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Haroro J. Ingram

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An analysis of AQAP's *Inspire* & IS's *Dabiq*

AN ANALYSIS OF *INSPIRE* & *DABIQ*: LESSONS FROM AQAP AND ISLAMIC STATE'S PROPAGANDA WAR

Haroro J. Ingram

Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs, Australian National University

Contact Information *Email Address:* haroro.ingram@anu.edu.au *Mailing Address:* Haroro J.

Ingram, Level 4, Hedley Bull Centre (#130), Fellows Road, Acton, ACT, 2601, Australia.

This study analyses how *Inspire* and *Dabiq* seek to appeal to and radicalise English-speaking Muslims. It examines how each magazine strategically designs in-group, Other, crisis and solution constructs and interplays these via value-, dichotomy- and crisis-reinforcing narratives. This analysis also explores how narrative, imagery and counter-narrative messaging are used to shape reader's perceptions and polarise their support. While both magazines are dominated by narratives designed to empower its readers towards action, *Inspire* relies heavily on identity-choice appeals while *Dabiq* tends to balance identity- and rational-choice messaging. This study concludes by identifying key lessons for counterterrorism strategic communications campaign and message design.

Keywords

Islamic State ISIS/ISIL; AQAP; Dabiq; Inspire; propaganda; radicalisation.

Author's Note

Haroro J. Ingram is a research fellow with the Australian National University (Canberra) and a research associate with the International Centre for Counter-terrorism (The Hague). His Australian Research Council funded research (DE140101123) analyses the role of propaganda in the strategies of violent non-state political movements. Much of the analysis for this paper was completed while a visiting fellow with the Naval Postgraduate School's Defense Analysis Department (Monterey).

Deep into the second decade of combating Islamist-inspired terrorism domestically and abroad, many Western nations are facing a threat that is greater now than ever before. Two trends capture the depth and scope of the problem. The first concerns the unprecedented wave of foreign fighters from the West who have travelled to Syria and Iraq to support groups like Islamic State (IS) and the Al-Qaeda (AQ) affiliated Jabhat Al-Nusrah (JN) since 2011.¹ The second trend relates to the increased threat of “home-grown” Islamist-inspired terrorism in many of those same Western nations. While Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) have been linked to some of the most high-profile attacks in the West (e.g. the 2009 Fort Hood shooting, 2013 Boston Marathon bombing and 2015 Charlie Hebdo attack), a surge of IS-inspired plots and attacks since mid-2014 reflects a recent generational shift in inspiration and modus operandi.² Indeed the threat of Islamist-inspired domestic terrorism remains a top national security priority for many Western nations.³ The aforementioned trends are, to varying degrees, products of an ominous phenomenon: the effectiveness with which groups like AQ and IS have appealed to and mobilised a very small (but seemingly growing) number of Western Muslims. At the forefront of these propaganda efforts have been AQAP’s *Inspire* and IS’s *Dabiq* English-language magazines.

The purpose of this study is to analyse *Inspire* and *Dabiq*’s top-down strategic logic by examining and contrasting how each seeks to appeal to and radicalise its readership. This is achieved by applying an interpretive framework for radical narrative analysis to the contents of fourteen issues of *Inspire* and thirteen issues of *Dabiq*. It explores how each strategically designs in-group identity, out-group identity (Other), crisis and solution constructs and interplays these via value-, dichotomy- and crisis-reinforcing narratives. It also considers how *Inspire* and

Dabiq's narratives variously leverage rational-choice (i.e. decisions made on a cost-benefit consideration of alternatives) and identity-choice (i.e. decisions made in accordance with one's identity) appeals to shape its audience's decision-making processes. Furthermore, this study examines how *Inspire* and *Dabiq* use narrative, imagery, "ordering" -- i.e. sequencing ideas to maximise appeal -- and counter-narrative strategies to boost the appeal of its messaging. By applying a unique analytical framework and then drawing out lessons for counterterrorism strategic communications, this study contributes to a growing body of scholarship devoted to analysing *Dabiq*'s contents.⁴

The central argument of this article is that *Inspire* and *Dabiq* provides its readership with a "competitive system of meaning", i.e. an alternative perspective of the world compared to that presented by its opponents, that acts as a "lens" through which to shape their supporters' perceptions, polarise their support and, ultimately, convince them to mobilise. What emerges from this study is that the subtle differences between *Inspire* and *Dabiq* offer crucial insights into not only the unique ways each tries to influence their audiences but the different strategic logics that underpin their respective campaigns. Hegghammer and Nesser's analysis of *jihadi* plots and attacks in the West found that distinguishing between IS and AQ inspired plots was not always clear because "[s]everal plotters appear to have been influenced by both IS and al-Qaida, consuming propaganda from, and expressing support for, both groups."⁵ This trend merely underscores the importance of understanding not only the messaging strategies of AQ and IS as well as the psychosocial factors their narratives are designed to leverage but how counterterrorism strategic communications can use this understanding to more effectively counter extremist propaganda. Indeed, there is much that counterterrorism strategic

communications architects can learn from their adversaries. It is upon this premise that this article concludes by drawing out key lessons that may help to inform more effective counterterrorism strategic communications campaign and message design.

The propaganda battle for Western Muslims

As the first English-language magazine published by al-Qaeda or an affiliate, *Inspire* was released online in mid-2010 by AQAP's al-Malahem media foundation. Its purpose was clearly articulated in its opening article: "Allah says: 'And inspire the believers to fight' [al-Anfal: 65]. It is from this verse that we derive the name of our new magazine."⁶ What immediately captured the attention of analysts and national security officials was *Inspire*'s high production value and an article featured in its "Open Source Jihad" section titled "Make a bomb in the kitchen of your Mom."⁷ *Inspire* also caught the attention of other Islamist groups wanting to appeal to English-speaking Muslims and its influence is evident in publications such as the Taliban in Khurasan's *Azan*, *Al Risalah* by the Mujahideen of Shaam and, of course, IS's *Dabiq*.

IS's al-Hayat media centre published several issues of *Islamic State News* (May-June 2014) and *Islamic State Report* (June 2014) prior to launching *Dabiq* in July 2014. *Dabiq*'s predecessor magazines featured mostly photo reports and short articles offering English-speaking audiences timely updates on IS's politico-military campaign. *Dabiq*'s inaugural issue explained the rationale for transitioning to a larger periodical format:

After a review of some of the comments received on the first issues of Islamic State News and Islamic State Report, AlHayat Media Center decided to carry on the effort -- in

sha'allah -- into a periodical magazine focusing on issues of *tawhid*, *manhaj*, *hijrah*, *jihad*, and *jama'ah*.⁸

Early issues of *Dabiq* were characterised by a dominant “Islamic State Reports” and “Islamic State News” sections often positioned at the centre of each issue with articles on either side addressing various matters deemed to be of politico-military or jurisprudential significance. Later issues of *Dabiq* have progressively allocated more space to detailed multi-part articles resulting in the “Islamic State Reports” and “Islamic State News” sections being less prominent. In this respect, *Dabiq*'s format is broadly similar to *Inspire* even mimicking regular sections in the latter such as “From the pages of history” -- which examines a significant historical event and its contemporary implications -- and “In the words of the enemy” -- featuring the views of IS's enemies followed by a counter-narrative. The broad similarities in *Inspire* and *Dabiq*'s core purpose, target audience and format facilitates a like-for-like comparative analysis of their contents.

An interpretive framework for radical narrative analysis

The conceptual approach adopted by this study is based on a multidisciplinary conceptual framework of radicalisation⁹ and contributes to a growing body of scholarship that examines how radical narratives use identity constructs as a means to maximise the appeal of its message and, ultimately, radicalise supporters towards action.¹⁰ This interpretive framework for radical narrative analysis facilitates the study of how extremist messaging strategically designs in-group, Other, solution and crisis constructs and interplays these via value-, dichotomy- and crisis-reinforcing narratives as a means to shape audience perceptions, polarise support and drive their

radicalisation.¹¹ Ultimately, *Inspire* and *Dabiq*'s narratives are designed to provide its audiences with a competitive system of meaning that it coaxes its audience to use as the "lens" through which to perceive the world and process decisions. The interplay of identity, solution and crisis constructs are crucial in these dynamics and so it is pertinent to begin by defining these key terms.

"Identity" is understood here as that package of values, rooted in an historical narrative, strategically constructed in response to a socio-historically specific reality.¹² Identity plays a significant role in how individuals and groups perceive the world, generate meaning and rationalise decisions, hence the centrality of values to this conceptualisation. After all, "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."¹³ This approach contends that the strategic construction of identities are often shaped by broader psychological and sociological (i.e. psychosocial) forces.¹⁴ During radicalisation, identity construction processes may be particularly influenced by two sets of psychosocial factors: "perceptions of crisis" and "solutions."

Perceptions of crisis are a crucial psychosocial driver of radicalisation and tend to be characterised by uncertainty, the breakdown of tradition and the influence of the Other. The role of uncertainty -- which Hermans and Dimaggio¹⁵ argue consists of complexity, ambiguity, deficit knowledge and unpredictability -- in driving individuals towards extremist groups and ideologies is well-established.¹⁶ The urge to alleviate uncertainty is a powerful driver of human behaviour

that can result in people promoting "...all sorts of things that would give them the feeling of certainty."¹⁷ Closely connected to uncertainty is the breakdown of tradition which is the perception that historically rooted norms of belief and practice associated with the in-group identity are changing due to the influence (i.e. threat) of the Other.¹⁸ Finally, the Other's role in perceptions of crisis reflects the tendency for both in- and out-group identities to be relationally constructed *and* the Other to manifest as a measuring stick for the in-group's status.¹⁹ During radicalisation, the perceived complicity of the Other in uncertainty and the breakdown of tradition can drive perceptions of crisis and elicit a need in individuals for solutions to this malaise.

Characterised by certainty, reinforcement of tradition and commitment to the in-group, "solution" constructs tend to act as the corollary "pulling forces" to the "pushing" dynamic of perceptions of crisis during radicalisation. For example, in contrast to uncertainty, certainty is characterised by simplicity, stability, understanding and predictability. Thus in response to perceptions that the Other is responsible for the breakdown of tradition and uncertainty, solution constructs promise certainty and the reinforcement of tradition via commitment to the in-group. These dualities can play a key role during radicalisation and radical narratives tend to be calibrated to harness these powerful psychosocial forces in their audiences.

For the purposes of this study, "radicalisation" is defined as the process by which an individual or collective increasingly adheres to a selectively literalist interpretation of an identity narrative (e.g. ideology), a response triggered and catalysed by perceptions of crisis which may lead to the legitimisation of and engagement in violence against perceived Others as a solution to those

crises. This approach, which builds on scholars such as Sprinzak,²⁰ Crenshaw²¹ and Ruthven,²² frames radicalisation as a complex psychosocial process of escalating phases characterised by traits that reflect psychological, ideological, socio-political and strategic transitions in the individual or group. While it is tangential to delve into the nuances of these phases,²³ it is important to stress that these transitions reflect the adoption of increasingly bifurcated in- and out-group identity constructs that are often tied to crisis and solution constructs. The in-group is afforded values like benevolence and purity while out-groups are considered malevolent and filthy. As Silke argues:

[s]ocial psychology has long appreciated that groups in conflict become extremely polarised in their views of each other. There is a pervasive tendency to show increased appreciation of the traits and characteristics of the in-group... and to denigrate the members of the out-group.²⁴

The core narrative in extremist propaganda tends to follow a broadly similar mantra: we are the epitome of the in-group identity, the in-group's crises are due to malevolent Others, so support us because we are your champions and protectors who will confront *our* enemies and restore the in-group's glory with our political agenda. After all, the more that the world is perceived through dichotomised identity constructs, the more acute Other-generated crises will seem and the more the in-group's solution will be embraced. Indeed, these are the self-reinforcing dynamics at the heart of "cyclical cognitive reinforcement" (CCR) processes. As graphically represented in Figure 1, CCR is the mutually reinforcing dynamic whereby perceptions of crisis are increasingly attached to malevolent out-groups which in turn exacerbates the benevolence of the

in-group and the importance of its solutions. The in-group is thus increasingly perceived as the source of solutions typically due to it offering an explanatory narrative to makes sense of the world, a physical sanctuary via a collective of likeminded individuals and a blueprint for tangible action rooted in both. This in turn tends to exacerbate the belief that the Other is complicit in crises.

Radical narratives variously interplay identity, crisis and solution constructs as a means to not only lure its audiences into perceiving the world through its competitive system of meaning but to catalyse CCR processes and drive radicalisation. As graphically represented by vertical arrows in Figure 2, value-reinforcing messages tie the in-group identity to solution constructs and Others to perceptions of crisis. This type of messaging is designed to reinforce the in-group's positive values and actions and the Other's negative values and actions. Dichotomy-reinforcing messaging, represented by horizontal arrows (Figure 2), tend to either accentuate the dichotomy between in- and out-group attributes or demonstrate how solutions are required to address crises. By highlighting these dualities, dichotomy-reinforcing messages are used to both generate psychological, existential and socio-political anxieties in readers *and* provide readers with clear choices between the in-group or Others and solution or crisis. Thirdly, crisis-reinforcing messages typically tie treacherous *in-group* members to *in-group* crises. This type of messaging is particularly pertinent when analysing Islamist propaganda because it reflects a group's *takfirist* proclivities. Drawing on this range of narrative approaches is a means by which radical groups seek to strategically compel audiences to use identity-choice and/or rational-choice decision-making processes.²⁵ Analysing how *Inspire* and *Dabiq*'s contents prioritise value-, dichotomy- and crisis-reinforcing narratives offers unique insights into not only how AQAP and IS want

their readership to perceive the world but the types of decision-making processes its messaging seeks to trigger.

An analysis of AQAP's *Inspire* and IS's *Dabiq*

This case study applies the interpretive framework of radical narrative analysis to twenty-seven issues of *Inspire* and *Dabiq* to examine how each strategically seeks to shape its audience's perceptions, polarise their support and radicalise them towards action. It assesses how *Inspire* and *Dabiq* have prioritised value-, dichotomy- and crisis-reinforcing messaging before applying narrative analysis to explore the nuances of each magazine's competitive system of meaning and counter-narrative messaging against Sunni rivals. To begin, three types of items were identified in the magazines:

- Articles: Lengthier written pieces, typically one to several pages long and accompanied by pertinent images, that focus on issues, events, jurisprudential opinions or a combination in an historical and/or contemporary context.
- Statements: Shorter written pieces, typically no more than three paragraphs in length, that often feature excerpts from works by prominent historical and contemporary figures or short descriptions of photo reports.
- Advertisements: Typically featuring catchy proclamations or excerpts from Islamic texts accompanied by colourful imagery, these items are identical in format and style to advertisements in any other magazine.

The analysis then focussed on assessing whether items in *Inspire* and *Dabiq* were primarily value-, dichotomy- or crisis-reinforcing messages using the criteria in Table 1. Using this criteria,

the “primary focus” and the broader context for that “primary focus” were identified for each item. For example, an item that imbued Others with negative traits (e.g. evil) and linked that construct to crises (or vice versa) was categorised as Other/crisis and thus a value-reinforcing message. Alternatively, if an item contrasted solution and crisis constructs it was deemed solution/crisis and categorised as dichotomy-reinforcing. Crucially, each item was assessed based on how its *explicitly stated content* related to the criteria in Table 1. A more subjective approach based on what may be implied from an item’s message could result in a range of equally plausible categorisations. If no clear “primary focus” was identified, often due to a lengthy article covering a variety of matters, then the item was categorised as a “combination.”²⁶ 408 items across fourteen issues of *Inspire* and 235 items across thirteen issues of *Dabiq* -- totalling 643 items across twenty-seven issues spanning almost six years -- were categorised based on this coding methodology, results tallied and percentages calculated.

Results

Table 2 contains the results of the breakdown of value-, dichotomy-, and crisis-reinforcing categories by primary focus across all *Inspire*’s items. *Inspire*’s most prevalent categories of messaging are value-reinforcing (44.61%) and dichotomy-reinforcing (30.39%). Primary focus trends showed in-group/solution (29.66%) and operational (18.38%) items were most common.

Table 3 features the results of the breakdown of value-, dichotomy-, and crisis-reinforcing categories by primary focus for *Dabiq*’s items. Dichotomy-reinforcing narratives (49.79%) dominate *Dabiq*’s contents followed by value-reinforcing (38.72%). This trend was reflected in

the primary focus of *Dabiq*'s items with solution/crisis (32.77%) and in-group/solution (27.23%) being most prevalent.

Table 4 contains a comparative breakdown of *Inspire* and *Dabiq*'s contents by primary focus and item type. Articles are the most common item type in both *Inspire* (56.13%) and *Dabiq* (63.4%). Statements are the next most prevalent item type in *Dabiq* (32.77%) compared to advertisements in *Inspire* (28.43%). In-group/solution (27.51%) and operational (24.02%) messaging dominate *Inspire*'s articles. In contrast, in-group/solution (26.85%), solution/crisis (23.49%) and in-group/Other (21.48%) narratives dominate *Dabiq*'s articles. In-group/solution messages (39.66%) dominate *Inspire*'s ads and solution/crisis messages (54.55%) are most common amongst *Dabiq*'s statements.

Trend Analysis

The above results highlight the sheer diversity of content that fills *Inspire* and *Dabiq*'s pages. However, this variety is built around a consistent structure and regular core sections. For *Inspire*, the magazine opens with a "Letter from the Editor" and current event sections -- such as "News Flash", featuring short news stories, and "Inspire Reactions", a series of quotes in response to previous issues -- before transitioning to major articles and concluding with the "Open Source Jihad" section. *Inspire*'s broad structure has remained largely unchanged with the exception of special issues (e.g. Issues 3, 7 and 11) which are shorter and typically commemorate significant events (e.g. the September 11 attacks). *Dabiq*'s structure has gradually changed from its first four issues, which were largely dominated by Islamic State "Reports" and "News" sections, to latter issues which prioritise articles appearing in regular sections such as "Among the Believers

are Men”, featuring the story of an IS fighter typically from the West, and “To Our Sisters”, an article catering to female audiences. The consistent structure and recurring sections in *Inspire* and *Dabiq* provide its readership with a sense of regularity and ensures content addresses issues that are likely to be pertinent to their specific target audiences.

Inspire and *Dabiq*’s unique prioritisation of value-, dichotomy- and crisis-reinforcing narratives reflect the identity- and rational-choice appeal preferences of its architects. Given articles are the most prevalent item type and the forum which enables the most in-depth discussion, article trends and its correlation with overall item trends offer important insights. *Inspire*’s prioritisation of in-group/solution (27.51%) and operational (24.02%) messaging in its articles, a trend mirrored across all its items, is designed to have a mutually-reinforcing effect on the reader. As in-group/solution narratives strengthen and empower commitment to the in-group identity and its solution construct, thus compelling the reader to engage in identity-choice decision-making, *Inspire*’s operational items provide both the strategic rationale and operational knowhow to support that solution (e.g. terrorism). These trends suggest that *Inspire*’s overarching narrative, which is dominated by identity-choice appeals, is strategically calibrated to act as a “gateway” for its operational material (i.e. the former facilitates the latter). This approach is reinforced by the placement of *Inspire*’s “Open Source Jihad” section near the end of each issue. That this trend reflects conscious strategizing by *Inspire*’s architects is evidenced by the following from its chief editor who mocks the disproportionate focus of commentators on *Inspire*’s “Open Source Jihad” section:

The *kuffar* [disbelievers] are so terrified by this section. In fact, they limit the weight of the magazine on this section alone, while they forget that all a Muslim needs to fight the *kuffar* is enough *Iman* [faith] and the simplest of tools. Thus, the magazines [sic] content complete each other.²⁷

Dabiq's contents are characterised by different narrative trends reflecting a distinct strategic logic. Solution/crisis (32.77%) and in-group/solution (27.23%) items are most prevalent in *Dabiq* constituting 60% of all its contents. This prioritisation is reflected in *Dabiq*'s articles which are dominated by in-group/solution (26.85%) and solution/crisis (23.49%) narratives. These findings suggest that *Dabiq*'s architects have fused rational-choice appeals -- reflected in solution/crisis messaging -- and identity-choice appeals -- reflected in in-group/solution messaging -- in its calls to Western Muslims. This contrasts with *Inspire*'s focus on identity-choice appeals. Significantly, the bulk of *Dabiq*'s overall solution/crisis messaging appear in its "Reports" and "News" sections which promote how IS's politico-military efforts are addressing Sunni-crises. Such content is overwhelmingly designed to leverage rational-choice decision-making by contrasting IS's solutions with Other-generated crises. *Dabiq* devotes comparatively less content to linking Others to crises preferring to focus on how IS are confronting its enemies and solving crises via dichotomy-reinforcing narratives. Meanwhile, *Dabiq*'s in-group/solution narratives compel its readership to view the world through their (IS-constructed) Sunni Muslim identity as a means to empower them towards IS's solution. Indeed, the tertiary role of in-group/Other articles (21.48%) and overall items (17.02%) augments these dynamics by demanding readers apply identity-choice decisions to contrast dichotomised in-group and Other identity constructs. The strategic logic that can be extrapolated from these findings is significant and may shed light

on the role IS propaganda plays in the seemingly rapid radicalisation of its supporters. By simultaneously compelling readers to perceive the world through bifurcated in- and out-group identity constructs *and* demonstrating how IS are *tangibly* addressing *real* Sunni crises (e.g. Sunni persecution and disempowerment) with *real* solutions (i.e. IS's politico-military agenda), *Dabiq* seeks to align its readership's identity- and rational-choice decision-making processes as a means to win their support and mobilise them to action as a matter of urgency.²⁸

Competitive systems of meaning

Inspire and *Dabiq* offer its target audiences a “lens” through which to perceive and assess themselves and the world more broadly. While a fusion of narrative and imagery are central to this competitive system of meaning, more subtle patterns in stylistics and “ordering” also play an important role. In the opening article of its inaugural issue, *Inspire*'s editor stated that the magazine's name is based on the Quranic verse al-Anfal: 65 arguing that the Arabic word *harid* is translated as “inspire” not “incite.” The distinction is central to *Inspire*'s strategic logic:

...when you inspire someone towards something using the verb *harid*, you are saying that unless they do what you are inspiring them to do they would perish. So the word *harid* is an inspiration that saves a person and guides them towards what is good for them.²⁹

Inspire frames what it calls “individual *jihad*” attacks against the West as the obligatory action of any true Muslim living in the West. *Inspire* thus bombards its readership with in-group/solution messaging designed to compel its audiences to place primacy on their (*Inspire*-constructed) Muslim identity over all others: “You have to decide what your identity is. This will help determine your future course of action.”³⁰ After all, Islam offers a multidimensional

solution to a world defined by multifaceted crises. To overcome Other induced uncertainty and the erosion of “true” Islam, *Inspire*’s readers are offered a divinely-assured solution rooted in fidelity to tradition and the collective *ummah*. At a personal level, *Inspire* tells Western Muslims that their “...identity predicament much like a midlife crisis”³¹ can be alleviated by committing to their Muslim identity. *Inspire* frequently leverages the disproportionate scrutiny of Western media and security agencies on Muslim populations as a crisis lever to compel Western Muslims towards Islam:

...your belongingness to Islam is enough to classify you as an enemy. As a matter of fact, they look at us as Muslim youth regardless of our appearance and education. They do not consider our citizenship and the childhood we spent in their neighborhoods [sic].... Our enemies treat us as Muslims only, nothing more.... We must abide by our religion and stand on our *ummah*’s side, one treatment one blame.³²

These personalised appeals are boosted by *Inspire*’s use of colloquial English tailored for Western audiences. Indeed, *Inspire*’s language is often very casual. For example, “@heartheworld” is a regular section which provides “[a] collection of quotes from friend and foe”³³ while many issues contain what *Inspire* labels as “A Cold Diss Ad” which typically features an attention-grabbing image accompanied by a short phrase meant to “disrespect” (i.e. “diss”) the subject. For example, one such ad shows President Obama with a “Mr. H.D.” name-badge accompanied by the nursery rhyme “Humpty Dumpty.”³⁴ While *Inspire* will use formal language where it deems appropriate, most notably when examining a particular jurisprudential issue such as in its series of articles addressing the implications of *tawheed*,³⁵ its colloquial

approach often gives the reader the impression that they are conversing with a knowledgeable peer. This effect is reinforced by ensuring authors are attributed to *Inspire*'s contents.

Leveraging its trademark style, *Inspire* ties the plight of Western Muslims to the transnational crises afflicting the *ummah*:

Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo Bay and secret extraordinary renditions showed the world the American understanding of human rights. The Patriot Act and the treatment of Muslims in America and the West showed the world the reality of Western proclamation of equality. The limits placed on the rights of Muslims to express their beliefs revealed that in the West you are only free if you are not a Muslim.³⁶

Through *Inspire*'s lens of a crisis-steeped bi-polar world, Western Muslims are held *individually* responsible for fighting Islam's enemies, preferably as "individual *jihadis*", for a simple reason: they are Muslims.

This central issue, as I like to call it, is the pivot of what makes a Muslim begin his journey as a jihadi. No, it is not the mass slaughter of the Palestinians... nor the atrocious actions of America... It is not the jihadi *anashid* (hymns) nor the jihadi films.... The central issue is that jihad is individually obligatory (*fard 'ayn*) on all Muslims from East to West until all of our lands are freed.³⁷

Inspire's dominant in-group/solution messaging is augmented by a rich tapestry of appeals that place its readership at the heart of a global strategic campaign; a cosmic war. It is therefore erroneous to focus disproportionately on the "Open Source Jihad" section when considering how

Inspire influences those considering engagement in a terrorist act. After all, *Inspire* offers potential “individual *jihadis*” a diverse architecture of jurisprudential justifications³⁸ and psychological support.³⁹ It also provides the strategic context for such actions via a “History & Strategy” section featuring articles by the legendary military strategist Abu Musab al-Suri. Its purpose is to present the politico-military rationale for engaging in “individual *jihad*”, alongside “open front” warfare in Muslim lands, as part of a broader two-tiered strategic plan:

The goal of the operations of the Resistance and the Individual Terrorism Jihad is to inflict as many human and material losses as possible upon the interests of America and her allies, and to make them feel that the Resistance has transformed into a phenomenon of popular uprising against them....⁴⁰

Inspire reinforces this messaging with the example of individuals, most notably in its “Shuhada” (Martyrs) section, to demonstrate that its system of meaning is not an abstraction but a reality which manifests in its members. *Inspire*’s trademark fusion of colloquially written narratives and eye-catching imagery is again crucial. Its regular “Mujahid Notes” page portrays the table or floor of an aspiring “individual *jihadi*” showing notepads and scrap paper with operational plans, typically reflecting “Open Source Jihad” advice, photos of potential targets and previous “individual *jihadis*. ”⁴¹ Having been bombarded by a diversity of messaging that is designed to cumulatively frame terrorism as an obligation, readers finally reach the “Open Source Jihad” section which, by providing a step-by-step operational guide, is designed to negate any excuses for not fighting.

While *Inspire*'s contents are dominated by rehashed speeches and publications that are often several years old, *Dabiq*'s contents are largely original and specifically tailored for its magazine format. *Dabiq*'s narratives portray a starkly bifurcated world, split between IS-aligned Sunnis and literally everyone else, that is teetering on the brink of End Times. As Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared: "...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 *kufir* (disbelief) and hypocrisy...."⁴² Eschatological themes are tightly woven into *Dabiq*'s narratives. Indeed the magazine's name is taken from a location in northern Syria where the Prophet Muhammad foretold events leading to Armageddon would occur while the opening page of each issue features the following Abu Musab al-Zarqawi quote: "The spark has been lit here in Iraq, and its heat will continue to intensify -- by Allah's permission -- until it burns the crusader armies in Dabiq." Thus, even before reading beyond its contents page, *Dabiq*'s readers are plunged into a world of lethally acute crisis. This works to heighten the sense of urgency around its central message: all true Sunnis must join its Caliphate and immediately mobilise.

As the world progresses towards al-Malhamah al-Kubra [the battle preceding Armageddon], the option to stand on the sidelines as a mere observer is being lost. As those with hearts diseased by hypocrisy and *bid'ah* are driven towards the camp of *kufir*, those with a mustard seed of sincerity and Sunnah are driven towards the camp of *iman*.⁴³

In a world devoid of grey, stark choices face the true believers to either join IS or be condemned as *kufir*. Membership is framed as the gateway to salvation from which actions -- either traveling

to join its caliphate or committing attacks in the West -- are mere by-products. Once a member, individuals must fulfil their obligations:

This is the order of the Khalifah. Either ones performs hijrah to the *wilayat* of the Khilafah or, if he is unable to do so, he must attack the crusaders, their allies, the Rafidah, the tawaghit, and their apostate forces, wherever he might be with any means available to him....⁴⁴

IS seeks to persuade its readership by fusing rational-choice appeals -- that promote how IS are addressing real crises with real politico-military solutions -- *and* identity-choice appeals -- that empower its audience to be true to their Muslim identity and despise all others. *Dabiq* not only promotes its transnational *wilayats*⁴⁵ but the pledges of individual Muslims prior to their engagement in terrorism⁴⁶ in an effort to normalise IS membership: “It is necessary that *bay’ah* becomes so common to the average Muslim that he considers those holding back as grossly abnormal.”⁴⁷

Stylistics play an important role in reinforcing this approach. Most notably, *Dabiq* is more formal than *Inspire* in its language. This reflects IS’s focus on establishing itself as an authority politically, militarily and jurisprudentially. To reinforce this point, *Dabiq* inundates its articles with quotations from *suras*, *hadiths* and prominent Islamist figures with the author’s own words typically used sparingly. The effect that this has on the reader, especially one uninformed about the nuances of Islamic jurisprudence, is that *Dabiq*’s message (i.e. IS’s system of meaning) appears *inherently* credible, even foretold, because it is written in the words of inherently

credible sources. The effect of this approach is further compounded by *Dabiq* almost never attributing an author to its contents.

Like *Inspire*, *Dabiq*'s message targets Western Muslims at both an individual and collective level by drawing on a diverse range of levers. For example, *Dabiq* contrasts the exciting and meaningful life in its Caliphate with the existential angsts many Western Muslims may experience:

The modern day slavery of employment, work hours, wages, etc., is one that leaves the Muslim in a constant feeling of subjugation to a *kafir* master. He does not live the might and honor that every Muslim should live and experience.⁴⁸

IS's solution promises to empower not just individuals but the entire *ummah*:

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 honor has emerged anew.⁴⁹

IS's caliphate is central to these proclamations because it is framed as both a politico-military reality addressing Muslim crises, a manifestation of IS's divine blessing and an affront to its enemies:

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....⁵⁰

Counter-narratives against Sunni enemies

Counter-narratives, i.e. responses to the criticisms of rivals, are an essential component of any propaganda campaign. While *Inspire* and *Dabiq*'s counter-narratives confront a diverse array of enemies, it is counter-narratives against fellow Sunnis -- i.e. crisis-reinforcing messaging that tie treacherous members of the in-group to crises -- that are perhaps most significant to this analysis because they are products of a battle for the same pool of potential supporters (i.e. Sunni Muslims). Crisis-reinforcing narratives are over three times as prevalent in *Dabiq* as *Inspire* reflecting the comparative prominence of *takfirist* (i.e. accusing fellow Muslims of apostasy) leanings in IS propaganda. In addition to differences in the frequency of this type of content, each magazine adopts a distinct counter-narrative approach. *Inspire*'s crisis-reinforcing messages focus heavily on corrupted Sunni clerics as responsible for weakening and depoliticising Islam at a time when an *ummah* in crisis,

...want to hear how Islam can help them bring an end to occupation, how Islam can allow them to live in dignity under their own system of government, and ruled by their own people. They need to be empowered and encouraged. This is the message the Muslims are waiting to hear from our esteemed scholars.⁵¹

Anwar al-Awlaki, AQAP's American born "cleric" killed in 2011, plays a particularly prominent role in *Inspire*'s counter-narrative messaging perhaps reflecting an effort to leverage his charismatic appeal amongst Western Muslim constituencies. Al-Awlaki's warnings of Western government schemes to change Islam with the help of supposedly "moderate" *imams*, which he derogatively describes as the "Sultan's scholars,"⁵² are amplified because he too was "a child of the West":

We are living in a time when the West has publicly stated that it will use Muslim against Muslim in the battlefield and will use scholar against scholar in the battle for the hearts and minds of the Muslim *ummah*. As one CIA official stated: ‘If you found out that Mullah Omar is on one street corner doing this, you set up Mullah Bradley on the other street corner to counter it.’⁵³

For its audience of western Muslims, *Inspire* focuses squarely on so-called “moderate” Sunnis, especially *ulema*, who dilute Islam and remove its most vital components for reversing Islam’s decline (e.g. *jihad*). However, *Inspire* rarely criticises other Sunni “*jihadis*.” This is in stark contrast to *Dabiq*.

Dabiq’s counter-narrative messaging is inundated with scathing criticisms of its Sunni rivals. Like *Inspire*, *Dabiq*’s counter-narratives similarly condemn fellow Sunnis, particularly *ulema*, who criticise IS’s agenda for having,

...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.⁵⁴

Other Sunni *jihadis* are a particular focus of IS’s counter-narratives, especially AQ and its allies. Indeed, *Dabiq* uses a variety of strategies to attack its former allies. For example, consider *Dabiq*’s leveraging of “ordering” in an effort to overwhelm its readers with AQ’s malicious deviousness. Issue 11 opens with a “Foreword” that scathingly criticised the Afghan Taliban and AQ for deceiving Muslims about Mullah Omar’s death.⁵⁵ This is then followed by an article that

ties AQ-aligned Jabhat Al-Nusra (JN) to a broader conspiracy involving Syrian Opposition groups, Western and regional powers.⁵⁶ The next article, featuring a photo of the AQ-aligned cleric Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, carefully outlines the jurisprudential case for why majority rulings following precedence (*taqlid*) are wrong and evil.⁵⁷ Mirroring its broader narrative trends, *Dabiq*'s counter-narratives tend to fuse rational- and identity-choice appeals via messaging that is dominated by excerpts from the Quran, *hadiths* and speeches of prominent Islamists. One of the most powerful examples of this approach is *Dabiq*'s leveraging of Al-Adnani's declaration of *mubahalalah* (imploing Allah's curse on the deceitful party) against JN in articles such as "The flood of the Mubahala"⁵⁸ and again in "The Allies of al-Qai'dah in Sham."⁵⁹ Al-Adnani's *mubahalalah* in response to JN's accusations of IS being extremists was reportedly accepted by JN in March 2014. Al-Adnani re-stated his declaration a month later:

O Allah, if this is a state of *khawarij* [an extremist sect], then break its back, kills its leaders, make its flag fall, and guide its soldiers to the truth. O Allah, and if it is a state of Islam that rules by Your book and the tradition of Your prophet, and performs jihad against your enemies, then keep it firm, strengthen it, support it, grant it authority in the land, and make it a khilafah upon the prophetic methodology.⁶⁰

As *Dabiq*'s narrative explains, within months of the *mubahalalah* IS had captured Mosul and declared its caliphate while IS's rivals stumbled. By drawing upon its *mubahalalah* declaration and politico-military successes, *Dabiq* sought to synchronise identity- and rational-choice appeals to make an unambiguous point: IS are divinely chosen, its actions are divinely-sanctioned, and God publicly condemned its Sunni rivals to prove it.

Lessons for counterterrorism strategic communications

Three core lessons for counterterrorism strategic communications can be drawn from the preceding analysis:

Have a simple and consistent core narrative

Inspire and *Dabiq* have a broadly similar core narrative as the cornerstone of their messaging: we are the epitome of the Sunni Muslim identity, non-Muslims are responsible for the *ummah*'s crises, so support us because we are your champions and protectors and together we will confront *our* enemies to restore Islam to its rightful status. Value-, crisis- and dichotomy-reinforcing messages hone in on certain aspects of that core narrative as a mechanism to variously (and overwhelmingly) support that fundamental contention. Such an approach allows for a diversity of messaging to be designed and deployed that are cohered by that overarching narrative. Communication campaigns designed to counter the resonance of extremist propaganda amongst Western Muslims must also have a central overarching narrative as the cornerstone around which a variety of messaging can be deployed without appearing ad hoc. The issue, then, is what should be the focus of that core narrative.

The instinct to engage in ideologically-based messaging to undermine the credibility of Islamist extremists is fraught with potential problems. Secular Western governments have no credibility in Islamic jurisprudence and co-opting “moderate” Muslims as representatives is more likely to undermine the credibility of moderates, including those not directly working with the government, amongst those demographics most vulnerable to radicalisation. A counter-proselytization based core narrative is more likely to give perceived credibility to the types of

conspiratorial narratives in *Inspire* and *Dabiq* that warn of plots to change Islam by (supposedly secular) Western governments. Instead, counterterrorism strategic communications efforts would benefit from following the same basic principles of any competition: avoid enemy strengths, exploit enemy weaknesses and, generally, err on the side of what is most likely to work.

A campaign that sought to undermine the credibility of extremist claims by rupturing the links extremist messaging forges between themselves and solutions on the one hand, and their enemies and crises on the other, is *less* risky than an ideology-centric strategy. For instance, the core narrative for western government counterterrorism strategic communications could be as simple as *groups like IS and AQAP have caused and exacerbated crises (especially for fellow Muslims) while government efforts have done far more to address domestic and international crises*. This core narrative allows for the development of a diversity of messaging that is geared towards rupturing the links extremist tie between in-group, Other, crisis and solution constructs in their messaging. This simple core narrative facilitates messaging that ties extremists to crises, governments to solutions, exacerbates the disparity between what groups like AQ and IS say and do while highlighting the comparatively narrow say-do gap of those governments. An extraordinary variety of messaging is possible within this framework. Moreover, from a psychosocial perspective, this approach is designed to disrupt CCR processes. Put simply, it is an approach that avoids countering radical narratives on ‘their terms’ (i.e. ideologically) while eroding the underlying architecture of their claims (i.e. linkages between themselves and solutions and their enemies and crises). It is useful to consider how message design can contribute to this overarching campaign guidance.

Deploy a variety of messaging that leverages a mix of rational- and identity-choice appeals

The architects of *Inspire* and *Dabiq* recognise that their readers are diverse and so varied messaging, calibrated for rational- and identity-choice appeals, both increase the probability that a message will resonate and renders its audience susceptible to other messaging. For the same reason, counterterrorism strategic communications efforts need to develop and deploy a variety of messaging that not only draw on local and international issues but leverage rational- and identity-choice appeals. For example, IS messages frequently portray life in its Caliphate as exciting and honourable while highlighting the effectiveness of its politico-military efforts. Effective counter-messaging would expose the realities of life in the Caliphate and highlight the disparity between what IS says and what it does. The latter is about more than just exposing hypocrisy but undermining perceived IS's politico-military and jurisprudential credibility. A corollary to this messaging would be to show how western governments are protecting civilians, providing humanitarian aid and, to a domestic audience, providing equal opportunities to all citizens regardless of faith or race. These should be simple and pragmatic messages that avoid both counter-proselytising IS's ideological claims and championing Western claims to being the bearers of democracy and freedom.

Identity-choice appeals will also be important to counterterrorism strategic communications efforts. Rather than focusing on addressing issues pertaining to Muslim identity and what is (and is not) "true" Islam, this type of messaging would be better calibrated towards highlighting national, gender and other identities as a means to subtly erode the bi-polar constructs of extremist claims. The principle is simple: countering the "black and white" world portrayed by

extremists cannot be achieved with similarly “black and white” assertions but “colour.”

Highlighting the multiplicity of identities inherent to any individual or collective will be essential to effective identity-choice appeals and subtly, but powerfully, undermining a core feature of extremist narratives.

The likelihood of such messaging reaching and resonating with target audiences in the west can be increased by the effective use of a range of communication mediums *including*, but not isolated to, social media. For instance, by purchasing ads on video sharing and other social media sites, counter-narrative videos would appear before and even during the showing of certain content (e.g. extremist videos). If the message’s content is catchy, compelling and even entertaining, it will likely trend online and stands a better chance of penetrating target audience networks. Achieving 100% reach in a messaging campaign is impractical and inefficient but maximising targeting is essential.

Synchronise message design, message and action with target audience for maximum effects

Another important lesson from the *Inspire* and *Dabiq* analysis is the importance of aligning narrative, imagery and ordering with the core message and its target audience. For example, clearly informing the community about counter-terrorism legislation is messaging that is probably best delivered with formal language and rational-choice appeals. Alternatively, a more casual style could be appropriate for messages that expose the hypocrisy of AQAP and IS’s puritanical claims by highlighting, for instance, the behaviour of its members.

A disproportionate focus on *countering* extremist propaganda may be misguided because such messaging is inherently defensive. An analysis of propaganda strategies through history found

that a prioritisation of offensive messaging -- i.e. communiques designed to provoke defensive messaging from rivals -- was crucial to success in the 'information theatre'.⁶¹ Counterterrorism strategic communications efforts should also focus on the design and dissemination of offensive messaging. An important metric for measuring the success of offensive messaging is, of course, whether and what type of counter-messaging it provokes from the adversary. While counter-narrative messaging will always have a role in campaign planning, offensive messaging designed to proactively prime target audiences to reject enemy narratives and counter-narratives should be an essential component of any counterterrorism strategic communications effort.

Ultimately, all messaging must be synchronised with actions in the field. Domestically, this requires a comprehensive and rigorous strategic communications effort calibrated to engage in both proactive and reactive messaging to enhance the effects of the full spectrum of "hard" (e.g. raids) and "soft" (e.g. counter violent extremism or CVE initiatives) counterterrorism activities. After all, actions without narratives are open to interpretation by target audiences and therefore manipulation via effective adversary messaging. Put simply, actions do not speak louder than words if one's adversary dominates how those actions are perceived. Equally, messaging without action or which does not reflect realities on the ground are unlikely to resonate with audiences.

Conclusion

Given the size of Muslim populations in the West, the number of Western Muslims traveling overseas as foreign fighters or implicated in domestic terrorism-related activities is very low. Those who have become involved in such activities are not only tiny in number but have tended to operate on the fringes of their communities. However, the upward trends are deeply

concerning and variously reflects the success of extremist propaganda efforts and the failure of Western governments to effectively counter it. There is much to be learned from AQAP and IS's propaganda efforts targeting Western Muslims. Of course, an effective communications strategy constitutes only a single aspect of what must be a multidimensional strategic-policy approach to confronting the threat of terrorism. Synchronising messaging with strategic-policy actions will be essential for maximising the benefits of both.

Future research

The West's foreign fighter and domestic "lone wolf" trends are ominous and the phenomenon helping to drive it is constantly evolving. As an analysis of strategic logic, this study offers an inherently top-down perspective of *Inspire* and *Dabiq*. The obvious corollary of this study is a bottom-up analysis that empirically explores the resonance of *Inspire* and *Dabiq* within its target audiences. Nevertheless, this analysis demonstrates that empirical-based studies of radical narratives can offer important insights into not only how groups like AQAP and IS attempt to appeal to their constituencies but how counterterrorism strategic communications could be improved.

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Table 1: Primary focus criteria for *Inspire* and *Dabiq* items

Primary focus	Criteria
In-group identity construction	The item attaches values and/or an historical narrative to construct the in-group identity.
Other (Out-Group) identity construction	The item attaches values and/or an historical narrative to construct the Other identity.
Solution construction	The item presents the case for an in-group generated solution.
Perception of crisis construction	The item highlights and/or explains the factors contributing to in-group perceptions of crisis.
Operational guidance	The item provides operational guidance pertaining to engagement in or support of violence against the Other.

Table 2: Breakdown of categorisations by primary focus, *Inspire* issues 1-14

<i>Inspire</i> magazine, issues 1-14			
Categorisation	Number (%)	Primary focus	Number (%)
Value-reinforcing	182 (44.61%)	In-group/Solution	121 (29.66%)
		Other/Perceptions of Crisis	61 (14.95%)
Dichotomy- reinforcing	124 (30.39%)	In-Group/Other	67 (16.42%)
		Solution/Perceptions of Crisis	57 (13.97%)
Crisis-reinforcing	12 (2.94%)	In-group/Perceptions of Crisis	12 (2.94%)
Other	90 (22.06%)	Combination	15 (3.68%)
		Operational	75 (18.38%)

Table 3: Breakdown of categorisations by primary focus, *Dabiq* issues 1-13

<i>Dabiq</i> magazine, issues 1-13			
Categorisation	Number (%)	Primary focus	Number (%)
Value-reinforcing	91 (38.72%)	In-group/Solution	64 (27.23%)
		Other/Perceptions of Crisis	27 (11.49%)
Dichotomy- reinforcing	117 (49.79%)	In-Group/Other	40 (17.02%)
		Solution/Perceptions of Crisis	77 (32.77%)
Crisis-reinforcing	23 (9.79%)	In-group/Perceptions of Crisis	23 (9.79%)
Other	4 (1.70%)	Combination	4 (1.70%)
		Operational	-

Table 4: Comparative breakdown of primary focus by item type, *Inspire* and *Dabiq*

Item type	Primary focus	<i>Inspire</i> number (%)	<i>Dabiq</i> number (%)
Article	In-group/Solution	63 (27.51%)	40 (26.85%)
	Other/Perceptions of Crisis	27 (11.79%)	18 (12.08%)
	In-Group/Other	33 (14.41%)	32 (21.48%)
	Solution/Perceptions of Crisis	30 (13.10%)	35 (23.49%)
	In-group/Perceptions of Crisis	9 (3.93%)	20 (13.42%)
	Combination	12 (5.24%)	4 (2.68%)
	Operational	55 (24.02%)	-
Statement	In-group/Solution	12 (19.05%)	19 (24.67%)
	Other/Perceptions of Crisis	14 (22.22%)	6 (7.79%)
	In-Group/Other	27 (42.86%)	8 (10.39%)
	Solution/Perceptions	8 (12.70%)	42 (54.55%)

	of Crisis		
	In-group/Perceptions of Crisis	-	2 (2.60%)
	Combination	2 (3.17%)	-
	Operational	-	-
Ad	In-group/Solution	46 (39.66%)	5 (55.56%)
	Other/Perceptions of Crisis	20 (17.24%)	3 (33.33%)
	In-Group/Other	7 (6.03%)	-
	Solution/Perceptions of Crisis	19 (16.38%)	-
	In-group/Perceptions of Crisis	3 (2.59%)	1 (11.11%)
	Combination	1 (0.86%)	-
	Operational	20 (17.24%)	-

Figure 1: The cyclical cognitive reinforcement dynamic

Figure 2: The value-, dichotomy- and crisis-reinforcing interplay

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⁵ Ibid, p. 20.

⁶ The Editor, "Letter from the editor" *Inspire* Issue 1 (2010), p. 2.

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⁸ Unidentified author, "Until it burns the Crusader armies in Dabiq", *Dabiq* Issue 1 (2014): 3.

⁹ H. Ingram, *The charismatic leadership phenomenon in Islamist radicalism and militancy* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 63-74.

¹⁰ M. Hafez, "Rationality, culture, and structure in the making of suicide bombers," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29(2) (2006): 165-185; H. Ingram, "An analysis of the Taliban in Khurasan's *Azan* (issues 1-5)," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 38(7) (2015): 560-579;

T. Johnson, "The Taliban insurgency and an analysis of shabnamah (Night Letters)," *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 18 (3) (2007): 317-344; A. Smith "From words to action," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 27(5) (2004): 409-437.

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Khurasan's *Azan* (Issues 1-5), pp.560-579; H. Ingram, "An analysis of Islamic State's *Dabiq* magazine" *Australian Journal of Political Science*.

¹² Ingram, *The charismatic leadership phenomenon...*, p. 51.

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¹⁶ For example see M. Hogg, C. Meehan, and J. Farquharson, "The Solace of Radicalism," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 46(2010), pp. 1061-1066; M. Hogg and J. Adelman, "Uncertainty-Identity Theory: Extreme Groups, Radical Behavior, and Authoritarian Leadership," *Journal of Social Issues* 69(3) (2013), pp. 436–454; B. Doosje, A. Loseman, and K. Van den Bos, "Determinants of Radicalization of Islamic Youth in the Netherlands: Personal Uncertainty, Perceived Injustice, and Perceived Group Threat," *Journal of Social Issues* 69(3) (2013), p. 586-604.

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²⁴ Silke, "The psychology of suicidal terrorism", p. 228.

²⁵ J. March and C. Heath, *A primer on decision-making* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

²⁶ Items deemed to fall outside of the coding criteria were deemed ‘administrative’ items and not included in the dataset. For example, a regular ‘administrative’ item in *Inspire* was its ‘Contact Us’ page while both magazines contained advertisements for current or future media releases.

²⁷ Y. Ibrahim, “Inspired by ‘Inspire’” *Inspire* Issue 11 (2013), p. 19.

²⁸ For an overarching analysis of IS’s propaganda campaign see H. Ingram, “The strategic logic of Islamic State information operations”, *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 69(6), pp.729-752.

²⁹ The Editor, “Letter from the editor”, p. 2.

³⁰ S. Khan “The Egyptian” *Inspire* Issue 5 (2011), p. 45.

³¹ S. Khan “Blended duality: Muslim and American?” *Inspire* Issue 8 (2011), p. 9.

³² Jonas the Rebel “Dear American Muslim” *Inspire* Issue 11 (2013), p. 17.

³³ For example, “@heartheworld” *Inspire* Issue 12 (2014), pp. 4-5.

³⁴ Unidentified author, “A Cold Diss Ad’ *Inspire* Issue 13 (2014): pp. 46-47.

³⁵ H. An-Nadhary “Conditions of the word of Tawheed” *Inspire* Issue 14 (2015), pp. 24-29.

³⁶ Y. Ibrahim, “The greatest special operation of all time” *Inspire* Issue 7 (2011), p.14.

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³⁸ For example A. Al-Awlaki, “Targeting the populations of countries that are at war with the Muslims” *Inspire* Issue 8 (2011), pp. 40-47.

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- ⁴³ Unidentified author, "The extinction of the grayzone" *Dabiq* Issue 7 (2015), p.66.
- ⁴⁴ Unidentified author, "And Allah is the best of plotters" *Dabiq* Issue 9 (2015), p.54.
- ⁴⁵ For example, Unidentified author, "The Qawqazi caravan gains pace", *Dabiq* Issue 10 (2015), 36-37.
- ⁴⁶ For example, the San Bernadino shooters in Unidentified author, "Foreword" *Dabiq* Issue 13 (2016), pp. 3-4.
- ⁴⁷ Unidentified author, "Foreword" *Dabiq* Issue 2 (2014), p. 3.
- ⁴⁸ Unidentified author, "Hijrah from hypocrisy to sincerity" *Dabiq* Issue 3 (2014), p.29.
- ⁴⁹ Unidentified author, "Khilafah Declared", p.9.
- ⁵⁰ Unidentified author, "The extinction of the grayzone", p.57.
- ⁵¹ A. Al-Awlaki, "The new mardin declaration: An attempt at justifying the new world order" *Inspire* Issue 2 (2010), p. 33.

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⁵² A. Al-Awlaki, "Why did I choose al Qaeda?" *Inspire* Issue 9 (2012), pp.42-43.

⁵³ Al-Awlaki, "The new mardin declaration", p. 39.

⁵⁴ Unidentified author, "The burning of the murtadd pilot" *Dabiq* Issue 7 (2015), p.6.

⁵⁵ Unidentified author, "Foreword" *Dabiq* Issue 11 (2015), pp.4-5.

⁵⁶ Unidentified author, "The allies of al-Qaidah in Sham: Part 4" *Dabiq* Issue 11 (2015), pp.6-9.

⁵⁷ Unidentified author, "The evil of division and Taqlid" *Dabiq* Issue 11 (2015), pp.10-14.

⁵⁸ Unidentified author, "The flood of the Mubahahlah" *Dabiq* Issue 2 (2014), pp.20-30.

⁵⁹ Unidentified author, "The allies of al-Qaidah in Sham: Part 4", pp.6-9.

⁶⁰ Unidentified author, "The flood of the Mubahahlah", p.20.

⁶¹ For more see H. Ingram, "A brief history of propaganda during conflict: Lessons for counterterrorism strategic communications" *The International Centre for Counter-terrorism – The Hague* 7 no. 6 (2016): pp.35-36. Also see H. Ingram and A. Reed, "Lessons from history for counterterrorism strategic communications" *The International Centre for Counter-terrorism – The Hague* 7 no. 4 (2016): p. 8.