

What do they say?
Mapping the propaganda discourse of Islamic State publications:
An analysis of Dabiq and Rumiya

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Abstract

The rise of the Islamic State (IS) has once again catapulted terrorism as a threat to global peace. The advancements in technologies of internet and social media have further pronounced the intensity of this threat. Rouge organizations such as the Islamic State have frequently utilized innovations in internet and social media to promote their agendas of recruitment, securing funding and spreading propaganda. For the first time in the history of the Islamic State, the organization has undergone a considerable loss in territory. This research seeks to quantitatively and qualitatively investigate the shifts in the propaganda discourse of the Islamic State's magazines; Rumiya and Dabiq, during the period of territorial loss. To this end, a quantitative analysis of Rumiya's content is conducted, categorising it into value-, dichotomy- and crisis-reinforcing propaganda narratives, the results are then compared to the results of Dabiq, which are taken from secondary literature. To further ground and understand the implications of the findings a critical discourse analysis is carried out on the content of the two publications. The study uncovers that with the loss of territory, a shift in the propaganda discourse is experienced in favour of a higher emphasis upon value-reinforcing content, and a lower emphasis upon dichotomy-reinforcing content. There are no changes observed in crisis-reinforcing content, however a new category of 'operational tactics' occupies indicative space in Rumiya. From these findings, the study infers that due to a loss in territory, the Islamic State attempts to consolidate their inner Sunni Muslim identity by emphasising upon value-reinforcing content, and encouraging simple, yet impactful terror activities in foreign lands. This study contributes to the literature on Islamic State, specifically pertaining to Rumiya, upon which no literature exists. The study also helps to further comprehend the Islamic State's propaganda machinery in different phases of its existence.

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*To my Baba,
who supported me in all my decisions.
To Lala,
for giving me the courage to do what is right.*

*This is dedicated to
all the innocent souls who lost their lives to terrorism*

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Introduction

A. General Background

Almost after a decade and a half of the tragic September, 11 attacks on the Twin Towers in New York, and more than a century after its invention¹, modern international terrorism continues to grab the attention of scholars and experts around the globe. With advances in technology and the emergence of tools such as the internet and social media, terrorism has undergone a metamorphosis. It has materialized as an ever more intricate global threat and problem that demands to be mitigated and dealt with on urgent basis. It is unjust to wholly deny the merits of these emerging technologies (internet, social media). However, it is neither wise to turn a blind eye towards the potential demerits. The internet has enabled terrorists to take a great deal of advantage from the new and all-encompassing commercial networks, for the purposes of advancing their communication, finance, and transportation. Due to this ubiquity, terrorist can now act globally rather than being confined within the borders of a country or region. The flexibility and concealment afforded by the internet makes counter measures against terrorists ever more intricate and challenging. Terrorists can now coordinate and perform more efficiently and professionally which was once deemed impossible before the advent of the internet back in 1990².

In such an ambiance, many rogue organisations have rushed to utilize the emerging technologies to further their agendas. Particularly, fundamentalist terrorist organisations have been keen on utilizing the internet to reach their own ominous goals. At the periphery, fundamentalist terrorist organisations have been relying on the internet to obtain and dissipate

¹ AYŞE ZARAKOL, "What Makes Terrorism Modern? Terrorism, Legitimacy, and the International System," *Review of International Studies* 37, no. 5 (2011): 2311.

² James A. Lewis, "The Internet and Terrorism," *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting (American Society of International Law)* 99 (2005): 112.

strategic information to meet their goals. Most imminently, they utilize the internet to spread their propaganda, which chiefly helps them to recruit new members and raise funds for their operations and logistics. The internet makes it possible for terrorist organisations to have a receptive audience at their disposal, of a scale which they could have only imagined of earlier before the advent of an inexpensive, decentralized global communication network; the internet³. Even though, Islamic fundamentalist terrorist groups were not the first organisations of their genre to take their operations online. Notwithstanding, they rapidly caught up and cultured within themselves the nearly infinite value of the new technology and are currently reaping benefits from such a strategic development⁴.

Among the Islamic terrorist groups the Chechen rebels were amongst the first to adapt to the technology⁵. However, it is now the Islamic State (IS)^{6,7} who are the vanguard terrorist organisation which exploits the internet to the extreme to meet their ends. The Islamic State is the first terrorist organisation to occupy not only physical territory, but also a virtual territory in the form of a presence on the internet⁸. Apart from the land they currently occupy in Iraq and Syria (Levant region), they also proficiently control and dominate pockets of the virtual internet space from where they propagate their far-reaching and hypnotising propaganda to susceptible audiences across the globe. The Islamic State have in place a unit by the name of

³ Ibid., 113.

⁴ Lewis, "The Internet and Terrorism."

⁵ Ibid., 112.

⁶ Jessica Stern and J.M. Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror* (William Collins London, 2015): 8.

⁷ The Islamic State (IS) also known as ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria & Iraq) and ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), has rebranded and renamed itself time and time again due to technical transliterations and geography. In the end of June 2014, the organization removed *IS* and *IL* from its name with the declaration of it becoming a *Caliphate* from then onwards.

⁸ Jared Cohen et al., "Digital Counterinsurgency: How to Marginalize the Islamic State Online," in *Blind Spot, America's Response to Radicalism in the Middle East* (Aspen Institute, 2015), 127, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt19gfk32.15>.

‘Al-Hayat Media Cell’ which is at the back of all Islamic State media activities⁹. The online activities of the Islamic State are unprecedented, not only in the history of terrorism but also in the history of the world. The Islamic State produces over 90,000 tweets a day in over a dozen different language¹⁰. The communication campaign consists of a multidimensional communication strategy. Which has managed to capture the attention of the world with its Hollywood inspired high production value of design and graphics, openly showcasing extremely gore content and the strategic use of social media to dissipate the content produced across the globe within minutes of its final editing and processing¹¹. Nasser Balochi, member of the Islamic State’s social media cell’s statement on the Islamic State media campaign encapsulates the logic of such an extreme communication strategy; ‘This is a war of ideologies, as much as it is a physical war. And just as the physical war must be fought on the battlefield, so too must the ideological war be fought in the media’¹². On these narratives and notions, the online campaign of the Islamic State has helped market the extremist discourse and ideology to help promote their agenda for funds and potential recruits¹³.

B. Research Agenda

This research seeks to investigate the discourse of the Islamic State’s propaganda magazine Rumiya. For the first time in the history of the Islamic State, it has sustained mass losses in territory, having lost over a quarter of their territory in Iraq and Syria since January

⁹ Dr. Christina Liang, “Cyber Jihad: Understanding and Countering Islamic State Propaganda,” *Geneva Centre for Security Policy*, February 2015, 6.

¹⁰ Eric Schmitt, “U.S. Intensifies Effort to Blunt ISIS’ Message,” *The New York Times*, February 16, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/17/world/middleeast/us-intensifies-effort-to-blunt-isis-message.html?_r=2.

¹¹ Haroro J. Ingram, “An Analysis of Islamic State’s Dabiq Magazine,” *Australian Journal of Political Science* 51, no. 3 (July 2, 2016): 2, doi:10.1080/10361146.2016.1174188.

¹² Stern and Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror*, 147.

¹³ Cohen et al., “Digital Counterinsurgency,” 127.

2016¹⁴. Due to this de-territorialisation process, the Islamic State launched a new propaganda magazine, after discontinuing their earlier publication; Dabiq¹⁵. It is of utmost academic interest and worth to map and analyse the radicalization discourse of the Islamic State encapsulated in their propaganda magazines, specifically in this point of time as there are profound shifts in the territorial and political status of the Islamic State. The two publications Dabiq and Rumiya can be treated as a time series, as during the publication of Dabiq the Islamic State was expanding, whereas during the publication of Rumiya it is contracting in territory (on going). The study will allow us to decipher if the loss of territory has entailed a shift in the organisation's repertoire. The study hypothesises that:

1. *As the Islamic State losses territory or faces stagnation in their expansion process, a considerable shift/change in the radicalisation discourse of the Islamic State is expected.*
2. *The expected shift in the radicalisation discourse will be in favour of a higher emphasis upon value-reinforcing content, and a lower emphasis upon dichotomy-reinforcing content.*
3. *Last but not least, it is hypothesised that there will be a higher emphasis upon crisis-reinforcing content.*

Given the unique case of the Islamic State, there is dearth of theoretical frameworks available to ground the hypotheses in. However, the study will move forward by basing the hypotheses in predictable understands of the Islamic State. The first hypothesis is based on a general understanding that mass losses suffered in territory will have an impact on the Islamic

¹⁴ "Islamic State and the Crisis in Iraq and Syria in Maps," *BBC News*, April 28, 2017, sec. Middle East, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27838034>.

¹⁵ "The Islamic State's (ISIS, ISIL) Magazine," *Clarion Project*, September 10, 2014, <https://clarionproject.org/islamic-state-isis-isil-propaganda-magazine-dabiq-50/>.

State's radicalisation discourse, this is already witnessed in the launch of a new propaganda magazine, however the study desires to map the specific change in discourse. The second hypothesis rests on the understanding that due to the loss of territory, the Islamic State will attempt to strengthen their own inner identity in light of the losses suffered. The third hypothesis is grounded in the consideration that due to the de-territorialisation faced by the Islamic State, there will be a higher emphasis upon content that reinforces constructs of crisis as to express a state of emergency, in which the followers of the Islamic State are proactively rallied for action. Based on these groundings, the study tests the aforementioned hypotheses.

The study finds that there is a significant shift in the radicalisation discourse of the Islamic State thus passing the first hypothesis. The second hypothesis also holds as the shift in the discourse is experienced in the form of a decrease in dichotomy-reinforcing content, whereas a higher emphasis upon value-reinforcing content is observed. Finally, the study fails to prove the third hypothesis, as no major shift in the crisis-reinforcing content is witnessed. The implications of these findings are immense. On a practical level, the findings help to further comprehend the Islamic State's radicalisation discourse, in periods of expansion and contraction, and how they shift from dichotomy to value reinforcing propaganda. The findings help understand Islamic State's emphasis upon various categories of propaganda content (value-, dichotomy- or crisis-reinforcing). Based on these findings, in the future the inner state and dimensions of the Islamic State can be inferred based on the kind of propaganda material they are publishing, to identify periods of distress of the Islamic State, even though if the Islamic State is apparently not in a state of distress, as seen in the form of territory loss. The findings can also be mapped onto other terrorist organisations, and inferences can be made based on any content available. On a theoretical plane, the findings help move towards consolidating theories upon the Islamic State and their potential shift towards consolidating as a state or vice versa, or its general orientation.

C. Existing Literature and Point of Departure

A study of the radicalisation discourse of the Islamic State has utmost value. From an academic purpose, it is vital to decipher and understand the radicalisation discourse of the Islamic State. The narratives of the Islamic State need not only be comprehended, but also countered and replaced with alternative narrative. As from a more counter-terrorism applied perspective, it is important to defeat the narratives of the Islamic State online apart from merely defeating them on the battlefield. Consequently, to this end academics and excerpts across the world have been engaged with studying and analysing the content produced by the Islamic State, particularly Dabiq. Primarily academics have been drawn towards focusing upon the process of radicalisation through propaganda material. There is a plethora of literature on the Islamic State's propaganda efforts, ranging from major publications such as; Weiss and Hassan (2015)¹⁶, Hall (2015)¹⁷, Stern and Berger (2015)¹⁸, and Lahoud et al. (2014)¹⁹ to numerous shorter analytical texts, including those by Farwell (2014)²⁰, Friis (2015)²¹ and Colas (2015)²².

Regardless of these well credited academic ventures, there still lies a gap in literature. Upon reviewing literature, there is an extreme dearth of academic literature available on the Islamic State's latest publication; Rumiyah. All the texts mentioned focus upon either Dabiq,

¹⁶ Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, 1st ed. (New York: Regan Arts, 2015).

¹⁷ Benjamin Hall, *Inside ISIS: The Brutal Rise of a Terrorist Army*, 2015.

¹⁸ Stern and Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror*.

¹⁹ Nelly Lahoud et al., "The Group That Calls Itself a State: Understanding the Evolution and Challenges of the Islamic State" (DTIC Document, 2014), <http://oai.dtic.mil/oai/oai?verb=getRecord&metadataPrefix=html&identifier=ADA619696>.

²⁰ James P. Farwell, "The Media Strategy of ISIS," *Survival* 56, no. 6 (November 2, 2014): 49–55, doi:10.1080/00396338.2014.985436.

²¹ Simone Molin Friis, "'Beyond Anything We Have Ever Seen': Beheading Videos and the Visibility of Violence in the War against ISIS," *International Affairs* 91, no. 4 (July 2015): 725–46, doi:10.1111/1468-2346.12341.

²² Brandon Colas, "What Does *Dabiq* Do? ISIS Hermeneutics and Organizational Fractures within *Dabiq* Magazine," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 40, no. 3 (March 4, 2017): 173–90, doi:10.1080/1057610X.2016.1184062.

or other publications by terrorist organisations such as *Aspire* magazine by Al-Qaeda. The absence of literature on *Rumiyah* is troubling and demanding, however comprehensible. Given the timeline of *Rumiyah*'s publication; they have been so recently published and are in fact still being published. Apart from the scarcity of literature on *Rumiyah*, all texts mentioned more or less point towards the professional production graphic violence and proficient utilisation of social media to account for the appeal and success of the Islamic State productions.

This research study, deviates from these trends in the current literature at two fronts; first by focusing upon the latest publications of the Islamic State; *Rumiyah*. And, second by focusing upon the publication's strategic logic by virtue of an examination of how its message succeeds to alter the consumers/reader's perception and radicalises them to fight for the Islamic State's goals. Rather than just focusing on the superior production quality of the publications.

To this end the theoretical framework will be taken from the academic contributions of Ingram's 'An Analysis of Islamic State's *Dabiq* Magazine'²³, where Ingram applies an 'interpretive framework for analysing radical narratives to examine how *Dabiq*'s architects strategically design in-group, Other, crisis and solution constructs and leverages these via value-, dichotomy- and crisis-reinforcing narratives'²⁴. The study will borrow from an understanding of the radicalisation process which is multidisciplinary in nature²⁵. The approach investigates how Islamic State 'content seeks to radicalise its readership by triggering awakenings, driving the process of cyclical cognitive reinforcement and further legitimising political violence'²⁶. Secondary literature will be used to analyse *Dabiq*'s first nine issues,

²³ Ingram, "An Analysis of Islamic State's *Dabiq* Magazine."

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁵ Haroro J. Ingram, *The Charismatic Leadership Phenomenon in Radical and Militant Islamism* (Routledge, 2014), 63–74.

²⁶ Ingram, "An Analysis of Islamic State's *Dabiq* Magazine," 2.

whereas a critical discourse analysis will be applied to the first five issues of Rumiyaḥ to reach the said aims of the study. By doing so, the study attempts to contribute to the existing literature on the Islamic state publications by analysing latest publications that have yet to be analysed to understand the continuation of Islamic State's radicalisation process in light of substantial changes in the land mass which they occupy.

The study will open by capturing the evolution of the Islamic State from a trivial subsidiary of Al-Qaeda to a transnational terrorist group, aspiring to establish a global Caliphate order. It will further elucidate upon the Islamic State's media propaganda and, present statistics and figure to demonstrate destructive impact of the propaganda machinery. The study will then elucidate upon the theoretical framework for the radicalisation process that will be used to analyse the Islamic State magazines; Dabiq and Rumiyaḥ, elaborating upon the mechanism within the Islamic State's publications adopt to radicalise its consumers. Following this, the study will introduce the methodology that has been used to achieve the stated research objectives, along the limitations and challenges which were encountered during the course of research. It will then present the findings that were obtained through the research design. The paper will then finally be in a position to analyse the findings of the research. The study will finally conclude by reiterating the findings of the research and the limitations of those findings, and by identifying further areas of research on the topic.

Chapter 1: The Origins and Logic of the Islamic State

The following section elucidates upon the emergence of the Islamic State and the political, social, historical and psychological logics behind it. The chapter elaborates upon Islamic State's ideological and theological inclinations, and further how it identifies as a unique organisation. This chapter will also explore Islamic State's effective media propaganda and demonstrates its far-reaching impact through statistics and numbers.

1.1 The Emergence of the Islamic State

The origins and logic of the Islamic State evolves around the obsession of reinstating the Muslim Caliphate. Islamic political ideology evolves around the notion of having in place a *Calipha*, who is the head of state. In this regard, politically the end of World War I was a particularly difficult time period for the Muslim world. The very revered and celebrated institution of the Caliphate in the Muslim world was in demise with the abolishment of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1926. As a response, in Al-Azhar University in Egypt convened the '*Congress of the Caliphate*' in attempts to uphold the ideology of the Caliphate²⁷. The Congress of the Caliphate drafted and passed two key resolutions regarding the Caliphate. The first resolution, pertained to the Caliph and stated that he must be an individual who had the capability of defending Islam. The second resolution being more functional and controversial in nature stated that; the Caliphate can be installed through conquest, legitimizing the use of power and violence, given the Calipha is Muslim²⁸. Vernie Liebl further remarks that 'there exists now in the Muslim world legitimate caliphate bloodlines; organizational and economic foundations; and potentially legal authority to restore the caliphate today. All that is needed is the will'²⁹.

²⁷ Vernie Liebl, "The Caliphate," *Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 3 (May 2009): 387, doi:10.1080/00263200902853355.

²⁸ Ibid., 388.

²⁹ Ibid.

The resolve to institute an Islamic State can be encapsulated in three stabs of deviations from the Al-Qaeda Organisation in the form of discrepant factions from within. The then leader of Al-Qaeda, Osama Bin Laden reportedly opposed such an establishment of an Islamic State on the reasoning that attempts to establish a state are too premature and will not cope due to the lack of public support and will. Regardless of such reasoning, Abu Masaab Al-Zaraqwi went ahead to create a potential Islamic State; a detached branch of Al-Qaeda in 2004 known as The Council for Mujahedeen. The nature of the off-shoot organisation was a resistance movement which stood against the presence of USA in Iraq. The Council accommodated many other similar organisations under its ambit which had similar aspirations. This Council later evolved into the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI). Simultaneously, Abu Bakr Al-Bagdadi, also a former Al-Qaeda front-runner, in resistance to USA presence in Iraq, co-founded the *Jamaat Jaysh Ahl al Sunnah Wa-al-Jamaah* (the Army of the Sunni People Group); an insurgent group operating in Samarra, Diyala and Baghdad. This organisation, later in 2006, joined arms and assimilated into the Council for Mujahedeen. Eventually, Al-Bagdadi rose to the tile of the ruler and leader of the ISI organisation after the death of Al-Zaraqwi³⁰.

Catalysed by the political instability of the region, and further complimented by an ever-growing military strengths and resources, ISI soon expanded to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Ultimately, on the 29th of June 2014, Islamic State declared itself a Caliphate ‘state’ under the leadership of Bakr Al-Bagdadi³¹. Since then, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria has established itself as an organisation that aspires to re-establish and re-institutionalise the Islamic Caliphate System and the instalment of Sharia Law. To meet these end, the Islamic State began their operations in regions which had a Sunni

³⁰ Weiss and Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, 113.

³¹ Stern and Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror*, 46.

majority in Iraq and Syria, and from there followed other places. Regardless of its then name (ISIS), the Islamic State is now expanding beyond Iraq and Syria or the Levant region. It is currently present in sound Yemen, Libya, Sinai Peninsular (Egypt), Somalia, Nigeria and Pakistan³².

The Islamic State is a relatively nascent organisation, a quick tour down history lane reveals that Islamic political history is laced with several leaders and movements for whom reinstalling the Caliphate had been the major motif. However, even though these movements shared the common central theme of the Islamic Caliphate they varied significantly, which hence begs the question of authenticity of religious revivalism³³. It is futile to identify one reference point of Islamic fundamentalism as each movement is distinctive given its context, aims and specific historical narrative. Regardless, the first theorist of modern Islamic fundamentalism can be traced back to the Egyptian Hassan El Banna and Pakistani Abu al-Ala Mawdudi³⁴. Mawdudi, elucidated upon the political notion of Islam by stating that ‘*al-Islam deen we dawla*’, meaning that Islam is a religion and a state, rather than just being established as a concept of merely a religion; ‘*iqamat el deen*’³⁵. He encouraged the juxtaposition of religion and state as a means of rules and procedure for society³⁶. The call for the instalment of the Sharia Islamic law, by the two thinkers can also be associated as a form of resistance to the Western influence which was increasing in dominance at the time and

³² William McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*. (Picador, 2015), 140.

³³ Martin E. Marty, R. Scott Appleby, and American Academy of Arts and Sciences, eds., *Fundamentalisms Observed*, Paperback ed., [Nachdr.], The Fundamentalism Project 1 (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2004), 839.

³⁴ Gerard Delanty, ed., *The Sage Handbook of Nations and Nationalism* (London: Sage Publ, 2006), 184.

³⁵ Marty, Appleby, and American Academy of Arts and Sciences, *Fundamentalisms Observed*, 824.

³⁶ Carimo Mohamed, “‘Islam’ as the National Identity for the Formation of Pakistan: The Political Thought of Muhammad Iqbal and Abu’l’Ala Mawdudi,” *História* 33 (2014): 219.

threatened Islam.

1.2 The Political, Social, Historical and Psychological Logic of the Islamic State

In addition to the theological motivation behind the establishment of the Islamic State, many political, social, historical and psychological reasons reveal themselves. Socially, increasing population figures, complimented by decreasing levels of education and employment rationalised the establishment of a new state. Politically, the failure of the states to accommodate and unify various political thoughts and ideologies under one umbrella, and rather suppress and oppress them into their own ideological framework nurtured fundamentalist ideologies. In the domain of the Historical and psychological, the widespread use of violence, torture, mass killings, frequent incarcerations and long term civil war hewed an ambiance in which extremist ideologies flourished. This coupled with the theological understand that advocates for the establishment of the Caliphate system as a religious duty all contributed as factors which led to the institution of the Islamic State

The underlining ideology that dictates the principles of a Caliphate system is grounded in the representation and succession. In many Islamic religious interpretations, the Calipha is at the very epicentre of the Islamic political ideological understanding, without which the very system of the Caliphate is futile and inapplicable. The Islamic State also part of the ideological bandwagon, and harmonise to the notion that without a Calipha, most of the Sharia law is not applied. Some members of the Islamic State specified that ‘Islam has been re-established’ with the formation of the State³⁷. Furthermore, this is coupled with the understanding that that the Caliph, be it Al-Bagdadi or Ibrahim, serves as the appointed leader of all the Muslims on earth, bestowed with the responsibility of carrying out God’s (Allah’s) will with the power vested in him by the spiritual authority. There are various

³⁷ Graeme Wood, “What ISIS Really Wants,” *The Atlantic*, March 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>.

criteria for being nominated as the Caliph. Al-Bagdadi hails from the bloodline of the Quraysh tribe, which is the same tribe from which Prophet Mohammad emerges from³⁸. Thus, the ideology of the Caliphate is not only a duty to be carried out, it is in fact a movement with a selected leader, with a clear justifiable noble vision³⁹.

1.3 Islamic State's Ideological and Theological Inclinations

The Islamic State adheres and borrows from the *Wahhabi School of thought* in Islam. *Wahhabism* is a form of Salafi ideology, an ideological movement which is prevalent in Saudi Arabia⁴⁰ and has an ultra-puritanical bent to it. The Islamic State shares common grounds with concepts of *Wahhabism* such as *Tawhid* (worship of one God (Allah)), *Hijra* (migrations), *Da'wah* (invitation to Islam), and *Takfir* (excommunication/infidelity). Enjoying state power to enforce their ideologies on the masses is a central theme in both of the movements⁴¹. The *Wahhabi* movement and the Islamic State are also, both obsessed with a pan-Islamism understanding of the Muslim world, where all Muslims unite and strive to expand beyond that confining notions of the modern state in attempts to spread their message across the world. To this end, the Islamic State aspires to re-establish the Caliphate in order to unite divided Muslims⁴² and regain the lost glory of the Muslims. Within these ends, the Islamic State hopes to dominate the entire world⁴³.

³⁸ Abdel Bari Atwan, "A Portrait of Caliph Ibrahim," *The Cairo Review of Global Affairs*, October 11, 2015, <https://www.thecaireview.com/essays/a-portrait-of-caliph-ibrahim/>.

³⁹ Ingram, "An Analysis of Islamic State's Dabiq Magazine," 3.

⁴⁰ David Dean Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia* (London ; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 1–2.

⁴¹ Bader Al-Ibrahim, "ISIS, Wahhabism and *Takfir*," *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 8, no. 3 (July 3, 2015): 410, doi:10.1080/17550912.2015.1051376.

⁴² Ibid., 412.

⁴³ Aymenn Al-Tamimi, "The Dawn of the Islamic State of Iraq and Ash-Sham," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* (Hudson Institute), 2014, <http://www.aymennjawad.org/14363/the-dawn-of-the-islamic-state-of-iraq-and-ash-sham>.

Spurting from Islamic apocalyptic prophecies, the Islamic State and the *Wahhabi school of thought* apportion the world into two; *Dar al-Islam* (House of Islam) and *Dar al-Kufr* (House of Infidelity). Such a division of the world prompts the understanding within the two movements of having a monopoly over religious truth and have been bestowed with the responsibility of inviting the masses to migrate to the House of Islam. Such a narrative calls for the mobilisation of the masses, by further building up on apocalyptic understands regarding the preparation for the End of Days⁴⁴. To this end, the very location of the Islamic State in Syria is not a mere coincidence, it is the prophesied location where the ultimate last battle between right and wrong will take place. The Islamic State views itself as the one unified army of Islam, which will defeat the prophesied eighty flags (infidel forces) in the final battle⁴⁵. In this regard, the utilisation of extreme violence by the Islamic State on and off the battle field, is not just to conquer territories through power, but is also to realise the prophecies mentioned in Islamic apocalyptic literature. Last but not least, the Islamic State and *Wahhabi school* adhere to the notion that the arrival of the *Mahdi*, will coincide with the breakdown of the political institutions in the Middle East⁴⁶. All these narratives regarding the apocalyptic understandings within Islam, coupled with the instability of the region, help propel the agenda of the Islamic State forward.

1.4 What Makes the Islamic State Unique?

An indispensable feature of the Islamic State, which sets it apart from other Islamic fundamentalist organisations that aspire to awaken Muslims and reject Western

⁴⁴ Ingram, "An Analysis of Islamic State's Dabiq Magazine," 3.

⁴⁵ McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*, 104.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

interferences, is the desire of the Islamic State of building a state on its own terms. A quick glance of the inner operations of the Islamic State reveal many characteristics of a state, such as the establishment and development of basic institutions, including economic, welfare, educational (Islamic texts), judicial infrastructure, defence, and taxation. In addition, the Islamic State fosters its ideology through *Da'wah*, distribution of pamphlets with effective content, and the use of social media. The Islamic State desires to build, expand and purify a state grounded in the *Baqiya wa tatamadad* – lasting and expanding motto⁴⁷. Such state formation and aspirations of the Islamic State sets it apart and give them a distinct identity.

The symbolism practiced by the Islamic State is also well-crafted and very reflective to fit their ideology. The Islamic State fashioned a black flag with white Arabic calligraphy, which flawlessly imitates the emblem of the Prophet Muhammad, used 1400 years ago. Back in time, the flag was used by Prophet Muhammad while engaging in the wars and struggles against the infidels of the time. It denotes the same authority to the Islamic State, which was bestowed upon the former Caliphate⁴⁸. The hijacking of the Prophet Muhammad's emblem, affords the Islamic State to get away with an identity construction and façade, which attracts and incentivizes foreign fighters to join under the depicted banners of Islamic unity and righteousness⁴⁹. Moreover, the Islamic State expects all Sunnis to pay homage and pledge allegiance to the Caliphate, while rejecting prevailing religious elites and their authority⁵⁰. Nevertheless, a plethora of regional regimes, religious leaders, other fundamentalists and a large number of individuals in the general Muslim population around the world have rejected

⁴⁷ Al-Tamimi, "The Dawn of the Islamic State of Iraq and Ash-Sham," 11.

⁴⁸ McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State.*, 26.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 147.

⁵⁰ Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, eds., *Accounting for Fundamentalisms: The Dynamic Character of Movements*, Nachdr., The Fundamentalism Project 4 (Chicago, Ill.: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2004), 363.

the Islamic State Caliphate. In such an ambiance, the Islamic State justifies the usage of violence by demarcating those who pledge loyalty and those who show opposition to them, which is alike turning away from what the Islamic State sees as pure Islam⁵¹.

The predisposition of the Islamic State with the use of extreme violence and suppression is also a fundamental part of their ideology. Violence and suppression take place in diverse manners under the Islamic State. They have a strong tendency to be exclusionist. For example, the Islamic State claims to apply *Dhimma* (protection pact)⁵² for the minorities in Syria in practises of subjugation such as paying *Jezyah* (special tax). In reciprocity for the special taxes, the minorities are offered security as citizens of the Islamic State. Apart from taxes, on the more gruesome side, conversion to Islam or certain death are the other manners in which the Islamic State deals with minorities or even disloyal Sunnis⁵³. Counter intuitively, there are existing masses of people who prefer the Islamic State rule in Syria, notwithstanding the violence they openly indulge in. This can be accounted for by the contributions the Islamic State has made in developing the country's infrastructure, and in eliminating and chasing out other rebel groups from the country⁵⁴. The Islamic State also institutionalises a system of 'carrots and sticks' for governance. Operating on the extremes of given and punishing, that is; delivering public services, welfare and even rewards for the loyalists, and harsh punishments such as stoning and cutting off hands of digressers⁵⁵.

The Islamic State is versatile and puts forward different images in different territories, depending on the political needs. In Iraq, it attempts to sell off as a protector of the Sunnis in the sectarian-divided country. The Islamic State is not only

⁵¹ Al-Ibrahim, "ISIS, Wahhabism and *Takfir*," 412.

⁵² Al-Tamimi, "The Dawn of the Islamic State of Iraq and Ash-Sham," 10.

⁵³ Ibid., 11.

⁵⁴ McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*, 89.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 152.

exclusivist towards non-Muslim minorities (Christians), but also towards other Muslim sects. The Islamic State harbours an anti-Shi'a Muslims rhetoric which can be traced back to nearly 900 years⁵⁶. The Sunnis of Iraq had been the subject of many atrocities and marginalisation for over centuries. The region was also rich in sectarian conflicts, which eventually paved the path for flourishing of extremist ideologies⁵⁷. Consequently, the Islamic State played such a volatile ambiance to its advantage and managed to win the allegiance of many eminent Sunni tribes in Iraq⁵⁸. Apart from welcoming those who desired to join the Islamic State believing in their ideologies, the Islamic State also welcomed those who joined in for non-religious reasons. Gaining financial awards or simply joining ranks due to the lack of other option is also a prevalent trend⁵⁹. The Islamic State also recruited former officers who served under Saddam's regime, given they were experienced and capable of running a state⁶⁰.

In a nutshell, the Islamic State adheres to and pushes for a puritanical religious ideology. The fundamentalist project under the Islamic State is exclusionist by nature, grounded in the notions of *takfiri* ideology which divides the world in the two camps of 'right' and 'wrong', the believers and the Kufar. To this end, the Islamic State promotes a superior extremist stance to rally Muslims and foreign fighter from across the world, believing that as fundamentalist they are on the right and victorious, truthful side that applies God's (Allah's) commandments and will on earth.

1.5 Islamic State's Media Propaganda

In this regard, one of Islamic State's multidimensional communication strategy's most

⁵⁶ Ahmed Hashim, "The Caliphate at War: Ideology, War Fighting and State-Formation," *Middle East Policy* 23, no. Spring 2016 (2016): 43.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 47.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 55.

⁵⁹ McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State.*, 98.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 154.

imperative component consists of the Islamic State publication in the form of an online magazines available readily through the deep internet. The Islamic State periodically publishes lustrous propaganda magazines, with the primary aims of recruiting new members from the West and other parts of the world, raise funds and spread their propaganda⁶¹. The issues of the magazines are sophisticated, slick and aesthetically appealing. To add to this, they are also printed in several languages, including English. Currently there are two magazines available online from the Islamic State; ‘*Dabiq*’ (discontinued) and ‘*Rumiyah*’. The Clarion Project posts the issues of these magazines online with the intentions of moving forward towards fulfilling the academic aspirations of understanding the ideologies of the Islamic State⁶².

Dabiq is the Islamic State’s first propaganda magazine. There are currently 15 issues of *Dabiq* available online after which it was discontinued. The first issue of the magazine appeared in July 2014⁶³. *Dabiq* proclaims itself to be a ‘periodical magazine focusing on the issues of *tawhid* (unity), *manhaj* (truth-seeking), *hijrah* (migration), jihad (holy war) and *jama’ah* (community). It will also contain photo reports, current events, and informative articles on matters relating to the Islamic State’⁶⁴. The magazine focuses and portrays the Islamic State as they imagine and picture themselves to be. Its rhetoric and design avowals and further brags about the victories of the Islamic state, while simultaneously romanticising about the reestablishment of an Islamic golden age with the instalment of a new caliphate through a holy war⁶⁵. The very name of the magazine is equally symbolic and telling as the rest of the publication’s content. *Dabiq* refers to the place in the northern countryside of Syria, which is prophesized in Islamic tradition to be the place where the apocalyptic war between the ‘right’

⁶¹ Ingram, “An Analysis of Islamic State’s *Dabiq* Magazine,” 2.

⁶² “The Islamic State’s (ISIS, ISIL) Magazine.”

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

and ‘wrong’ will take place near Armageddon⁶⁶.

In September 2016, the Islamic State revamped their media and propaganda strategy. This was understandably due to the losses suffered by the Islamic State in the territories which they occupied. The Islamic State had earlier occupied the region of Dabiq, however in October 2016 they were driven out of the town of Dabiq by the Turkish Military and Syrian Rebels⁶⁷. The Islamic State’s media and propaganda team was quick to respond and realign their strategic communication plan by ceasing the publications of Dabiq and initiating the publication of a new magazine by the name of ‘Rumiyah’. There are currently 9 issues of Rumiyah available online. The new magazine is shorter than the previous Islamic State publication; Dabiq and can be seen as a continuation of it. Rumiyah, aims at elucidating upon and prompting the political and theological ideologies of the Islamic State, and further discouraging opposition to the Islamic State by revelling about terrorism operations conducted by them⁶⁸. The title ‘Rumiyah’, refers to Rome, which the Islamic State now desires to conquer. Keeping in line with the symbolism which is prevalent in the Islamic State produced content, conquering Rome is not only a political victory, but also emblematic. The Islamic State interpret the Western Civilization as a continuation of the ancient Roman Empire. Hence, aiming to take over Rome is alike taking down the West in its entirety emblematically⁶⁹.

1.6 Number & Statistics

⁶⁶ “Hot Issue: Dabiq: What Islamic State’s New Magazine Tells Us about Their Strategic Direction, Recruitment Patterns and Guerrilla Doctrine,” *Jamestown*, accessed May 16, 2017, <https://jamestown.org/program/hot-issue-dabiq-what-islamic-states-new-magazine-tells-us-about-their-strategic-direction-recruitment-patterns-and-guerrilla-doctrine/>.

⁶⁷ “Town of Dabiq Falls to Turkish-Backed Forces,” *FDD’s Long War Journal*, accessed May 17, 2017, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/10/town-of-dabiq-falls-to-turkish-backed-forces.php>.

⁶⁸ “The Islamic State’s (ISIS, ISIL) Magazine.”

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Statistics on the Islamic State's activity's pay homage to the success of the Islamic State's communication campaign. As of December 2015, estimates indicate that around 20,000 to 30,000 foreign fighters have travelled to Syria and Iraq between the years 2011 and 2014 (United Nations Security Council 2015). For a comparative perspective, only 10,000 to 20,000 foreign fighters have been estimated to have travelled to Muslim lands between the years 1980 and 2010⁷⁰. Thus, the current immigration of foreign fighters to Muslim lands is quoted as 'the largest mobilization of foreign fighters in Muslim majority countries since 1945'⁷¹. More worryingly, numbers indicate that as of June 2014 the number of foreign fighters who have migrated to support the Islamic State's activities has doubled in merely 18 months⁷², such an attraction of foreign fighters by the Islamic State is particularly disturbing as during this time the Islamic State suffered from losses of over 12,800 Km² of territory⁷³. This is indicative of the notion that their propaganda is strongly effective notwithstanding the actual ground realities. Furthermore, simultaneously the home (Western) countries of the migrating foreign fighters experienced a sharp spike in home-grown terrorist plots and attacks, for example Australia observed one third of its terrorism related arrest since 2001 ensuing within a six-month period beginning in late 2014⁷⁴. During the period of January 2011 and June 2015, home grown terrorism plots in Western Nations uncovered that 30 out of 69 plots had some connection to the Islamic State, with 26 of the 30 occurring between July 2014 and June 2015.

⁷⁰ Ingram, "An Analysis of Islamic State's Dabiq Magazine," 1.

⁷¹ "Foreign Fighter Total in Syria/Iraq Now Exceeds 20,000; Surpasses Afghanistan Conflict in the 1980s / ICSR," *ICSR*, January 26, 2015, <http://icsr.info/2015/01/foreign-fighter-total-syriairaq-now-exceeds-20000-surpasses-afghanistan-conflict-1980s/>.

⁷² "TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate_FINAL_120715 - TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf," 27, accessed May 15, 2017, http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf.

⁷³ "Islamic State's Caliphate Shrinks by 14 Percent in 2015 | IHS Online Newsroom," accessed May 15, 2017, <http://news.ihsmarkit.com/press-release/aerospace-defense-security/islamic-states-caliphate-shrinks-14-percent-2015>.

⁷⁴ Ingram, "An Analysis of Islamic State's Dabiq Magazine." 1.

Moreover, the probability of Islamic State linked stratagems to be implemented was estimated to be twice of those with no Islamic State links. Aside from the fact that, that most of the rogue individuals had even not met or communed directly with the Islamic State agents⁷⁵. Studies have indicated that the Islamic State's proficient and striking multidimensional communication campaign plays an indispensable role in shaping the trends of Islamic State enthused foreign fighters migrating from the West to support their agenda⁷⁶.

⁷⁵ Thomas Hegghammer and Petter Nesser, "Assessing the Islamic State's Commitment to Attacking the West," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 4 (July 21, 2015): 19–20, <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/440>.

⁷⁶ Ingram, "An Analysis of Islamic State's Dabiq Magazine," 2.

Chapter 2: A theoretical Framework for Analysing Radicalisation Discourse

The following section elucidates upon the radicalisation framework utilised within the Islamic State propaganda content and how it affects radicalises its consumer. The framework will be used as the yardstick against which the content of Rumiya will be compared to Dabiq's in order to unearth any changes that might have taken place in the radicalisation discourse of the Islamic State, in light of their stagnation in territory expansion efforts.

2.1 The Process of Shape Perception and Polarising Support for Radicalisation:

The primary agenda of the Islamic State propaganda apparatus is to mould the perception of its consumer so that it coincides with the ideology of the Islamic State. This is achieved by polarising the support of the consumer (readership) and further, rallying them to act, by utilising a mix of perceptual and practical factors in their propaganda efforts⁷⁷. Perceptual factors consist of notions pertaining to the consumer's world view. For instance, the consumer's perception of the enemy or of the crisis at hand. Whereas, practical factors pertain to the consumer's rational-choice quotient. For instance, the consumer's practicality in deciphering between the 'right' and 'wrong' side of the conflict.

The Islamic State strictly adheres to the understanding that the propaganda content should be utilised to endorse and propel forward the group's politico-military apparatus and win over extensive support from the masses to meet the goal of realising the group's agenda⁷⁸. The politico-military apparatus refers to the political and military might of the Islamic State. Modern insurgencies, such as the Islamic State desire to implement their politico-military apparatus in reality and also in their propaganda content, Fall describes this notion as a

⁷⁷ Haroro J. Ingram, "The Strategic Logic of Islamic State Information Operations," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 69, no. 6 (November 2, 2015): 730, doi:10.1080/10357718.2015.1059799.

⁷⁸ Ingram, "An Analysis of Islamic State's Dabiq Magazine," 4.

‘competitive system of control’ (practical factors). Apart from this, they also put out an alternate schema or goal that serves as a ‘competitive system of meaning’ (perceptual factors), this is a lot like a lens through which the consumer comprehends the conflict⁷⁹ and is enthused to act upon such a world view.

Figure 1: The strategic logic of Islamic State’s propaganda campaign.⁸⁰

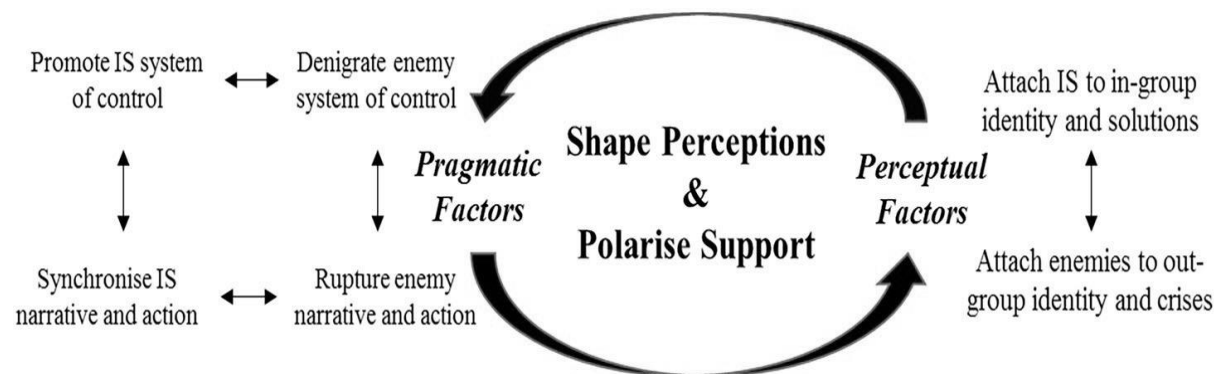


Figure 1 illustrates the Islamic State’s extensive tactical rationality behind their proficient communications propaganda campaign. In their radicalisation recruitment process, the Islamic State keenly realises that to mobilise foreign fighters and other devotees, it is an indispensable task to first successfully mould consumer perceptions and then polarise their support. To this end, the Islamic State communicates utilises two factors; pragmatic and perceptive. On this, Ingram elucidates ‘Islamic State’s appeals to pragmatic factors are designed to promote its ‘system of control’ and synchronise its messaging with politico-military actions in the field’⁸¹ While simultaneously disparaging the ‘systems of control’ of their adversaries and creating a rift in the link between its enemies’ narratives and their politico-military actions. Once this is achieved, the Islamic State calls on the consumer of its propaganda material to indulge in a rational choice decision making process based on a cost-

⁷⁹ Bernard Fall, “The Theory and Practice of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency, NWC Review, Winter 1998,” *Naval War College Review*, 1998, <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/navy/art5-w98.htm>.

⁸⁰ Ingram, “An Analysis of Islamic State’s Dabiq Magazine,” 4.

⁸¹ Ibid.

benefit analysis of the options available⁸².

Apart from pleading to the consumers' rational-choice quotient, the Islamic State communication strategy also begs at the consumer's identity-choice quotient. This is accomplished by pulling at perceptual factors, the Islamic State draws on in-group identity, out-group identity (Other), solution and crisis paradigms to beguile the consumers into making a 'logic of appropriateness' decision⁸³. This is a decision made primarily drawing on the consumer's identity. This is also akin to the tactical reasoning utilised by charismatic leaders and other rebel groups⁸⁴. Such a communication strategy is deployed by the Islamic State to present itself as the guardian and protector of the in-group identity, which in this case is that of 'Sunni Muslims'. While simultaneously, framing the enemies of the Islamic State as the malicious 'Others', accountable for the in-group's crisis. The propaganda, ultimately places and sells the Islamic State as the possessors of a solutions to the crisis caused by the Others. Ingram further remarks that 'identities play an essential role as cognitive prisms through which individuals and groups interpret the world. Attaching solution and crisis constructs to respective in- and out-group identities further enhances these perceptual qualities, especially during times of crisis'⁸⁵.

In a nutshell, by bringing into play, pragmatic and perceptual aspects, the Islamic State's communiques pursue to plea to a vast spectrum of prospective adherent's enthusiasms, while conjointly enhancing the resonance of identity and rational-choice appeals. The radicalisation process can be understood as a competitive duel, in which the more the

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Haroro J. Ingram, "An Analysis of the Taliban in Khurasan's *Azan* (Issues 1–5)," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38, no. 7 (July 3, 2015): 571, doi:10.1080/1057610X.2015.1022093.

⁸⁵ Ingram, "An Analysis of Islamic State's Dabiq Magazine," 5.

consumers recognise Islamic State's 'system of control' as more effective than its adversaries, the more it is probable that the Islamic State's appeal to perceptual factors will reverberate, and the other way around. Furthermore, the Islamic State's communiques for inspiring radicalisation is not fixed, it is dependent upon the target consumer. For instance, by adjusting, the Islamic State will focus upon pragmatic aspects when reaching out to local consumers, and switch to perceptual features when aspiring to allure international consumers⁸⁶.

Acknowledged that the Islamic State's propaganda material, chiefly aims at international targets, it is of academic worth for this study to further expand upon the perceptual dimension of this theoretical framework of radicalisation.

2.2 An interpretive Framework for Radical Narrative Analysis:

In attempts to holistically comprehend the radicalisation process of the Islamic State through their propaganda content, it is of utmost importance to decipher the radical narratives they are grounded in. And, to decipher how these 'radical narratives strategically design in-group identity, solution, out-group identity (Other) and crisis constructs and interplays these via value-, dichotomy- and crisis reinforcing narratives to drive its readership's radicalisation'⁸⁷. Central to this process, is the notion of identity constructs and its role in radicalising the consumer to back the cause of the insurgency, and further take part in politically enthused violence⁸⁸.

Before the theoretical framework for radicalisation is elucidated upon, it is of immense importance to begin by first defining 'identity', 'crisis' and 'solution'. In this study 'identity'

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Allison G. Smith, "From Words to Action: Exploring the Relationship between a Group's Value References and Its Likelihood of Engaging in Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 27, no. 5 (September 2004): 431, doi:10.1080/10576100490483679.

is defined ‘as that package of values, rooted in an historical narrative, strategically constructed in response to a socio-historically specific reality’⁸⁹. The concept of value is indispensable in this understanding of identity. It plays a cognitive role, which tends to act as a lens through which individuals perceive Other actors and events, attach meaning to them and further legitimise their own (radical) actions through it. As Rokeach clarifies, values act ‘as a standard or criterion for guiding action, for developing and maintaining attitudes towards relevant objects or situations, for justifying one’s own and other’s actions and attitudes, for morally judging self and others, and for comparing self with others’⁹⁰. Apart from values, there is also a psychological and sociological (psychosocial) element at play when it comes to the notion of constructing identities. In this regard, there are two sets of psychosocial factors that chiefly accounts for the identity construction process during radicalisation.

The first set of psychosocial factors consist of the perception of crisis, which constitutes of Other (out-group identity), the deterioration of tradition (which are held close to heart by locals) and the element of uncertainty. Given the very affinitive nature of the identity construction procedure, the Other (out-group identity) has a tendency to trigger a comparative sense of inter-identity values, the consequences of which are then often felt in the in-group’s ideas of meaning and status⁹¹. Ingram further elucidates by stating that ‘Just as one may develop what one is by what one is not, the Other tends to act as a barometer for the state of the in-group and, particularly during times of in- group crisis, a source of threat’⁹². The second factor, which is the collapse or changing of traditions due to the stimulus, threat or mere

⁸⁹ Ingram, *The Charismatic Leadership Phenomenon in Radical and Militant Islamism*, 51.

⁹⁰ Milton Rokeach, *Beliefs, Attitudes, and Values* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1970), 170.

⁹¹ Andrew Silke, ed., *Terrorists, Victims and Society: Psychological Perspectives on Terrorism and Its Consequences*, Wiley Series in Psychology of Crime, Policing and Law (Chichester: Wiley, 2003), 228.

⁹² Ingram, “An Analysis of Islamic State’s Dabiq Magazine,” 6.

presence of the Others. Traditions are historically rooted and upheld standards of belief and customs, strongly integrated and correlated with the in-group identity and threatened by others. The perception of crisis, alongside the breakdown of tradition, pave the path for the third factor of; uncertainty. This consists of complexity, ambiguity, deficit knowledge, and unpredictability of the situation⁹³. The function of uncertainty in the process of identity construction, particularly in the case of prompting individuals towards committing to extremist ideologies has been well established empirically by academics such as Doosje et al 2013⁹⁴. This is coupled with the role of the added variables of the Other, perception of crisis, breakdown of tradition and uncertainty, which facilitate as push factors in the process of radicalisation.

Furthermore, the predisposition of aligning with a group which supposedly possesses a potential solution to the ongoing crisis also plays a vital role during the process of radicalisation. The perception of crisis, prompts a need for a 'solution' in individuals and groups. The solution manifests itself in the form of pledging commitment to the in-group, the reinforcement of traditions and certainty. Naturally, these factors act as attractive forces during the radicalisation process, where dynamically the solution and crisis constructs act as pull and push factors simultaneously. During this process, to potentially confront a threatening Other, accountable for the perceived deterioration of tradition, intuitively individuals may turn to solutions that promise to tackle the Other and in turn reinforce the in-group and its traditions, while concurrently eliminating uncertainty. In a nutshell, the radicalisation process is an

⁹³ Hubert J. M. Hermans and Giancarlo Dimaggio, "Self, Identity, and Globalization in Times of Uncertainty: A Dialogical Analysis.," *Review of General Psychology* 11, no. 1 (2007): 34, doi:10.1037/1089-2680.11.1.31.

⁹⁴ Bertjan Doosje, Annemarie Loseman, and Kees van den Bos, "Determinants of Radicalization of Islamic Youth in the Netherlands: Personal Uncertainty, Perceived Injustice, and Perceived Group Threat: Determinants of Radicalization of Islamic Youth in the Netherlands," *Journal of Social Issues* 69, no. 3 (September 2013): 586–604, doi:10.1111/josi.12030.

equation of stark dualities experienced amongst in-group and out-group identities, solution and crisis constructs.

To reconcile, in the entire radicalisation process the role of radical narratives is of indispensable value, apart from identify, solution and crisis constructs. The understanding of radicalisation utilised within this study is grounded in the argument that ‘radicalisation is a process of escalating phases characterised by certain factors and signs that reflect ideological, psychological and political changes’⁹⁵. Radicalisation is theorized as the method through which ‘an individual or collective increasingly adheres to a selectively literalist interpretation of an identity narrative (e.g., an ideology), a response triggered and catalysed by perceptions of crisis which can lead to the legitimisation of and engagement in violence against perceived Others as a solution to that crisis’⁹⁶. Moreover, there are also in play cognitive and perceptual shifts which prompt and are prompted by changes in ideological beliefs and political demeanour, which are intrinsic to the embracing of increasing bifurcated in and out-group identities. The identities play the role of ‘lens’ through which individuals and groups understand the world, attach meaning and provide legitimacy to their actions. In this regard, ever inflexible and dichotomised identities mould and are moulded by the perception of crisis and solution constructs. As for those, who make it to a further state of the radicalisation process, violence reveals itself as the product of ‘a de-legitimation of incumbent authorities and a perceived need to defend the in-group’⁹⁷.

⁹⁵ Ingram, “An Analysis of Islamic State’s Dabiq Magazine,” 6.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The following chapter elucidates upon the methodology that will be used in this study to analyse the latest Islamic State publications; Rumiyah. The section will first elucidate upon the methods of case selection and the data collection process, after which it will elaborate upon the research design for analysing Dabiq (secondary resources) and Rumiyah (primary resources). The section will end by highlighting the limitations and challenges experienced over the course of the research.

3.1 Case Selection and Data Collection

For the Study of mapping the propaganda discourse of the Islamic State, the cases of Dabiq and Rumiyah were selected. The two publications allow for the possibility of comparing the propaganda discourse in two separate phases of the Islamic State, an expanding and a contracting/stagnant phase. Dabiq represents the expanding phase, whereas Rumiyah represents the contracting or stagnant phase of the Islamic State.

The study chiefly comprises of comparative and quantitative method. Simultaneously, it also has some elements of an idiographic case study. As defined by J.S. Levy idiographic case studies aim ‘to describe, explain, interpret, and/or understand a single case as an end in itself rather than as a vehicle for developing broader theoretical generalizations’⁹⁸. The Islamic State’s case is unique in nature due to its contemporary relevance. The case of the Islamic State can further be treated as a Theory-guided case study within the framework of an idiographic case study as the current study relies on the theoretical framework of Ingram. Theory-guided case studies ‘aim to explain and/or interpret a single historical episode rather than to generalize beyond the data. Unlike inductive case studies, they are explicitly structured by a well-

⁹⁸ Jack S. Levy, “Case Studies: Types, Designs, and Logics of Inference,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 25, no. 1 (February 2008): 4, doi:10.1080/07388940701860318.

developed conceptual framework that focuses attention on some theoretically specified aspects of reality and neglects others'⁹⁹.

The data collected for this study consists of two sets. For the analysis of Dabiq the data consists of secondary literature, primarily the work of Ingram (2015)¹⁰⁰, (2016)¹⁰¹. For Rumiya, as there was no secondary literature available on the topic, primary data was collected in the form of the first five issues of the Islamic State's secondary propaganda magazine. The data was collected from online sources of the Clarion Project¹⁰².

3.2 Research Design

For analysing Dabiq's radicalisation discourse, secondary research will be chiefly relied upon. Building on the theoretical framework, results and analysis used by Haroro J. Ingram in 'Analysis of Islamic State's Dabiq Magazine' (2016). A similar framework and analysis will then be applied to the first five issues of Rumiya, after which the results and analysis will be compared to trace and comprehend the Islamic State's radicalisation discourse in light of their de-territorialisation.

For the analyses of the issues of Rumiya, similar to the analysis of Dabiq, the study will comprise of two interconnected venues of analysis. The first delves upon the process through which Rumiya's producers tactfully institute in-group identity, other, crisis and solution constructs and further utilise these through value-, dichotomy- and crisis-reinforcing content. The second, explores the various narrative approaches implemented in Rumiya to mould the perception, polarise the support and ultimately, radicalise its consumers. In order to achieve the objectives mentioned, quantitative analysis will be used to assess how Rumiya's

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ingram, "The Strategic Logic of Islamic State Information Operations."

¹⁰¹ Ingram, "An Analysis of Islamic State's Dabiq Magazine."

¹⁰² "The Islamic State's (ISIS, ISIL) Magazine."

producers prioritise value-, dichotomy- and crisis-reinforcing narratives, whereas qualitative critical discourse analysis will be utilized to analyse the radicalisation process of Rumiyaḥ's content¹⁰³. Once the results and analysis are at hand, they will be compared to those of Dabiq to contrast and decipher the radicalisation discourse.

To initiate the analysis of Rumiyaḥ's discourse, the content of the magazine is categorised in to three separate groups:

1. Articles: This category consist of all the pieces which are longer in nature, usually occupying one to a few pages, covering the themes of general issues, happenings, jurisprudential opinions or a juxtaposition of all these in an historical or contemporary context. Often these pieces are laced with pertinent graphic images¹⁰⁴.
2. Statements: This group consists of relatively short written pieces, typically expanding over several sentences or a few paragraphs in length. The content of this group contains extracts from works of imminent historical and contemporary figures or the accounts of photographic reports¹⁰⁵.
3. Advertisements: Similar in layout and design to commercials in any magazine, this category usually consists of short statements or extracts from Islamic texts alongside vibrant imagery¹⁰⁶.

For the allocation of various content into different groups, discrete criteria were set up to evaluate if a piece was primarily crafted to communicate a value-, dichotomy- or crisis-reinforcing message. Table 1 elucidates upon the particular criteria that are utilised to assess the 'primary focus' of an item, and also the broader context of the 'primacy focus'. For

¹⁰³ Ingram, "An Analysis of Islamic State's Dabiq Magazine," 10.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

instance, a piece which constructs the in-group identity with positive empowering values such as brutality, and establishes a connection of the construct to solution, such an item would be grouped under group/solution and hence a value-reinforcing content¹⁰⁷. In contrast, if a piece is coming across as an in-group identity infused with positive values such as generosity, with an out-group identity infused with negative values such as savagery, that piece would be categorised in-group/other and grouped as dichotomy-reinforcing messages¹⁰⁸.

Table 1: Primary focus criteria for Dabiq and Rumiya content.¹⁰⁹

Primary Focus	Criteria
In-group identity	The content connotes to values and/or an historical narrative to
Other (Out-Group)	The content connotes to values and/or an historical narrative to
Solution	The content leverages certainty, the reinforcement of tradition, and
Perception of crisis	The content leverages uncertainty, the breakdown of tradition, and
Operational	The content provides operational guidance pertaining to

Every piece was evaluated exclusively on how the explicitly stated content corresponded to the criteria outlined in Table 1. Addressing the problem of subjectivity while coding, depending upon the interpretation of the content and what it infers, could land the content in almost any category. For instance, a piece with the prime focus upon constructing in-group identity as righteous and liable for executing solution could potentially be subjectively understood as inferring that the other is malicious and can be held accountable for the crisis. Subsequently, such a piece does not signify a clear in-group/solution evaluation, and hence could be subjectively be assigned to any group. In such cases, coding decisions are taken by identifying the chief association, which is clearly and most expressed in each piece. In

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 11.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 10.

instances, where a clear ‘prime focus’ was difficult to establish, due to the length of the pieces, or it having a general theme expanding over a broad range of issues, such pieces are classified as a ‘combination’¹¹⁰.

3.3 Limitations and Challenges

Over the course of the study, quite a few challenges and limitations were faced. First and foremost, the extreme want of secondary literature on the Islamic State’s potential consolidation into a state linked to their territorialisation, and on Islamic State’s new propaganda magazine; Rumiya. The dearth of theoretical frameworks to ground the hypotheses tested in the study is perhaps the most crucial limitation of the study. This is primarily due to the unique nature of the Islamic State and the publication timeline of Rumiya, as they have been published very recently (and are in fact still being published). As a result, there was a severe limitation upon the various content categories in which Rumiya could have been further analysed, in this study it was limited to four categories (value, dichotomy, crisis and operational), which were borrowed from secondary literature on Dabiq. The possibility of further categories to analyse Rumiya and hence, the Islamic State’s radicalisation discourse could have potentially yielded more telling results.

Furthermore, the study involved a coding process of the Islamic State’s Rumiya magazine. However, due to the lack of resources and limitations of time, the coding of only one coder was available. Thus, the lack of an inter-coder reliability score imposes a limitation upon the findings of the study¹¹¹. In an ideal case, more than one coder would have added to the credibility of the study.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 11.

¹¹¹ Howard E. A. Tinsley and Steven D. Brown, eds., *Handbook of Applied Multivariate Statistics and Mathematical Modeling* (San Diego: Academic Press, 2000), 95–124.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Dabiq

For Dabiq, one hundred and sixty-four content items across nine issues of Dabiq were categorised based on this coding methodology, totals were calculated and percentages were produced, taken from the work of Ingram¹¹². Table 2 includes the initial set of results evaluated on piece type by primary focuses. In Dabiq articles enjoy the highest share of the type of total pieces, covering 57.93 percent of the issues. The Statements category being second in line with a 39.63 percent share of the issue space. Advertisements occupy the least amount of print space with only 2.44 percent of the total. Of the articles evaluated, 28.421 percent lied between solution/crisis, 25.263 between in-group/solution and 21.053 between in-group/other. As for the statement category, solution/crisis is the most prevalent narrative, occupying over 56.92 percent of the entire content. Last but not least, the advertisements were dominated by in-group/solution messaging at 75 percent of the total advertisement content¹¹³.

Table 3 presents the second set of results, which are based on a breakdown of value-, dichotomy-, and crisis-reinforcing groups by primary focus across all pieces evaluated. Upon compilation, it is revealed that over half of Dabiq's content is committed to manifest dichotomy-reinforcing narratives with 54.88 percent of the share. Second to dichotomy-reinforcing pieces are the value-reinforcing pieces, with 36.58 percent of the total content. Solution/crisis at 39.024 percent, and in-group/solution at 26.219 percent triumphed as the two most common categories across all Dabiq content¹¹⁴. The least emphasis is upon crisis-reinforcing messaging, which covers only 6.10 percent of the total space across the nine issues.

¹¹² Ingram, "An Analysis of Islamic State's Dabiq Magazine," 11.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 12.

Table 2: Breakdown by primary focus and item type, Dabiq (issues 1–9).¹¹⁵

Dabiq Magazine, Issue 1-9			
Item Type	Total Number (%)	Primary Focus	Number (%)
Article	95 (57.93)	In-group/solution	24 (25.263)
		Others/perceptions	11 (11.579)
		In-group/other	20 (21.053)
		Solution/	27 (28.421)
		In-group/perception	9 (9.474)
		Combinational	4 (4.210)
Statement	65 (39.63)	Operational	-
		In-group/solution	16 (24.62)
		Others/perceptions	6 (9.23)
		In-group/other	6 (9.23)
		Solution/	37 (56.92)
		In-group/perception	-
Advertisement	4 (2.44)	Combinational	-
		Operational	-
		In-group/solution	3 (75.000)
		Others/perceptions	-
		In-group/other	-
		Solution/	-
		In-group/perception	1 (25.000)
		Combinational	-
		Operational	-

Table 3: Breakdown of categorisations by primary focus, Dabiq (issues 1–9).¹¹⁶

Dabiq Magazine, issue 1-9			
Categorisation	Number (%)	Primary Focus	Number (%)
Value-reinforcing	60 (36.58)	In-group/solution	43 (26.219)
Dichotomy-reinforcing	90 (54.88)	Other/Perceptions of	17 (10.366)
		In-group/other	26 (15.854)
		Solution/perception	64 (39.024)
Crisis-reinforcing	10 (6.10)	In-group/perception	10 (6.098)
Other	4 (2.44)	Combination	4 (2.439)
		Operational	-

4.2 Rumiya

On the other hand, for Rumiya a total of eighty-eight content items across five issues of Rumiya were categorised according to the same coding methodology, after which totals were calculated and percentages were produced. Table 4 includes the initial set of results evaluated on piece type by primary focuses for Rumiya. Similar to Dabiq, in Rumiya as

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 11.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 12.

expected articles also enjoy the highest share of the type of total pieces, covering 60.23 percent of the total space. Following Dabiq's trend further, the statements category is second in line with a 35.23 percent share of the total issue space. In Rumiyah, advertisements occupy the least amount of print space akin to Dabiq, with only 4.55 percent of the total space. However, this is still double in space coverage when compared to advertisement space allocated in Dabiq which is 2.44 percent. The major chunk of articles lie between in-group/solution (47.170 percent), this is almost double in amount when compared to Dabiq's share. Whereas, 24.528 percent of the articles are occupied with the in-group/other category, compared to Dabiq this is relatively equal. Solution/perception of crisis in Rumiyah articles only had a 3.773 percentage share, which is quite a fall when compared to Dabiq's 28.421 percent allocation. In the statement category, chiefly Rumiyah's content had the prime focus of in-group/solution with a total of 54.839 percent share. Finally, the advertisements content in Rumiyah is also dominated by in-group/solution covering 50 percent of the advertisement content, which is like Dabiq's allocation of 75 percent.

Table 5 presents the second set of results for Rumiyah, which are based on a breakdown of value-, dichotomy-, and crisis-reinforcing groups by primary focus across all pieces evaluated. Upon accumulation, it is evident that chiefly Rumiyah's content is pushing on the lines of value-reinforcing messaging, with over 55.68 percent of the total content share. Compared to Dabiq, this is a major shift in primary focus when compared to Dabiq, which allocated only 36.58 percent to value-reinforcing content. After value-reinforcing content, second in line is dichotomy-reinforcing content which occupies 28.41 percent of the total content. Compared to Dabiq, this is a sharp decline from its 54.88 percent allocation to dichotomy-reinforcing content. Thus, there is a major shift from dichotomy reinforcing content in Dabiq, to a preference of value-reinforcing messages in Rumiyah. Regardless, similar to Dabiq, in Rumiyah in-group/solution with 50 percent of the total share of content, and in-

group/other with 25 percent of the total share triumph as the two most common categories. The only difference is the allocation of space to each particular category, which have more or less been reversed with an increase in share in favour of in-group/solution in Rumiya. Crisis-reinforcing content is yet again the least emphasised category in Rumiya with only 5.68 percent of the total issue space, this is similar to Dabiq. The final finding of the study, pertains to the operational content category. Unlike Dabiq, Rumiya allocates 9.0 percent of total issue space to this category, which is a considerable increase given Dabiq allocates 0 percent to this category.

Table 4: Breakdown by primary focus and item type, Rumiya (issues 1–5).

Rumiya Magazine, Issue 1-5			
Item Type	Total Number (%)	Primary Focus	Number (%)
Article	53 (60.23)	In-group/solution	25 (47.170)
		Others/perceptions	4 (7.547)
		In-group/other	13 (24.528)
		Solution/	2 (3.773)
		In-group/perception	3 (5.660)
		Combinational	-
Statement	31 (35.23)	Operational	6 (11.320)
		In-group/solution	17 (54.839)
		Others/perceptions	-
		In-group/other	9 (29.032)
		Solution/	3 (9.677)
		In-group/perception	1 (3.226)
Advertisement	4 (4.55)	Combinational	-
		Operational	1 (3.226)
		In-group/solution	2 (50.000)
		Others/perceptions	-
		In-group/other	-
		Solution/	-
		In-group/perception	1 (25.000)
		Combinational	1 (25.000)
		Operational	-

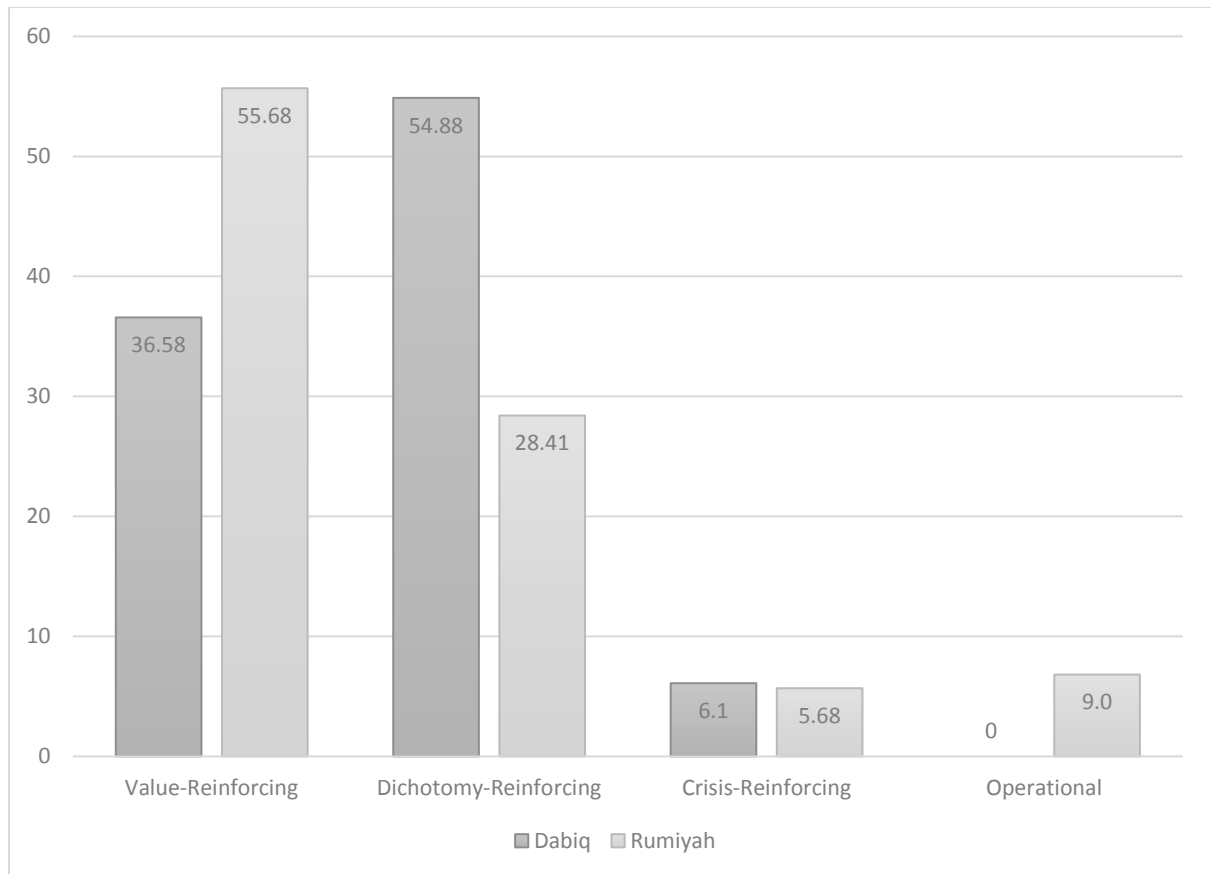
Table 5: Breakdown of categorisations by primary focus, Rumiya (issues 1–5).

Rumiya Magazine, issue 1-5			
Categorisation	Number (%)	Primary Focus	Number (%)
Value-reinforcing	49 (55.68)	In-group/solution	44 (50.000)
		Other/Perceptions of	5 (5.681)
Dichotomy-reinforcing	25 (28.41)	In-group/other	22 (25.000)
		Solution/perception	5 (5.681)
Crisis-reinforcing	5 (5.68)	In-group/perception	5 (5.681)
Other	9 (10.23)	Combination	1 (1.363)
		Operational	8 (9.000)

4.3 Reconciling the Findings

Figure 2 illustrates the findings from the analysis of Rumiya, compared to those of Dabiq. It is evident from the figure that the first hypothesis passes as there are significant shifts observed in the discourse of the Islamic State. The chief shifts can be associated with the fall in dichotomy-reinforcing content, and a rise in value-dichotomy reinforcing content. Thus, the second hypothesis also passes, given there is an increase of over 20 percent in the share of value-reinforcing content, and a nearly 24 percent fall in the share of dichotomy-reinforcing content. This holds true to the understanding that in the face losing territory, the Islamic State would desire to strengthen its inner identity by focusing upon value-reinforcing messages, rather than focusing upon dichotomy-reinforcing content. Given the losses in territory and political stature, it was expected that the Islamic State would push more crisis-reinforcing content as hypothesis three stated. However, as figure 2 demonstrates it is not that case, there is in-fact a slight decrease in the share of crisis-reinforcing content when compared to Dabiq. As there is no increase in crisis-reinforcing content, the third hypothesis fails. To reconcile, the first two of the three hypotheses pass.

Figure 2: Changes experienced in overall percentage share of each prime focus when moving from Dabiq to Rumiya.



Chapter 5: Analysis

The following section analyses the findings on the Islamic State's radicalisation discourse by first wholesomely analysing Dabiq and Rumiya. Afterwards, the section analyses and elucidates upon the specific categories of propaganda content. The sub-sections analysing Rumiya are more comparative in nature.

5.1 Dabiq

From the results stated above it is evident that the producers of Dabiq give chief preference to value-, dichotomy- and crisis-reinforcing content. This renders crucial comprehension of the Islamic State's strategic logic of their radicalisation process. In this regard, the articles of Dabiq are especially an important measure as they consist of the bulkiest part of the publication, occupying 57.93 percent of the total content, and are also the most detailed for the sake of analysis. To paint an image of Dabiq's articles, they 'are dominated by solution/crisis (28.421 per cent), in-group/solution (25.263 per cent) and in-group/Other (21.053 per cent) narratives. This emulates the pattern of prioritisation across all Dabiq's items: solution/crisis (39.024 per cent), in-group/solution (26.219 per cent) and in-group/Other (15.854 per cent). The overarching dominance of dichotomy-reinforcing articles (49.474 per cent) – that is, the total of in-group/Other and solution/crisis articles – closely mirrors the overall dominance of dichotomy-reinforcing items (54.88 per cent) with value-reinforcing narratives (36.58 per cent), particularly in-group/solution messaging (26.219 per cent), playing a crucial augmenting role'¹¹⁷.

Bearing this image in mind, from a tactful logical understanding of the findings, the Islamic State emphasis upon rational-choice appeals is evident, this is also echoed in the prevalence of dichotomy-reinforcing content, further joining in with Islamic State's solution

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

and crisis constructs tied to in-group/solution and in-group/other narratives. The solution/crisis pieces are published in Dabiq's regular 'Islamic State Reports' section, which endorse the Islamic State's politico-military activities and their success in combating the other/Islamic State enemies, thus address Sunni perception of the crisis as well in the process¹¹⁸. Equivalently substantial is the supplementing role of in-group/solution content, which is intended to juxtapose and inspire Western Muslims towards undertaking acts of 'lone wolf' terrorism in the West or migrate to the Islamic State and become part of the operations. While the Islamic State was expanding in territory, the patterns uncovered in the nine issues of Dabiq reflect a strategic logic that infuses rational- and identity-choice appeals, emphasising more on rational-choice (dichotomy-reinforcing), this is a yielding mix for not only moulding perception and polarising support, but also driving radicalisation in the consumers of the content. As Ingram further elaborates 'the more that rational-choice decisions are processed through identity lenses, and vice versa, the more urgent commitment to the constructed in-group (i.e., the Islamic State) and its politico-military agenda (i.e., violence against Others) will become'¹¹⁹.

5.2 Rumiayah

Compared to Dabiq, it is evident that the Islamic State also gave chief preference to value- and dichotomy-reinforcing content in Rumiayah. This enhances the vital understanding of the Islamic State's strategic logic behind their radicalisation discourse in a period in which the Islamic State is not expanding. The articles of Rumiayah, provide an essential measure of the overall content of Rumiayah as they occupy the most amount of space in all the issues, enjoying 60.23 percent of the entire issue space. Rumiayah articles are dominated by in-group/solution (47.170 percent), and in-group/other (24.528 percent) content. This is quite a shift from Dabiq's allocation, where is it the opposite. Across all Rumiayah content; in-

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

group/solution occupies 50 percent of the total content, whereas in-group/other occupies 25 percent of the total content. There is an overall decrease in emphasis on in-group/perception of crises (5.681 percent) and other/perception of crisis (also 5.681 percent) when compared to Dabiq's 10.366 percent emphasis upon other/perception of crisis and 39.024 percent in-group/perception of crisis.

At the periphery, while keeping in mind the findings on Rumiya, the Islamic state's strategic emphasis upon the consumer's identity-choice quotient is evident. This is accomplished by pulling at the consumer's identity choice by emphasising upon in-group and solution oriented content and constructs. Such content, further beguile the consumer into making a 'logic of appropriateness' decision¹²⁰. To this end, Rumiya's chief allocation of content is towards the in-group/solution category. Simultaneously, Rumiya also pulls at the consumer's rational-choice appeals by allocating considerable space to dichotomy-reinforcing content. Thus, Rumiya has two prime emphasis, chiefly on reinforcing in-group identity and secondly upon demarcating out-group identity by pushing dichotomy reinforcing messages. Compared to Dabiq, this is quite a shift in discourse as Dabiq had a prime focus upon dichotomy-reinforcing messages (hypothesis 1).

In light of such a shift, it is tempting to infer, that given Islamic State's stagnation in territory expansion over the period under review, and its loss of over a quarter of its territory in 2016¹²¹, the radicalisation discourse of Islamic State adapts to the political and territorial status of the Islamic State. The shift from dichotomy reinforcing content to primarily, value-reinforcing messaging is indicative of the view that the Islamic State is perhaps attempting to reconcile itself in face of the lost territory by strengthening and fortifying its in-group identity.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 4.

¹²¹ "Islamic State and the Crisis in Iraq and Syria in Maps."

Not only are they bent upon consolidating their own identity, they also have a pre-disposition in Rumiayah to present themselves as the solution to the on-going crisis. This is further augmented by the introduction of a new section in Rumiayah, which is unlike anything witnessed in Dabiq. The ‘Just Terror Tactic’ section across Rumiayah issues, elucidates upon methods to practise terror and violence in foreign lands, be it through a knife or using arson to create a bomb¹²². Such content further connotes to the Islamic State’s potential aspirations, of focusing the attention of its adherents towards practising terror in foreign lands, which further strengthens their in-group identity and comes across as a solution to the on-going crisis. Additionally, by reducing focus on dichotomy-reinforcing content, it seems as if the Islamic State is attempting to divert the attention of its consumers to spread violence in foreign when they are facing difficulty in their local territory.

5.3 Value-Reinforcing Content

5.3.1 Dabiq

The results establish that over 70 percent of Dabiq’s value-reinforcing content is hinged onto in-group-solution focused narratives. In the radicalisation process, such pieces persistently remind the consumer of the magazine that the Islamic State is a guardian of Sunni Muslims, which will annihilate the enemies of the Sunni Muslims and is the processor of the divinely ordained solution¹²³. As stated in the very first issue of Dabiq:

‘Raise your head high, for today – by Allah’s grace – you have a state and Khilafah, which will return your dignity, might, rights, and leadership. It is a state where the Arab and non-Arab, the white man and black man, the easterner and westerner are all brothers’

The Sunni Muslim identity is centrally upheld by the Islamic State, all devotees of the

¹²² “Just Terror Tactics,” *Rumiayah*, 2016, 12.

¹²³ Ingram, “An Analysis of Islamic State’s Dabiq Magazine,” 13.

Islamic State are expected to place priority on their Sunni Muslim identity, by upholding the fundamental values that bond the in-group together. In the 8th addition of Dabiq, it is elaborated in the very foreword of the magazine that ‘It is the kinship between us and the people, for our scales ... are divine, our laws are Quranic, and our judgements are upon the prophetic tradition’¹²⁴. Dabiq constructs a perception, in which consumers are lured in towards committing to the in-group and its values, as a venue for resolving individual and collective predicaments. For instance, to appeal to individuals, Dabiq declares that pledging to Islam will unravel all doubt, however it is demanded of the Muslims place a ‘certainty in Allah’s promise’¹²⁵ and ‘this certainty is the one that should pulse in the heart of every *Mujahid*...’¹²⁶. To further add credibility to this narrative, Dabiq utilises the Islamic State’s evident socio-political achievements, and states in its 7th issue that:

*‘The revival of the Khilafah 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 ...’*¹²⁷

The Islamic State frames and promotes its socio-political agenda as the outcome of its function of a guardian and defender of Sunnis, as states in Dabiq’s 3rd issue that: ‘for what good is there in liberating a city only to leave its inhabitants steeped in misguidance and misery, suffering from ignorance and disunity, and disconnected from the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger’¹²⁸.

The Islamic State in their radicalisation process, dehumanises and demonises all those

¹²⁴ “Foreword,” *Dabiq*, 2015, 3.

¹²⁵ “The Islamic State before Al-Malhamah,” *Dabiq*, 2014, 4.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹²⁷ “The Extinction of the Grayzone,” *Dabiq*, 2015, 57.

¹²⁸ “Da’wah and Hisbah in the Islamic State,” *Dabiq*, 2014, 17.

who have not pledged alliance with the Islamic State Sunni Muslims. Forwarding this agenda in Dabiq, the others are associated with traits such as ‘arrogance, envy, anger and desire’¹²⁹, at places they were also labelled as ‘filthy’¹³⁰ and ‘evil’¹³¹. Furthermore ‘the Islamic State also uses socio-culturally ‘loaded’ terms such as: *kufir* (disbeliever), *safawi* (a derogatory term for Shia), *murtaddin* (one who abandon’s Islam) and apostate *sahwah* (Awakening participants), which are derogatory and have jurisprudential connotations justifying violence’¹³². Dabiq utilizes the term ‘*jahiliyaah*’¹³³ to explain the crisis affecting Sunni Muslims, simultaneously emphasising other-produces uncertainty and the deterioration of traditions and indicate that the Islamic State are at the vanguard of Islam’s modern resurgence. However, only 10.366 percent of Dabiq’s pieces are on other/crisis. This is indicative of a configuration in Dabiq due to which the Other is seldom associated to crisis without the Islamic State simultaneously stating it’s attempts to support Sunni Muslims and aspire to assuage their crisis¹³⁴.

5.3.2 Rumiya

Similar to Dabiq, Rumiya’s content is also chiefly occupied with the narrative of value-reinforcing notions, which are primarily fixated onto in-group/solution notions. The logic of such content can be inferred to be similar to that utilised within Dabiq; which is to persistently remind the consumer of the content that the Islamic State is a guardian of Sunni Muslims, focused on the task of annihilating the enemies of the Sunni Muslims¹³⁵. This helps to strengthen the in-group identity. Furthermore, in the solution narratives, the Islamic State in Rumiya is also presented as the custodian of all the crisis being faced by the Sunni Muslims.

¹²⁹ “The Flood of the Mubahalalah,” *Dabiq*, 2014, 29.

¹³⁰ “Murtaddin Repent in the Thousands,” *Dabiq*, 2014, 48.

¹³¹ “The Bay’ah from West Africa,” *Dabiq*, 2015, 15.

¹³² Ingram, “An Analysis of Islamic State’s Dabiq Magazine,” 13.

¹³³ “The Flags of Jahiliyyah,” *Dabiq*, 2015.

¹³⁴ Ingram, “An Analysis of Islamic State’s Dabiq Magazine,” 13.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

For instance, in the very foreword of the first issue of Rumiayah it is stated that:

‘As for the mujahidin in Allah’s cause – and they are the elite of His creation (Sunni), those of His slaves whom He has chosen to become martyrs and whom He subjects to favourable tests – then the death of their leaders and commanders who stormed ahead of them into battle, running head first into hardships for their religion, only increases their firmness and determination in fighting the enemies of Allah’¹³⁶

Apart from focusing on the Sunni identity, the value-reinforcing content in Rumiayah additionally takes a slightly different bent. The value-reinforcing content in Rumiayah focuses upon the consolidation of the Sunni identity on a more social welfare narratives. For instance, in the 1st issue of Rumiayah, a long piece article ‘Oh Women, Give Charity’¹³⁷ is specifically focused upon the women of the Islamic State. The article issues special instructions to the women of the Islamic State to give charity. Similarly, in another long piece article ‘Marrying Widows is an Established Sunnah’¹³⁸ in the 4th addition of Rumiayah, men of the Islamic State are encouraged to marry widowed women. Such content has an emphasis upon constructing the in-group identity by practices. It can be inferred that these are further mechanisms of consolidating the Islamic State identity as a response to the loss of territory, by focusing upon deeds that strengthen the Islamic State community from within by indulging in acts of social welfare. On similar lines, in the first issue of Rumiayah an article titled ‘Interview: With the Amir of the Central Office for Investigating Grievances’¹³⁹, which elucidates about Islamic State’s commitment to undo any injustice to its followers. Such content further points towards

¹³⁶ “Foreword: Stand and Die upon That for Which Your Brothers Died,” *Rumiayah*, 2016, 2.

¹³⁷ “Oh Women, Give Charity,” *Rumiayah*, 2016, 18.

¹³⁸ “Marrying Widows Is an Established Sunnah,” *Rumiayah*, 2016, 32.

¹³⁹ “Interview: With the Amir of the Central Office for Investigating Grievances,” *Rumiayah*, 2016, 11.

the establishing of social institutions for justice and welfare, which are pre-requisites for reconciling a state like profile of the Islamic State.

Finally, in attempts to push value-reinforcing content, apart from constructing in-group identity and solution constructs, the Islamic State propaganda content in Rumiyaḥ also builds upon notions of the Other and perception of crisis. This is done by content which presents the out-group or other as deviant and enemies of Islam. For instance, an article in the 5th issue of Rumiyaḥ builds a case against the Sufism school of thought by stating:

‘After the mujahidin waged jihad so that the word of Allah would be supreme, and fought the imams of kufr from among the tawaghit ruling by manmade laws, they achieved power in an area of Sinai, and gained command therein. Us, they endeavoured to establish the religion of Allah in the land and to remove the symbols of shirk and jahiliyyah. They made a sincere resolve that there would not remain any Sufi tariqas in a land in which the banner of jihad rose high’¹⁴⁰

In a nutshell, the value-reinforcing content in Rumiyaḥ is primarily focused upon erecting in-group identity and solution constructs. The content differs from that of Dabiq as it has a strong emphasis upon identity building and solutions in the form of community constructs rather than strictly based upon the Sunni Muslim identity. Additionally, the value-reinforcing content also focuses upon Others identity and perception of crisis constructs, by expressing the deterioration of tradition at the hands of other schools of thought.

5.4 Dichotomy-Reinforcing Content

5.4.1 Dabiq

The Islamic State’s radicalisation processes’ predisposition towards identity- and

¹⁴⁰ “With the Amir of Hisbah In Sinai,” *Rumiyaḥ*, 2017, 14.

ration-choice appeals is fully embodied when infused with the prevailing dichotomy-reinforces content in Dabiq¹⁴¹. 15.854 percent of the Islamic Dabiq's content consist of in-group/other propaganda, which gaps with the bipolarity of in and out-group identities. As the self-proclaimed Calipha Baghdadi declares in the very first issue of Dabiq:

*'The world today has been divided into two camps and two trenches, with no third camp present: The camp of Islam and faith, and the camp of kufr (disbelief) and hypocrisy – the camp of the Muslims and the mujahidin everywhere, and the camp of the Jews, the crusaders, their allies, and with them the rest of the nations and religions of kufr, all being led by America and Russia, and being mobilized by the Jews'*¹⁴².

The rhetoric of Dabiq frequently refers to the division of the world into two halves as the obliteration or extermination of the 'grey zone'¹⁴³. Dabiq further weights on its consumers to 'choose to be from one of the two camps'¹⁴⁴. The solution/crisis content further supplement this narrative by presenting the Islamic State's solution and crisis constructs as the products of dichotomous in- and out-group values¹⁴⁵. As the Islamic State's chief spokesman, Shaykh Abu Muhammad al- 'Adnani, declared:

'The time has come for the Ummah of Muhammad ... to wake up from its sleep, remove the garments of dishonour, and shake off the dust of humiliation and disgrace, for the era of lamenting and moaning has gone, and the dawn of honour has emerged anew. The sun of jihad has risen. The glad tidings of good are shining. Triumph looms on the horizon. The signs of

¹⁴¹ Ingram, "The Strategic Logic of Islamic State Information Operations," 746.

¹⁴² "Khilafah Declared," *Dabiq*, 2014, 1.

¹⁴³ "The Extinction of the Grayzone," 54.

¹⁴⁴ "The Punishing of Shu'aytat for Treachery," *Dabiq*, 2014, 12.

¹⁴⁵ Ingram, "An Analysis of Islamic State's Dabiq Magazine," 14.

*victory have appeared*¹⁴⁶.

Additionally, the solution/crisis content of the Islamic State also plays a practical role of establishing how the Islamic State's politico-military activities in the field are substantially addressing the needs of Sunni Muslims. For instance, Dabiq's 'Islamic State Report's segment, utilises chiefly rational-choice appeals to promote the Islamic State's 'system of control' and disparage its adversaries' politico-military attempts. This section of Dabiq constitutes of articles and statements showcasing the full range of the Islamic State's politico-military strengths from military operations¹⁴⁷, economics¹⁴⁸, infrastructural expansions¹⁴⁹, social welfare¹⁵⁰ and healthcare schemes¹⁵¹. While simultaneously, it also highlights the ostensible lies and shortcomings of its adversaries¹⁵². As stated and assured in the 4th issue of Dabiq that:

*'In the midst of a raging war with multiple fronts and numerous enemies, life goes on in the Islamic State. The soldiers of Allah do not liberate a village, town or city, only to abandon its residents and ignore their needs*¹⁵³.

5.4.2 Rumiya

On similar lines to Dabiq, Rumiya also carries on the process of relying upon dichotomy-reinforcing content, with a total of 28.41 percent share of total issue space. The content pushes for its consumer to indulge in rational-choice decisions by demarcating between

¹⁴⁶ "Khilafah Declared," *Dabiq*, 2014, 9.

¹⁴⁷ "Soldiers of Terror," *Dabiq*, 2015, 17–19.

¹⁴⁸ "The Currency of the Khilafah," *Dabiq*, 2014, 18–19.

¹⁴⁹ "A Window into the Islamic State," *Dabiq*, 2014, 27–29.

¹⁵⁰ "Caring for the Ophans," *Dabiq*, 2014, 38.

¹⁵¹ "Healthcare in the Khilafah," *Dabiq*, 2015, 24–26.

¹⁵² Ingram, "An Analysis of Islamic State's Dabiq Magazine," 14.

¹⁵³ "A Window into the Islamic State," 27.

the two identities, and potentially siding with the in-group. This is akin to Dabiq's strategy, in which the world is bifurcated into two halves¹⁵⁴. 25 percent of Rumiayah's content is based upon in-group/other identity constructs. Every issue of Rumiayah has an 'operations'¹⁵⁵ section, in which the politico-military might of the Islamic State is established, whereas simultaneously the politico-military apparatus of the adversaries of the Islamic State is tainted. For instance, this statement in a Rumiayah article elucidates upon how victory is coming for the Muslim camp:

*'Thus, every Muslim must be certain that complete victory is coming, that Allah will honour this religion, that the future belongs to it, even if all nations rabidly contend against us, and that we shall definitely rule the earth by the might of Allah, the Powerful, the Strong. And whoever rejects or doubts that is nothing but one of the disbelieving fear mongers'*¹⁵⁶.

As witnessed, in Rumiayah the dichotomy-reinforcing content pushes forward in-group/other constructs akin to Dabiq. However, there is a delicate change observed in Rumiayah's content pertaining to dichotomy-reinforcing content. In Dabiq, to establish Islamic State's political-military might, areas of infrastructure development and economic welfare have been included into dichotomy-reinforcing content. However, in Rumiayah, such content is designed and articulated in a manner which consolidates in-group/solution identity, rather than in-group/other constructs. The operation section of Rumiayah magazines are wanting in any content related to development of infrastructure, economic development and other similar state development activities. In fact, there are a separate series of articles which construct in-group/solution identity as elucidated upon in the previous section. Such a shift of utilising state development information content as value-reinforcing content, rather than dichotomy-

¹⁵⁴ "Khilafah Declared," 2014, 1.

¹⁵⁵ "Marrying Widows Is an Established Sunnah," 42.

¹⁵⁶ "Paths to Victory - Part 1," *Rumiayah*, 2016, 18.

reinforcing content connotes a telling modification in the Islamic State radicalisation discourse. It can be inferred that due to losses in territories, and stagnation is expansion of the Islamic State, the producers of Rumiya perhaps wanted to focus the attention towards inner value and solution building, rather than using state development news to push forward dichotomy-reinforcing notions.

5.5 Crisis-Reinforcing Content

5.5.1 Dabiq

The crisis-reinforcing content of Dabiq occupied 6.098 percent of the total space and expresses the Islamic State's utmost overt takfirist declarations. Notwithstanding, the Islamic State's pro-Sunni Muslims rhetoric, the Islamic State denounces and criticizes a diverse array of Sunni groups as traitors, including the Syrian opposition forces¹⁵⁷ and the Afghan Taliban¹⁵⁸. Ingram elaborates upon this by stating that 'Al-Qaeda represents IS's most significant 'Sunni enemy' because, in many respects, both are competing for the same constituencies, that is, Sunnis'¹⁵⁹. Similarly, Dabiq denounces any Muslims who speak against the Islamic State, particularly clerics, who are branded as sell-outs and accountable for Islam's decline in modern days.

*'Such people have had their religion diluted and, not surprisingly, are always amongst the first to speak out in any case where the mujahidin display their harshness towards crusaders, attempting to disguise their criticism towards the mujahidin as concern for the image of Islam'*¹⁶⁰

Furthermore, Dabiq cautions its consumers of articulate Muslim clerics by putting

¹⁵⁷ "The Allies of Al-Qaidah in Sham Part II," *Dabiq*, 2015, 6–7.

¹⁵⁸ "In the Words of the Enemy," *Dabiq*, 2015, 61–62.

¹⁵⁹ Ingram, "An Analysis of Islamic State's Dabiq Magazine," 14.

¹⁶⁰ "The Burning of the Murtadd Pilot," *Dabiq*, 2015, 7.

forward a hadith of the Prophet Muhammad, in which he was asked “What is this that you fear for the most for your Ummah more than the Dajjal (Anti-Christ)?” he responded, ‘The misleading imams’¹⁶¹.

This Islamic State’s crisis-reinforcing accounts, thus have a dual purpose, they simultaneously escalate the perceptions of crisis in its consumers, and further encourages them to reject any criticism focused towards the Islamic State¹⁶².

5.5.2 Rumiyah

Akin to Dabiq, Rumiyah also has an emphasis upon crisis-reinforcing content. In the very 1st issue of Rumiyah, an article titled by the name of ‘The Wicked Scholars are Cursed’ builds upon perception of crisis constructs. It states:

‘As such, whoever does not act upon his knowledge by openly declaring it and waging jihad or by concealing it and dressing up the truth in falsehood, then he is not truly a scholar. Rather, he is a devil – whether vocal or mute’¹⁶³

Dabiq also pushes such content in its issues, thus Rumiyah and Dabiq have similar notions of dichotomy-reinforcing content. However, in light of the losses in territory suffered by the Islamic State, it was expected that there will be a higher emphasis upon the crisis-reinforcing content to raise awareness in the adherents of the Islamic State, regarding the crisis in attempts to rally support in a more effective manner by leveraging the crisis at hand. Conversely, this is not the case observed, as only 5.68 percent of total content share of Rumiyah is targeting towards reinforcing-crisis narratives. There are two potential inferences that can be

¹⁶¹ “Misleading Scholars,” *Dabiq*, 2014, 38.

¹⁶² Ingram, “An Analysis of Islamic State’s Dabiq Magazine,” 14.

¹⁶³ “The Wicked Scholars Are Cursed,” *Rumiyah*, 2016, 19.

made from this observation. First being that the Islamic State does not consider the loss of territory as a crisis, this goes in line with a potential notion of attempting to consolidate as a state on a relatively smaller territory scale. However, the losses incurred by the Islamic State is still an on-going process and only time will reveal if the losses keep going on or they stop at a certain point in the future. The second inference that can be made from this observation is that; perhaps the Islamic State does not want to let the loss of territory to create panic amongst its adherents. They hence treat it as a normal happening by not emphasising upon crisis-reinforcing narratives.

5.6 Operational Content in Dabiq and Rumiya

The final considerable shift observed in the Islamic State's propaganda discourse in light of the loss of territory pertains to content themed upon operational tactics. In Dabiq, 0 percent of the content was allocated to such content. However, in Rumiya there a total of 9 percent of the total content space is allocated towards operational tactics. The 'Just Terror'¹⁶⁴ section in almost all Rumiya issues which were analysed is a telling observation. Operational content elucidates upon methods which can be adopted to spear terror or violence in foreign lands, be it through public stabbings or through using a truck to kill pedestrians. The allocation of 9 percent of the total issue space, which is more than the share of crisis-reinforcing content, permits for the making of some inference on the Islamic State. Having lost territory, and focusing upon value reinforcing narratives, by pushing operational tactics content, it seems as if the Islamic State is aspiring to continue to spread their terror in foreign lands. Having lost their territorial stature, they are attempting to keep up their propaganda in foreign lands by encouraging terror attacks by elucidating upon how to conduct them with ease. This also goes along with the inference that the Islamic State is providing a method to support the Islamic

¹⁶⁴ "Just Terror Tactics."

State for those followers who might think that the Islamic State is on the decline due to the loss of territory. Additionally, the loss of territory, makes migration to the Islamic State more difficult, in light of such developments, perhaps the logic for propagating terror tactics in Rumiya is to encourage supporters to indulge in terror tactics in foreign lands, to keep up the propaganda of terror of the Islamic State, despite the losses in territory. Last but not least, such attacks in foreign lands, with the Islamic State accepting responsibility for them helps strengthen the in-group identity of the Islamic State, which is crucial given the losses in territory, thus going hand in hand with the logic of emphasising upon value-reinforcing narratives in the Islamic State radicalisation discourse.

Conclusion:

This study investigated the radicalisation discourse of the Islamic State's propaganda magazine *Rumiyah*, and compared and analysed it, in light of previous findings on *Dabiq*. The propaganda discourse was traced over a period in which the Islamic State experienced stagnation in their territorial expansion, and lost considerable territory to their adversaries in Iraq and Syria, in the year 2016. The chief aim of the study was to detect and decipher any shift in the propaganda discourse during this period of contraction in territory. The discourse was mapped by critically analysing the content of the Islamic State magazines relying on Ingram's theoretical framework for radicalisation, which categorise the content into value-, dichotomy- and crisis-reinforcing narratives.

The study finds that during the period in which the Islamic State underwent a de-territorialisation process, there is a substantial shift in the radicalisation discourse of the Islamic State. The propaganda narratives shifted focus from dichotomy-reinforcing narratives to more value-reinforcing propaganda. The emphasis upon value-reinforcing messages increased by over 20 percent, whereas the emphasis upon dichotomy-reinforcing messages decreased by around 24 percent. Within value-reinforcing content, the chief share belonged to content that focused on developing in-group identity and solution constructs. Whereas, the dichotomy-reinforcing content, predominantly focused upon in-group identity against Other/out-group identity constructs. The study had also hypothesised a higher emphasis upon crisis-reinforcing narratives, however the findings did not observe a considerable change in the emphasis on this category in *Rumiyah*. Lastly, the study found an increase in emphasis upon 'operational tactics', which was starkly absent in *Dabiq*.

It can be inferred from the findings of the study, that in the period of suffering from mass territory losses, the Islamic State's pronounced emphasis upon value-reinforcing

narratives is an attempt to consolidate and strengthen their inner identity. The Islamic State attempts to fortify the Sunni Muslim identity to potentially subdue the impact of the defeats, while simultaneously endeavouring to demerit the identity of its adversaries. Such an emphasis upon value-reinforcing narratives may also be deciphered as a shift towards consolidating as a state, given the nature of the content which is hinged upon highlighting inner identity by indulging in measures of social welfare and justice. The finding of a decreased emphasis upon dichotomy-reinforcing narrative is indicative of a similar understanding as that of an increase in value-reinforcing narratives. The Islamic State is perhaps taking away from paradigms that focus on dichotomy, to favour those which place the in-group as the possessors of solutions in attempts to further bolster in-group identity. Similarly, by not emphasising more on crisis narratives in Rumiya, it can further be inferred that the Islamic State is not treating the loss of territory as a crisis and aspires to maintain an image of control to propagate to its followers. The last inference that can be drawn from the findings is that an increased emphasis upon simple, yet impactful operational tactics in foreign lands, is a further attempt to consolidate the in-group identity of the Islamic State in foreign lands, by encouraging its followers to practice violence and spread terror.

The findings of this study are of particular academic and practical value. Given the extreme want of secondary literature upon Rumiya, the study makes a contribution towards further understanding and deciphering the motives and operations of the Islamic State. The study may potentially help in consolidating theories on terrorist organisations and their behaviour during different periods of expansion or contractions. On a more pragmatic dimension, the study has value for counter-terrorism agendas. The world of the 21st century has been plagued by the spectre of terrorism. However, before terrorism can be dealt with, in this day and age of internet and social media, it is of indispensable importance to first decipher the narratives of terrorist organisations, counter them, and then replace them with alternative

narratives. To this end, the study helps to better interpret the narratives of the Islamic State in various periods of its existence, such understandings can pave the path for more impactful counter-terrorism efforts.

Notwithstanding, there is still a lot of room for further research on the topic, given that the Islamic State is still contracting. Also, the production of Rumiya magazine is still ongoing and it is of utmost importance that the discourse of the Islamic State's radicalisation efforts is actively mapped and compared. Terrorism persists and has claimed far too many innocent lives; academic endeavours of the like, potentially bring the world a small step closer towards subduing the agenda of terrorism. Hence, the study concludes by reinforcing a strong emphasis upon understanding the narratives of terrorist organisations such as the Islamic State.

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