holy strength in terms of its religious principles as well as military strength stemming from the consolidation of strength within its Caliphate, which will inevitably lead to its triumph over the rest of the world. In

Rumiyah, the narrative changes. With significant territorial loss, it becomes more difficult for Daesh to claim that it is remaining *and* expanding. The slogan is all but absent in *Rumiyah*. When it comes to the Caliphate in *Rumiyah*, it is not expanding, but it is remaining with everything it has. The focus is on the true believers that stay behind and overcome adversity and how it is this strength that guarantees Daesh's victory. Like *Dabiq*, victory is guaranteed, but in *Rumiyah* it is pushed a little further into the future.

Daesh's difficulties, like the loss of resources and territories, are presented as something that will challenge the strongest amongst them and distinguish Daesh from its predecessors. Much like the narrative in *Dabiq*, Daesh is fighting a continuous war, but the point in which Daesh finds itself is unique. In a speech in *Rumiyah* 9, "Be Patient, for Indeed the promise of Allah is True," Daesh's official spokesman Abdul Hassan al Muhajir (2017) compares Daesh's current situation with previous "periods of invasion" like when Al Andalus (present day Spain) was lost because Muslims were "divided" and "distant from its religion and lord":

...so Allah empowered an enemy that swept into the homes, destroying both hearth and offspring. As for today, and despite the severity of the assault and the raging struggle from the East and the West against Dar al-Islam, the situation of the Muslims in the land of the Khilafah differs from that previous period, for the Islamic State is the one who confronts and defends Dar al-Islam and incites the people of faith, refining the zeal of the youth of Islam to liberate themselves from the bondages of slavery and subordination to the nations of kufr, and it is they who have plunged into a fierce and deadly war in defense of their ummah, and who have spared no effort in warring, confronting, and repelling on its behalf, with everything that they were given of power and various methods and means. (pp. 27-28)

Here al Muhajir reassures readers that despite the severity of Daesh's situation, Daesh will still be guaranteed victory, so long as its followers remain on the right path (read: remaining loyal to Daesh and its leadership). Like descriptions in *Dabiq*, Daesh distinguishes itself from its predecessors. However, in *Rumiyah*, Daesh distinguishes itself by reassuring readers that unlike Muslim societies during previous "periods of invasion," Daesh and its fighters are on the right path and will therefore be guaranteed victory by God.

This is not the first time where groups have blamed past failures on a lack of faith, as it was mentioned in a previous chapter, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria's a humiliating loss against Israel in the 1967 Six Days War was also attributed to God turning away from Muslims, which necessitated the need to return to "pure faith" (Wright, 2006, p. 44-45). Daesh and its fighters' participation in this war is unique in that they have been tested by the challenges of the conflict and remain patient. The determination to remain on the "right path" is what distinguishes Daesh from its predecessors.

As previously mentioned, Daesh claims to have a group of fighters with unique strength and commitment that will guarantee Daesh victory, despite the forces acting against it. Daesh also frames its situation as a test from the divine to retain the "true believers." Daesh reframes its situation as a period of purification as seen in the foreword for *Rumiyah 12* recounting, the battle of Mosul, one of Daesh's last major strongholds:

Indeed, our brothers in Mosul displayed steadfastness, perseverance, and conviction in the face of disbelief and its various forms, something not witnessed by history until today. And indeed the kuffar had gathered and rallied thousands of soldiers and vehicles, but they were confronted by the lions of the Islamic State, who massacred them and tore them to pieces, after inflicting upon them losses reaching into the tens of thousands in regards to both soldiers and vehicles – with the permission of Allah and His assistance. The kuffar were incapable of comprehending the determination of the men and women of the Islamic State, who could be stopped by the immanence of death, nor by their enemies’ planes [sic] (Al Hayat 2017d, p. 4).

The author emphasizes the fighters’ determination and steadfastness; they are seen as a more defensive force rather than a force conquering enemies and gaining new territory as seen in *Dabiq*. The situation is presented as something unprecedented and regardless of how accurate the account is, it demonstrates *Rumiyah*’s focus on remaining. Overall, Daesh highlights the unique strength and determination from its “true believers” who have remained with them and whose steadfastness will lead to Daesh’s inevitable triumph leaving those weaker elements (e.g. defectors or those who doubt Daesh’s strength) of the movement behind. In other words, these trials faced by Daesh are all part of a divine plan to select the best fighters to bring about Daesh’s inevitable triumph.

In *Dabiq*, it is the Caliphate’s strength and capabilities that will lead Daesh to victory as promised by God, whereas in *Rumiyah* the divine promise of victory is still relevant, but the emphasis is on the determination of the true believers. Though there are no direct references to losing territory in *Rumiyah*, the narrative shifts from a Caliphate remaining and expanding to one that is being tested to identify the true believers. In *Rumiyah*, similar to al Qaeda’s *Inspire*,

Daesh has fewer fighters, but claim that they will succeed because of their faith.

Apocalyptic Narratives

Apocalyptic narratives play a role in al Qaeda and Daesh's definition of the situation. However, "end of days" prophecies are a common theme in Daesh publications. Al Qaeda has a plan of how they will fight and destroy the enemy to usher in a golden age, which involves the establishment of the Caliphate (something that will happen much later), while Daesh places themselves further along this trajectory as they have established the Caliphate and are living in the "end times." Daesh's positioning itself within "the end of days" heading towards the ultimate battle between good and evil is another example of projecting an inevitable triumph.

For Daesh, the end of days prophecy figures prominently within its narrative. This can be seen in the names of its magazines: *Dabiq* being the place where according to prophecy, the battle between the armies of "Islam" and "the Romans" will happen and *Rumiyah* meaning Rome, or whom Daesh will fight against in the final battle. It is important to point out that other movements who are not necessarily religious, have eschatological narratives. Whether it is the withering away of the state after seizing the means of production or the emergence of a pure Aryan race, there is an end point, which usually involves the establishment (or re-establishment) of a golden age. Between Daesh and al Qaeda, they are both apocalyptic, but on different points of the timeline. For Daesh, its battles are taking place during end times and it has positioned itself close to the final struggle between good and evil. As it was mentioned in a previous chapter, Daesh is more of a millenarian movement (Berger 2015).

Each *Dabiq* issue features a passage about "the hour", or the end of days, on the last page and the first page of all *Dabiq* issues features the following Zarqawi quote: "The spark has been lit here in Iraq, and its heat will continue to intensify – by Allah's permission – until it

burns the crusader armies in Dābiq” (Zarqawi quoted by Al Hayat 2014a, p. 2). This gives the reader a sense of where Daesh is headed; it is not just defeating its enemies, but this struggle is heading towards the ultimate battle in Dabiq.

According to Daesh, the war they are fighting is not only bigger than any political conflict, but the final battle for all Muslims, which creates a greater sense of urgency amongst Daesh’s supporters. In a speech by Abu Bakr al Baghdadi (2016a) featured in an article in *Dabiq* 9, he describes the nature of this conflict (or “wars before the Hour”): “O Muslims! Do not think the war that we are waging is the Islamic State’s war alone. Rather, it is the Muslims’ war altogether. It is the war of every Muslim in every place, and the Islamic State” (Al Baghdadi, quoted by al Hayat 2016a, p. 54). This expands the sense of urgency and the significance of participation in this war. The war itself is not just a conflict between Daesh and its enemies, but an obligatory battle for all Muslims to fight. It is the ultimate battle between good and evil. Much like a larger master frame of good triumphing over evil within a historical trajectory of struggles, Daesh presents its struggle as, in one sense, part of these battles, but also different as this is the ultimate battle, and they are *the* movement to lead it.

Rumiyah does not have as many references to the “The Hour” or end of days prophecies as *Dabiq* does in its regular features. However, each issue of *Rumiyah* features the following quote from Daesh spokesman Al Muhajir on the first page: “O muwahhidin, rejoice, for by Allah, we will not rest from our jihad except beneath the olive trees of Rumiyah (Rome)” (Al Hayat, 2017e, p. 2). In other words, Daesh will not rest until it fights the final battle.

The end of days trajectory shifts in *Rumiyah*. Though Daesh is still near the end of days, it frames its current situation as a time of purification for true believers to emerge before the ultimate battle. As previously mentioned, at the time of *Rumiyah*’s publication, Daesh had lost

Dabiq. Like other millenarian movements who have been unsuccessful in predicting “the end”, Daesh needed to shift its narrative to match its current circumstances (Dawson, 2017). Daesh’s losses were not directly acknowledged, but they were framed as part of a bigger plan. In a speech in *Rumiyah 9*, Daesh’s official spokesman Abdul Hasan al Muhajir (2017) states:

And if we lose a city, an area, or a town, it is simply a trial and a purification of the Jama’ah⁴⁸ of the Muslims, in order to cleanse the ranks and remove the filth, and so that Allah may choose from among His slaves whomever He wills. It is simply the ebb of the tide which will be followed by expansion and the great conquest – with Allah’s permission – of Baghdad, Dimashq, Quds, ‘Amman, the Peninsula of Muhammad , and the battalions of faith will certainly raid Persia, and they will conquer Qom and Tehran. Thereafter, we will certainly raid Rome, and the lions will roar with takbir and Constantinople will be conquered without a fight. It is the promise of our Lord and the glad tidings of our prophet g, for indeed a generation has been raised in the land of the Khilafah ... (p. 33)

Loss of territory is reframed as a period of purification in preparation for a greater period of conquest, which eventually leads to the last battles in the end of days. Daesh and its followers are simply moving through a difficult “tide” within a divine plan before it reaches a period of great conquest guaranteed by God. In other words, though the Caliphate may have lost territory, the difficulties and setbacks it endured has produced a new generation of fighters prepared for future challenges. Daesh reframes losses as challenges, which are a form of purification that ensures that those who remain part of Daesh are uniquely prepared to face the ultimate battle.

⁴⁸ Congregation

End of days prophecy and narratives play an important role in Daesh publications. This makes more extreme or desperate actions justifiable as Daesh is preparing for the ultimate battle between good and evil. In *Dabiq*, Daesh is on a narrative trajectory defined by its successes—the consolidation of the Caliphate’s strength and acquisition of new territory—and is on a direct path to “the hour” and final battle. In *Rumiyah*, Daesh’s position on this trajectory has moved and it is in a phase of purification that happens before the final struggle and subsequent victory. Both magazines are named after important elements in Daesh’s end of days struggle. The hour (or the end of days) is a type of broader historical trend because it has been established in the past by scripture and allows Daesh, and to a lesser extent al Qaeda, map out its definition of the situation and determine its next course of action.

Daesh and al Qaeda frame their respective movements as being guaranteed victory by divine prophecy and the natural course of history using scripture and interpretations of selected historical events. This inevitable path to victory, whatever form it takes, continues despite the odds as demonstrated by *Rumiyah*’s narratives of remaining after major territorial loss, or al Qaeda’s ethos as a modest, but faithful group being able to take on large empires. Al Qaeda and Daesh have similar trajectories, however, the way they present themselves as guaranteed victors in an ongoing struggle differs. Al Qaeda presents itself as a continuation of loosely linked historical groups fighting to defend “Islam” or Muslims who because of their faith, have all succeeded against powerful enemies—from the Crusaders to the Soviets. Daesh presents itself as a group that will succeed where its predecessors have not because it has established a Caliphate and remained on God’s path, which guarantees victory both in its current battles and the “final battle” between good and evil.

The promised victory frame is not only about divine promises (or being on the side of God), but the forces of history being in Daesh, or al Qaeda's, favour driving events towards victory and the creation of a better world. This type of narrative is common in other social movements where the triumph of a movement is not necessarily the triumph of a particular religion or political system, but something greater like "freedom" or "justice"; for example, during the Cold War, many in the West would speak of how "freedom," not capitalism, will prevail over "oppression" not communism. In this case, it is not al Qaeda and Daesh's specific versions of Islam that will defeat their enemies, but it will be the "Truth" that eventually defeats "falsehood."

Both al Qaeda and Daesh are living out the selectively interpreted history of their chosen predecessors, while ignoring relevant cultural, historical, and political context. Previous conflicts and actors are folded into one force that has been fighting a continuous war throughout history, a force to which al Qaeda and Daesh connect their respective movements.

Al Qaeda pulls from struggles and victories in the past to attest to its strength and predict its inevitable victory. Al Qaeda is in a continuous battle, but does not yet find itself living out end of days prophecies like Daesh. Daesh, on the other hand, is living within a more defined storyline leading to the end of days, which includes the revival of Caliphate. Though Daesh pulls from similar historical events as al Qaeda, these events have led Daesh to the point of establishing a Caliphate and therefore succeeding in a way its predecessors, namely al Qaeda, have not. Broader historical trends, like the notion of the continuous war leading to an eventual, divinely promised triumph defines the situation in which Daesh and al Qaeda are acting, which gives the actions (actual and potential) of those involved in the movement broader significance.

Chapter 7 Movement Legitimacy

Daesh and al Qaeda, as discussed in the previous chapter, position themselves within broader historical trends. At the same time, they establish their legitimacy as the “right” group to carry out its objectives within this larger historical trajectory. The aim of this chapter is to outline movement legitimacy frames, or how *Inspire*, *Dabiq*, and *Rumiyah* showcase movement legitimacy, not only in terms of the groups’ effectiveness in accomplishing its goals, but also having the right principles. Both Daesh and al Qaeda highlight their unique features to establish their legitimacy. Legitimacy is established through interactions with other actors, whether that is mainstream media organizations, politicians, activists, scholars, or other Jihadist groups.

The first section outlines relevant theories drawing from symbolic interactionism, more specifically, interactive determination and theories on media and terror. The second section addresses the way al Qaeda and Daesh establish legitimacy as a threat in terms of their relevance and effectiveness. The third section addresses reputation management, or how al Qaeda and Daesh directly and indirectly respond to critics in order to protect their legitimacy. This will be followed by a discussion of how al Qaeda and Daesh distinguish themselves as the more legitimate or “true” movement in their discussions of each other.

Theory

Entities like social movements and organizations do not exist in isolation, but shape and are shaped by their interactions with other actors. In this case, al Qaeda and Daesh’s definitions of themselves are shaped by other actors such as enemies, supporters, and each other. The first section outlines Snow’s (2003) concept of interactive determination and how Daesh and al Qaeda interactively determine who they are as a movement. This will be followed by a

discussion of theories of media and terror to outline Daesh and al Qaeda's codependent relationship with media organizations.

Al Qaeda and Daesh's legitimacy is defined by what Snow (2003) refers to as interactive determination. According to Snow (2003), interactive determination describes how concepts like identities, roles, self concepts, and organizational practices are connected and understood in relation to each other, in terms of how they interact "...whether actual, virtual, or imagined" (Snow, 2003, p. 814). Al Qaeda and Daesh's definitions of themselves depend on actors outside of their respective groups. For example, al Qaeda and Daesh often rely on commentary from sources like Western mainstream media organizations to establish their legitimacy as a threat. The same can be said about establishing the moral legitimacy of their movement by using outside sources to criticize their enemies like activists and scholars critical of American foreign policy.

Theories from terror and media, or the relationship between terrorist groups and media organizations are relevant to interactional determination, more specifically, notions of the theatre of terror and Terroredia. As Weimann and Winn (2006) contend, terrorist attacks are a form of theatre conveying the strength or significance of a group and the impact of the attack is dependent on interpretation by media organizations. Eid's (2014) notion of terroredia describes the codependent relationship between terrorist groups and media organizations where media coverage is exchanged for publicity or relevance. Like other terrorist groups, Daesh and al Qaeda need media coverage to add meaning to their actions and establish their strength or legitimacy as a threat.

Daesh and al Qaeda's legitimacy is interactively determined by actors outside of their respective movements. Legitimacy is not only determined by interactions with actors like their enemies or mainstream media organizations, but also concepts in which their potential audiences are familiar like social justice, fairness, or religious legitimacy.

Evidence of Relevance: Outside Commentary

An important part of any movement narrative is to establish a sense of legitimacy. Both al Qaeda and Daesh, though similar in terms of their aims and ideological origins, have different ways of establishing their legitimacy as a threat. Al Qaeda stresses the portability, accessibility and unpredictable nature of its lone wolf attacks while Daesh's legitimacy is largely based on its fighting force and Caliphate as well as its claims of having the trappings of a state like social services and currency. Daesh's narrative shifts in *Rumiyah* where, like al Qaeda, it emphasizes the effectiveness and importance of individual attacks conducted in Western countries. However, unlike al Qaeda, Daesh presents these attacks as part of a larger centralized network headed by the Caliph. This section addresses the ways in which al Qaeda and Daesh establish their legitimacy as effective movements. The first section addresses the use of expert opinion and commentary to establish each movement's unique strengths. The second section is a discussion of how al Qaeda and Daesh present their organizational structure as a form of legitimacy.

Al Qaeda and Daesh rely on mainstream media framing of events; they need their opponents' commentary to legitimize their movements. Daesh and al Qaeda use selected snippets from media coverage—or what Goffman (1986) might call strips of meaning—from media organizations to frame their respective movement's strengths. Al Qaeda and Daesh employ outside media coverage, especially coverage featuring expert opinions, in features like *Inspire's* "Hear the World" and *Dabiq's* "In the Words of the Enemy." The first section addresses the use

of outside expert opinions in *Inspire*, which will be followed by a discussion of Daesh's use of expert opinions in *Dabiq* (*Rumiyah* does not have features dedicated to outside commentary).

Al Qaeda

The main function of *Inspire* features like "Hear the World" and "Inspire reactions" is to use statements from outsiders like journalists, politicians, activists and academics (most of them based in Western societies) to strengthen al Qaeda and *Inspire* magazine's legitimacy as a threat. "Inspire reactions" and "Hear the World" as well as more issue-specific "reaction" pages like the *Inspire 16* "9/17 special", pull passages from major media outlets like *CNN*, *The Guardian*, and *the Washington post*. As Lemieux et al (2014) contend, Al Qaeda features Western voices in *Inspire* to show the reader that it is providing accurate and reasonable information on foreign affairs. While this may be true, these voices are also used to highlight al Qaeda's strengths and conversely, its enemies' weaknesses. Features like "Hear the world," demonstrate al Qaeda's reliance on other actors such as its enemies, journalists, and other experts to define its significance and strengths.

Features like "Inspire Reactions" present al Qaeda as a dangerous group and *Inspire* magazine itself as a unique and lethal tool. This is especially true in the regular "Inspire Reactions" features where most "reactions" come from American and English media outlets. The statements in this feature focus on the threat of *Inspire*'s attack manuals and the magazine's slick production. *Inspire 14*'s reaction page featured the following reaction from American attorney and writer, Martin London:

The magazine has given instructions for building car bombs as well as pressure-cooker bombs using material from a kitchen or a hardware store. Those instructions were followed to the letter by the Tsarnaev brothers, who murdered three and sent 264 to hospitals in the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing (Martin London, quoted by Al Malahem, 2015, p. 8)

Al Qaeda magnifies the impact of the magazine by sharing a statement that stresses not only the simplicity of the weaponry and links to major attacks, but how the magazine facilitates and eases the barrier of entry for participation because attacks can be planned using the magazine and easily accessible materials. The statement also includes the impact of the attack including deaths and injuries to demonstrate *Inspire*'s effectiveness. By sharing statements that emphasize the threat of *Inspire* magazine itself, al Qaeda establishes its legitimacy as a portable, decentralized, and deadly threat.

Al Qaeda uses statements from terrorism experts in *Inspire*'s "Hear the World" feature to showcase its relevance as a threat. For example, in *Inspire 10* authors quote former CIA officer and author Bruce Riedell, "Al Qaeda has now moved to simpler, smaller plots that don't cause as many casualties, but which can still terrorize the West" (al Malahem, 2013, p. 6). *Inspire 13*'s "Hear the World" features a statement from terrorism scholar Gabriel Weimann: "Lone wolf terrorism is the fastest growing kind of terrorism, especially in the West, where all recent lone wolf attacks involved individuals who were radicalized, recruited, trained, and even launched on social media platforms" (al Malahem, 2014, p. 10). These statements emphasize al Qaeda's relevance as a threat. Al Qaeda's attacks are described as small scale, but more effective as they are easily carried out, more widespread, and growing fast. In short, al Qaeda is still capable of effectively terrorizing the West. Though members of al Qaeda can make similar points, the fact

that these statements are made by outside experts adds an extra layer of legitimacy to al Qaeda's potential as a major threat.

Expert opinions not only highlight al Qaeda's strengths, they also draw attention to its enemies' weaknesses. This is often the case when authors quote scholars, journalists and activists, often those critical of American foreign policy. One common example of this is commentary on the US drone program in Yemen, an area where AQAP is active. *Inspire 17's* "Hear the world" featured a passage from researcher Michael Horton's study in Westpointe's Countering Terrorism Centre (CTC) Sentinel highlighting al Qaeda's advantages in the conflict:

The war has acted as a catalyst for the organization's evolution. AQAP is now focused on implementing a more covert strategy that allows it to expand its ties to local communities and to further enmesh itself within some forces battling the Houthis and their allies.

These deepening ties with local communities and anti-Houthi forces mean that AQAP will be even more resilient and more difficult to combat (Al Malahem, 2017, p. 6).

Using research from the CTC, al Qaeda confirms with its audiences that it is a group that is winning hearts and minds in Yemeni communities, which gives it a stronger presence and moral authority to be in the region. Features like this demonstrate that al Qaeda's strength and resiliency are features of the movement that can be confirmed by experts in the field.

It is not only al Qaeda's resiliency and close local ties that give it an advantage in Yemen, it is also the brutal nature of the US drone program that is allegedly increasing al Qaeda's ranks. *Inspire 12's* "In Hot Pursuit of a Mirage Drones: Firing or Backfiring?", a collection of passages critical of the US Drone program from journalists, activists and other experts, features a statement by American political scientist Micah Zenko. He states,

There is also a strong correlation between targeted killings in Yemen since December 2009 - primarily conducted by U.S. drones - and increased anger toward the United States and sympathy or allegiance to AQAP. In 2010, the Obama administration described AQAP as "several hundred Al-Qāeda members"; two years later, it increased to "more than a thousand members." Now, AQAP has a "few thousand members." After a drone strike reportedly killed 13 civilians in early September, Yemeni activist Nasr Abdullah noted: 'I would not be surprised if a hundred tribesmen joined the lines of Al-Qāeda as a result of the latest drone mistake.' (Al Malahem, 2014a, p. 29)

Al Qaeda uses an outside voice to point out the weaknesses in its enemies' strategy while magnifying its strength. This statement also presents al Qaeda as having moral legitimacy as well as military advantage over its enemies as US drone killings are said to be alienating the local populations. Using activist statements may also be an attempt by al Qaeda to align itself with other groups fighting against, or at least critical of, American foreign policy.

Al Qaeda's legitimacy as a threat is partly reliant on voices outside of al Qaeda, including journalists, scholars, and activists. These voices are used to highlight *Inspire's* ability to provide readers the means to attack while legitimizing lone wolf attacks and al Qaeda's activities in its theatres of operation like Yemen. This is an example of Eid's (2014) notion of terroredia where al Qaeda is reliant on outside voices, namely Western media outlets, to establish its legitimacy as a threat, but also highlight voices that point out its enemies' weaknesses, whether it is the lack of resources, ethics, or support from local populations.

Daesh

Though Daesh, like al Qaeda, uses media critics and experts to assert its legitimacy as a threat, it does not draw its legitimacy from being portable and unpredictable, but from being a more centralized and organized threat. This narrative is more pervasive in *Dabiq* than it is in *Rumiyah*. Though Daesh discusses inspired attacks in *Dabiq*, it often frames these individuals as soldiers responding to official statements from the Caliphate's leadership. *Dabiq* has two regular features based on outside commentary, or voices from those who are not part of Daesh (e.g. fighters, fans, officials): John Cantlie's regular articles and "In the Words of the enemy." These features emphasize Daesh's legitimacy as a threat, one that is a powerful global player with a state-like structure.

The degree to which Daesh has editorial control over John Cantlie cannot be determined by this study. However, the role of Cantlie's feature is to represent a "Western voice" or at least one familiar with the West, who can discuss Daesh's strengths from a different perspective. Cantlie frames Daesh's new developments, whether it is minting a new currency or inciting individual attacks in Western countries, in terms of resistance to Western hegemony, rather than actions justified by scripture or religious tradition. Cantlie's expertise as a journalist and outsider (he is still a prisoner and not an official member of Daesh) gives him an extra layer of legitimacy. Cantlie pulls from sources like mainstream media journalism and reporting on university and thinktank studies to support his arguments. He acknowledges the fact that he is a prisoner and often claims that he is being treated well while placing the blame for his continued imprisonment on the British government for abandoning him by not negotiating with Daesh.

Cantlie's pieces criticize The West while emphasizing Daesh's strengths. For example, Cantlie's (2015) article on Daesh's currency in *Dabiq 6* argued that Daesh is at an economic advantage as their currency is based on a stable gold standard unlike the West's unstable and exploitative systems (p. 62). In one of his features entitled "If I were US president today" where Cantlie (2014) discusses Daesh's territorial gains and consolidation of power he states:

Much to the dread of western political leaders, the Islamic State is now truly moving with great momentum. As an entity enjoys success, it attracts more to its fold, thereby causing expansion and breeding more success until it achieves some sort of critical mass, the point at which it becomes self-perpetuating, self-sustaining. And for the moment, the talk about the Islamic State is not even of its continued expansion in the Arab nations of the Middle East, but its reach into the homelands and living rooms of ordinary people living thousands of miles away in western cities and suburbs. The Islamic State has now become a global player (p. 36).

Cantlie describes Daesh as an influential, united global movement expanding its influence, not only to other territories near Iraq and Syria, but to the West through individual attacks (and ensuing media coverage) by its "global army." Cantlie as an outsider confirms that Daesh is a more legitimate player on the global stage as opposed to a group of rogue terrorists or rebels. Daesh prides itself on being a movement with a powerful centre (The Caliphate) and expansionist ambitions.

Overall commentary from outside experts featured in "In the Words of the enemy" describe Daesh as an unprecedented threat—namely being more than just a terrorist group like al Qaeda. As mentioned in a previous chapter, this feature focuses on reports, interviews and discussion panels by experts like diplomats, academics, and certain politicians. In a "Words of

the Enemy” feature in *Dabiq* 7, featuring a piece by journalist Patrick Cockburn entitled “Isis Hostage Crisis: Militant Group Stands Strong as Its Numerous Enemies Fail to Find a Common Plan to Defeat It,” the authors describe Coburn as a ‘...kāfir journalist and citizen of Britain, a member of the crusader coalition against the Islamic State” (Al Hayat, 2015a, p. 52). The authors claim that in his article, Coburn “...contrasts the successes of the Islamic State with the overall failure of the crusaders in their war against the Khilāfah” (Al Hayat, 2015a, p. 52). The author states that “Although the article contains exaggerations of the ‘abilities’ and ‘advances’ attributed to the murtaddīn⁴⁹,” Cockburn “makes a number of sensible points” (Al Hayat, 2015a, p. 52). This description of the article is followed by selected excerpts from the article like this:

Isis is surviving attempts to defeat it and holds about the same amount of territory in Iraq and Syria – an area larger than Great Britain – as it did at the end of its blitzkrieg offensives last year. Its enemies are numerous but disunited and without a common plan. Neither the Iraqi nor the Syrian armies, its chief military opponents, are strong enough to over-run the jihadi state (Cockburn quoted by Al Hayat, 2015a, p. 52).

The excerpts from Cockburn’s article are then followed with a passage from the *Washington Post* and a passage from a *Fox News* report, both juxtaposing Daesh’s powers and its enemies’ weaknesses. For Daesh, Cockburn is a “Crusader,” but his insights that portray Daesh as a legitimate threat and a powerful force are true. While Daesh describes Western or “Crusader” media as at best, exaggerating, and at worst, spreading falsehoods, it is still reliant on these sources to prove that Daesh is a force to be reckoned with. These excerpts also offer descriptions of Daesh’s power in terms familiar to its Western audiences like describing Daesh’s territory as the size of Great Britain.

⁴⁹ Apostates, or the military forces of Muslim majority countries.

Daesh's expansionist plans and potential are also highlighted in its selected media commentary. For example, Daesh shares excerpts from, mostly American, politicians and pundits framing the war against Daesh as a war against a global "Islamic takeover." In *Dabiq 8's* "In the Words of the Enemy", Daesh shares a collection of what they describe as crusader's "concerns over the power and drive of the Islamic State, its revival of Islam and the caliphate and its eventual expansion into Europe and the rest of the world" (Al Hayat, 2016b, p. 57). This piece featured quotes from "Catholic crusader and American politician" Rick Santorum, "American crusader and former CIA mission commander" Gary Bernsten, and "American crusader and Virginia state senator" Republican Senator Richard Black (Al Hayat, 2016b, p. 57). Using an excerpt from Richard Black, Daesh expands the significance of its battle while playing up its strengths as a threat:

One thing is clear, if Damascus falls, the dreaded black and white flag of ISIS will fly over Damascus. Within a period of months after the fall of Damascus, Jordan will fall and Lebanon will fall. With that area of expansion for the most extreme Islamists, I think you will automatically see a beginning of a historic push of Islam towards Europe and I think, ultimately, Europe will be conquered, and that's why I look at Syria as the center of gravity. That's what we used to talk about in the army war college when we would study wars and the objective. There was always a center of gravity – the thing which would determine the outcome of the war. If you defeated the center of gravity, then you won. What I see is Syria is the center of gravity for Western civilization. If it falls, then we will begin to see a very rapid advance of Islam on Europe and I think ultimately, potentially, the collapse of all of Europe (Richard Black, quoted by Al Hayat, 2016b, p. 58).

This passage essentially reiterates Daesh's notion of "remaining and expanding." Black elevates Daesh to a more existential "civilizational threat" coming from a historic "push of Islam," rather than an insurgent group fighting in Muslim majority countries. Sharing these "crusader" versions of Daesh's definition of the battle, not only paints Daesh as a bigger threat, but also places "the West" on the same page, so to speak, of fighting in a battle between two mutually exclusive sides: Islam and the West. Daesh relies on outside voices not only to demonstrate its legitimacy as a threat, but like many political pundits and politicians in the West, also promote a bipolar world order where the reader can either be with Islam or with The Crusaders.

Media coverage is an essential element of terrorist activity as such commentary provides relevance to the attack and the group responsible. Media coverage, expert commentary in particular, also plays an important role in al Qaeda and Daesh's internal media as they help establish the group's strength. Al Qaeda and Daesh use outside commentary to highlight unique factors that make them a legitimate threat to their enemies. Daesh presents itself as a state-like entity with global ambitions expanding its territory while al Qaeda presents itself as a growing, unpredictable, loosely networked, yet portable, movement inspiring individuals to take on its enemies. Daesh and al Qaeda's legitimacy as a threat is not formed in a vacuum, it is reliant on actors outside of their given movements.

Reputation Management

Daesh and al Qaeda respond to criticisms coming from outside of their movement—usually coming from religious scholars or other public figures like activists and political leaders (from the West and in Muslim majority countries). Al Qaeda and Daesh discuss controversial practices, like slavery or killing civilians, with an awareness that readers may be skeptical, or at least have encountered criticism, of these practices. Coverage of controversial practices appear to

anticipate and respond to common criticisms in order to defend the legitimacy of the movement and manage its reputation. Quite often authors of *Dabiq*, *Rumiyah*, and *Inspire* will argue that they are working within a different set of conventions: outside of the international system and outside of peace time. They claim to be acting on “God’s law” (their interpretation of Shariah) and not international “man-made” laws and conventions, something they see as illegitimate as they are part of an international system that is built on colonialism and not based on God’s law. Another common defence is that these actions are in line with war time rules because they are acting in a continuous war, which was discussed in the previous chapter. The next sections will address how each group manages its reputation, starting with a discussion of al Qaeda, which will be followed by a discussion of Daesh.

Al Qaeda

Al Qaeda’s responses to common critiques often appeared in sections justifying “lone Jihad” and sections featuring questions, allegedly from readers, like letters to *Inspire* and Q&A features with figures like Anwar Awlaki. Regardless of whether an actual reader submitted these questions, they are clearly shared for a reason: to signal to readers that they are aware of these concerns and understand the reader’s potential skepticism of al Qaeda’s methods. Most “reader questions” concern targeting and/or killing civilians in the West. One of the common justifications for targeting civilians, aside from retribution, is that al Qaeda’s actions are backed by religious laws and historical precedent— as was discussed in the previous chapter. Overall, al Qaeda claims that they are operating according to a set of rules separate from the international community, or those who condemn them. To al Qaeda, any manmade laws or international conventions are illegitimate. Even religious scholars who criticize al Qaeda’s practices on

religious grounds are seen as supporting the international community and “man-made laws.”

This argument is summarized in a piece entitled “Rulings on Lone Jihad” in *Inspire 16*:

In Jihad, the rulings with regards to blood are acquired from the Quran, Sunna, ijmaa (Scholars’ consensus) and qiyaas (Juristic reasoning). Such rulings cannot be referred from traditional, international laws or what is seen as being common among people and convenient to their desires and liking. So whatever ruling that has been placed by the Islamic Shariah is what he is obliged to refer to, even if it might go against customs, traditions, or not accepted by weak individuals and corrupted hearts...(al Tameemi, 2016, p. 29)

Al Qaeda does not adhere to international laws or other traditions because they place greater importance on God’s laws, “the Sharia” (or their interpretation of it). These attacks are not just retribution for the West’s actions, but al Qaeda answering to the highest authority (God). Al Qaeda, much like other religious fundamentalist movements, presents complex bodies of knowledge like the Quran, Shariah, and juristic reasoning as one coherent source of information with only one possible interpretation and entirely separate from other disciplines like international law. Al Qaeda’s methods of targeting civilians are reframed as something that is not morally weak, but as a rule that is followed with great difficulty and risk of being cast out. Essentially, they derive a sense of legitimacy from “doing the right thing” even if it is difficult and goes against international convention because al Qaeda’s methods are based on religious principles.

Al Qaeda also uses the religious principles legitimizing its actions to distinguish itself from other terrorist groups, like terrorists on the extreme right. In an *Inspire 9* article entitled “Do the mujahidin and Christian terrorists have the same goals?” Al Qaeda distinguishes itself

from other “Christian terrorists”:

The right-wing extremists are the real Crusaders who seek mere bloodshed whereas the mujahidin of the al Qaeda organization seek the establishment of a just socio-political order throughout the globe: the shari`ah. The difference is like night and day (Al Malahem, 2012, p. 41).

For al Qaeda, the order they want to establish on earth is what differentiates them from “Christian terrorists” who, to al Qaeda, are simply acting to produce bloodshed. This could be a response to critics comparing extreme right and jihadist terrorism. Despite having similar means, it is the ends that distinguishes al Qaeda from other terrorist groups. For Al Qaeda, its actions are not only sanctioned by scripture, but are also committed for the sake of a more “just world,” something they claim that groups using similar tactics do not have.

Al Qaeda manages its reputation by developing its own moral compass, one that is outside of what its readers may be familiar with, while at the same time, presenting its actions as part of creating a more just world. Al Qaeda responds to critiques from the international community and Muslim leaders and scholars by attacking the basis of their critiques; for example, stating that these scholars are coming from a set of deeply flawed rules heavily influenced by a corrupt international system. Al Qaeda claims to function according to a set of rules set out by God, which therefore cannot be compromised. Rather than ignoring the critiques, al Qaeda responds to its critics, both directly and indirectly, when calling readers to action. Al Qaeda defends its legitimacy by casting its opponents as part of a corrupt system, a system that al Qaeda will destroy to create a more just world.

Daesh

Daesh's excessive violence was often portrayed by critics as one of the main appeals to its followers and supporters, at the same time, while *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* showcased Daesh's military exploits and executions, authors would offer explanations justifying these acts. Daesh, like al Qaeda, claims that its actions are part of a strict religious practice within a war for a divine cause. Daesh claims that its actions are part of building and defending a society for true Muslims and not for territory or political interests, something they accuse al Qaeda and other militant groups of doing. Daesh's war justifies many practices, even those that may seem problematic to its audiences. Daesh, in both *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, call on readers to not expect perfection within the Caliphate while also defending its most controversial practices.

In many articles and features, Daesh presents the Caliphate as an ideal place to live where one can live authentically and according to pure religious principles. However, in several pieces, in both *Rumiyah* and *Dabiq*, authors warn their readers not to expect perfection when they arrive in the Caliphate. In a piece in *Dabiq* 6 entitled "Advice to Soldiers of the Islamic State" offering advice to those living in Daesh's territory and those considering hijrah, the author advises readers on how to deal with other fighters:

Don't chase after people's flaws, especially your leader and your brothers. Conceal their faults as much as you can and Allah will conceal yours, and don't try to discover those of their flaws that you're not aware of. The Messenger⁵⁰ (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) said, "Beware of suspicion, for indeed suspicion is the falsest of speech. Do not probe for information, do not spy, do not envy one another, do not boycott each other, and do not hate one another. Be slaves of Allah and brothers" (al Muhajir, 2015, p. 9).

⁵⁰ Another term for the Prophet Mohammad

Here the reader is asked not to question their fellow soldiers or go after their flaws for the sake of the greater movement. This reflects Colas' (2016) description of *Dabiq*'s function of integrating those living in Daesh's territory who may not be fitting in well or who may start to feel disillusioned. The authors let readers know that while the Caliphate is a perfect society, they should not expect perfection in its soldiers, nor should they try to find any flaws because doing so jeopardizes the greater war effort.

Authors in *Rumiyah* also get readers to manage their expectations when it comes to living in the Caliphate. The overall narrative in *Rumiyah*, that of Daesh hanging on to the true believers as it loses territory, is reflected in their admission of having certain "societal flaws." In a piece in *Rumiyah 12* entitled "The Muslim Society: Between Human Reality and Misleading Fantasies."

The author states:

...we will attempt, in this article, to clarify – with Allah's permission – some aspects of that virtuous society, emphasizing its virtue and superiority over all other societies of mankind despite having been afflicted with some of the same social illnesses that afflict all human societies in every era, including shahwat (lusts) and shubuhāt (misconceptions) (Al Hayat 2017c, p. 6).

These weaknesses were likely present at the height of Daesh's power, but are acknowledged in *Rumiyah*. In order to defend its legitimacy as a movement, Daesh is framing itself, not as *the* perfect society, as they were in *Dabiq*, but the most perfect amongst all societies. Daesh is not perfect, but still superior to all others. This may be an attempt to avoid charges of hypocrisy, while at the same time tempering Daesh's audience's expectations of what to expect in the Caliphate. As well, *Rumiyah* may also have a similar role that *Dabiq* did in Colas' study; that of helping disillusioned inhabitants of the Caliphate integrate. However, instead of trying to

integrate those into the Caliphate, they aim to prevent followers from abandoning the movement altogether.

Daesh responds to widespread media coverage and condemnation of its treatment of certain groups like Yazidis' and Kurds by claiming that these killings were not about targeting a group for its ethnicity or culture, but for its religious principles or lack thereof. In other words, these groups are either not following Islam or not following it properly. For Daesh, this war is about defending and fighting for Islam, not what it sees as more trivial causes, like those based on ethnic, cultural, or nationalistic identities. In a *Dabiq 5* Islamic State Report outlining Daesh's relationships with Kurds, they state:

Our war with Kurds is a religious war. It is not a nationalistic war – we seek the refuge of Allah. We do not fight Kurds because they are Kurds. Rather we fight the disbelievers amongst them, the allies of the crusaders and Jews in their war against the Muslims (Al Hayat 2014, p. 12).

Daesh defends its actions by claiming that they are part of a more principled war and not one of “false” identities, but one of religion (even though most of the Kurds they do fight are Muslim). Daesh works under the assumption that religion is a clear category that can be separated from cultural, ethnic, tribal, and national identities, categories it accuses its main rivals of prioritizing over religion. Here Daesh claims that it is not targeting its victims for features they cannot change, like race or place of origin. Instead, its actions are framed in such a way where the victim could have easily chosen “the truth” (Daesh's version of Islam) and avoided this fate, which makes Daesh more of an enforcer of principles instead of a group committing mass atrocities towards identifiable groups.

Reports and features on executions are a common feature in *Dabiq*. Executions are framed, not necessarily as proof of Daesh's power, but as a form of retributive justice according to an established set of laws. In a *Dabiq* 7 piece responding to the widespread condemnation Daesh received from the international community, and Muslim religious leaders in particular, for burning a Jordanian pilot alive (and featuring the execution on one of its videos) the author states that "...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" (al Hayat, 2015b, p. 5). Daesh claimed that by burning the pilot alive and burying him under a pile of debris, it carried out a just sentence according to Islamic law, something its critics accuse it of violating. According to Daesh, Islamic law states that the perpetrator should be subject to the same punishment as his victims i.e. being burned alive and buried under debris (al Hayat, 2015b, p. 6). Essentially, Daesh frames its actions as not as killing its enemies, but handing out a sentence according to Islamic law. Because Daesh had established a Caliphate, it has a state and legal structure that gives it the power to enforce its own form of Islamic law. A similar line of argumentation can be found in Daesh's reporting on executions of hostages and other prisoners, essentially that they are simply carrying out sentences according to a set of laws (Daesh's interpretation of Shariah law) as opposed to carrying out indiscriminate killings.

Daesh also responds to criticism of some of its most controversial practices like the use of child soldiers, slavery, and destroying ancient artifacts. Like al Qaeda, Daesh sees itself as an entity that follows "God's laws", which means making decisions outside of corrupt man-made international norms and laws. Daesh defends these practices by claiming that they trace back to the time of The Prophet, or to the golden age it wants to recreate in its Caliphate, which makes these practices not only a tradition, but part of an order that is based on the word of God and not

corrupted by “Western” international norms.

Dabiq has features on raising children as the next generation of fighters. In a *Dabiq 8* report entitled “The Lion Cubs of the Khilafah,” which features children getting combat training, and carrying out executions, the author responds to accusations from “non-believers” in the West that Daesh is using child soldiers, a practice that is widely condemned by the international community:

As expected, the kuffār were up in arms about the Khilāfah’s use of “child soldiers.” Yet this was the Sunnah of Allah’s Messenger (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam), who would allow those capable from amongst the young Sahābah to participate in his battles against the mushrikīn. It was two young boys from the Ansār who struck down Abū Jahl in the battle of Badr. And just as the children of the Sahābah stained their swords with the blood of yesterday’s tāghūt⁵¹, the Fir’awn of the Ummah, so too will the children of the Khilāfah stain their bullets with the blood of today’s tawāghīt, bi idhnillāh (Al Hayat 2016c, p. 21)

The author argues that having children fight in battles was something practiced by The Prophet, with children being prominent fighters in important historical battles. This of course ignores cultural and historical context, but this justification essentially demonstrates that Daesh will follow what it sees as a religiously sanctioned requirement for defending and fighting for its Caliphate despite the outside disapproval and condemnation it may receive.

Daesh uses similar arguments to defend its practice of enslaving women and girls, Yazidis’ in particular. These actions received widespread condemnation and media attention. In the *Dabiq 9* “For Sisters” feature entitled “Slave girls or prostitutes” written by Umm Sumayyah

⁵¹ Tyrants

Al Muhajirah, she defends this practice by claiming that it is not the same as “prostitution” in the West involving weak men and women with questionable morals, but something that is entirely different because it is based on religious principles:

Are slave-girls whom we took by Allah’s command better, or prostitutes – an evil you do not denounce – who are grabbed by quasi men in the lands of kufr where you live? A prostitute in your lands comes and goes, openly committing sin. She lives by selling her honor, within the sight and hearing of the deviant scholars from whom we don’t hear even a faint sound. As for the slave-girl that was taken by the swords of men following the cheerful warrior (Muhammad – sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam), then her enslavement is in opposition to human rights and copulation with her is rape?! What is wrong with you? How do you make such a judgment? What is your religion? What is your law? Rather, tell me who is your lord? ...I swear by Allah, O you who feign to be knowledgeable and shout with falsehood in every gathering, surely the slave markets will be established against the will of the politically “correct”! (Umm Sumayyah Al Muhajirah, 2016, pp. 48-49)

She accuses religious scholars of ignoring “sinful” prostitution in the West and unfairly focusing on Daesh’s practices, which to her, are religiously sanctioned. She defends this practice by not only claiming that it is not what the West sees as human trafficking or forced prostitution, but it is a sanctioned practice tracing back to Islam’s early days. Essentially those who are critiquing Daesh’s actions, especially those religious scholars who condemn this practice, are also critiquing The Prophet’s choices. Daesh will not give into the “politically correct” or false notions of human rights but uphold these practices that they see as essential to establishing a pious society.

Daesh's destruction of ancient artifacts was another practice widely condemned by many public figures and religious scholars. In an "Islamic State Report" entitled "Erasing the Legacy of a ruined nation" The authors claim that "Such nations were destroyed for worshipping others besides Allah and rejecting his prophets..." and that God had humiliated them by leaving these artifacts "...not to gaze upon them with admiration, but to look at them with disgust and hatred, coupled with the fear of falling into shirk and being afflicted with the same punishment they had tasted" (al Hayat 2016d, p. 24). Here Daesh not only destroys "pre-Islamic" artifacts as a religious obligation, but does so as a preventative measure to prevent disbelief from spreading, even though Daesh had, according to the US State Department, made millions in profit selling these artifacts in the illegal antiquities trade (Rose-Greenland, 2016). Destroying elements of the past is not exclusive to Daesh and has been done by other movements like the Taliban's destruction of Buddha statues in Afghanistan, or Mao's cultural revolution. For most movements, including Daesh, destroying the past is a necessary sacrifice for the emergence of a new just order.

Overall, Daesh defends its reputation and legitimacy as a movement by claiming that its dedication to piety is more important than how it will be perceived by religious scholars and the wider international community, which it sees as illegitimate. By responding to wider criticisms of its most controversial practices, Daesh frames itself as a group that will follow the right path despite the optics.

Responding to public criticisms is not exclusive to Daesh and al Qaeda as it is a normal part of any movement. However, what makes this case interesting is that Daesh and al Qaeda feel the need to respond to specific criticisms by groups they had already deemed illegitimate and dishonest. Both groups are aware of arguments that their potential audiences are exposed to and

therefore must respond. Al Qaeda defends its actions as part of a divinely sanctioned effort in a war to create a just order. While Daesh frames its actions as sanctioned by laws set out by God, it also targets its enemies for the “right reasons” (not following Daesh’s interpretation of Islam) and not for “false reasons” like culture, nationality, or ethnicity. Daesh also makes a point of letting its followers know that though its Caliphate is not perfect, it is the most perfect society and therefore must be defended for the greater good of the movement. Both Daesh and al Qaeda present their more controversial practices as not only religiously sanctioned, but difficult decisions weaker people, like more mainstream religious scholars, would not make. In short, these are not cruel acts, but sacrifices Daesh and al Qaeda must make in order to uphold their principles.

How al Qaeda and Daesh Discuss Each Other

Daesh and al Qaeda operate within the same Global Jihadist movement having once been part of the same group. Daesh and al Qaeda’s discussions of each other play an important role in how they define the aims of the larger Global Jihadist movement and their respective roles within it. In other words, which group has the legitimacy to lead the movement towards its goals. Daesh publications dedicate a significant portion of material, including articles and special features, to critiquing al Qaeda. As previously mentioned, Daesh presents itself as *the* group to follow distinguishing itself from its predecessors and rivals, namely al Qaeda, not only because of its establishment of a Caliphate, but its uncompromising dedication to its principles. The following section will outline al Qaeda’s discussions of Daesh. This will be followed by a discussion of Daesh’s coverage of al Qaeda.

How al Qaeda Discusses Daesh

Daesh-inspired lone wolf attackers are featured in *Inspire*, but they are not described as Daesh actors, but actors conducting “lone jihad operations” in the West. Daesh-Inspired individuals like Michael Zehaf-Bibeau appeared in *Inspire* features like an interview with the AQ Chef in *Inspire 13* (AQ Chef, 2014, p. 21). *Inspire 17* features a one-page chart entitled “Analyzing Lone Jihad Operations,” which contained several high-profile lone wolf attacks, which included Daesh-inspired attacks like Omar Martin’s mass shooting in Orlando and Muhammad al Huwayji’s vehicle attack in Nice (Al malahem, 2017a, p. 17). The chart compared features of each attack including the country targeted and its priority level (America was first priority while Britain and France were second and third respectively), fatalities; strengths and weaknesses of the attack, and the relevant *Inspire Guide* edition for each attack (Al malahem, 2017a, p. 17). These attacks may have been incorporated into al Qaeda’s magazine for practical reasons, like giving readers ideas of how to conduct an attack. At the same time, it could be al Qaeda’s attempt to loosely associate itself with these high-profile attacks. Regardless of whether a “lone jihad operation” was inspired by Daesh or al Qaeda, the authors of *Inspire* associate the attack with al Qaeda’s wider strategy (or the main strategy presented to *Inspire*’s readership), of promoting lone jihad operations in Western countries. The focus is on the technique and impact of the attack on the West, rather than the specific group the attacker wanted to represent. Besides being an attempt to “claim” other attacks, this may also be a way for al Qaeda to demonstrate its role as the originator of lone jihad and how it has prioritized attacking the West.

In a later issue of *Inspire*, al Qaeda makes a point of claiming an attack as an al Qaeda-specific attack, rather than a lone jihad or Daesh-inspired attack. *Inspire 16*, an issue focused on al Qaeda’s so-called 9/17 attacks, contained a round up of selected media commentary on the

events. In one passage from a *Philadelphia Media Network* article, the author quotes terrorism scholar Bruce Hoffman:

The references in Rahami's note to bin Laden, Awlaki, and attacks such as the Boston Marathon bombing and the absence of any mention of the Islamic State raise the possibility he was inspired by al-Qaida, analysts said. 'If anything', said Bruce Hoffman, a terrorism expert at Georgetown University, this may be 'an al-Qaida-inspired or al-Qaida-linked connection' (Al Malahem 2016, p. 24)

The author of the passage also states that the assailants in the Orlando and San Bernadino⁵² shootings had viewed Awlaki videos (Both attacks were said to be Daesh-inspired). Al Qaeda uses expert opinion to solidify its claim of the 9/17 attack (and loosely link itself to others), while removing the possibility of Daesh inspiring the assailant. Al Qaeda links the assailants to major al Qaeda figures like bin Laden, Awlaki, and the Tsaernev brothers, while ignoring the fact that Daesh respects and claims both bin Laden and Awlaki as part of its history. As opposed to describing this attack as one of many successful lone jihad operations, al Qaeda frames the attack as one specific to al Qaeda. This is one of *Inspire's* first specific references to Daesh, which may have been an effort by al Qaeda to stay relevant when most individual attacks at the time of *Inspire 16's* publication were said to be Daesh-Inspired.

It is only in later issues of *Inspire* where al Qaeda critiques Daesh, first indirectly and then later by name. Zawahiri indirectly critiqued Daesh in *Inspire 15*, which was published in 2016, after Daesh and al Qaeda had officially parted ways. In a piece entitled "We must unite for Palestine", Zawahiri (2016) calls for a more unified jihadist movement with a focus on attacking

⁵² On December 2, 2015, husband and wife Syed Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik opened fire at a regional health department Holiday party killing 14 and injuring 22 (Farook had worked for the department hosting the party). Both were killed in a shootout with police. Daesh later praised the couple's actions while claiming that they were Daesh supporters (Karimi, Hanna, and Basil, 2015).

America and Israel and accuses groups in Iraq and Syria of breaking the jihadist movement into factions and taking attention away from the common enemy (p. 17-19). According to Zawahiri (2016), the first step to liberating Palestine is first, “striking the west” followed by “establishing a muslim state in egypt and the Levant for the mobilization of the Ummah to liberate Palestine[sic]” This second step requires unity and stopping fights within the mujahideen (p. 17). As Zawahiri (2016) states:

Therefore, the Muslim Ummah in general and the Mujahideen in particular must form a general declaration to incite unity, so as not to drain the efforts of the Mujahideen in fighting one another while the Crusader Westerners and the Russians unite with the Safavids, Nusayris and secularists against them. Is it not from piety and rationality to stop the fighting between the Mujahideen and to direct their efforts in full against the aggressive satanic alliance which is attacking the Islamic Ummah and which has invaded Iraq and the Levant? (p. 17).

Factions, like Daesh, take efforts away from attacking a seemingly more unified enemy, which prevents the mujahideen (read al Qaeda) from achieving important aims like the liberation of Palestine. Zawahiri also states that it is important that this movement does not “... alienate the Muslim people from the Mujahideen” (p. 19), something al Qaeda leadership had accused Daesh of before. Zawahiri (2016) continues:

And we do not exaggerate in Takfeer⁵³, and that we are the kindest to our people, and that we do not seek to dominate the Muslims. But we want the Ummah to choose its Imam by consultation and acceptance, to restore the caliphate on the methodology of the prophet and the Sunnah of the rightly guided Caliphs -may Allah be pleased with them (p. 19).

⁵³ Takfir is the practice of excommunicating or declaring a believer to be an infidel (Esposito, 2002, p. 172).

This is likely a reference to Daesh's brutality. In addition, arguing for restoring the Caliphate using a proper methodology is perhaps Zawahiri's way of denying the legitimacy of Daesh's Caliphate. By portraying Daesh as a more brutal and narrowly focused movement, Zawahiri presents al Qaeda as a unifying and more rational force winning hearts and minds of Muslims while staying focused on destroying "the real enemy" (America and its allies), which will bring about major changes like the liberation of Palestine.

In the last issue (*Inspire 17*) of the sample, AQIM's Amir, or leader, Sheikh Abu Musa'ab Abdul-Wadood (2017) criticizes, Daesh by name in an interview. He claims that Daesh is "following in the footsteps" (p. 39) of the GIA (Armed Islamic Group), a militant group that in the 1990s, waged a decade long insurgency against the government in Algeria; the GIA eventually alienated the local population (Moghadam, 2008, pp. 160-62). Abdul-Wadood (2017) explains how this "distortion of jihad" is a lesson that is still remembered in Algeria as he states:

You might have noticed that Algeria was the least affected among different Jihadi theatres by the fitna⁵⁴ of Daula ('Islamic State' group). Hardly anyone responded to the calls of this fitna except a fringe group of mostly new recruits who had little knowledge or practical experience, but were not lacking in emotions and impulsiveness. As for the Mujahideen generally, specially the members of the organization and its cadres, they remained steadfast, for they knew better the consequences of this fitna (pp. 39-40).

Here Daesh is not a unique movement, but another deviation causing disorder (or fitnah) like the GIA, which according to Abdul-Wadood, is why most Algerians who have experienced the GIA did not want to join Daesh. Abdul-Wadood's critique focuses on Daesh's extremism potentially alienating local populations, as opposed to Daesh's religious legitimacy. Daesh's extreme

⁵⁴In this article Al Qaeda defines fitnah as a deviation (Abdul-Wadood, 2017, p. 36)

actions are not only “distorting jihad”, but its impulsiveness and brutality will end up alienating other Muslims. Daesh is portrayed as the inexperienced and emotionally unstable movement, which by contrast makes al Qaeda appear more practical and experienced.

Throughout the interview, Abdul-Wadood (2017) stresses the importance of creating unity within the jihadist movement, instead of breaking into factions, so it can focus on its main priority, America and its Allies, which is similar to Zawahiri’s argument. This is reflective of al Qaeda leadership’s main critiques of Daesh and its predecessor AQI— essentially that they were too focused on local enemies and used harsh tactics that will alienate Muslim populations (McCants, 2015, pp. 7-11).

Al Qaeda’s discussions of Daesh change over time. In the earlier *Inspire* issues, al Qaeda did not discuss Daesh and would often showcase Daesh-inspired attacks in its publications (and continued to do so in later issues) trying to draw connections between these attacks and al Qaeda’s promotion of lone jihad operations. In later issues, al Qaeda starts to distinguish itself from Daesh and critique it, mostly accusing Daesh of being divisive, alienating Muslims, and not focusing on the main priority: destroying America and its allies. By highlighting Daesh’s divisiveness and brutality, al Qaeda can present itself as a movement that promotes unity and has a more “practical” approach to winning the war, namely gaining support amongst Muslim populations and focusing on America and its allies.

How Daesh Discusses Al Qaeda

Daesh is critical of other jihadist groups or groups that it calls “jihad claimants.” However, the vast majority of criticism is reserved for al Qaeda and its affiliates, like the Taliban in Afghanistan and AQAP in Yemen, with multiple features dedicated to this subject. Critiques are consistent across *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*. *Dabiq* had more features dedicated to al Qaeda like the

Dabiq 6 cover story and exposé “Al Qaeda in Waziristan: A Testimony From Within” and a multi-part feature spanning five issues, two of which are in the sample for this study (*Dabiq* 8 and 9), entitled “the allies of al Qaeda in al Sham” discussing which militias al Qaeda is allying with in Syria (the wrong allies). *Rumiyah* mostly features critiques of al Qaeda and its leadership in articles about targeting Shias and Christians – essentially criticizing al Qaeda for being inconsistent or not tough enough— and has very few articles entirely dedicated to criticizing al Qaeda. However, there was one feature in *Rumiyah* 13 entitled “The Murtadd Taliban” criticizing the Taliban, for being “nationalistic” and devoted to man-made laws.

Overall, Daesh has respect for bin Laden, but not Zawahiri. *Dabiq*’s authors praise bin Laden and consider 9/11 to be part of Daesh’s story. Daesh sees itself as the extension of al Qaeda under bin Laden, despite bin Laden’s criticism of Daesh’s predecessors. Al Qaeda under Zawahiri, and after Daesh’s establishment of the Caliphate, is seen as a corrupt movement on the wrong path. Generally speaking, Daesh accuses Al Qaeda of lacking religious or ideological commitment and denies its legitimacy as a truly Islamic movement. To Daesh, this lack of ideological commitment is mostly due to corruption and denial of the “truth” (read: support for Daesh) and the lack of harshness towards certain enemies (e.g. Shia Muslims, Coptic Christians, more “secular” militias etc.). This criticism of al Qaeda positions Daesh as the movement that holds the truth and will not abandon its principles. The first section will outline Daesh’s accusations of al Qaeda being corrupt and shutting down dissent, which will be followed by a discussion of critiques of al Qaeda’s approach to enemies like Shia Muslims and Coptic Christians.

Daesh often accuses al Qaeda of hypocrisy and corruption. In the *Dabiq* 6 feature “Al Qaeda of Waziristan: A testimony from Within” by Abu Jarir ash Shamali (2015), a former al

Qaeda member, Shamali accuses al Qaeda of many wrongdoings including the inconsistent application of Shariah law and following tribal laws in Waziristan⁵⁵ to the detriment of Shariah (p. 43), being too soft on Shia Muslims (nor declaring takfir on them), as well as praising the Arab Spring and promoting protest (which the author calls pacifism) in its attempts to gain popular support. He also describes how al Qaeda's leadership is not responsive and punishes those who support the "truth" (support for Daesh). The author describes al Qaeda cutting stipends to those who disagree with them:

Al-Qā'idah's cronies raised their voices, declaring war with neither fear nor shame, for the Tandhīm⁵⁶ immediately cut off stipends from the families of the brothers who had signed the declaration of bay'ah without any consideration for the presence of women, children, and the sick... from those who deserved it for no reason other than their desire for the truth and for supporting the truth and establishing the religion (ash Shamali, 2015, p. 54).

Al Qaeda is portrayed as a corrupt group who will go through many lengths to suppress "the truth" including putting the lives of women and children at risk. Al Qaeda is contrasted with Daesh, a movement that claims to be committed to its ideals and supporting the population of the Caliphate, including women and children, with its many services.

This narrative continues in *Rumiyah* where al Qaeda is portrayed as a movement that is not as dedicated to important principles, like implementing Shariah, as it presents itself to be. In a *Rumiyah 13* a piece about the Taliban, the author accuses the group of being "nationalistic" or what Daesh sees as focused on false, manmade constructs like the nation-state instead of properly implementing shariah law (Al Hayat, 2017f, pp. 42-43). In a "For Sisters" piece in

⁵⁵ A remote, tribal area near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border where the Pakistani Army does not exercise authority (Moghadam, 2008, p. 139)

⁵⁶ Another word for al Qaeda

Rumiyah 13 by Umm Sulaym al Muhajirah (2017) describing her hijrah to the Islamic state from Australia, she describes her late husband's disillusionment with al Qaeda's affiliate at the time, Jabat al Nusra. She states:

My previous husband – may Allah accept him – had been fighting in Sham with the mujahidin of the Islamic State while I remained in Australia with our children awaiting his signal to join him. Six months had passed and it was “December 2013” when he told me, “I am confirming to you my allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham. I have given bay’ah to its amir Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi al-Husayni al-Qurashi. We are anticipating betrayal from the other factions and we’re speculating a propaganda war. Jabhat an-Nusrah aren’t what we thought them to be. Dawlah are the true mujahidin.

(Umm Sulaym al Muhajirah, 2017, p. 31)

Like the article on al Qaeda in Waziristan, this is an account where the reader gets to see “the real” al Qaeda (or jabat al nusra) through the authors’ disillusionment and discover that Daesh is “the real mujahidin.” Essentially, Daesh is the true movement and any criticism of Daesh is part of a “propaganda war.” The references to betrayals from other factions, also play an important role in establishing sacrifices, besides hijrah and fighting, that many make to follow the “true movement” or Daesh.

Daesh also criticized Al Qaeda for being “too soft” on groups like Shias and Christians, groups that Daesh sees as permissible targets according to their interpretation of shariah. In a piece in *Dabiq 6* entitled “The Qa’idah of Adh-Dhawahiri, Al-Harari, and An-Nadhari, and The Absent Yemeni Wisdom” by Abū Maysarah ash-Shāmī. The author discusses a Yemeni group’s bayah (pledge of allegiance) to Daesh and criticizes a leader in Yemen for not pledging

allegiance to Daesh and taking Zawahiri's side. The authors believe that An-Nadhari had made a mistake as al Qaeda has many flaws, in particular, its stance on Shias:

...adh-Dhawāhirī, who doesn't make takfir of the Rāfidah to begin with. And if adhDhawārī were to consider making takfir of them, he wouldn't 'make takfir' of them except for one justification: supporting America in their aggression towards the Muslims. (Ash Shami, 2015, p. 19).

By not making takfir on Shias and being more focused on America, Zawahiri appears to be bending rules and not fully committing to religious principles—or Daesh's version of Sunni Islam where Shias are a significant enemy of Islam and therefore must be brutally punished. Daesh's focus on Shia Muslims will be discussed more in detail in the next chapter. Unlike al Qaeda, Daesh presents itself as a group that will not compromise in order to focus on the far enemy.

Daesh also criticizes al Qaeda for being soft on Christians, in particular the Coptic Christians in Egypt. In a *Dabiq* 7 report entitled "Revenge for the Muslimat persecuted by the Coptic Crusaders of Egypt" discussing the capture of twenty one "Coptic crusaders" five years after an operation against the Baghdad church in revenge for "sisters who were tortured and murdered by the Coptic Church of Egypt" (Al Hayat, 2015c). Daesh responds to Azzam al Amriki (Azzam the American or Adam Gadahn), who the author identifies as a top al Qaeda leader, by accusing him of "defending the Catholics of Europe in the face of the actions of the mujāhidīn!" As the author states:

‘Azzām al-Amrīkī’s strange attitude towards the Christians was similarly expressed by Ayman adh-Dhawāhirī when he said, “I want to restate our position towards the Coptic Christians. We do not want to get into a war with them because we are busy in the battle against the greatest enemy of the Ummah [America] and because they are our partners in this nation, partners whom we wish to live with in peace and stability” [Risālat al-Amal wal-Bishr – Part 8]. So while the Islamic State targeted the Catholics in revenge for the sisters imprisoned by the Copts, ‘Azzām al-Amrīkī’s commander was wooing the war-waging Copts themselves(Al Hayat 2015c, p. 32)

Similar to its criticism of al Qaeda’s views regarding Shia Muslims, Daesh accuses al Qaeda of making significant compromises in order to target America. To Daesh, supporting Coptic Christians in Egypt is the equivalent of supporting Catholics in Europe—Christians, regardless of location, culture and history are seen as crusaders. Al Qaeda is also accused of not targeting enemies that it has a religious duty to target. Earlier in the piece, the author makes references to scripture for further justification of Daesh’s actions, beyond revenge: “O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are allies of one another” (Al Hayat 2015c, p. 31) (This passage is commonly used by both Daesh and al Qaeda). Daesh portrays Al Qaeda’s, perhaps more strategic, approach of focusing on the greater enemy (America) as ignoring injustices inflicted by other enemies. Daesh presents itself as the group that does not compromise and values justice, in contrast to a group like al Qaeda that sacrifices principles for greater strategic objectives.

Overall, Daesh presents al Qaeda as a group that has lost its way and lacks commitment to religious principles, which positions Daesh as the group on the right path that does not compromise on its values. This tension between compromising on principles to achieve certain

aims versus hanging on to principles regardless of the strategic costs, is a tension that is not exclusive to al Qaeda and Daesh and relevant to other social movements. Though Daesh and its affiliates may have local concerns and make more strategic decisions, Daesh presents itself as a unified force effectively fighting all of its enemies without compromising on principle.

Daesh and al Qaeda establish their legitimacy, not only by showcasing their strengths, but also highlighting their rival's weaknesses. Both groups place themselves on a similar trajectory operating within the wider Global Jihadist movement with similar goals of destroying the near and far enemies and establishing a Caliphate. However, they each claim that their rival group is on the wrong path that will either lead Muslims away from their principles or alienate them from the cause. Al Qaeda claims to be building unity while highlighting the divisive nature of Daesh's excesses, whereas Daesh presents itself as a group of true believers that will not "go soft" on its enemies regardless of the impact on strategy. What al Qaeda sees as its strengths: being a movement that prioritizes winning hearts and minds for unity against the far enemy, Daesh sees as weaknesses. While to al Qaeda, Daesh's strong commitments to certain principles or its notions of justice, are divisive and alienating many Muslims.

Daesh and al Qaeda interact with outside sources including their enemies, media organizations and each other to develop legitimacy frames, whether that is through responding to critiques or incorporating media commentary into their publications. These frames help establish and defend their legitimacy as capable actors. Al Qaeda and Daesh use outside voices when reaching out to their audiences because it is not enough for experts from within the group to highlight their strengths, they also need outside validation from sources familiar to their audiences. Daesh and al Qaeda also manage their reputation by responding to high profile criticisms of their practices, demonstrating familiarity with the arguments their audiences are

exposed to and the doubts they may have about the movement's moral and/or religious legitimacy.

Daesh and al Qaeda rely on outside media commentary to demonstrate their legitimacy as threats. Al Qaeda presents itself as a loose network with the ability to carry out multiple, unpredictable attacks by inspiring readers and providing them with the means to attack in *Inspire*. Daesh, on the other hand, highlights its strength as a strong centralized force, even when discussing individual attacks. The reliance on outside media commentary is an example of Eid's (2014a) theory of terroredia where the creators of *Inspire* and *Dabiq* incorporate largely Western-based media companies' commentary on their significance as a threat to establish relevance with their audiences.

Though Daesh and al Qaeda see their enemies' positions on their actions as illegitimate, they still need to respond to their critiques as potentially sympathetic audiences might need an explanation for their controversial practices. Both groups justify their practices by claiming to function outside of an inherently corrupt international system, which not only includes the near and far enemies, but also religious scholars who condemn their practices (who are seen as pawns of this larger system). Al Qaeda claims that actions like targeting civilians are necessary, according to their interpretation of Shariah, as part of fighting a war to establish a just order. Daesh, on the other hand, claims that it is defending its established just order, the Caliphate, through the implementation of Shariah (Daesh's interpretation), which may include practices that are condemned by those who support "man-made" laws or concepts like human rights. This is ignoring the fact that even religious laws, are man-made, both in interpretation and implementation. Both Daesh and al Qaeda show their audiences that they function according to a specific ethical framework, so acts that may seem like indiscriminate killing or human rights

violations to outsiders are principled actions for a greater cause.

In its efforts to distinguish itself as *the* jihadist movement, Daesh critiques other groups, but mostly al Qaeda. Daesh's critiques frame al Qaeda as a group that is inconsistent and less dedicated to what they see as essential principles. Though Daesh occasionally admits that its fighters are not perfect, it still claims that Daesh is "the real mujahidin" and still superior to all other movements. While al Qaeda claims some Daesh-inspired attacks under the wider umbrella of promoting lonewolf jihad, it criticizes Daesh claiming that its brutal practices may alienate Muslims, the very population that it claims to defend. This resembles past criticisms of Daesh when it was an al Qaeda affiliate (McCants, 2015). Daesh and al Qaeda criticize each other to demonstrate that they, and not the other group, have the legitimacy to further the cause as the defenders of Islam. The tension between adhering to principles or bending rules for strategic purposes is not unique to al Qaeda and Daesh as other movements struggle with this tension.

Overall, legitimacy frames are an essential part of al Qaeda and Daesh's appeals to Western audiences. Daesh and al Qaeda establish their strength as a threat to demonstrate that they have power to make change, they respond to critics in order to justify their legitimacy as forces for good, and they must distinguish themselves from rival groups as the one "true" movement.

Chapter 8: Enemies Heroes and Actions

Having established how al Qaeda and Daesh present themselves as legitimate actors within a specific set of broader historical trends, it is important to define the nature of their struggle, which includes identifying enemies, heroes, and desired actions supporters should take. Al Qaeda and Daesh are part of a wider Global Jihadist movement with similar goals and enemies. However, their priorities and preferred methods differ. Al Qaeda and Daesh's selection of enemies and targets provide insights into their priorities, strategy, and targeted audiences for recruitment.

Inspire authors, though they may occasionally mention enemies within its theatres of conflict like Houthis in Yemen, is primarily focused on America and its allies. Al Qaeda promotes lone wolf attacks within the West (mostly America), as the most effective way of achieving its aims. *Inspire* readers can also contribute to the cause by writing for the magazine as part of al Qaeda's fight in a "media war" being waged against it by (mostly Western-based) mainstream media organizations.

When it comes to defining enemies, Daesh publications focus on groups within Daesh's main theatres of conflict in Iraq and Syria—but also its other territories (or Wilayah) in places like Afghanistan and Egypt—like government military forces, Shias, Coptic Christians, and other militias. Daesh sees The West, or America, as the main enemy supporting these groups (directly and indirectly), but not as its main priority. In *Dabiq*, Daesh praises, but does not actively promote, individual attacks in the West as full invasions of the West are projected into the future after Daesh's army has taken complete control of Muslim majority countries. Daesh calls on readers to escape the evils of the West by living and fighting in its territories—or in

Rumiyah contributing to the cause as individual attackers targeting the West—to build up and maintain its Caliphate.

The first section of this chapter draws from theories on the development of movement frames like Snow and Benford's (1988) diagnostic, prognostic and motivational frames; and van Hulst and Yannow's (2016) process of framing. This section also includes theories on establishing collective identities through media like Anderson's notion of the imagined community and Kirke's (2015) discussion of the integrative properties of political myth. This group of theories will inform how al Qaeda and Daesh establish who they are as a group, who/what they are fighting against, why they fight, and how they want supporters to participate.

The second section establishes how al Qaeda and Daesh identify and prioritize their main enemies. In addition, it will address how each movement, al Qaeda in particular, tries to expand its potential audiences by highlighting major social issues, typically those relevant to Western audiences.

The third section outlines how al Qaeda and Daesh promote heroes, or martyrs, and the different role martyrdom plays in each movement. The fourth section outlines how al Qaeda and Daesh outline, prioritize and promote, different methods of acting against the enemy including hijrah, lone wolf attacks, and media jihad.

Theory

This section outlines the relevant theoretical concepts from the theory and literature chapters to establish how Daesh and al Qaeda develop movement frames to bring different supporters together. Like many social movements, Daesh and al Qaeda need frames to build a recruitment narrative for their Western audiences. The first section addresses van Hulst and Yannow's (2016) notion of framing, focusing on selecting, naming, and categorizing. This is

followed by a discussion of Snow and Benford's (1988) movement frames. The final section will address Anderson's (1983) imagined communities and Kirke's (2015) integrative function of political myths. These framing devices help establish an order for the movement that helps define enemies, problems, solutions, and the actions supporters must take.

In order to properly frame their movement al Qaeda and Daesh engage in what van Hulst and Yannow (2016) describe as selecting and categorizing elements of the situation. Selecting is when movements select and focus on certain aspects of a larger and complex situation to frame it in way target audiences feel they can act on (van Hulst and Yannow 2016, p. 99). In this case, Daesh and al Qaeda present multiple conflicts in diverse geopolitical regions as one war with two "sides" where the reader can easily participate on the side of good. Problems are also named, typically using metaphors, in a way to make sense to an audience (van Hulst and Yannow, 2016, p. 99); for example, al Qaeda describing America as "the head" of the snake made up of all of its enemies that must be targeted. Categorizing draws important distinctions and places elements of the situation into meaningful categories, like enemies and friends and victims and perpetrators, (van Hulst and Yannow, 2016, p. 99-100). Daesh and al Qaeda have similar enemies, but they are categorized differently. Through selecting, naming and categorizing, Daesh and al Qaeda create the necessary frames to make sense of complex situations.

As Snow and Benford (1988) contend, movements produce meaning for participants, protagonists and observers, through the creation of movement frames: prognostic, diagnostic, motivational. These frames establish the problem, the solution, and significance (or why) of a given movement. Daesh and al Qaeda may have similar enemies or aims, but the movement frames they develop differ; for example, the prognostic frame, or solution to the problem may be the destruction of the enemy, but how one destroys the enemy may differ. Diagnostic frames

establish who or what is responsible for the current order, but the roles of those enemies may differ; for example, prioritizing the near enemy as the main source of social ills over the far enemy. Motivational frames may also differ between the two groups. While al Qaeda and Daesh may frame involvement in the movement as a type of religious obligation, they also share other unique “benefits” of their given movement, whether that is al Qaeda’s claim that supporters help other causes by destroying the main source of oppression or Daesh’s claim that recruits can help build a more just society.

Daesh and al Qaeda frame individual attacks carried out on their behalf as part of a collective war effort, rather than separate incidents of violence. Like Andersons (1983) notion of an imagined community, individuals who act on al Qaeda or Daesh’s behalf are connected to a larger collective of fighters including other “lone wolf” attackers and members of affiliated militias in different regions; they are aware of these fighters but cannot meet them all. Daesh and al Qaeda’s magazines also demonstrate what Kirke (2015) in his study of *Inspire* describes as the cognitive and integrative functions of political myth; the cognitive function of myth provides a specific order to the world in order to organize and map experiences and the integrative function creates a collective identity in which individuals are said to belong (as well as an identity for “others” who do not belong) (p. 288). The aim of al Qaeda and Daesh’s magazines is to integrate readers into a larger group of believers who will enact change by targeting their enemies.

Overall, al Qaeda and Daesh approach a complex geopolitical situation by selecting certain aspects for their audiences’ focus to define the aims of the movement and identify enemies to target in order to achieve those aims. Daesh and al Qaeda’s magazines work to integrate readers into a wider collective, or a type of global imagined community. Supporters and

potential supporters are also integrated into a larger political myth where they can be part of a group of heroes fighting against a variety of “illegitimate others.”

Enemies

Though Daesh and al Qaeda frame their struggle as a bipolar conflict of Islam versus the West, “The West” is often made up of different groups with varying degrees of connection to America and its allies including heads of state in Muslim majority countries, religious scholars, and other insurgent groups. Examining how al Qaeda and Daesh frame their enemies is essential to understanding their strategic priorities. Al Qaeda has primary and secondary enemies, but mostly prioritizes targeting America. Similar to al Qaeda, Daesh has different categories of enemies, but it prioritizes targeting more “local groups” (i.e. groups fighting in its territories), many who they see as pawns of the West. This first section outlines how al Qaeda and Daesh categorize and prioritize their enemies.

Al Qaeda

Overall, al Qaeda is focused on the far enemy: America, Israel, and its allies. Though al Qaeda’s main enemy is usually “The West”, America appears to be the main target. In the *Inspire 10* “Jihad Experiences” feature, strategist Abu Musab al Suri (2013) outlines al Qaeda’s priorities for targeting enemies:

There are the primary enemies such as America, Israel or England and then there are the secondary enemies such as general non-Muslim states and the lackey puppet governments which populate our lands. These secondary enemies enter the fight usually from fear of punishment or financial incentive from the primary enemies. (p. 23).

This piece outlines how al Qaeda thinks about its enemies. The West, or primary enemies, hold the most power, so they are the underlying reason for the actions of secondary enemies. For al

Qaeda, the main source of the problem, which needs to be eliminated first, is The West, but more specifically America.

Al Qaeda often refers to their enemies as part of a large “Zio-crusader alliance.” When describing this alliance, al Qaeda is clear on who leads it. For example, in the *Inspire 14* “Words of Wisdom” feature, Hamza bin Laden uses the following metaphor to describe this alliance:

I figured that the Zionist-Crusader alliance led by America today is like a bird: America is its head, NATO is one wing and the Jewish state in the occupied Palestine is the other wing, and the legs are the oppressive dictators sitting on the chests of the peoples of the Muslim Ummah ... By concentrating on the head, with permission from Allah, it guarantees that all will vanish. This is the general plan of the Mujahideen (Hamza bin Laden, quoted by Al Malahem, 2015, p. 15)

As the “head” of the problem, America is al Qaeda’s main target. Referring to America as “the head” of its enemies, like the “Head of the snake”, is a common metaphor; for example, in *Inspire 13*’s main feature “Neurometesis: Cutting the nerves and isolating the head,” the authors call on “Muslims in the West” to target America’s nerves (i.e. its economy) through individual attacks to “decapitate” America from the world (External Operation Team, 2014, p. 60-64). This is an example of naming where a variety of political and social problems are portrayed as coming from one source: a body being led by the metaphorical “head” (America), which can be easily targeted. For readers in the West, targeting America is presented as a possible method of taking down the entire enemy and with it, problems plaguing “Muslim lands.”

Overall, al Qaeda presents the West, or America, as its main priority because it is the entity that controls other enemies like governments in Muslim majority countries. By targeting the main source of the problem, America, the potential recruit is making a more “effective”

decision, which has greater potential for resolving issues in the Islamic world ranging from the defeat of dictatorships to freeing Palestine.

Daesh

Daesh, like al Qaeda, categorizes its enemies to make sense of the conflict. However, Daesh is more focused on what may seem like its direct rivals, such as different insurgent groups (including those affiliated with al Qaeda) and other militias in its major theatres of conflict.

Daesh dedicates several features and articles to its many enemies, but these groups still form one large “side” of the conflict supported by the West. Daesh’s enemies and the nature of the conflict are outlined in *Dabiq* 7’s “The Extinction of the Grayzone” article:

The different factions in Shām – as occurred in Iraq – began to split into two camps: the Islamic State versus the Sahwah⁵⁷ backed by the crusaders, apostate regimes, and deviant movements... and those who tried to preserve the grayzone for different partisan interests found the grayzone withering rapidly before them, as their sincere soldiers abandoned them to join the Islamic State while their sick-hearted soldiers rushed to join the Sahwah factions. This division found its way quickly into different lands, as sincere mujāhidīn saw their former leaders fearful of losing power and influence rushing to futilely resuscitate the grayzone, even if it necessitated supporting the interests of the secularist, nationalist, and heretical parties waging war against the Islamic State on behalf of the crusaders and Arab apostate regimes ([sic] Al Hayat, 2015, p. 57).

Fighters who are not part of the Sahwah forces, or “sincere mujahidin” under leadership that does not want to join Daesh, are called on to join Daesh should they not want to support crusader or apostate regime interests. Daesh’s inclusion of leaders of other insurgent groups, an enemy

⁵⁷ Sahwah or “awakening” was a resistance movement started in 2005 in Iraq’s Anbar province made up of Sunni tribesmen, police officers, rival insurgent groups, and others fighting what was AQI (Hassan and Weiss, 2015, p. 68-69).

category that is not often discussed by al Qaeda, demonstrates Daesh's focus on its local enemies or what Hamming (2017) refers to as the "internal enemy" or rival jihadist groups (usually al Qaeda and its affiliates). Despite these groups' complexities and varying interests in this conflict, the only commonality being opposition to Daesh, they are still categorized as making up the other "side" of a two-sided conflict promoting "crusader" and "apostate regime" interests.

Daesh also focuses on Shia Muslims as an important target and significant enemy, which may be indicative of the sectarian nature of conflict within its territories, Iraq in particular (Isakhan and Zarandona, 2018, p. 7). Daesh publications often feature commentary on targeting and delegitimizing Shia Muslims. In the *Dabiq* 5 feature "Remaining and Expanding" describing Daesh's expansion and consolidation of power, al Baghdadi (2014) states:

Deal with the Rāfidah first, wherever you find them, then Āl Salūl⁵⁸ and their soldiers before the crusaders and their bases. Deal with the Rāfidah, Āl Salūl, and their soldiers. Dismember their limbs. Snatch them as groups and individuals. Embitter their lives and make them occupied with themselves instead of us (p. 27).

Shia Muslims are a primary target as they must be targeted before "the crusader's bases." The focus on Shia Muslims continues into *Rumiyah*. For example, the four-part feature "The Twelver Rafidah: From Fabricated Claim to a Non-Existent Imam" that spans over several issues of *Rumiyah*. The authors of this feature claim that Shiism is "man-made" in a sense that it is not revealed like Sunni Islam (Al Hayat, 2017g, p. 37). By declaring them to be non-Muslims and accusing them of spreading falsehoods, Daesh legitimizes targeting Shia Muslims.

Unlike al Qaeda, Daesh pays close attention to Shia Muslims. This is not to say that al Qaeda does not target Shias in its insurgencies, rather targeting Shia Muslims is not prioritized in

⁵⁸ A term used to describe the Saudi Royal family, which "...is a reference to a seventh-century figure depicted as outwardly embracing Islam while conspiring against the prophet Muhammad" (Black, 2016).

its actual messaging for English-speaking audiences. Al Qaeda does mention Shias in terms of “Shia regimes” like Iran or Syria or in the context of America fueling sectarian conflict (Murabit, 2016, p. 36), but it does not call on readers to target them like they do for “Jews” (often used interchangeably with “Zionists”) and “Crusaders” (often used interchangeably with “Christians”, Europeans, or Americans).

While Daesh claims to be fighting in a clearly defined conflict with no “gray zone”, they appear to be more focused on agents of the West, as opposed to targeting the West directly (except for praising individual attacks). Daesh is focused on establishing itself as a major power, mostly in Iraq and Syria, while also distinguishing itself from other groups such as “Jihad claimants” like al Qaeda or militias backed by other regimes. The focus on targeting Shia Muslims is not only indicative of the sectarian nature of the conflict in Iraq, but also showcases Daesh’s dedication to a type of “purity.” Instead of being more strategic like al Qaeda, whose leadership calls for unity against a greater enemy (the West), Daesh portrays itself as a movement that has enough strength and dedication to fight all of Islam’s (Daesh’s interpretation of Islam) enemies without having to compromise on its principles.

Daesh and al Qaeda both see themselves in a conflict between two “sides” (Islam and The West), but they differ in how they define “the other side.” When it comes to defining the conflict, Al Qaeda is facing a network of enemies with America at its centre as the main target. Daesh, on the other hand, is facing a complex network of enemies in its many theatres of operation, each with varying connections to the West and/or Western interests, who must be destroyed before directly confronting The West. This is not to say that “The West” is not important to Daesh as they do mention targeting America and its allies’ and praise—and later promote—individual attacks in the West. Al Qaeda promotes a unified approach against America

and its allies with less focus on Shia Muslims and the near enemy. Daesh, though it promotes itself as a global pan Islamic movement, is much more focused on enemies within its territories.

Movement Expansion and Selection of Social Issues

Inspire, *Dabiq*, and *Rumiyah*'s authors not only outline the main enemy and the many social ills they create, they also establish what can be gained by destroying their enemies. For al Qaeda, and to a lesser extent, Daesh, this involves incorporating causes familiar and important to Western audiences, whether that is economic inequality, human rights, or anti-racism. Daesh does not directly address these social issues, but it tends to frame its Caliphate as a place immune to these social ills; therefore, framing migration to the Caliphate as not just a religious journey, but an escape from oppression. Al Qaeda, on the other hand, highlights issues like racism and poverty, mainly focusing on the American context. Al Qaeda also claims to represent, not only Muslims, but other groups who have been subject to what they refer to as American Imperialism.

The first section will outline how *Inspire* authors gesture to other oppressed groups and victims of American imperialism, this will be followed by a discussion of how *Inspire* highlights major issues impacting those living in The West, America in particular, like economic inequality, racism, and islamophobia. This will be followed by a discussion of how Daesh highlights social issues in the West, like economic inequality and racism, in its accounts of fighters making hijrah.

Al Qaeda

In features promoting and providing instructions for individual attacks, like Open Source Jihad (OSJ), authors often state that al Qaeda's methods of attack can be used by victims of The West who are not necessarily Muslim. In a Question and Answer feature with a "Specialist AQ Consultant" in the *Inspire* 10 OSJ section, the consultant is asked who could use OSJ manuals, to which he responds, "Inspire Magazine seeks to free the oppressed nations from

the Western Hegemony. These tools are for Muslims in particular, but others could also use them in their war against the present oppressors, America and its allies” ([sic] AQ Consultant, 2013, p. 57). The AQ chef has a similar answer to the same question in an interview in *Inspire 13* stating, “Everyone who wants to win over the oppressive American imperialism is advised to take back his right. Our call is for the indigenous peoples of the Americas and the Afro-Americans who are oppressed by the AngloAmerican supremacists” ([sic] AQ Chef, 2014, p. 20). In “Inspired by Inspire,” a piece in *Inspire 11* praising attacks linked to *Inspire* magazine like the 2013 Boston bombing, the author describes *Inspire* as a magazine that “...strives to defend Muslims and other oppressed nations” (Ibrahim, 2013, p. 19). Through reaching out to a wider audience of “the oppressed” al Qaeda could be trying to widen its audience and perhaps appeal to other grievances a potential recruit may have.

Al Qaeda also highlights other atrocities in America’s past, not just those against Muslims. In an *Inspire 11* article “Who and Why?” justifying the Boston Marathon bombings, the author states:

Of course, we are speaking to the American nation about its government sequential policies against Muslim nations. We will not speak about crimes against other oppressed nations in the Latin America in Panama, Cuba, Nicaragua and others. We will not get into the crimes against the Indochinese in Vietnam, the Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, not even of what happened in America itself like the annihilation of the indigenous peoples of the Americas, 'the Red Indians'. We will leave out the history of the racism policy against the colored, and how the white man drowned in racism ([sic] Almoravid, 2013a, p. 30).

Though the author claims to be focusing on America's crimes against Muslims, they make a point of highlighting other "crimes against oppressed nations" to frame the enemy as not only a problem for Muslims, but other populations both within and outside of America. Therefore, targeting America does not only serve as a form of justice for Muslims, but for other groups as well. Al Qaeda widens the significance of its movement as one that fights multiple forms of oppression on behalf of other groups besides Muslims, which may give potential recruits more, or different, motivations to be a part of the cause.

In several *Inspire* articles, authors will often rhetorically gesture to an American audience, explaining how they can benefit from al Qaeda's demands being met (i.e. halting US wars and military presence in Muslim countries). This audience is different from the presumed Western Muslim audiences as they are not called on to carry out individual attacks in America as part of a religious obligation, but to put pressure on their governments. *Inspire* authors often juxtapose costs of American wars in "Muslim lands" with economic inequality and poverty in America. Authors will argue that the problem is not just that American political leadership is carrying out invasions of Muslim lands, but doing so is costing American taxpayers whose money could be used for other purposes like remedying economic inequality. Several articles frame the costs of these wars as impediments to solving major social problems; for example, "Battle of the marathon: Message to the 99% of the American people" (an obvious reference to the Occupy Wall Street⁵⁹ slogan) in *Inspire 13*, where the author states:

⁵⁹ Occupy Wall Street is a movement protesting economic inequality that originated in New York in 2011, but spread to other countries. Often referring to those on Wallstreet who hold all the power as the 1% and those without it as the 99% (Occupy Wallstreet, 2019).

This war is not your war. It is the war of the 1%. But you are the one paying the price. And the wave of vengeance will eventually drown you. I know you may wonder why you have to be punished for the sins of the 1%. The answer is simple. You are the people. And the claim is 'your government is of the people, by the people, for the people'. It is not fair that you take credit for any success and fail to be punished for any failure. In short, you are the rightful ruler of your country. You are the majority. All credit, both good and bad, is yours. I thought well of you when you occupied Wall Street. But the real problem does not lie in Wall Street, it lies in the Pentagon. That is where your blood and money is being wasted. I don't say you go there and occupy it; no, that is the job of an invader. I want you to take it back in your hands. To be responsible. By any means necessary. Or else, we will remember another battle, or maybe a massacre ([sic] Almoravid, 2014, p. 50).

The author frames the enemy using the same language as the Occupy Wall Street movement (1% and the 99%) to build commonality with those protesting inequality. At the same time, the author pins some responsibility for the “the war of the 1%” on this audience (presumably Americans) claiming that they should go after those in the Pentagon and not Wall Street to not only eliminate economic inequality, but also stop expensive wars in Muslim Lands. Ending these wars is presented as beneficial to “both sides” (America and those living in Muslim lands) depending on what “side” the readers may see themselves on when looking at the conflict. In this case, the reader does not need to believe in all of al Qaeda’s aims if the result of meeting al Qaeda’s requests (i.e. ending American military intervention in places like Afghanistan and Iraq) has other benefits aside from not being targeted by al Qaeda, like alleviating economic inequality as money would not be spent on costly wars.

Al Qaeda authors also highlight anti-Muslim sentiment in the West, especially in America. In “Blended duality: Muslim and American?” in *Inspire 8* Samir Khan (2011) argues that not only is American society inherently anti-Muslim, but one can not be “truly Muslim” while living in Western societies (p. 9). This argument is not unlike many political pundits who claim that Islam is some how inimical, or cannot fully exist, within Western democracies. *Inspire 15* and *17* reactions to the 2016 American Presidential campaign (and results) also argue that the West, especially America, is inherently anti-Muslim. In the *Inspire 15* “Editor’s letter”, Yayha Ibrahim (2016) argues that the candidates, Trump and Clinton (and their parties) only disagreed on domestic policy, but had the same foreign policy producing the same result: more Muslim deaths (p. 4). And while Clinton “pretends” to be friends with Muslims, Trump was more forthcoming in his anti-Muslim hostility (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 4). Essentially, anti-Muslim sentiment has always been a part of American politics, regardless of what politicians say in public. In an interview with AQIM leader Sheikh Abu Musa’b Abdul-Wadood in *Inspire 17*, he states that President Trump’s “...blunt statements and his hostile stance towards Islam and Muslims may be beneficial...” Trump’s behaviour is seen as “...a powerful reminder to the Islamic Ummah of the reality of these disbelievers” (Abdul-Wadood, 2017, p. 40). For Abdul-Wadood (2017), Trump’s rhetoric is seen as reflective of Western societies writ large, especially with the increase of right-wing nativist sentiment in America and other Western countries around the time of Trump’s election:

...we take a closer look, a powerful return of racist and nationalist tendencies amongst the vast majority of Western masses is a trend clearly discernible in recent years. This is visible in the rapid rise of parties which call themselves 'right-wing.' We can see this racist tendency becoming a concrete reality in the decisions and actions taken by several Western governments. In fact, even governments of supposedly left-wing parties have enforced such discriminatory policies (pp. 41-42).

Abdul-Wadood is referring to hostility towards Muslims not only in America, but in other Western societies including the passing of laws disproportionately targeting Muslims like attempts (and eventual successes) at banning religious head coverings in Quebec, Canada (Shingler, 2019) and other Western European countries like France (BBC, 2018), or controversial “assimilation programs”⁶⁰ (Barri and Sorensen 2018). Intolerance towards Muslims is presented as an inherent feature of Western societies, which makes joining al Qaeda a better option as it will destroy the source of oppression: the West. This argument not only serves as a motivator for joining al Qaeda, but it could also be an attempt to delegitimize Muslims in Western societies that criticize al Qaeda. Even if they actively oppose these laws and anti-Muslim attitudes, they are still upholding these laws by choosing to be a part of Western societies.

American anti-Black racism is discussed in several *Inspire* articles as well as smaller features like “Hear the World” or “Words of Wisdom,” which often feature quotations from prominent Black activists like Malcom X and Dr. Cornell West. Statistics and references to police brutality against African Americans and other visible minorities in America are featured

⁶⁰ In 2018 the Danish government mandated that mostly low income, Muslim Danish Immigrants, living in so-called “ghetto” neighbourhoods to send their children away for 25 hours a week to learn “Danish values” or face punishments like fines or having welfare payments withheld (Barry and Sorensen, 2018).

in pages like “Mujahids notes” and “Numbers Speak Louder Than words.” A one-page feature “Islam: the solution to racism”, in *Inspire 10* is centered around a quote from Malcom X:

America needs to understand Islam, because this is the one religion that erases from its society the race problem. Throughout my travels in the Muslim world, I have met, talked to, and even eaten with people who in America would have been considered white, but the white attitude was removed from their minds by the religion of Islam. I have never before seen sincere and true brotherhood practised by all together, irrespective of their color (Malcom X quoted by Al Malahem, 2013a, p. 29).

Here al Qaeda implies that al Qaeda’s version of Islam is interchangeable with Malcom X’s. Next to this passage is a picture of Trayvon Martin, a teenage victim of a police shooting, with the label “field negro” and a picture of President Obama labeled as a “house negro.” This feature is culturally significant to American audiences, not only does it feature a prominent activist, Malcom X, but the image is a reference to one of his famous 1963 speeches. In this speech, Malcom X referred to “the house negro,” as a slave given a few more privileges than the “field negro,” and as a result of these privileges, upholds and refuses to challenge the system of racism (Malcom X, n.d). In this case, it is President Obama upholding racist systems leading to the deaths of Black youth like Trayvon Martin.

Not only does *Inspire* feature prominent anti-racism figures, it also has articles and features on historical and contemporary anti-Black racism in America. In *Inspire 14* a feature entitled “The Blacks in America,” covers the history of slavery, segregation, and police brutality. The article was published in light of, what at the time of the magazine’s publication, were recent police killings of two unarmed Black men, Freddie Gray and Michael Brown, which resulted in major protests by groups like Black Lives Matter. The piece ends with a call to action for African

Americans to “come to Islam” and join al Qaeda’s fight against the oppressor: America, or in this case, “White America” (Almoravid, 2015, p. 19). While al Qaeda calls African Americans to Islam and features figures like Malcom X, they do not mention African American Muslim movements like the Nation of Islam.

A timeline feature, “The Issue of African Americans” in *Inspire 16* included events like *Inspire*’s publishing of “The Blacks in America” (in *Inspire 14*) and Zawahiri’s comments on the oppression of African Americans in a commemorative speech for the 15th anniversary of 9/11 (featured in *Inspire 16*) alongside events like prominent cases of unarmed Black men being killed by police (Michael Brown, Freddy Gray, Filando Castile etc.) and protests against police brutality (like the Ferguson protests in 2014) (Al Malahem, 2016a, pp.34-35). The timeline also included Micah Johnson (Al Malahem, 2016a, pp. 34-35), the “Dallas Sniper’s,” killing of five police officers in 2016 (Karimi, Shoicet, and Ellis, 2016). Al Qaeda’s inclusion of the “Dallas Sniper” in the timeline could be to present an example of an individual act of violence by the oppressed against the oppressors, the kind they promote in OSJ and other features. The timeline also demonstrates how al Qaeda will not only attempt to represent other oppressed groups, but also insert itself into the narrative as a group that “did something” or “spoke out” about the injustice.

It is not clear whether or not *Inspire* authors assume that Black Americans might read the magazine; however, the oppression of Black Americans represents a challenge to American myth making as a society built on equality. By highlighting these issues, al Qaeda not only appears to represent other causes, but also discredit its enemies. However, citing anti-Black racism in order to discredit America’s reputation as the leader of “The Free World” is not entirely new. During the 1960’s, Soviet media would cover American conflicts over civil rights arguing that

“capitalism provided a natural environment for racism” and that America’s treatment of Black citizens was indicative of their treatment of people of colour throughout the world (Onion, 2013). This approach is similar to al Qaeda’s argument that the West is inherently racist and murders other people of colour around the world, whether it is in Afghanistan, Iraq, Vietnam, or in America itself.

Daesh

Daesh also discusses contemporary issues like racism and economic inequality in its publications, but it does not dedicate as much material to these issues as al Qaeda does. Unlike al Qaeda who advocates for destroying the problem by eliminating the source (America), Daesh presents the Caliphate as an escape from systems of oppression. When Daesh discusses issues like racism and economic inequality, it is often in stories of those leaving their home countries to live in the Caliphate in features like “For Sisters” and “Among the believers are men.”

Daesh presents itself and its Caliphate as a collective that does not recognize race or nationality, rather it elevates “religion” (assuming it can be separated from other categories) as the only relevant identity. Daesh and its followers are part of a collective of “true Muslims” following a version of Islam stripped of any cultural context. Daesh, at least in *Dabiq*, presents the Caliphate as an antidote to social problems like racism. In the foreword for *Dabiq* 8, the author asserts that Daesh’s cause is not for territory, but to elevate the word of God above all else and anyone who stands in Daesh’s way, regardless of their background, is an enemy while Daesh’s Caliphate is:

...a state where the Arab and non-Arab, the white man and black man, the easterner and westerner are all brothers. It is a khilāfah that gathered the Caucasian, Indian, Chinese, Shāmī, Iraqi, Yemeni, Egyptian, Maghribī (North African), American, French, German, and Australian. Allah brought their hearts together, and thus, they became brothers by His grace, loving each other for the sake of Allah, standing in a single trench, defending and guarding each other, and sacrificing themselves for one another. Their blood mixed and became one, under a single flag and goal, in one pavilion, enjoying this blessing, the blessing of faithful brotherhood (Al Hayat, 2016e, p. 4).

Daesh presents its state as one that it is global, not only in its ambitions for expansion, but also in a sense that its supporters come from all around the world. Differences like race, ethnicity and nationality, which may have mattered outside of the Caliphate, do not matter because they are all unified under one flag, one leader, and Daesh's version of Islam. Daesh does not claim to solve problems like racism by targeting the West like al Qaeda. Instead, it presents itself as a movement that unifies individuals from different backgrounds under one religious identity making other aspects of identity like race, class, ethnicity, or culture irrelevant.

In pieces about individuals who make hijrah to Daesh's Caliphate, authors often highlight major problems within the Western countries' these emigres lived in, while also highlighting the many comforts they have sacrificed to live a more authentic life in the Caliphate. In the "Among the Believers are Men" feature in *Rumiyah 11* about, al Faranasi, a fighter from France, the author describes the Paris suburbs he lived in prior to joining Daesh:

In the impoverished suburbs of Paris, the foreigners of that country are amassed, crowded together in neighborhoods that are congested with Arabs and Africans from countries that France once occupied, with many of them associating themselves to Islam.... But whether they are Muslims or merely claim to be Muslims, in both cases there is enough reason for the original inhabitants of the land from among the Christians and Jews to hate them, and to endeavor to separate them from themselves, relegate them to the outskirts of the city, and avoid mixing with them and employing them in important positions of work. They prefer to leave them in this despicable condition so that they can be cheap servants for them who perform the kind of work that they themselves avoid, granting them in exchange for this humiliating condition the permission to remain in the country, as well as some wealth that barely keeps them alive and suffices their needs (al Hayat, 2017h, p. 45).

This account paints a detailed picture of this fighter's circumstances and perhaps that of other readers living in Europe (or other Western societies) who may feel that they are stuck on the margins of society. By performing hijrah to the Caliphate, al Faranasi was able to escape a system that keeps Muslims like him poor and in a constant state of humiliation. Humiliation at the hands of The West is a common theme in both al Qaeda and Daesh publications. This piece describes France (and perhaps other Western societies) to readers as a society that will not accept them regardless of how "Muslim" they are (whether that is practising or being "only Muslim by name"). Stories like these present hijrah to the Caliphate as not only a religious obligation, but a chance to escape an oppressive society to live a more meaningful life.

Both Daesh and al Qaeda expand the significance of their movements by highlighting different social issues familiar to their audiences. Al Qaeda tends to highlight specific issues in the American context like racism and economic inequality. By highlighting issues that may be important to its Western audiences, al Qaeda not only discredits its enemies, but attempts to make al Qaeda's cause more meaningful to a wider audience. Though Daesh has a large "crusader enemy," that it must eliminate, it does not draw on specific social issues. Instead, the Caliphate is presented as an entity that is free from these problems. Daesh's fighters are not only sacrificing lives of comfort in the West to join the Caliphate, but they are leaving an unjust society behind.

Martyrs

After establishing Daesh and al Qaeda's enemies, or how they define "the other side" of the conflict, it is important to examine how they define heroes, or those that potential recruits should look to as an example. In *Inspire*, *Dabiq*, and *Rumiyah*, these heroes are martyrs and each magazine has features profiling and venerating martyrs. Martyrdom is a complex term and has many definitions, so I will be looking at how al Qaeda and Daesh define it in these specific publications. Based on my reading of the magazines, martyrs are those who have died for the cause. Martyrs are not just those who immediately sacrifice themselves in a "martyrdom operation," but also those who die while supporting the movement, whether it is being killed by an opposing army in a battle or conducting an individual attack and being killed by law enforcement; or recruiting for the movement and being killed by a drone strike. *Inspire* has several features dedicated to martyrs, like Tamerlane Tsarnev or *Inspire* founders Awlaki and Khan. In *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, martyrs are showcased and praised in "Among the Believers are Men" and highlighted in other articles and features like Islamic State Reports. Martyrdom plays

a different role in each movement. For al Qaeda, martyrdom is both an obligation and a reward, and a way to showcase the movement's legitimacy as a threat. For Daesh, martyrdom is praised, but it is not a fighter's immediate goal, rather it is something to be used strategically.

Al Qaeda

For al Qaeda, martyrdom has spiritual and strategic value as it provides a psychological blow to the enemy while guaranteeing the individual carrying out a "martyrdom operation" can die for the cause and be rewarded in the afterlife. In other words, if fighters are killed (or martyred) by their enemies, it is not a loss, but a victory, making their enemies' military strength irrelevant. Martyrs are held up as examples of al Qaeda's moral and military strength. The fact that al Qaeda's fighters aim for martyrdom is presented as proof of their superiority as they not only are willing to die for the cause, but welcome it (Al Awlaki, 2011a, p. 53). Al Qaeda presents martyrdom as not only a religious obligation, but one of the highest forms of religious practice. For example, in an *Inspire 17* piece by Hamza bin Laden, "Advice for Martyrdom Seekers in the West," bin Laden (2017) states: "Know O' noble knight that you are heading for a deed which is among the greatest of virtues, and the most glorified of worships" (p. 14). For al Qaeda, martyrdom operations are not just a means for victory, but an end in itself. Those who conduct "martyrdom operations" provide al Qaeda with a type of strategic (or psychological) advantage by carrying out small-scale deadly attacks, while at the same time, fulfilling a religious obligation that will be rewarded in the afterlife.

Daesh

In *Dabiq* martyrdom is important, but it is seen as one of many benefits of becoming a part of Daesh's army and not necessarily a goal; martyrdom can be maximized or used strategically. In "Advice to the leaders of the Islamic State" a piece in *Dabiq* 7 by Abu Hamza al Muhajir (2015a), he offers leaders advice on "Shahadah" or martyrdom:

It's permissible for the leader of an army to let one eager for shahādah expose himself to it if the leader knows that seeing him killed will be an incitement for the Muslims to fight zealously to avenge him. The opposite is also correct; he should protect any person whose killing will break the strength of his brothers, such as a distinguished commander. (p. 14).

Martyrdom is not a good in itself as it is up to the leader to determine whether a fighter's martyrdom has the "right" outcome and triggers the right emotions within the group. In other words, not all soldiers should seek out martyrdom if it means negatively impacting the overall morale of the group. This contrasts with al Qaeda's promotion of martyrdom for all of its fighters, regardless of the outcome for the group. Daesh is fighting a battle in its territories as a centralized state-like entity and is not a scattered decentralized group like al Qaeda, so there may be more of a need for leadership to assess the impact of martyrdom on the group.

For Daesh, martyrdom is more of an endpoint, as opposed to an immediate goal, as a fighter's martyrdom (or shahadah) needs to be preceded by a long fighting career. In a piece from *Dabiq* 9 on "The virtues of Ribat For the Cause of Allah" (Ribat is a place to withdraw to in order to train⁶¹) the author states:

⁶¹ The author described Ribat as "The word was then used for every person stationed at the frontier posts defending those behind him – throughout the area between him and them" (Al Hayat, 2016f, p. 9). According to the Oxford Islamic Dictionary, Ribat is a stronghold or a fort "Initially founded by Muslims in non-Muslim areas,

Since the revival of jihād more than thirty years ago, mujāhid leaders have stated that jihād – on the personal level – consists of strides on a roadmap towards shahādah. One first performs hijrah to the lands of jihād (now, dārul-Islām), then gives bay’ah, pledging what it entails of obedience (sam’ and tā’ah) to the amīr (now, the Khalīfah) and commitment to the jamā’ah (now, the Khilāfah), then trains (i’dād) for the purpose of jihād, then patiently spends months of rībat, serves countless hours of guard duty (hirāsah), then fights (qitāl) in battles and kills (qatl) whom he can from amongst the kāfir enemy, and finally achieves shahādah.Of course, there are always exceptions, such as the muhājir who achieves shahādah during his training camp or the murābit who achieves it on his first day of ribāt. But this is the roadmap every mujāhid should grasp so as to maximize the fruits of his jihād. Otherwise, how can one expect to be patient on the fearsome battlefield while not enduring the hardships of ribāt? (Al Hayat 2016f, p. 13)

For Daesh, martyrdom is an endpoint point on a roadmap set by Daesh leadership that a fighter is working towards and not something that should be that achieved right away. The author makes a point of laying out important steps a fighter must take before martyrdom like training and taking on other important duties. This is not to say that al Qaeda does not call for training before martyrdom, but fighters do not have to follow a road map of specific steps set out by leadership. For Daesh, martyrdom does not simply offer an immediate reward, but has benefits that can be “maximized” depending on how the fighter “achieves” martyrdom. This may be because Daesh had more of a centralized structure than al Qaeda, meaning it would be more beneficial for fighters to continue as opposed to immediately embrace death as is espoused in *Inspire*.

simultaneously fulfilling defensive and missionary purposes” and “The ribat is also a place where the ascetic withdraws to engage in internal spiritual jihad (struggle).” (“Ribat”, 2003)

Daesh's attitude towards martyrdom changes slightly in *Rumiyah* where there is an overall shift in Daesh's narrative including the promotion of individual attacks over hijrah and the emphasis on "remaining" over expanding. In *Rumiyah 12's* foreword the author describes a battle in Mosul:

These people do not understand. They cannot grasp that every soldier of the Khilafah is upon the same 'aqidah and methodology, all seeking to be killed in Allah's cause. Yes, the soldiers of the Islamic State – without exception – are all prepared to fight in the cause of Allah down to their last drop of blood. And so we give glad tidings to the kuffar that the soldiers of the Khilafah will conquer the land of Sham in its entirety, even if after some time, and will eventually reach their lands, with Allah's permission (Al Hayat, 2017d, p. 4).

Martyrdom is reframed as a desired outcome, which makes any losses that Daesh may have incurred look less like losses and more like a moral victory because Daesh's fighters supposedly do not fear death. Though Daesh's soldiers "seek to be killed" for their cause, they are still fighting "to their last drop of blood." They are still fighting until martyrdom, rather than fighting in order to attain martyrdom.

Al Qaeda and Daesh revere martyrs as heroes. However, they have different views on martyrdom's role in a fighter's life. Al Qaeda's greatest heroes are individuals who take matters into their own hands and attain martyrdom through "lone jihad" as part of al Qaeda's larger aim of targeting The West; the act of sacrifice is a good in itself. Daesh's greatest heroes fight under a leader (the Caliph), and their "martyring" must either be at the end of a fighting career or serve the interests of the Caliphate's army. This is not to say that al Qaeda's "martyrs" do not have long fighting careers or that Daesh does not have fighters that conduct "martyrdom operations"

right away, but the advice given to their audiences and the individuals they hold up as heroes reflect the nature of the movement. Daesh's idea of martyrdom being achieved after sustained fighting or used in a strategic way for the sake of group morale reflects Daesh's image of itself as a centralized fighting force. Al Qaeda's focus on immediate martyrdom, through individual attacks, is reflective of its nature as a decentralized network of individuals carrying out small-scale unpredictable attacks.

Participation

When instructing audiences on how to get involved, al Qaeda and Daesh prioritize different types of participation. Though some forms of participation may be more symbolic, or not have concrete impacts on Daesh and al Qaeda's aims, like defeating an army or gaining territory, magazine authors frame these actions as significant to the overall movement. This section examines the common forms of action Daesh and al Qaeda promote. The first section will discuss the promotion of Hijrah, mostly by Daesh. The second section outlines how Daesh and al Qaeda promote and prioritize lone wolf attacks, which will be followed by a discussion of the notion of "media jihad" or the production and distribution of media as a type of participation.

Hijrah

The notion of hijrah or migrating to "Islamic" lands, is promoted in Daesh publications, *Dabiq* in particular. For *Inspire* hijrah is rarely ever mentioned, and when it is, it is often when it is being compared to individual jihad as a less effective form of participation. *Dabiq* (and *Rumiyah*) authors often describe The Prophet's hijrah from Mecca to Medina, as one of the most important events in Islamic history and elevate hijrah to the highest form of religious practice (Umm Summayah al Muhajirah, 2016a, p. 32), much like al Qaeda's elevation of jihad. Making Hijrah to fight and/or live in Daesh's territory is often presented as a better option than carrying

out an individual attack (at least in *Dabiq*); individual attacks are only recommended if an individual cannot perform hijrah.

Dabiq, has many pieces promoting hijrah to Daesh's Caliphate in Iraq and Syria. However, if readers cannot reach Daesh's territory in Iraq and Syria, authors encourage them to migrate to other territories like their Wilayat in West Africa (al Hayat, 2016g, p. 15). The reader must make hijrah to remove themselves from a corrupt society in order to protect their soul. In the foreword for *Dabiq 9*, the author states:

As for those who continue to suffer from the disease of being indifferent towards the obligations of hijrah, jihād, and bay'ah, so much so that they see nothing wrong with residing amongst, and paying taxes to, the very crusaders who belittle the Sharī'ah on their news and entertainment programs, who arm the secularists and Rawāfid in Muslim lands, who imprison and torture Muslim men and women, and on top of all who burn the Qur'an and mock the Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam), then let them prepare their flimsy excuses for the angels of death (Al Hayat, 2016h, p. 4).

By staying in their homeland, Western audiences not only risk corruption of the soul, but also end up supporting a society that is waging war against Islam. The author references events that have happened in the Western societies— like Quran burnings (Peralta, 2013) and “Draw Mohammad” cartoon contests (Gorta, 2014)— implying that these incidents are a regular feature of Western society. While migrating to Daesh's territory is a way to support Daesh, conversely, not migrating to Daesh's territory is another form of “action” where living in a Western society is supporting the undermining of Islam and the invasion of Muslim lands.

Hijrah is seen as a calling that naturally draws in true believers. In the first “For Sisters” feature in *Dabiq* 7, an interview Umm Basir al Muhajirah (2015), the wife of Amedy Coulibaly, she mentions Daesh’s videos and how her husband would tell her not to show him the videos because if he “...would watch the videos, it would make him want to perform hijrah immediately and that would have conflicted with his intent to carry out the operations in France” (p. 51). This account is not just a statement about the effectiveness of Daesh’s media products, but it also presents hijrah as less of a sacrifice, but something more meaningful. Soldiers like Coulibaly conducting an attack in the West are dedicated to carrying out the attack, but at the same time, the draw of hijrah could potentially sway him from the mission. This is another way of showcasing hijrah as a more desirable and rewarding way of supporting Daesh.

Discussions of hijrah are present in *Rumiyah*, but not as prevalent as they are in *Dabiq*. While *Dabiq* is focused on “remaining and expanding” or building a society, *Rumiyah* is more focused on “remaining” or defending the remaining territory with whatever resources Daesh has left. As it will be discussed later, *Rumiyah* authors mostly promote individual attacks. Hijrah is mostly discussed in features that share personal stories like “For Sisters” and “Among the Believers are Men.” These stories do not directly tell readers to make hijrah, but share personal accounts of those who have made hijrah and the hardships and obstacles they overcame in the process that made them stronger. The occasional direct calls for hijrah invited readers to migrate to Daesh’s other Wilayats like Daesh’s East Asia Khilafah in the Philippines (Al Hayat, 2017j, p. 37).

While *Dabiq* features directly call for readers to make hijrah to Daesh’s Caliphate, *Rumiyah* presents examples of individuals being faced with and overcoming trials and tribulations while making hijrah and encourages migration to its other territories. This shift in

narrative is likely the result of Daesh's territorial losses at the time of *Rumiyah's* publication and the resulting shift towards purifying the ranks to hang on to the true believers within their territories. In *Rumiyah*, hijrah is presented as a test for future struggles. This is different from *Dabiq's* calls for hijrah, where hijrah is obligatory and must be carried out to escape a corrupt society to build and fight for a more just one.

Promoting Lone Wolf Attacks

Both Daesh and al Qaeda praise and promote individual or "lone jihad" attacks in different ways. "Lone jihad" attacks are the *raison d'être* for *Inspire* magazine; authors provide detailed instructions in features like OSJ and promote these attacks in articles and features as the most effective way to support al Qaeda. Daesh, at least in *Dabiq*, prioritized hijrah over individual attacks. However, when reporting Daesh-inspired attacks, *Dabiq* authors praised these attacks as direct responses to Daesh leadership's calls to target the West. The narrative shifts in *Rumiyah* where authors promote individual attacks while providing instructions to carry them out.

Al Qaeda

Inspire has several articles and regular features like OSJ that promote "lone Jihad." *Inspire* authors argue that lone jihad is a more effective and powerful way to target The West and readers are all but dissuaded from travelling to one of al Qaeda's theatres of operation. In interview features with major al Qaeda figures, the interviewees are often asked what advice they would give to Muslims in the West to which they usually respond by recommending individual attacks. In a "Talk to *Inspire*" interview in *Inspire 13* with AQAP fighter Abu Dahdāh Bāsil Az-Zahrāni his advice to Muslims in the West is: "If you join the ranks of the Muhajireen and Mujahideen, you will be a Soldier of Allāh. But if you carry out a lone Jihād operation amidst the

kuffār, you will be an Army of Allāh” (Az-Zahrāni, 2014, p. 35). For al Qaeda, individual attacks are much more powerful as the individual has the power of an army as opposed to soldier in a larger group. Al Qaeda often frames these attacks as directly targeting the enemy. Individual attacks tend to have more of a psychological impact and generally draw more media attention as they are typically carried out in civilian spaces in the West.

According to its authors, *Inspire* was essentially created to promote individual attacks; the magazine is often framed as a weapon itself. In a letter from the editor commemorating Awlaki’s death in *Inspire* 9 the author refers to the magazine as “America’s worst nightmare” and an “effective tool” with two objectives: “...to call for and inspire to jihad in the English-speaking world” and to “...deliver to every inspired Muslim anywhere around the world the operational know-how of carrying out attacks from within the West.” (Ibrahim, 2012, p. 4). Authors often liken the magazine to a type of portable training camp. In a piece entitled “Winning on the ground,” Yahya Ibrahim (2012a) states,

Now, our capabilities and skills have developed from being in the military camp of Khaldun in Khowst to be transferred now to Virginia. And the idea that the military camp of al-Farouq has now become portable in a section of our magazine which is easily accessible online. Now, all you need to make explosives is the kitchen of your mum as instructed in the open source jihad (p. 58).

The magazine is likened to the al Farouq training camp in Khost, which was established by bin Laden in 1989 and is said to be the place where al Qaeda was officially established (Hegghammer, 2020, p. 357). “The kitchen of your mum” is a reference to an explosives recipe in *Inspire* 1’s OSJ feature entitled “Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of your mom.” The magazine itself is seen as a tool for change, both as a provider of the “why,” narratives justifying individual

jihad, and the “how” as a source of instructions for carrying out attacks. It lowers the barrier of entry into the movement by making the means more portable. *Inspire* is a meeting place for a widespread imagined community of fighters to train together. *Inspire* also makes sense of individual attacks by weaving together seemingly disparate attacks together as part of al Qaeda’s wider legacy, which the reader can be a part of.

Daesh

In *Dabiq*, individual attacks are praised and often causally linked to the statements from Daesh leadership; they are an alternative for those who have a “legitimate” reason for not making hijrah. In a *Dabiq* 5 piece entitled “If I were US president today” by John Cantlie (2014), he attributes attacks in Canada, Australia, and the United States to the following statement made by Daesh’s official spokesman Al Adnani:

You must strike the soldiers, patrons, and troops of the tawāghīt. Strike their police, security, and intelligence members. If you can kill a disbelieving American or European – especially the spiteful and filthy French – or an Australian, or a Canadian, or any other disbeliever from the disbelievers waging war against the Islamic State, then rely upon Allah, and kill him in any manner or way however it may be (al Adnani, quoted by Cantlie, 2014, p. 37).

Cantlie (2014) claims that “All these attacks were the direct result of the Shaykh’s call to action” (p. 37). According to Cantlie (2014), these incidents were not just individual acts of violence, which happen every day, but a group of men fighting “under the banner of the Islamic State” (p. 38) and:

The significance of these attacks and others is enormous and cannot be underestimated. By calling on Muslims around the world to rise up in arms, the Shaykh launched attacks in Canada, America, and Australia (three of the countries mentioned in his speech) with nothing more than words and a shared belief in the act of worship that is jihād. A general in a conventional army couldn't possibly hope to have such power over men he'd never met on the other side of the world, ordering them to attack and possibly be killed, even if he offered them money! (Cantlie, 2014, p. 38)

In this case, it is not just individuals being inspired to act, rather it is the Shaykh (Al-Adnani), who launched attacks by issuing orders to a larger "army" around the world. These individuals are presented as soldiers taking orders in a more top-down centralized fighting force, rather than a loosely connected group of individual "lone wolf jihadists" as seen in *Inspire*.

Daesh's emphasis on hijrah over individual attacks is reversed in *Rumiyah* where several articles and regular features call on individuals in the West to target Western interests, whether that is through conducting an attack, or even committing theft or vandalism (Al Hayat 2017k, p. 39). The reader is not encouraged to join Daesh's army as a foreign fighter, but to pledge allegiance to Daesh and focus on targets at home, or "the West." *Rumiyah* includes features providing instructions for carrying out attacks like Just Terror Tactics (JTT) and features that report on Daesh attacks (by individuals and militias) around the world like Military and Covert Operations (MCO). The tactics shared in JTT manuals are not as complex or technical as al Qaeda's OSJ. However, they perform a different function; they provide instructions for certain modes of attack (e.g. stabbings, vehicle attacks) that have been committed by Daesh-inspired individuals in the past. The JTT feature helps Daesh claim not only these individual attacks, but the methods employed by the assailant as part of Daesh's larger strategy (Hai, 2019). In the

Rumiyah 9 JTT feature, the author describes individual attacks as part of Daesh’s legacy and wider strategy against its enemies:

As the Crusaders continue to wage their vicious campaign on the lands of Islam in the wilayat of Iraq, Sham, Khurasan, Sinai and elsewhere, they are constantly reminded of the painful reality that this honorable ummah has men – heroes who gallantly demonstrate with their operations against them that their howitzers, Tomahawks, white phosphorus bombs, and MOABs, which they rain over the heads of the Muslims and their homes, will be met with blades that plunge into their bodies, vehicles that unexpectedly mount their busy sidewalks, smashing into crowds, crushing bones, and severing limbs, and bullets that pierce their filthy bodies while they are in the midst of their foul enjoyment. The likes of Khalid Masood in the UK, Man Haron Monis, Numan Haider, and Farhad Khalil Mohammad Jabar in Australia, Michael Zehaf-Bibeau, and Martin Couture-Rouleau in Canada.... (Al Hayat, 2017l, p. 46).

This passage captures Daesh’s framing of individual attacks— whether it is a vehicle attack, shooting, or stabbing—being a united effort along with other small-scale attacks that had been committed by other Daesh “soldiers” in the past. Readers are encouraged to follow these fighters’ examples, by publicly pledging allegiance to Daesh and conducting an attack (JTT features always include instructions of how to publicly pledge allegiance to Daesh). These individuals are a unified army against Daesh’s enemies.

The unification of selected individual attacks is also reflected in the MCO feature. These selected “operations,” be they individual stabbings in England or military assaults in Iraq, are all shared on one feature, which describes these activities as “...recent operations conducted by the mujahidin of the Islamic State...” (al Hayat 2017a, p. 32). MCO unifies selected scattered events

into a larger narrative portraying Daesh as a unified army working around the world, both inside and outside of its main territory.

Daesh and Al Qaeda make the promotion of individual or “lone wolf” attacks more meaningful by connecting the individual attacker to a larger imagined community of fighters and supporters around the world. However, Daesh and al Qaeda differ in how they define this community’s structure.

Al Qaeda uses phrases like “lone wolf” or “lone jihad” to portray fighters as an army of one representing al Qaeda or “Islam” (as al Qaeda defines it). Al Qaeda focuses on giving individuals the means to carry out attacks to be a part of a legacy of individual fighters who self-trained using *Inspire*. This is not to say that al Qaeda-inspired attackers only received their training from *Inspire* and have not used other means like training abroad, but al Qaeda often portrays *Inspire* as the only resource supporters need to successfully carry out attacks.

In *Dabiq*, where hijrah is prioritized over individual attacks in the West, Daesh presents individual attackers as soldiers taking orders from Daesh leadership as opposed to a loosely connected network of Daesh-inspired individuals. In *Rumiyah*, carrying out individual attacks in “The West” is not necessarily an alternative for those who cannot make hijrah, but promoted in most of the magazine’s regular features. Like *Inspire*, readers are called to carry out individual attacks. However, unlike *Inspire*, *Rumiyah*’s authors, do not explicitly state that these attacks are more important or effective than fighting in Daesh’s territories. Instead, these actions are framed as part of Daesh’s wider efforts alongside its military exploits in its territories. Individuals carrying out the attacks are all seen as Daesh’s soldiers. *Rumiyah* features like MCO and JTT pull together seemingly disconnected individual attacks to portray Daesh as a centralized fighting force with its own strategy and techniques.

Both Daesh and al Qaeda portray themselves as larger global movements resisting an international order. However, the way each group promotes individual attacks reflects the nature of their movement; while Daesh’s “soldiers” are fighting under a centralized leader or entity (The Caliphate/Caliph), al Qaeda’s fighters are a network of individuals who take al Qaeda’s guidance and technical knowhow from *Inspire* to attack “The West” on behalf of “Islam” or al Qaeda, not a centralized entity or leader.

Media Jihad

Inspire, *Dabiq*, and *Rumiyah* contain multiple advertisements for other media products – like films, manuals, mobile apps, and books—created by Daesh and al Qaeda’s different media foundations. These media products are also promoted in other features and stories. In both Daesh and al Qaeda publications, Jihadist media have a role to play in the movement itself. In *Inspire*, the notion of “media jihad,” or media distribution and production, is a form of participation that is almost as important as fighting (Meleagrou-Hitchens and Kaderbhai’s 2017; Brachman 2009). Daesh mentions its media products in features like “Among the Believers are Men” and “For Sisters” where media products often play a facilitating role, typically convincing or inspiring supporters to join the movement.

Al Qaeda

Inspire authors encouraged supporter participation through distributing the magazine or contributing new material. Several issues in the sample include a call for reader questions and contributions along with how to get in touch with *Inspire*. Some features are marked as a reader’s contributions like book and film reviews in “Jihadisphere,” a review page for books and other media products (found in *Inspire 8* and *Inspire 10*) and *Inspire 8*’s article on the Pakistani

army written by “an ex-Pakistani Army serviceman”(Al Islamabad, 2011, p. 20). In many cases, media production is praised as a type of “jihad” or contribution to the fight against al Qaeda’s enemies. Articles dedicated to magazine creators like Awlaki and Khan focused on their work in media production, often likening media production tools to weapons. In an article profiling Samir Khan after his death in *Inspire 9*, the author, Abu Yazeed (2012) describes Khan as fighting an “intellectual war against Islam” where “His weapons to defend Islam were very simple; a laptop and a camera. However, he was loaded with ammunition. That ammunition was the creed of jihad in Allah’s path” (Yazeed, 2012, p. 15). Similar metaphors were used in other articles, like this account of a fighter training with al Qaeda in *Inspire 13*:

In the course of our training, I saw something that astonished me and those around me. We saw two people engrossed in training ... It was normal to see a brother training with the usual weapons; the Kalashnikov, PKM, handguns or any other. What astonished me was the new weapon which the two brothers carried, what are they going to do with it? A video camera? (al- Iraqi, 2014, p. 26).

By likening laptops and video cameras to guns and other weapons, al Qaeda frames media production as a form of participation just as valuable as actual fighting. Much like al Qaeda’s OSJ features promoting “lone wolf jihad” using household items, participation in “media jihad” is presented as accessible as it can be done using everyday items like laptops and cameras. Contribution to and distribution of *Inspire*, is not only a form of promoting the movement, but a significant contribution to the wider “fight” against al Qaeda’s enemies. This is not unlike Zelizer’s (2018a) discussion of media impact as an important element of the Cold War frame where winning the war involves producing media to target those who are “under the grip of the other side” (Zelizer, 2018a, p. 142).

Daesh

Despite multiple studies and media commentary on Daesh's "media mujahidin" or "fan boys" working on social media to share and spread Daesh's media releases (Fischer 2015; Cottee 2014), these efforts are not featured in *Dabiq* or *Rumiyah*. In *Dabiq*, readers are not invited to contribute to the magazine's production. Daesh media products are featured in advertisements, but also in stories and interviews where they work as facilitators drawing people to the movement. For example, in the "Among the Believers are Men" feature in *Dabiq* 7 about a man from Egypt who joined Daesh, the author makes a point of including his viewing of Daesh's early videos as part of his journey to making hijrah (Al Hayat 2015d, p. 47). As mentioned previously, Umm Basir al Muhajirah, in a "For Sisters" feature describes Daesh's videos as having potential to pull her husband away from conducting operations in France (Umm Basir al Muhajirah, 2015, p. 51). In a *Dabiq* 6 feature, "A Testimony from within" by an al Qaeda defector, the author describes Daesh's online media:

Some of the brothers – may Allah reward them – began communicating through the Internet, obtaining pictures taken from within the Islamic State, showing them to the people, and showing them the video releases in restaurants and coffee shops. This would be a da'wah for them and a means of shedding light on the Islamic State, the true jihād that it's waging, and the conquests that Allah has granted it (Ash-Shamālī, 2015, p. 53).

By producing and distributing media, Daesh is reaching out to people in public places like coffee shops and restaurants. In these stories, dawah, or bringing people to the faith, is the main function of Daesh media. Distributing Daesh media products is framed as spreading "the truth" about Daesh's "true jihad." Daesh's media releases are framed as an important recruiting tool having the ability to convince people to join its cause.

Media products are featured in advertisements in *Rumiyah*, and like *Dabiq*, Daesh media products often play a role in stories of fighters joining the movement. While most features in *Rumiyah* call for individual attacks, they do not call the audience to contribute to *Rumiyah* magazine. Media products still play a role in personal accounts. In the *Rumiyah 11* “Among the Believers are Men” feature about Abu Mujahid al Faranasi, a man who left France to join Daesh, they describe his arrival in the Islamic State where Daesh’s soldiers were “...waiting for him at the border with their distinguished clothing, their black masks, and the appearance that he had long seen in the Islamic State’s video releases” (al Hayat, 2017h, p. 51). This account demonstrates Daesh meeting its supporters’ expectations, but it also showcases the important role Daesh’s videos play in the story of the recruit’s journey.

In *Inspire*, creating and distributing media is a form of action. *Inspire* authors often describe the magazine itself as a powerful tool that makes al Qaeda’s movement portable. By distributing and contributing to the actual magazine, readers are contributing to a type of war effort by building recruitment narratives and spreading the means of carrying out attacks. For Daesh, media products are heavily advertised in both *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, but readers are not called to contribute to the magazine. Daesh’s media products are featured in stories as examples of Daesh’s ability to effectively spread its message and bring people to its cause. While Daesh supporters may participate in media distribution and production on other online platforms, the promotion of supporters taking part in media production is largely absent from its magazines. This could be part of Daesh’s more centralized approach where media products may be distributed by supporters, but they are ultimately created by Daesh’s media foundations. While *Inspire* is presented as a forum for al Qaeda supporters to contribute their work, *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* demonstrate the effectiveness of Daesh’s official messaging and introduce readers to

Daesh's other official media products.

Inspire, *Dabiq*, and *Rumiyah* authors select from aspects of complex geopolitical situations to frame their respective movements in a way that makes audiences feel like they must and can act on their behalf. Daesh and al Qaeda both see themselves in a conflict broadly defined as a war against Islam waged by “the West”, which is often made up of various groups including governments and armies of Western and Muslim majority countries.

Daesh and al Qaeda differ in terms of how they define and prioritize enemies on “the other side.” Al Qaeda mainly focuses on America as the main target while prioritizing individual attacks in the West. Daesh, on the other hand, defines the West as its main enemy, but focuses on a variety of near enemies—such as local military forces, Shia Muslims and other militias—who have varying direct and indirect connections to the West.

Both movements appeal to what Olivier Roy (2017) described as the vague, undefined, notion of an ummah or Muslim community, which is not centred in a specific country or territory. The vagueness of this category allows Daesh and al Qaeda to incorporate other conflicts or social issues into their wider cause. Al Qaeda and Daesh not only appeal to supporters by framing involvement in the group as a religious obligation to defend “Islam”, they also incorporate certain social issues familiar to their readers.

Al Qaeda claims that problems like racism and inequality, will be resolved by “defeating America” whether that is stopping military interventions in Muslim countries or slowly destroying America through small scale attacks. Daesh frames the Caliphate as a solution to problems like inequality by claiming it is a place that unifies all its inhabitants under one religious identity making other identities like race, class, or nationality irrelevant.

Both groups present martyrs as heroes. For al Qaeda, attaining martyrdom is a powerful act to help bring it closer to destroying its enemies, but for Daesh, martyrdom must be preceded by a long fighting career and used strategically for the collective. Though al Qaeda may frame martyrdom as helping a collective, it is still a loosely connected community of Muslims, not a specific group of soldiers as is the case of Daesh.

Al Qaeda and Daesh present audiences with different ways to act against their enemies, and the framing of these activities provide insights into how they imagine their collective efforts. Al Qaeda's fighters are a network of individuals who take al Qaeda's guidance and technical knowhow from *Inspire* to attack "The West" on behalf of "Islam" (or al Qaeda), not a centralized entity or leader. Daesh presents itself as a unified fighting force in its promotion of hijrah to the Caliphate to join its fighting force, but also in the way it frames individual attacks in the West as actions from "soldiers" responding to orders from Daesh leadership.

With al Qaeda's decentralized nature, it has a more flexible narrative, which can easily incorporate other movements, from anti-globalization to anti-racism to Palestinian human rights. Al Qaeda's reliance on individual fighters and incorporation of different social issues allows supporters to represent more than just "al Qaeda," but also the struggles of other victims of American hegemony.

Daesh's major appeal and distinguishing feature is its centering the movement on building and defending its Caliphate. However, Daesh's establishment of a territory left it more vulnerable to attack (McCants, 2015, p. 28). While significant territorial loss also makes it more difficult for Daesh to promote the Caliphate as its defining feature, in *Rumiyah*, Daesh responds to territorial losses with the promotion of individual attacks, and to a lesser extent, migration to its other territories.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

To answer the questions: How do al Qaeda and Daesh promote and adapt a bipolar (Islam versus the West) yet flexible movement narrative to connect diverse audiences in Western societies meaningfully to their respective movements? What are the common frames al Qaeda and Daesh use to appeal to these audiences? The analysis suggests that al Qaeda and Daesh employ three overlapping sets of frames: frames to position themselves within broader historical trends, frames to establish their legitimacy as movement actors; and frames to establish actors and actions (defining enemies, threats, heroes and recommended activities). Using these frames, al Qaeda promotes a flexible narrative as a more decentralized force while Daesh, even after losing territory, sees itself as a centralized force and a new movement that has succeeded where its predecessors have not. The first section will outline what has been covered in the previous chapters, this will be followed by a discussion of this study's contributions, limitations and suggestions for future studies, and some final reflections.

Al Qaeda and Daesh have similar origins tracing back to the global jihadist movement started by Qaeda's leadership in the 1990's following the Soviet-Afghan war. Though the term jihad is complex and has been debated over centuries, al Qaeda and Daesh promote and practice a form of jihad that prioritizes violent action and can be traced back to twentieth century ideologues like Sayyed Qutb and Abul A'la Mawdudi. They have similar roots but differ in their strategy and framing of the movement.

Al Qaeda and Daesh are known as terrorist groups and often use variations of the term to describe themselves. Though the term terrorism (and terrorist) is highly politicized and can be applied in problematic ways (Thussu and Freedman 2012; Karim 2003; Eid 2014), it can still be

useful to this study if it is understood as what Eid (2014) and Crenshaw (2011) describe as a communicative act of violence that can be used by different actors for a variety of purposes. This definition of terrorism acknowledges the importance of the audiences that terrorist groups want to target as well as how attacks are framed by the perpetrators, supporters and media organizations.

Radicalization is a term that appears frequently in discussions about individuals who support or act on behalf of al Qaeda or Daesh, especially in discussions of both on and offline media and recruitment. The term radicalization has shifted over history and is often impacted by the political climate (Karim, 2014; Awan et al, 2011). Radicalization is discussed by critics like Horgan (2008), Sageman (2008), McCauley and Moskalenko (2009); and Hafez and Mullins' (2017) as being caused by multiple "risk factors" like the political climate, collective grievances, personal circumstances, and social networks. Studies focusing on the "pull" factors of radicalization of Western al Qaeda and Daesh supporters, like Dawson and Amarasingam (2016), Vidino et al. (2015) and Hemingsen (2016), focus on issues like countercultural appeal and desires to live a more meaningful life, which are valuable as they draw attention to how individuals find aspects of the movement that align with their existing values. This is relevant to the way al Qaeda and Daesh frame their respective movements to highlight the different "benefits" of their respective causes, whether that is alleviating or escaping from social ills like racism and economic inequality.

Terrorist groups rely on online media to spread the movement's message and form communities. However, as critics like Benson (2014), Sageman (2004), Archetti (2013), Khatib (2003), Ingram and Reed (2017); and Klausen (2015) point out, online media tend to perform some of the same functions as older media like flyers, magazines, and cassette tapes did in the

past like building an imagined community of supporters (Anderson 1983). The affordances of online media allow for greater access to movement materials, the creation of new communities, and new forms of participation (Ducol 2012; Stenersen 2008; Brachman 2009; Bowman-Grievies 2009; Fischer 2015; Klausen et.al 2012; Khaderbhai and Melegrou-Hitchens 2017). While *Dabiq* and *Inspire* are distributed online, they resemble older media products as they cannot be altered by audiences. *Dabiq*, *Rumiyah* and *Inspire* bring together different types of movement materials like translated statements from media organizations like al Hayat and al Sahab, reader contributions, manuals, and original reporting from magazine authors, making it accessible to English-speakers around the world.

Terrorist events, like other geopolitical events, are the product of interpretations using certain historical, cultural and political frames by actors such as by public leaders and media organizations (Hulsee and Spencer 2008; Dayan and Thussu 2012; Zelizer 2018a). Daesh and al Qaeda, like other terrorist groups, often incorporate mainstream media logics into the planning of their attacks to gain mainstream media attention (Dowling 1986; Weiman and Winn 2006). Daesh and al Qaeda, are also dependant on mainstream media coverage to increase the legitimacy of their respective causes, but also to provide a more unified narrative of seemingly disparate events (Eid 2014a; Reed and Ingram 2017).

Inspire, *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* are one small part of a larger jihadist media system. Made up of centralized media production foundations (Kimmage 2008). These media systems are impacted by the reality on the ground as demonstrated by Zelin (2015) and Winter's (2018) study of how geopolitical factors impacted Daesh's media systems in both output and content. Jihadist movements have in the past tried to appeal to Western audiences before the creation of

publications like *Inspire*; for example, al Qaeda's al Sahab used English subtitles and incorporated issues like American racism in its productions (Seib 2008).

Recent studies on *Inspire* and *Dabiq* (and *Rumiyah*) outline different functions of these magazines like sharing strategy (Novenario, 2016; Ludvigsen, 2018), mobilizing (or radicalizing) (Lemieux, et al. 2014; Ingram, 2017; Westphal 2018; Vergan and Bliuc 2018), and producing narratives (Kirke 2015; Heck, 2017; Droogan and Peattie, 2017). This study expands on these existing studies by examining both al Qaeda and Daesh publications while comparing the frames each group employs, how these groups discuss and respond to each other; and how authors internalize, react to, and incorporate mainstream media formulations of events.

I have developed a theoretical framework to understand Daesh and al Qaeda's framing process. Symbolic interactionism and Goffman's (1986) notion of the frame and framing analysis are important because they help outline how each group defines their situation. Snow and Benford's (1988) diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frame categories identify some more strategic aspects of the movement narrative in terms of establishing a problem, developing a solution, and motivating people to join. While Snow and Benford's (1988) framework outlines important aspects of a social movement, van Hulst and Yanow's (2016) work on the framing process is useful for understanding how Daesh and al Qaeda construct frames that may not exactly fit within the categories of diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames. Daesh and al Qaeda also rely on many culturally relevant symbols, and notions of performance, elements from new social movement theory (Williams 2004; Goodwin et al. 2001; McAdams 1994). Grounded theory, the process of developing theory from data, often from texts, was the most suitable method to analyze these magazines. Grounded theory makes sense of particular themes emerging from the text rather than applying existing frames.

Inspire, *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* act as a centralized source of movement material where readers can not only access original content like articles, attack manuals, and opinion pieces, but also translated speeches and statements from senior al Qaeda or Daesh officials. These magazines provide readers advice and/or detailed instructions of how to act, but also embed these instructions within a larger narrative.

From the grounded theory analysis of *Inspire*, *Dabiq*, and *Rumiyah*, I have found that al Qaeda and Daesh promote a narrative made up of three broad categories of frames: frames to position themselves within broader historical trends, frames to establish their legitimacy as actors; and frames to establish actors and actions (defining enemies, threats, heroes and how to act on the movement's behalf).

Al Qaeda and Daesh claim to be fighting in a continuous war throughout history, a war that will end with the ultimate battle between good and evil (and/or the end of times) with al Qaeda or Daesh triumphing over their enemies. Daesh and al Qaeda see themselves as part of the same historical trajectory: a continuous "war against Islam" including events like the Crusades, colonial occupation, and the Soviet-Afghan war. However, for Daesh, these events have led it to the point of establishing a Caliphate and therefore succeeding where its predecessor, al Qaeda, has not. Like other extremist movements, Daesh and al Qaeda define their situation as fighting a continuous war against evil, which will eventually lead them to a divinely promised triumph.

Daesh and al Qaeda also rely on other actors to establish their legitimacy. In order to establish their legitimacy as a threat, they rely on outside media commentary from, mostly Western, mainstream media organizations. This commentary is used to highlight the threat they pose to "the West", whether that is as a centralized state-like fighting force like Daesh or a decentralized, yet effective, network of fighters like al Qaeda. Al Qaeda and Daesh also establish

a sense of moral legitimacy with their Western audiences by responding to major critiques of their controversial practices, critiques in which their potential audiences are familiar, like the use of child soldiers, slavery, or targeting civilians. As well, Daesh and al Qaeda work to establish themselves as leaders within the global jihadist movement by highlighting each others' alleged weaknesses, whether that is Daesh's harsh tactics and sectarianism alienating other Muslims or al Qaeda's focusing on the far enemy at the expense of certain principles.

Al Qaeda and Daesh both come from the same movement and share similar goals. However, they differ in how they define elements of their respective movements including how they frame their enemies' and supporter's actions. In *Inspire*, Al Qaeda presents itself as a flexible decentralized global network of self-trained fighters, not only representing Muslims, but other victims of American imperialism; the primary target is America and its allies. Daesh presents itself as a centralized army representing the Caliphate, both when referring to the actions of its foreign fighters and affiliate militias as well as individuals conducting attacks in the West. In *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, Daesh is fighting in a similar war of "Islam versus the West." However, they are facing a more complex, but unified enemy made up of not only the West (or America and its allies), but local armies, rival militias, governments of Muslim majority countries, and other religious groups (e.g. Shia Muslims, Yazidi's, Coptic Christians etc.).

Research Contributions

In this section, I will outline how the findings of this study, the sets of frames that make up al Qaeda and Daesh's wider narrative framework contribute to scholarship on the study of al Qaeda and Daesh and their use of media, as well as research on terrorism and media. These frames add a new dimension of understanding of how Daesh and al Qaeda frame their respective causes and how they are impacted by outside sources including each other. The findings of this

study can also be applied to the study of other global extremist movements, be that other jihadist movements or those on the extreme right; for example, movements like Soldiers of Odin,⁶² PEGIDA⁶³, and QAnon⁶⁴, that were originally based in Finland, Germany, and the US, respectively, but have managed to establish followings and/or affiliates in other countries.

Al Qaeda and Daesh place themselves within a set of broader historical trends. Both see themselves in a Manichean struggle based on overly simplified notions of “the West” and “Islam” (Karim and Eid, 2012). This trend is reflected in other studies on al Qaeda and Daesh’s magazines and other media where al Qaeda and Daesh see themselves and their supporters as fighters in a long war alongside other heroes like Saladin (Kirke, 2015). This study contributes to these bodies of literature by highlighting how al Qaeda and Daesh differ in their specific roles on this trajectory. Al Qaeda sees its present situation as fighting in an ongoing war with the same enemy, or different versions of “the West” (medieval crusaders, European colonists, and now America), which will lead to al Qaeda’s eventual triumph, establishment of a Caliphate, and much later, the ushering in of the end days. Daesh, though fighting in the same continuous war, defines its current situation as something different from its predecessors. Daesh’s establishment of its Caliphate, not only places it on a different place on this timeline—closer to the end of days,

⁶² Soldiers of Odin is an anti-immigration, anti-Muslim group that was founded in Finland by Mike Ranta in 2015. At its peak, it was present in over 20 countries (including Canada). They describe themselves as “a patriotic street patrol organization, which opposes harmful immigration, Islamization, EU and globalization, and aims at tackling the by products caused by the aforementioned problems, like weakening of the security”(Quoted by Kotonen, 2019, p. 241).

⁶³ Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West (PEGIDA) is a neo-Nazi, nationalist and anti-Islamic group based in Germany, which also has a growing presence in Canada (Perry et al. 2017, p. 66; Perry and Scrivens, 2016, p. 827).

⁶⁴ QAnon emerged from the 4Chan message board in 2017 and its central (baseless) claim is that a cabal of Satan-worshipping powerful elites are running a global child sex-trafficking ring and are plotting against President Donald Trump who is the chosen one to destroy them. QAnon has followers around the world and overlaps with other existing conspiracy theories and other extremist groups like far-right paramilitary groups. The movement is mostly online, but there have been offline actions like demonstrations and many individuals have committed violent acts for the movement. Some American politicians have expressed a degree of support for QAnon (Amarasingam and Argentino, 2020).

which creates a greater sense of urgency— they claim to have created something more concrete for the ummah to fight for. While it has lost most of its territory, Daesh still has a type of “virtual caliphate” and as some scholars contend, the fact that they had succeeded in creating a Caliphate, which lasted for a few years will impact the jihadist movement by generating a type of Caliphate-period nostalgia to show supporters what can be accomplished (Hamming, 2019, p. 5). While al Qaeda sees itself as part of a historical resistance against the West, Daesh sees itself as a conqueror of new territories and the builders of an alternative society.

Broader historical trends are an important part of identifying a group’s strategy and distinguishing groups within a larger movement; for example, groups that may see themselves as ushering in “the end of days” (or closer to a “final” conflict) may create more of a sense of urgency amongst their supporters, while other groups may simply legitimize certain actions as part of a larger war heading towards a coming, but not immanent, “final battle.” While an ongoing cosmic or continuous war is typical in other religious terrorist movements, this concept is also applicable to other extremist movements, like those on the extreme right (though many of these groups tie themselves to a type of religious identity). For example, some groups position themselves within broader historical trends tracing their efforts back to historical events to define their struggle (e.g. the Crusades, periods of European colonial conquest/supremacy, or the American Civil war). These historical trends are used to legitimize violence against groups like refugees, immigrants, visible and sexual minorities, progressives, and/or Muslims as part of war to defend “Western civilization” (or White Christian identity) from forces like “Islamification” or multiculturalism as part of a conflict leading to an “inevitable” battle—be it a race war or clash between “Islam and the West.”

Like any movement, Daesh and al Qaeda must not only demonstrate that they have a vision for the future, but also show their potential supporters that they are a legitimate threat to their enemies. This study highlights how al Qaeda and Daesh establish legitimacy in different ways whether that is legitimacy as a threat, or as a leader within the wider global jihadist movement. The need to establish legitimacy is reflected in other studies. Heck's (2017) study revealed how Daesh establishes its legitimacy to exist through the analysis of one of *Dabiq's* foreword features and al Dayel and Anfinson (2018) contend that *Dabiq's* "In the words of the enemy" features function to demonstrate Daesh's state-like characteristics. While Daesh, at least in *Dabiq*, prides itself on being a legitimate and state-like entity, my study also examines how Daesh distinguishes itself as *the* legitimate leader within the global jihadist movement. While this trend is reflected in Hamming's (2017) study, this study highlights how Daesh's legitimacy goes beyond its state-like characteristics (e.g. territory, services etc.). Daesh presents itself as a centralized force with the ability to launch multiple attacks, a theme that is still present in *Rumiyah*, after significant territorial loss. This study also reveals how Daesh and al Qaeda demonstrate familiarity with and respond to common criticism of their movements' more controversial practices and manage their reputations in order to preserve their legitimacy.

Eid (2014a) and Reed and Ingram (2017) contend that terrorist groups are dependant on mainstream media coverage of their activities (sensationalized coverage in particular), to increase their significance. This study takes their theories further by outlining the ways in which Daesh and al Qaeda incorporate actual media coverage into their publications to highlight, not only the effectiveness of their attacks, but also their unique strengths. Daesh and al Qaeda's incorporation of commentary from mainstream media and other sources like thinktanks, politicians and experts, not only highlight how they frame themselves as a major threat to the

West, they also reveal how each movement frames itself as a specific kind of threat. While al Qaeda presents itself as an unpredictably lethal network of individuals armed with *Inspire* magazine, Daesh portrays itself as a centralized fighting force that can launch attacks, both within and outside of its Caliphate, under its leadership's orders. While al Qaeda and Daesh's conceptions of themselves may be partially based on their respective situations on the ground (i.e. lack of territory or a base), they are still reliant on selected media coverage to assert their legitimacy as a threat.

This study contributes to scholarship on “inter jihadi competition” (Hamming 2017) and studies of *Dabiq* and *Inspire*, which outline Daesh and al Qaeda's ideological and strategic disagreements, as well as how they compete with each other. This study reveals how what Daesh sees as its strengths—zealous dedication to religious principles, establishing a Caliphate, and targeting multiple enemies—al Qaeda sees as its weaknesses that will divide and alienate Muslims. Conversely, al Qaeda's self-proclaimed strengths of being a more unifying movement against the West is seen as a weakness by Daesh who accuses al Qaeda of ignoring other principles and important enemies (e.g. Shia Muslims, Coptic Christians etc.) in order to target the West. Not only do movements define themselves in opposition to their enemies, they also define themselves as distinct from their rivals. Daesh and al Qaeda try to distinguish themselves as *the* movement that has the legitimacy to represent “Islam” in an ongoing war against “the West.”

Al Qaeda and Daesh see themselves in a two-sided war of Islam versus the West, but they differ in how they define “the other side” of the conflict. As it has been found in previous studies, al Qaeda is more focused on the West (the US in particular) while Daesh is more focused on a larger group of enemies within its theatres of conflict (Lorenzo-Dus et al., 2017). Daesh and al Qaeda also differ in how they want supporters to destroy their enemies; while al Qaeda

promotes individual attacks, Daesh, at least in *Dabiq*, prioritizes making hijrah and joining its army before shifting to the promotion of individual attacks in *Rumiyah*. This trend is reflected in the literature (Wigness, et al, 2017; Winter 2018), but this study not only addresses how Daesh's strategy shifts in *Rumiyah*, it also addresses how Daesh and al Qaeda differ in their framing of individual attacks. In both *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, Daesh presents individual attacks as part of a collective response to Daesh leadership's orders by those who have (or are instructed to) pledge allegiance to Daesh (and its Caliph). This is different from al Qaeda's conceptions of individual attacks in *Inspire* as a DIY lone jihad carried out by self-trained individuals acting as "an individual army of God" representing Muslims (and/or other victims of American imperialism) and not necessarily as a soldier given orders by al Qaeda's leadership.

This study also highlights how al Qaeda, and to a lesser extent, Daesh, highlight social problems within the West. Al Qaeda and Daesh incorporate local grievances into their respective narratives, not only when it comes to establishing and managing local affiliates in different regional conflicts (Pandya 2020; Nsaibia and Weiss 2020), but also when it comes to social issues or grievances within Western societies. While Lemiux et al. (2014) claim that *Inspire* magazine features those in the West critical of American and Israeli policy, to give audiences the impression that AQAP is providing accurate and reasonable information on foreign affairs (p. 362), they do not address how *Inspire* authors discuss social problems in the West (mostly America) like racism, islamophobia, and economic inequality. By acknowledging these social issues, authors of *Inspire* and *Dabiq* not only pose their respective movements as a solution to these problems, they expand the significance of the movement by highlighting grievances relevant to Western audiences. While al Qaeda's solution to these problems is destroying its "root cause" (America) through lone wolf attacks, Daesh presents its Caliphate as a place to

escape from these problems. Daesh and al Qaeda claim to reject the West and Western culture, but they are still reliant on it, not only to reach out to Western audiences, but also to define themselves as they are deeply co-constituted by it.

The incorporation of different social issues and other local grievances is not unique to al Qaeda and Daesh, but also to other social movements, including extremist movements. For example, far right groups have been known to address local issues while having affiliates in multiple countries. For example, the Soldiers of Odin adopt local grievances in different countries like Canada such as protecting French identity in Quebec and other general issues accross Canada like unemployment, and concerns about crime, while tying these problems to immigrants and refugees (Veilleux-Lepage and Archambault, 2019).

Frames positioning al Qaeda and Daesh within broader historical trends, establishing movement legitimacy, and defining actors and actions all make up important elements of recruitment narratives for diverse audiences with a variety of grievances and/or motives. These frames are important to understand, not only when employed by jihadist groups like al Qaeda and Daesh, but also other groups that aim to recruit internationally. Examining these frames, provides insights into how these groups attempt to appeal to a larger audience by defining themselves and the situation they are acting in while incorporating themes familiar to these audiences. These frames are created to expand the relevance of the movement in order to bring together different followers.

Limitations and Future Studies

This study like others has limitations. As a grounded theory analysis, the interpretation of the text was from my perspective. While I am reading the texts critically with a perspective that

is informed by the literature and some of my findings were reflected in previous studies on al Qaeda and Daesh's texts, it is still subjective. At the same time, it is nearly impossible to be completely objective and texts are not fixed objects with one meaning, but open to different kinds of interpretations.

This study involves an in-depth analysis of the written text of twenty publications: 10 issues of *Inspire*, five issues of *Dabiq*, and five issues of *Rumiyah* published between 2011-17. While this selection reflects a significant time period covering the rise of Daesh and its split with al Qaeda, it does not include all *Inspire* (17), *Dabiq* (14) and *Rumiyah* (13) issues. In addition, this analysis only covers written text and does not include image analysis. This study also only covers English-language publications, and not publications in languages like French or German, which could offer other insights into Daesh and al Qaeda's approaches to audiences in non-English-speaking Western societies.

Future studies could examine how these frames are employed in different Daesh and al Qaeda media products. While my research draws from a large corpus of material, these texts only represent a small portion of al Qaeda and Daesh's media systems (and English-Language material) and could be expanded to include other media such as videos, audio, and social media posts on platforms like Telegram. A future study could extend to media produced by other rival groups working within al Qaeda and Daesh's theatres of conflict.

The framework developed from this study could also be applied to other extremist movements that work on a global or transnational level, like right-wing extremists that appeal to a larger shared "White/Western Christian" identity or even those like QAnon who have followers in different countries and claim to be fighting against a global conspiracy. While certain far right movements may differ from al Qaeda and Daesh in terms of who they target and the level of

cooperation amongst movements—as well as the fact that they may have more of a presence outside of the “fringes of society” as some groups have varying support from members of official political parties (Kotonen 2019, pp. 248-49; Perry, Mirrlees, and Scrivens, 2017, pp. 63-66; Amarasingam and Argentino, 2020, p. 42)—they see themselves in a similar continuous war and call on their audiences to perform a variety of actions including violence. Many of these groups see themselves in the same war as al Qaeda and Daesh: Islam versus the West, where they claim to represent the West. The extreme right, like the global jihadist movement is large, made up of multiple loosely connected groups, and has planned and carried out violent attacks including mass shootings, bombings, and vehicle attacks.

Daesh and Al Qaeda, like their far right counterparts, find themselves in a zero-sum “civilizational struggle” where those who are different from the in-group (e.g. progressives, immigrants, religious and sexual minorities) are often the cause of many social ills and must either accept a lesser status, complete conformity, or annihilation in order to defeat a larger external enemy, or in some cases, they have varying degrees of association with the external enemy. The loss of the in-group’s dominance (as opposed to it existing as one group amongst many) is equated with the complete destruction of, not only the in-group, but “civilization” itself as the in-group is the source of “truth” and order in an eternal bipolar struggle against evil and chaos. The nature of the threat –out-groups plotting the destruction of the in-group through political and cultural influence and/or violence— then justifies various actions (including violence) as they are framed as justified acts of self-preservation against a pervasive enemy.

This “clash of civilizations struggle” (e.g. War against Islam, the West, or a global cabal) type of extremism provides a tidy yet flexible narrative, which can be adopted and then adapted by extremists in different societies who can still connect their struggles to the larger two-sided

war. In these conflicts, the heroes and villains are co-constituted by each other, and contemporary political issues are often imbued with special meaning using mythology, religious texts, history, and even popular culture. Each “side” functions as a loose network where smaller groups are connected, whether that is a concrete connection through organizing (online and offline) or as an imagined community, to the larger cause of defending “civilization” (or their form of order) and/or bringing about a golden age. This form of extremism should be studied further, which is why studies on media products created by groups that have affiliates or operate in a variety of Western Societies like Soldiers of Odin, QAnon, or PEGIDA, can offer insights into the frames they employ to appeal to their audiences in different countries as part of a larger struggle

Concluding Thoughts

Al Qaeda and Daesh’s publications not only present readers with the aims and objectives of the group, but also respond to and incorporate outside commentary, critical or otherwise, in meaningful ways. Like other extremist movements, Daesh and al Qaeda often present a bipolar order with little nuance or complexity, where one must choose a clear “side.” This perspective is not exclusive to al Qaeda and other extremist groups, but also politicians and pundits like Samuel Huntington. In *Inspire*, *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, al Qaeda and Daesh position themselves within a two-sided conflict, however the “sides” of this greater conflict differ between the two groups in terms of how they prioritize enemies, whom they attempt to find common cause with, and what cultural resources they use to build a movement narrative.

Inspire tends to have an American-centric approach when describing al Qaeda’s struggle, not only in terms of targeting the US as its main enemy, but in the use of American slang, pop cultural references, and focusing on American current events and issues like anti-Black racism,

police brutality, and economic inequality (which is at least partially due to the influence of its American founders Awlaki and Khan). At the same time, al Qaeda prioritizes “lone-jihad,” an individual pursuit by a lone hero, which resembles a type of rugged individualism especially relevant to American audiences. Daesh, especially in *Dabiq*, presents its Caliphate as an alternative society for individuals to live a more meaningful life. It is the building of a society where specific national, class, or ethnic identity –and the problems that result from them like racism and economic inequality— are no longer relevant. Even after its territorial losses, Daesh is still focused on defending the Caliphate by targeting those who are destroying it (coalition countries and other groups resisting Daesh) through individual attacks in hopes of rebuilding it in the future.

Though both al Qaeda and Daesh have similar aims and may be seen by some as “foreign” to Western audiences, they often pull from cultural currents within Western societies to shape their narrative to fit diverse audiences. While they may present themselves as rejecting, the Western or so-called “secular world”, they are still deeply engaged with it, whether it is using Western media to legitimize themselves as a threat or connecting their cause to other Western-based struggles against oppression. Far from rejecting the West, Daesh and al Qaeda’s causes are reliant on it to define themselves and their respective movements.

The War on Terror against al Qaeda and Daesh has had significant geopolitical, societal, and cultural impacts on the the first few decades of the twenty first century. At the time of writing, al Qaeda continues to operate affiliates in different regions and while Daesh has lost almost all its territory, it continues to operate in different regions including Afghanistan and its former stronghold in Iraq. Al Qaeda and Daesh have influenced other movements, like the growing far right terrorist movement, which has adopted, not only its recruitment, weapons

building, and mobilization strategies, but also incorporated Daesh-style imagery of its fighters and writings from figures like bin Laden into its media productions (Makuch and Lamoureux, 2019).

Regardless of their targets or tactics, movements like al Qaeda and Daesh, employ various frames to build a narrative of an ongoing war against an army of “others” they need to destroy in order to create (or restore) a golden age. Al Qaeda and Daesh, like their farright counterparts, often rely on the promotion of simplistic narratives that reinforce the notion of a “civilizational clash”, while also attempting to address societal problems in Western societies as well as Muslim majority countries. Examining materials created by terrorist movements, highlights how the notion of “with Islam or with the unbelievers” and its counterpart “with us or with the terrorists,” not only ignore important political, cultural, and historical context, but often feed off of each other. Narratives like these often narrow who can be part “us” in order to combat “the other.” In *Inspire*, *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, al Qaeda and Daesh’s narratives showcase how certain appeals of being “with the terrorists” are often reliant on political and cultural elements of being “with us.”

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Appendix 1: Summary of Research Tables

Table 1: Summary of Research Material

Issue	Date (Islamic)	Date (Gregorian)	Title	Number of pages
Al Qaeda Publications				
Inspire 8	Fall 1432	Fall 2011	Targeting Dar Al-Harb Populations	63
Inspire 9	Winter 1433	Winter 2012	Winning on the Ground	63
Inspire 10	Spring 1434	Spring 2013	We are all Usama	60
Inspire 11	Spring 1434	Spring 2013	Who & Why? (Special Issue)	38
Inspire 12	Spring 1435	Spring 2014	Shattered a Story about change	72
Inspire 13	Winter 1435	Winter 2014	NEUROtMESIS: Cutting the Nerves and Isolating the head	112
Inspire 14	Summer 1436	Summer 2015	Assassination Operations	90
Inspire 15	Spring 1437	Spring 2016	Professional Assassinations	90
Inspire 16	Autumn 1438	Autumn 2016	The 9/17 Operations (Special Issue)	48
Inspire 17	Summer 1438	Summer 2017	Train Derail Operations	98
Daesh Publications				
Dabiq 5	Muharram 1436	October 2014	Remaining and Expanding	40
Dabiq 6	Rabbi al Awwal 1436	December 2014- January 2015	Al-Qa'idah of Waziristan: A Testimony from Within	63
Dabiq 7	Rabi al Akhir 1436	January- February 2015	From Hypocrisy to Apostasy: The Extinction of the Grayzone	83
Dabiq 8	Jumada al Akhira 1436	March-April 2015	Shari'ah Alone will Rule Africa	67
Dabiq 9	Shaban 1436	May-June 2015	They Plot and Allah Plots	79
Rumiyah 9	Shaban 1438	April- May 2017	The Ruling on The Belligerent Christians	58
Rumiyah 10	Ramadan 1438	May-June 2017	The Jihad in East Asia	79
Rumiyah 11	Shawwal 1438	June-July 2017	The Ruling on Ghanimah, Fay, and Ihtitab	60
Rumiyah 12	Dhul Qadah 1438	August 2017	It will Be a Fire that burns The Cross and It's People in Raqqah	46
Rumiyah 13	Dhul Hijjah 1438	August-September 2017	Allah Cast Terror into Their Hearts	44

Islamic Calendar Months

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Muharram | 7. Rajab |
| 2. Safar | 8. Shaban |
| 3. Rabi al awwal | 9. Ramadan |
| 4. Rabi al Thani/ Rabi al Akhir | 10. Shawwal |
| 5. Jumada al Ula | 11. Dhu al Qa'dah |
| 6. Jumada al Akhirah | 12. Dhu al Hijjah |

Table 2: Initial Nodes

Node	Sources Node Appears in	Specific Instances of Node
Historical parallels	19	55
Promoting lone wolf attacks	18	61
Enemies' weakness	16	77
Martyrs	16	32
Personal story	16	28
Promoting media products	16	41
Unified actions	15	42
War on the ummah	15	43
Defending actions	14	61
Western Muslim identity	14	45
Shia conflict	13	23
After life	12	17
Call to action or fight	12	19
Praise lone wolf attack attempted and successful	12	22
Previous issues	12	31
Religious justification	12	33
Victories (promises and signs)	12	23
American army's actions	11	16
Al Qaeda as legitimate threat	11	51
Caliphate or Muslim nation	11	13
Palestine	11	35
Sacrifice	11	20
Uniting ummah	11	20
Wrong scholars	11	18
Anti-capitalism	10	17
Corrupt media	10	26
Economic target	10	22
Jews and Christians	10	15
American actions government and individual	9	16
Claiming attack	9	12
Defining enemies	9	14
IS as legitimate threat	9	34
Islamophobia and racism	9	14
Magazine's purpose	9	20
Reputation management	9	26
So-called Muslims	9	14
Western moral weakness	9	16
Divine intervention	8	11
Hijra or migration	8	19

Node	Sources Node Appears in	Specific Instances of Node
Manmade laws	8	12
Outside expert	8	16
Pro shariah	8	11
Targets	8	13
The hour or apocalyptic prophecy	8	17
Western Muslim experience	8	8
Colonial rulers	7	10
Corrupt international system	7	12
Expanding Wilayat and bayah	7	22
Mocking enemies	7	13
Organizational structure	7	10
Religious instruction (non-jihad)	7	13
Targeting America	7	11
Western fighters	7	15
Women	7	18
American historical atrocities	6	12
Anti-American hegemony	6	12
Al Qaeda critique	6	28
AQI (Al Qaeda in Iraq)	6	6
Arab Spring revolutions	6	10
Crusaders	6	11
Extreme right	6	8
Daesh as the right movement	6	20
Jizya	6	7
Nationalism	6	14
Not quitting jihad	6	7
Other jihadist groups	6	8
Remaining	6	7
Results of Al Qaeda's actions	6	17
Western expert	6	7
Bayah group-level	5	5
Double standards	5	7
Establishing Islam	5	5
Daesh governance	5	13
Media jihad	5	7
Moderate Muslim critiques	5	10
Other media company	5	5
What Americans can do	5	9
Al Shabaab	4	6
American power and empire	4	7

Node	Sources Node Appears in	Specific Instances of Node
Brotherhood	4	7
Clash of civilizations	4	5
Divine justice through natural disasters	4	4
Humiliation	4	4
Insulting Muhammad	4	7
Islamic supremacy/ as the only solution	4	5
Libya	4	5
Promoting lone wolf attacks over other means and Hijra	4	7
Protests	4	4
Spread the message	4	8
Syria and Sham	4	9
Western media programs	4	8
Zionist conspiracy	4	5
American history	3	3
American racism and police brutality	3	6
Approachability	3	10
Battle infographic	3	3
Democrats and Republicans	3	4
Distractions	3	3
Egyptian affairs	3	4
Hijra story	3	4
Individual bayah	3	4
Liberation	3	5
Pop culture	3	5
Previous jihadis	3	3
Reassurance	3	3
Self improvement	3	4
Taliban	3	4
Testing faith	3	6
War on terror efforts	3	5
Western media coverage	3	5
Women empowerment	3	3
911 anniversary	2	4
Addressing Obama	2	3
Algeria	2	2
AQIM (Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb)	2	3
Black Lives Matter	2	3
Convert	2	2
Counterterrorism policy	2	3
Deviant Muslim groups	2	2

Node	Sources Node Appears in	Specific Instances of Node
Exiting global capitalism	2	2
Fighter advice	2	2
France	2	3
France atrocities	2	3
Freedom of expression	2	6
Globalization	2	4
Good vs evil	2	3
Hamza bin laden	2	2
Hostage	2	3
Hostages	2	2
Daesh (mention by Al Qaeda)	2	2
Daesh justice	2	3
Jews	2	3
Khilafah	2	2
Mali	2	3
Osama bin Laden	2	3
Other factions in Syria	2	5
Other oppressed groups	2	2
Pakistan strategy	2	2
Philippines	2	3
PKK	2	2
Prisoner	2	2
Quran quote	2	6
Raising children	2	3
Islam and science	2	3
Religious freedom	2	2
Religious precedence	2	2
Secularism	2	3
Self and other	2	5
Strategy	2	5
US 2016 elections	2	2
Western Current events	2	3
Winning support	2	2
Acquiring weapons	1	1
Al Baghdadi	1	1
American excess	1	1
American Yemen raids	1	2
Al Qaeda as a message	1	1
Attacking Christians	1	3
Attacks on Sunnis	1	1

Node	Sources Node Appears in	Specific Instances of Node
Attacks on US military	1	1
Battle victories	1	1
Boycott	1	1
Call to media and activists	1	1
Challenges to establishing rule	1	1
Charitable organizations	1	1
Charlie Hebdo attack	1	5
CIA coup	1	1
Community	1	1
Concealing faults	1	1
Critiquing Islamists	1	1
Currency	1	1
CVE (Countering Violent Extremism)	1	2
Dabiq (town)	1	1
Dealing with internal threats	1	1
Defining lone jihad	1	1
Denial of act	1	1
Dictators	1	1
Divine promises	1	1
Economic hitmen	1	1
Emotions	1	1
Environment	1	1
Executions	1	1
Family	1	1
FBI	1	2
Following the leader	1	3
FSA (Free Syrian Army) other armed groups in Syria	1	1
Giving enemies strength	1	2
Golden past	1	1
Guantanamo	1	1
Hamas	1	4
Iran	1	1
Islam and peace	1	1
Islamic history	1	1
Jabhat al Nusra	1	1
Jihad benefits (personal)	1	1
Khilafah location geography	1	1
Khilafah obligation	1	1
Kurds	1	1
Learning Arabic	1	1

Node	Sources Node Appears in	Specific Instances of Node
Legacy and mission	1	2
Malala Yousafzai	1	1
Marriage	1	1
Martyrdom myths	1	1
Media outreach	1	1
Michelle Obama	1	1
Mosul battle	1	1
Muslim brotherhood and Morsi	1	1
Muslim regimes	1	1
Muslims celebrating	1	1
Occupy wall street	1	2
Passports, visas and borders	1	1
Patience	1	1
Praising Daesh	1	1
Previous lone wolf attacks as example	1	1
Refugee crisis	1	1
Reporting lone wolf attacks	1	1
Responding to Daesh ideologue	1	1
Responsibility to react	1	1
Results of Daesh action	1	1
Rewards	1	2
Rhyme/rap	1	1
Ribat	1	1
Right scholar	1	1
Safety	1	1
Saudi	1	1
Secularism	1	1
Simplicity	1	1
American statistics	1	1
Slaves	1	5
Social justice	1	1
Spreading Islam prophecy	1	3
Statements from terrorists	1	1
Sudan	1	1
The levant	1	1
The right scholars	1	1
Training fighters	1	1
Trump	1	6
US invasion of Iraq	1	1
Veterans	1	2

Node	Sources Node Appears in	Specific Instances of Node
Yazidi women	1	1
Yemen	1	1
Zarqawi	1	3

Table 3: Condensed Codes/Conceptual Categories

Node	Sources Node Appears in	Specific Instances of Node
Enemies weakness	16	77
Promoting lone wolf attacks	18	61
Historical parallels and continuity	19	55
Al Qaeda as a legitimate threat	11	51
Western Muslim identity	14	45
War on the ummah	15	43
Unified actions	15	42
Promoting media products	16	41
Daesh as legitimate threat	9	34
Martyrs	16	32
Personal story	16	28
Reputation management	9	26
Shia conflict	13	23
Victory (promises and signs)	12	23
Uniting ummah	11	20
Sacrifice	11	20
Call to action or fight	12	19
Hijrah or migration	8	19
Women	7	18
The hour or apocalyptic prophecy	8	17
Outside experts	8	16
American actions govt and individual	9	16
Islamophobia and racism	9	14
So-called Muslims	9	14
Defining enemies	9	14
Other jihadist groups	6	8
Establishing Islamic rule	5	5
Self improvement	3	4
Western Current events	2	3
Following the leader	1	3
Emotions	1	1
Media outreach	1	1
Family	1	1