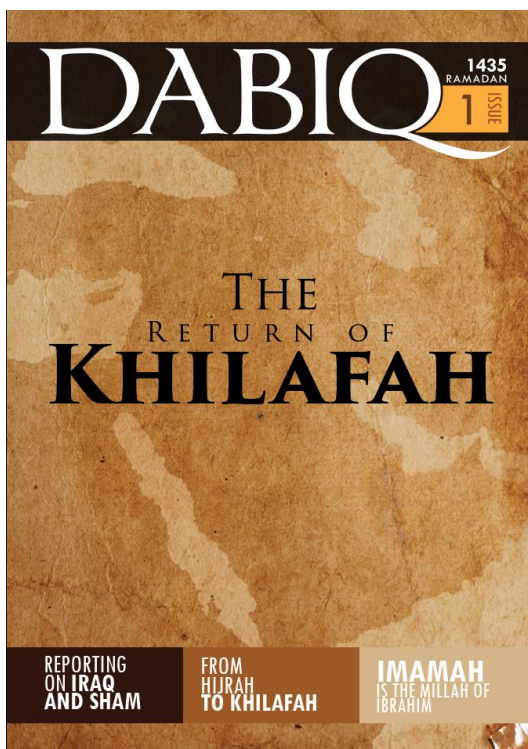


Dabiq: Framing the Islamic State

A Utopian Roadmap to the New Caliphate

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Preface

I would like to thank my own sanity and stomach for being able to cope IS imagery and Vera for getting me through. I also would like to thank Roel Meijer for his helpful suggestions and revisions.

Chapter 1

Introduction

*“There can be no compelling counter-narrative until the extremist narrative itself is well understood.”*¹ - NETworked Radicalization report

Beheadings, atrocities, conquest, suicide bombings: One glance at the news nowadays and it is hard to miss the brutality which IS displays. The so-called Islamic State has proven to be a capable military might and a ruthless governing force in the Middle East. Even though the existence of the state in the Levant and Iraq is under threat because of the military setbacks the state suffered, it still continues to exist and it is expected that the ideology of the Islamic State will live on long after the state project has been destroyed.²

Bunzel wrote that members of IS are driven by different factors, some not at all knowledgeable on the ideology. According to Bunzel it is the leadership of IS that is truly ideologically driven. Bunzel considers IS ideology to be understood in two ways: 1) Jihadi-Salafism:³ the Islamic political school whereto IS belongs, and 2) the hard-line interpretation of the Salafi school.⁴

A window into the ideology of the Islamic State itself is the online magazine *Dabiq*, freely available to anyone who has access to the worldwide web. It is a magazine written in English and targeted at the Western (Muslim) audience. Its fifteen issues were published between 5 July 2014, the date of the declaration of the caliphate, and 31 July 2016, when the town of Dabiq was lost. In this MA thesis I focus on the first eight issues, roughly stretching from the formative first year of the caliphate and thereby being focussed the most on the state building message. Later issues were published in times of greater setbacks for the Islamic State, as can be seen by its themes, when shaming enemies, militancy and celebrating suicide attacks become dominant over the state

¹ Christina Archetti, *Understanding Terrorism in the Age of Global Media: A Communication Approach*, (UK: Palgrave Mcmillan, 2013), 130-131.

² <http://www.volkskrant.nl/buitenland/propagandamachine-is-lijkt-nauwelijks-nog-te-draaien~a4483759/> (Dutch)

³ A good introduction to Jihadi-Salafism is: Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁴ Cole Bunzel, “From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State,” *The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World*, No. 19 (March, 2015), 7-8.

building theme.

The name of the magazine comes from a small city in Syria named Dabiq where according to Islamic prophecy the apocalyptic battle against the ‘Romans’⁵ (Christians) will take place. The value IS places on the Islamic apocalypse cannot be understated when assessing their ideology. IS in fact defines itself as an apocalyptic movement (in contrast to IS’ ideological and organisational ‘father’, Al-Qaida). The Islamic State conquered Dabiq in its formative year and prepared the town and its surrounding area by entrenching against the ‘Romans.’ Ironically, Dabiq was lost to Syrian rebels backed by Turkish forces.⁶ This defeat – a defeat that was not prophesized - no doubt prompted the propagandists to stop publishing *Dabiq*, as its name is now tainted by the stain of setback. 21 July 2015 was the date on which the last issue of *Dabiq* was released on the internet. IS launched a new magazine in its stead named after a place that will be conquered further down the apocalyptic timeline: *Rumiyah*, the Arabic name for Rome.

A word of warning: We should be careful with using the magazine as a source to gain insight in the Islamic State, because of its propagandist nature. Propaganda, as always, is a tool that twists reality into a narrative that is favourable to the propagandist. However, there still is informational value in propaganda outlets. Not of course as a document that lists events without bias, but a view into the ideals of the propagandists, or in this case IS. The Islamic State presents itself as the ultimate bastion of the Islamic faith and *Dabiq* is its mouthpiece. By reading carefully, we can determine the ideology of the Islamic state, sometimes implicitly buried in the texts and pictures, more often explicitly displayed.

Since *Dabiq* is a tool of Islamic State propaganda, it is useful to use the conceptual tool of *framing*. Framing is in propaganda one of the most important tools. From the propaganda minister of the third *Reich*, all the way to *Dabiq’s al-Hayat* media centre in the Islamic State, framing has proven its effectiveness in influencing people’s opinions. Framing, in short, is a way of presenting an event or process to an audience advancing one’s interest. It is about the portrayal of events. Events are manipulated in such a way that conveys specific meanings the sender wants the receiver to understand. I will discuss the framing process in *Dabiq* in the third chapter of this thesis.

Why did I choose *Dabiq* to understand the ideal state according to the Islamic State?

⁵ *Dabiq* generally refers to “Romans” and not to the Arabic name for Christians: “*Rum*”.

⁶ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-turkey-dabiq-idUSKBN12G0UK>

In 2014, Harleen K. Gambhir of the Institute for the Study of War published a paper in which she analyses the first issue of *Dabiq*. She writes that *Dabiq* is “[an] outreach to the Islamic State’s potential fighters and future residents, as well as to its enemies. The magazine is not simply propaganda. Rather, it is an outward-looking articulation of ISIS’s Caliphate vision. [...] Artefacts like *Dabiq* provide invaluable insight on the internal interactions of ISIS’s three axes of effort.”⁷ This “Caliphate vision” is the theme I focus on in my thesis. In addition, Gambhir tells us that the magazine lends itself well for further research on the ideal of the Islamic State: “the division and evolution of *Dabiq*’s article topics over time may allow analysts to track ISIS’s changing priorities, while a study of ISIS’s changing justifications of authority could aid in the formation of a counterstrategy to undermine the organization.”⁸ Gambhir’s statement can leave no doubt that analysing *Dabiq* will help academics to better understand the organization and government institutions to better formulate a response to IS. It becomes clear that by studying *Dabiq* we will gain knowledge of what kind of state the new Caliphate is striving to be.

Dabiq is often cited in academic papers to support claims about the ideology of IS, but it is rarely discussed as anything more. For example, Joas Wagemakers uses a *Dabiq* article to demonstrate the importance IS places on the concept of *bay’a*.⁹ Trus Hallberg Tønnessen refers to *Dabiq* only by means of introduction in her article on the relationship between al-Qaida in Iraq and the Islamic State.¹⁰ Thomas Hegghammer and Peter Nesser use *Dabiq*’s articles to assess the Islamic State’s commitment to attacking the West and because of their focus, the content of *Dabiq* that they can use is limited.¹¹

Some scholars even misrepresent *Dabiq*. For example, Ian R. Edgar writes that *Dabiq* “is primarily concerned with reports of battlefield successes and effective rebel governance”.¹² He uses *Dabiq* to provide quotes that support his claim that jihadi fighters attach great importance to dreams in strategic decision-making. I argue, like Gambhir, that *Dabiq* is much more than the description of “battlefield successes and effective rebel governance”, as *Dabiq* writes about IS ideology and

⁷ Harleen K. Gambhir: “*Dabiq*: The Strategic Messaging of the Islamic State”, *ISW: Institute for the Study of War Background*, (August 15, 2014), 10.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Joas Wagemakers, “The Concept of *Bay’a* in the Islamic State’s Ideology,” *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 9, Issue 4, (August, 2015), 99.

¹⁰ Trus Hallberg Tønnessen, “Heirs of Zarqawi or Saddam?: The Relationship Between al-Qaida in Iraq and the Islamic State,” *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 9, Issue 4, (August, 2015), 49.

¹¹ Thomas Hegghammer and Peter Nesser, “Assessing the Islamic State’s Commitment to Attacking the West,” *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 9, Issue 4, (August, 2015), 16-17.

¹² Ian R. Edgar, “The Dreams of the Islamic State,” *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 9, Issue 4, (August, 2015), 77.

strategy, as I will point out in Chapter Three. It can thus be considered a missed opportunity that Cole Bunzel, in his research on the ideology of the Islamic State, did not include any reference to *Dabiq*, even though *Dabiq* was available at the time of publishing the article (Bunzel's article still is a great introductory primer into IS ideology).¹³

Lina Khatib analysed IS strategy and argues that *Dabiq* “often makes parallels between present incidents and stories from the dawn of Islam as a way to cultivate a sense of legitimacy for the organization”.¹⁴ It is this “sense of legitimacy” why we should read further meaning into *Dabiq*'s propaganda, as understanding *Dabiq*'s narrative of the perfect Islamic State can help policy makers into undermining its legitimacy. Alex P. Schmid argues to develop a counter narrative to IS' propaganda and uses *Dabiq* among other IS media outlets to help map the narrative.¹⁵ Schmid's use of *Dabiq* is telling; we can't dismiss *Dabiq* as mere propaganda, but we should view the magazine as a means to map the ideology of the caliphate. Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, Nathaniel Barr and Bridget Moreng regard *Dabiq* and other IS media as a tool to mobilise foreign fighters, which they consider the greatest success of IS propaganda. They also view *Dabiq* as a tool to distribute “IS' religious narrative” and as a means to drive “a wedge between Muslims and the West”.¹⁶

Besides Gambhir's article, one paper focusses solely on *Dabiq* as a research object. The Carter Center published an overview of *Dabiq*'s thematic evolution and it regards *Dabiq* as “recruitment propaganda”. The Carter Center has developed a coding methodology that allows for the study of “shifting themes, trends, and recruitment strategies” in *Dabiq*.¹⁷ However, the article primarily focuses on quantitative research and as a result the ideological content of *Dabiq*'s articles is neglected.

My contribution to the research of *Dabiq* is a qualitative inquiry into *Dabiq* as a vehicle to promote IS as the ultimate Islamic State. I furthermore argue that through the lens of *Dabiq*, IS should be seen as a utopian project, as I will describe later on in Chapter One and in Chapter Three.

One scholar who researched official media output of the Islamic State is Aaron Y. Zelin. In his article “Picture Or It Didn't Happen: A Snapshot of the Islamic State's Official Media Output,” he examined different media releases of IS during a single week. Of all the 143 publications he

¹³ Bunzel, “From Paper State to Caliphate.”

¹⁴ Lina Khatib, “The Islamic State's Strategy: Lasting and Expanding,” *Carnegie Middle East Center*, (June, 2015), 16.

¹⁵ Alex P. Schmid, “Challenging the Narrative of the ‘Islamic State’,” *ICCT Research Paper*, (June 2015).

¹⁶ Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, Nathaniel Barr and Bridget Moreng, “The Islamic State's Global Propaganda Strategy,” *ICCT Research Paper*, (March 2016), 1, 12, 23.

¹⁷ The Carter Center, *Overview of Daesh's Online Recruitment Propaganda Magazine, Dabiq*, (December, 2017).

investigated, 123 were in Arabic, only eight in English, five in Russian, four in Kurdish, two in French and just one in Urdu.¹⁸ Even though *Dabiq* is in English and is not analysed by Zelin in his article, we can find similarities between the themes the online glossy brings up and the media output examined by Zelin.

In his research, Zelin discerned eleven different themes. He divided the themes into the six more prominent and the six less prominent ones. The most important themes in Islamic State media output according to Zelin are:

1) *Military*. One of the major points IS media and *Dabiq* try to make is that the Islamic State is a successful military force. It always portrays itself as being on the move; there is no mention of any setbacks or slowdowns.

2) *Governance*. This is how the Islamic State wants its readers to believe that it truly is a state. Or more specifically, that it is a caliphate as it has been in the early days of Islam. There is something rather interesting about this, because, in a sense, the Islamic State is emulating the modern welfare state. It wants to show that it provides social services and security to its citizens, which indeed is a very modern concept of state building.

3) *Da'wa*. This is known as the “invitation to the Islamic religion”.¹⁹ Frequently the Islamic State says it promotes the Islamic religion. It does this by hosting so called *da'wa* events. Examples of this include contests in Quran recitation, or increasing the cohesion of the *umma* (the Muslim community) by organizing social events, such as eating contests.

4) *Hisba or religious policing*. Media outlets of the Islamic State will show how it “enjoins in doing good and forbids what is evil”. These outlets are committed to the endeavours of the *Hisba*, the religious police. Their activities include the upholding of the ban on narcotics and drugs, making sure everyone prays during prayer time, and they destroy sites which are considered *shirk* (idolatrous). These sites include ancient temples which were once dedicated to polytheistic gods, graves (including those of Muslims), and symbols which are thought to be worshipped (such as the Christian cross).

18 Aaron Y. Zelin, “Picture Or It Didn’t Happen: A Snapshot of the Islamic State’s Official Media Output,” *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 9, issue 4, 89.

19 However, *da'wa* signifies social activities with an Islamic theme as well. One could compare *da'wa* up to a certain extent to Christian missionary activities.

5) *Promotion of the Caliphate*. This is a rather broad theme. It basically promotes the Caliphate as the ideal place for Muslims.

6) *Enemy Attack*. The Islamic State wants to inform its audience of any afflictions suffered by Muslims in the world in general and more specifically of Muslims on its territories. It often shows mutilated bodies to make the point of how evil the enemy is.

The themes that appeared in a lesser quantity during Zelin's research period are:

7) *News*. Again a broad category, this can cover a lot of different subjects.

8) *Martyrdom*. Although during Zelin's research martyrdom is less important, it is a central theme in *Dabiq*. Paradise awaits those who fight for the caliphate and those who fall during combat or suicide operations are celebrated as *shahid* in *Dabiq*.

9) *Execution*. This theme is used by IS to instil fear in the enemies of the Islamic State. The other purpose of the executions is to show that the Islamic State is ready and able to enforce the (Islamic) rule of law.

10) *Denial of enemy information*. Everything what the enemies of IS claim about the organization is denied by IS official media. *Dabiq* also shows another trend. Instead of denying enemy reports, *Dabiq* actually confirms these reports so long as their information fits with the narrative IS tells about itself.

11) *Other*: A category Zelin uses to fit in the subjects that he considers miscellaneous.²⁰

All the specified themes (excluding number eleven for the moment) described above can be found in *Dabiq*, which I will analyse in greater detail in Chapter Three. The themes described by Zelin allow us to better place the individual articles that together constitute *Dabiq*.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF IS

Although the history of IS is not the focus of this thesis, it helps to have a short outline of the history of the organisation.²¹ The spiritual founder of the organisation is Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

²⁰ Zelin, "Snapshot of the Islamic State's Official Media Output," 85-97.

²¹ For a historic overview, read: Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror* (New York,: Simon

From 1999-2004 he headed *Jamaat al-Tawhid wa-l-Jihad*, an independent jihadi group which was active in the resistance against the American occupation of Iraq. At one point he pledged allegiance to Osama bin Laden, but there were major differences between the two. One of these was that Bin Laden came from an elite family and had enjoyed university education. Zarqawi had a criminal past and came from a poor family having had no higher education. Bin Laden thought Zarqawi to be an effective leader, but rather extreme in his views on *takfir* (declaring another Muslim to be a heretic). In 2004 al-Zarqawi was given command of Al-Qaida in the Land of the Two Rivers (Iraq). He became infamous for “his brutal personal beheadings and fast-paced suicide bombing campaign against Shiite religious targets and Sunni civilians, among others.”²² Zarqawi became popular among jihadi militants and Al Qaida in Iraq started to grow. A major ideological conflict between AQ leadership and Zarqawi started emerging: “Zarqawi felt that the only way to save the umma (global Islamic community) from itself was through purging it, whereas bin Laden’s number two, Ayman al-Zawahiri, believed that Muslims were not the problem, but that instead the “apostate” institutions needed to be changed.”²³ Zelin believes this to be the difference between Al-Qaida’s more strategic outlook versus Zarqawi’s doctrinaire outlook “as well as differing attitudes toward the role of institution building and governance.”²⁴ McCants has written that Zarqawi was obsessed with eschatology, another difference between him and AQ leadership, which did not deny the eschatological but did not pay too much attention to this obscure aspect of Islamic doctrine.²⁵

Zarqawi’s extremism was a problem for AQ’s leadership. They advised him to reduce the violence and the “over-the-top enforcement of sharia.”²⁶ This was done in order not to alienate Sunni Muslims any further. Zarqawi ignored this and put a great effort in institution building, but in 2006 he was killed. His death was followed by a statement of his organisation that the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) was now established under leadership of the emir Abu Omar al-Baghdadi. The group started taking territory but governing it turned out to be “disastrous.” This was because of the harsh enforcement of sharia and bad governance. It even helped the creation of the *sahwa* movement (awakening), a movement that the Americans were able to establish among Sunni tribes to fight jihadi groups. ISI was pushed back, but in 2013 ISI surged ahead due to the discrimination

and Schuster, 2015). Also: Jessica Stern and J.M. Berger: *ISIS: The State of Terror*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2015). A good overview of IS can be read here: Greame Wood, “What ISIS Really Wants,” *The Atlantic*, (March, 2015), <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980>.

²² Aaron Y. Zelin, “The War between ISIS and al-Qaeda for Supremacy of the Global Jihadist Movement,” *Research Notes: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, No. 20 (June 2014) 2.

²³ Ibid., 3.

²⁴ Ibid., 3.

²⁵ William McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse, The History, Strategy and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2015), 7-15.

²⁶ Zelin, “The War between ISIS and al-Qaeda,” 3.

of Sunnis under the Shiite government under Maliki, and became active in war torn Syria, prompting a name change to ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria). At this point hostilities broke out between AQ (through its subdivision *Jabhat al-Nusra*) and ISIS, because both were operating in the same area and both demanded the loyalty of the other. No compromise was reached.²⁷ In 2014 ISIS declared itself the new and last caliphate until Judgment Day: IS. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi proclaimed himself caliph and because of his position, IS demanded loyalty from all jihadists, since the caliph is the commander of all the faithful Muslims.²⁸

Cole Bunzel describes IS in four phases of its development. The first phase according to Bunzel is the “Zarqawi prelude,” which lasted from 2002-2006. It was the period of jihadism’s rise in Iraq under the leadership of Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi.²⁹ The second phase, “ISI (Islamic State in Iraq)” is situated from 2006-2015, in what Bunzel describes as mainly a failed attempt at a formation of state and a reduction in Iraq’s local jihadism. The third phase, “ISIS,” covers the period 2013-2014, in which many successes were achieved and the organization expanded into Syria. The fourth phase is the current phase: IS as caliphate.³⁰ *Dabiq* was first published at the start of this fourth phase.

1.2 UTOPIANISM

As *Dabiq* tries to give us a picture of the Islamic State as the ideal state and the ultimate state, parallels can be drawn with Sir Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516). At first I wanted to test theories of state building on *Dabiq*’s idea of building the state. However, I found it impossible to empirically proof, since *Dabiq* is a propaganda magazine and because it is very hard to do research on IS institutions, as most are off-limits because of war and because of the reclusive nature of the organisation.³¹

My supervisor came with a solution: ‘Why not use utopian theory?’ This suggestion proved to be the solution: utopianism covers the notion of what people see as the ultimate perfect state and

²⁷ Zelin, “The War between ISIS and al-Qaeda,” 1-8.

²⁸ A great introduction to IS ideology is: Andrew F. March and Mara Revking: “Caliphate of Law: ISIS’ ground Rules,” *Foreign Affairs* April 15, 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/syria/2015-04-15/caliphate-law>.

²⁹ For the development of jihad, read: Abdulaziz A. Sachedina, “The Development of Jihad in Islamic Revelation and History”, in: *Cross, Crescent, and Sword: The Justification of War in Western and Islamic Tradition*, red. James Turner Johnson & John Kelsay, (New York etc.: Greenwood Press, 1990), 35-50. For an influential Salafi view on jihad, read: Tāqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya, “Jihad,” in *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam – a reader*, red. Rudolph Peters (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 1996), 43-51.

³⁰ Bunzel, “From Paper State to Caliphate,” 5-6.

³¹ Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi has a great collection available of IS fragments concerning all kinds of material coming from IS territory, ranging from educational material to IS issued driving licenses. It can be accessed here: <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2016/01/archive-of-islamic-state-administrative-documents-1>

under what conditions the concept of the ideal state is formed. Therefore, utopian idealism, or utopianism is a great tool to help us understand IS' state building project.

The main question I will answer in this thesis is the following: **“In what way does *Dabiq* frame the Islamic State as the perfect state what is the roadmap to reach this utopia?”**

In order to answer the questions above, we must first make an assessment of the rather controversial concept of ‘utopianism’. Although the historical context greatly helps us in understanding the Islamic State, it is not the focus of this thesis although it is touched upon. My research focuses mainly on the ideology of IS through the window of *Dabiq*, which functions as a window that provides a view into the ideological kitchen of IS. Utopianism is an excellent concept through which to analyse IS propaganda.

The term ‘Utopia’ was first used by the 16th century scholar Thomas More (although Plato’s *Republic* is often seen as the first written utopian model), etymologically the term stems from the Greek meaning “no place”.³² It can also mean “good place”, depending on the spelling of the word. Utopia was a fictional island invented by More about which the protagonist Hythloday (the salesman of nonsense) narrates the things he saw. The Utopians led a good life with the focus on “maintaining a kind of equilibrium between all the inhabitants on the island, so that no one is arbitrarily favoured over someone else by any part of the political system.”³³ This society is kept in line by the use of repressive methods that are aimed at keeping the ideal state stable. According to Kloeg: “On the one hand, there are similarities to the modern welfare state; on the other hand, it is also easy to be reminded of totalitarian regimes, because of the repressive method by which this welfare is guaranteed.”³⁴

Utopianism is a fictional place; it is the ideal of the most perfect society. This perfect society is governed by “*perfectly morally motivated*” people.³⁵ Utopianism was a central theme of many Marxists (the ideal of a classless society). Regardless of Marxists’ secular interpretations of state, utopianism applies perfectly to *Dabiq*, since *Dabiq* deals in absolute truths, as do Marxists and

³² οὐτόπος.

³³ Julien Kloeg, “Utopianism and its Discontents: A conceptual history,” *Algemeen Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Wijsbegeerte*, Vol. 108, No.3, (2016), 453.

³⁴ Ibid., 454.

³⁵ Edward Hall, “Skepticism about Unconstrained Utopianism,” *Social Philosophy and Policy*, Vol. 33, Issue 1-2, (2016), 76.

More's Utopia. Furthermore, Marxists referred to themselves as social scientists and "definitely not as utopians."³⁶ Neither did Salafi-Jihadi fighters of the Islamic State, as they did not regard themselves as utopians; rather they saw themselves as true Muslims. The concept of utopianism helps us to understand the propaganda of IS.

Kloeg also mentions that the utopian project describes the ideal state as an unattainable ideal in a far distance (in space and/or time), while also using and reconfiguring "element that are already present in existing societies."³⁷ In the case of *Dabiq* the temporal aspect is negated, because the 'perfect state' is already in existence since 2014; the only distance that often remains for the readers of *Dabiq* is the spatial distance to the Caliphate. The same thing happened in 1917 when the Soviet Union was founded on the human catastrophe of World War I: "The general sense was that 'utopia' had emerged out of myth and was under construction."³⁸ This reminds us of IS's slogan: "remaining and expanding," i.e. the Islamic utopia exists in the form of the mythical Caliphate of the End Times and is being further constructed. The Soviet Union failed as a utopian project and because of this and the many human right violations that occurred during the Stalin era, utopianism as a whole gained a negative connotation. Like the Soviet-Union, also IS will fail to meet the ideals of the utopian state as result of the war effort of the many factions involved in fighting IS. Utopianism was further attacked by postmodernist doubts and what David Easton calls the "empirical turn" ousting utopianism from political theory (facts need to refer to "a portion for reality, where values express only the emotional response of an individual").³⁹ This does not mean we should dismiss utopianism as a mere fantasy, since the struggle for the ideal state –however imaginative – has real world consequences, as the Islamic State vividly demonstrates. According to Leszek Kolakowski: "The trouble with utopias is not that designing one is too hard, but rather too easy."⁴⁰

The other aspect of utopianism is that it legitimates criminal acts against humanity. In utopianism "the truly awful is transformed into the only apparently awful, providing a readymade justification for the breaching of any previously inviolable moral value."⁴¹ This is apparent in the brutality IS displays in *Dabiq*; horrible violent acts are justified for the sake of the greater good, in this case for establishing and expanding the Islamic state which in *Dabiq's* view is synonymous with Islam.

³⁶ Kloeg, "Utopianism," 456.

³⁷ Ibid., 455.

³⁸ Ibid., 458-459.

³⁹ Ibid., 459.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 452.

⁴¹ Ibid., 452.

Kokalowski has little sympathy for utopianism, stating that “utopianism [...] is a self-indulgent surrender to fantasy, an act of political escapism, or at the very least unscientific.”⁴²

There are many kinds of utopias, from socialist, communist to religious utopias. *Dabiq* depicts IS as an intra-religious utopia; it is the ultimate state for Muslims, although one should keep in mind that Christians and Jews are allowed to be second class citizens under the protection of IS as long as they pay the *jizya*-tax (poll tax), the tax for Abrahamic unbelievers. Besides being an intra-religious utopian project, IS seems to uphold the idea of transcendental institutionalism.⁴³ Accordingly the Caliphate is the most supreme institution, ruling out any alternative and acquiring a non-worldly, transcendental nature.⁴⁴

Why is utopian transcendental institutionalist theory relevant? Gilabert and Kloeg provide three reasons: 1) “Utopias have the ability to identify the salient aspects of comparisons”; 2) “they can be used to criticize the status quo and to activate “dynamic duties”; 3) “Utopias are important because of their inspirational and motivational significance.” For instance, they inspire people to follow “dynamic duties”, referring to “the extension of our capability to recognize and battle against injustices.”⁴⁵ As we will see in Chapter Three, these three aspects are prominent in *Dabiq*. This is the reason why IS succeeds in inspiring and motivating Islamic youths to migrate to the Islamic State.

IS’ utopianism is further reinforced by what is known as “unconstrained utopianism.” According to Hall, unconstrained utopianism is “an influential strand of contemporary analytic political theory.”⁴⁶ It tells the people that they should live on the basis of certain principles “that would govern society if people were perfectly morally motivated.”⁴⁷ For IS, the source that allows for this morally perfect state and people is their fundamentalist Jihadi-Salafi interpretation of the Islamic faith (mainly derived from Qur’an, *hadith*, sayings about the Prophet, and the *sira*, life of the Prophet). This branch of Islam promotes the idea that Muslims should live according to exactly the same moral value as the earliest generations of Muslims (the *salaf al-salih*), who lived Islam in its most ‘pure’

⁴² Kloeg, “Utopianism,” 452.

⁴³ Ibid., 462-463.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 462-463.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 464.

⁴⁶ Edward Hall, “Skepticism about Unconstrained Utopianism,” 76.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

state.⁴⁸ This allows the organization to pursue an unconstrained utopianism by promoting the idea that IS implements the same Islamic society as during the earliest generations of Muslims, who are considered to be the most morally perfect Muslims (and humans). According to Skitka, Hanson and Wisneski “people are more likely to become politically engaged [...] when issues are associated with strong moral convictions.”⁴⁹ This is especially true in the case of (intra) religious utopias, which are based on absolute religious truths. It is even easier to motivate people with similar moral convictions, when their moral convictions are perceived to be under mortal threat. According to the three scholars, there are quite a number of acts that are inspired in the name of moral convictions, but the two most relevant ones in this case are “the acceptance of vigilantism and violence to achieve morally preferred ends,” and maintaining a “greater preferred social and physical distance from those who do not share one’s morally convicted views.”⁵⁰ The latter, of course, closely resembles the Salafi principle of *al-wala wa-l-bara*, also known as loyalty to Muslims and the distancing from unbelievers. This, as we will see later on, is one of the founding principles of IS.

1.3 THESIS STRUCTURE

The main question I try to answer in this thesis is “In what way does *Dabiq* frame the Islamic State as the ideal state and what is the roadmap to reach this utopia?” To help me answer the question, I will use the concept of utopianism as a theoretical tool in order to provide a systematic and descriptive description of IS’s state building and apocalyptic narrative.

This thesis is constructed as follows: In the second chapter I will explain the background of the *Dabiq* magazine itself. I will analyse the recent history of online jihadi-glossies and how *Dabiq* fits in this development.

In the third chapter I focus on *Dabiq* and its depiction of the ideal state and the roadmap that is designed to achieve this perfect state. This is followed by the fourth chapter, the conclusion.

The issues of *Dabiq* I have used for writing the thesis are the following (release date in brackets): 1)

⁴⁸ Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst, *Salafisme in Nederland: diversiteit en dynamiek* (Den Haag: 2015) (Dutch) and Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst, *Leven bij ISIS, de mythe ontrafeld* (Den Haag: 2016) (Dutch).

⁴⁹ Linda J. Skitka, Brittany E. Hanson, and Daniel C. Wisneski, “Utopian Hopes or Dystopian Fears?: Exploring the Motivational Underpinnings of Moralized Political Engagement,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 43(2) (2017), 177.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

The Return of Khilafah [5-6-2014]; 2) *The Flood* [27-7 2014]; 3) *A Call to Hijrah* [10-9-2014]; 4) *The Failed Crusade* [11-10-2014]; 5) *Remaining and Expanding*, [21-11-2014]; 6) *Al Qa'idah of Waziristan: A Testimony from Within*, [29-12-2014]; 7) *From Hypocrisy to Apostasy: The Extinction of the Greyzone*, [12-2-2015]; and 8) *Shari'ah Alone Will Rule Africa*. [30-3-2015] Together these magazines form 446 pages worth of pdf material.

A lot of controversy surrounds the name of the Islamic State. Many international organisations use the abbreviation of ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham), ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant) or even the Arabic acronym *Daesh* in an understandable effort to delegitimize the Caliphate. These names imply that the State is limited by geographic borders. I have chosen to use the name the caliphate uses for itself: IS (Islamic State). I have made this choice because, , doing otherwise denies the goals of the Islamic State: it wants to be a state for all 'true' Muslims, unrestricted by geographic borders. The Islamic State promotes itself as the universal Islamic State. By using the other abbreviations such as ISIS or ISIL we might lose sight of the 'new caliphate's' goal. Therefore I write 'IS' when I mention the organisation. One should keep in mind that this doesn't mean that I recognize any legitimacy of the organization, but that I think that 'IS' helps us identify the goals that the organisation has set for itself: being the ultimate borderless state that ultimately will include all Muslims.

I have added three appendixes to help the reader to understand *Dabiq*. Appendix A is a glossary which shortly elaborates *Dabiq's* terminology. Appendix B provides a description on of apocalyptic events according to Sunni sources. Appendix C provides *Dabiq's* viewpoint on its enemies. This is a very interesting subject that I did not include in the thesis because I felt it distracted too much from the main question (although one can create one's identity by defining one's enemies). I have chosen not to include any issues of *Dabiq* for the spreading (according to the authorities' definition) of terrorist propaganda. However, if one wants to review the contents of *Dabiq*, they can be found in a safe web environment hosted by the *Clarion Project*.⁵¹

Any references to *Dabiq* are made by a system which makes it easy to look up the source, since the Chicago Manual of Style needs more information that simply is unavailable. For example: If I quote a passage from the third issue on page fourteen I make the following reference: *Dabiq* 3:14. References to other jihadi glosses will work in the same way (*Inspire* 2:6, for example).

⁵¹ <https://clarionproject.org/islamic-state-isis-isil-propaganda-magazine-dabiq-50/>

Chapter 2

Jihadi Glossies: a Recent History

I begin this chapter with a short assessment of the definition of a magazine, after which I will continue with a brief history of the use of online magazines by Salafi-jihadi groups.

Johnson and Prijatel argue that: “magazines are highly specialized in content and in audience” and that “audience and content work in tandem. Magazine editors see their readers as part of a community; readers of a successful publication have a sense of ownership of their magazine.” Johnson and Prijatel also identify three major factors for a successful magazine:

- 1) A highly focused editorial philosophy.
- 2) A clearly defined formula.
- 3) A thorough understanding and connection with the audience (1999: 109).⁵²

Dabiq seems to meet all these three criteria. It is highly focused in spreading the ideology of the Islamic State. It has a clearly defined formula and it seems to have a good understanding and connection with the audience. This has a dual character however. No doubt *Dabiq* had its sincere readers who identify with the message *Dabiq* spreads, some of them members of IS. Another aspect is the unintentional, or rather, the collateral reader. Many readers come into contact with *Dabiq*'s content through media other than *Dabiq* or IS', through regular news channels, blogs, or wherever they get their news from. The fact that *Dabiq*'s content is disseminated in other media should be considered its biggest success. Moreover, its intention of spreading fear is even more effective when it reaches unintentional readers.

According to Tim Holmes and Liz Nice successful magazines meet the following criteria:

- 1) Magazines always target a precisely defined group of readers.
- 2) Magazines base their content on the expressed and perceived needs, desires, hopes and fears of that defined group.

⁵² Tim Holmes & Liz Nice, “Magazines: a Historical Survey,” *Magazine Journalism*, (2012), Chapter 1, 6, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446288597.n1>.

- 3) Magazines develop a bond of trust with their readerships.
- 4) Magazines foster community-like interactions between themselves and their readers, and among readers.
- 5) Magazines can respond quickly and flexibly to changes in the readership and changes in the wider society.⁵³

These five points roughly apply to *Dabiq*, except for the “precisely defined group of readers” (the collateral reader is definitely a target for *Dabiq*, in order to instil fear as mentioned by Zelin). Number five is especially interesting since *Dabiq* has a habit of changing its contents in accordance with the situation IS finds itself in. It is of course difficult and outside of the aims of this thesis to ask *Dabiq* readers the impact the magazine makes on them and if they have a “bond of trust” with the magazine. AlHayat - the media group that published *Dabiq* - does ask for responses from its readers in *Dabiq* 3:41, guaranteeing that readers’ questions will be presented to a member of the IS Shūrā Council. It assures the readers that other questions will be answered by the *Dabiq* editorial staff.⁵⁴

Dabiq does not appear out of nowhere. It stands in a very recent tradition of online jihadi magazines. The first online magazine was published by al-Qaeda in Yemen (AQY). The purpose of publishing a magazine was to attract recruits and to verbally harass the enemy. The editor was a Saudi-Arabian teenager with the name Nayif al-Qahtani and his work was approved by the emir of AQY, Nasir al-Wuhayshi.⁵⁵ Qahtani had no experience in designing magazines, but in January 2008 he published his first magazine, *The Echo of Battles*, which according to William McCants alludes to the final battles of the apocalypse. It even featured an article “Interview with One of the Most Wanted People,” - Qahtani himself.⁵⁶

The magazine was published in Arabic and as such had a limited audience. The contents of the magazine were received enthusiastically in the closely monitored private discussion forums, but the visual presentation was not. McCants comment on the magazine was that “the layout was ugly, with pictures floating across a vacuum of white interspersed with blue and black text. Qahtani’s

⁵³ Tim Holmes & Liz Nice, “Magazines: a Historical Survey,” Chapter 1, 6.

⁵⁴ Email addresses to send questions to are: dabiq-is@yandex.com, dabiq-is@india.com, dabiq-IS@0x300.com

⁵⁵ McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse*, 47.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 48.

inexperience as a graphic designer was showing.”⁵⁷ A later issue showed a great improvement in the quality of *The Echo of Battles*, so either Qathani’s skills as editor improved or he had help from others.⁵⁸

Later, Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, (AQAP) started a magazine in English, called *Inspire*, produced by a media foundation called *al-Malahem*. The editor was the twenty-four-year old Samir Khan. Like al-Qahtani, he also was born in Saudi-Arabia but he moved to the United States as a child with his parents. In 2009, Khan left for Yemen to “join his hero, Anwar al-Awlaki,”⁵⁹ who was a member of AQAP at the time. Khan and Awlaki eventually met up. Khan as a blogger and Awlaki as a skilled charismatic preacher, collaborated with the aim to promote Jihadi-Salafism among a Muslim audience in the West. The result of this was AQAP’s first English magazine, *Inspire*. Its message was, “You [a Muslim] either leave or you fight [in the United States or Europe].”⁶⁰ The destination at the time was to go to Yemen.⁶¹

The first issue appeared in the summer of 2010. Its editorial quality was much higher compared to the *The Echo of Battles*. At the date of writing, *Inspire* has published 16 issues. The magazine targets a public that is already interested in Al-Qa’ida ideology and it reads more like an instruction manual than it is an attractive glossy. The magazine frequently explains to its readers how one should commit terror attacks in different settings. It provides instructions on how to build bombs with minimal means and tells its reader what are the targets. The magazine calls this “open source jihad”, often abbreviated to OSJ.

It is interesting that the magazine asks for readers to contribute to its content by writing articles and sending them to a specified email address. In that sense, *Inspire* might indeed be more of an “open source” glossy than perhaps many other glossies are. However, in one of the latest issues *Inspire* editors state: “Note: due to technical and security reasons, we have suspended our email addresses temporarily.”⁶² This will probably mean that the magazine will become less dependent on individual contributions. It is hard to say if this brings a difference in content, since afterwards there only appeared three new issues.

⁵⁷ McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse*, 48.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 49.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 50.

⁶¹ Ibid., 50.

⁶² *Inspire*, 12: 2.

We must realize that we are dealing with media output of organisations that are branded as terrorist by many governments in the world and that do not operate according to normal rules. The dates of publication and its contents, for example, are not always always uncertain. Timetables and publishing might be disrupted by military assaults, drone strikes, hacking and the loss or lack of access to the internet. Potential casualties and incarcerations of the editorial staff or contributors to the magazine are hard to monitor, as many deaths are not reported (which might signal a loss of face for the organisation) and the use of pseudonyms makes it even foggier to ascertain what is happening. This could also mean that replacements in staff can affect the contents of the magazines over time. All this however is speculative, since it is impossible to know what is going on in what are essentially hidden networks.

It is thematically of import to see that *Inspire* does not seem to have a missionary aim (*Da'wa*) to convert people to Islam or to a more 'correct' interpretation of Islam. This tells us that its intended readers are probably Muslim, of which some have not yet joined the militant jihad. It assumes that its audience is already significantly tuned into al-Qaida ideology, as can be deduced from the use of Muslim terminology. Also, in the first issue *Inspire* states that its goal "[...] is geared towards making the Muslim a mujāhid in Allāh's path. Our intent is to give the most accurate presentation of Islām as followed by the *Ṣalaf as-Ṣālih*."⁶³ It leaves no question that *Inspire* considers itself to be a Jihadi-Salafi magazine, just as *Dabiq*.

Inspire has a peculiar habit of including puns (this in contrast to *Dabiq*, which is devoid of light-heartedness and strict in its stern ideology). My supervisor, Roel Meijer once made the comment when I showed him some screenshots of *Inspire*, that the writing is "adolescent in nature". For example: an article named "*Make A Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom*" written by an editor who calls himself "The AQ Chef".⁶⁴ "Mom's kitchen" is a returning theme in *Inspire*. For example, "Many of the brothers who made *hijrah* from the West wish they have a return ticket, returning home heading for mom's kitchen. Not to serve the *kuffar* with delicious and exotic meals, but to terrorize the American society until they cease to fight and assault Muslims."⁶⁵ One might be tempted to say that *Inspire* defangs Al-Qaida somewhat. Furthermore, *Inspire*'s editors seem to live in a perpetual state of nostalgia, probably due to the recent lack of grand success stories, as it

⁶³ *Inspire*, 1:2.

⁶⁴ *Inspire*, 1:33-40.

⁶⁵ *Inspire*, 11:37.

regularly devotes multiple pages to the attacks on the World Trade Center.

One of the major differences with *Dabiq* is that *Inspire* does not require a Muslim to migrate (a major theme in *Dabiq*), as demonstrated by a citation on Open Source Jihad below (spelling errors included):

- “Open Source Jihad: A resource manual for those who loathe the tyrants; includes bomb making techniques, security measures, guerrilla tactics, weapons training and all other jihād related activities.”
- “INFORMAL A disaster for the repressive imperialistic nations: The open source jihād is America's worst nightmare.”
- It allows Muslims to train at home instead of risking a dangerous travel abroad: Look no further, the open source jihād is now at hands reach.”⁶⁶

The citations above display an area in which *Dabiq* completely differs from *Inspire*. Rather than demanding Muslims to migrate to the so-called “abode of Islam” or else being declared apostate, AQ allows people to stay at home. Of course, AQ does not have a home territory (there was the *Ansar al-Sharia* project in Yemen however, but it never claimed to be a caliphate, rather an emirate), such as IS does, but it still is a marked difference when you look at the IS message that migration to the abode of Islam is mandatory (with only a few exceptions that instead demand immediate action against the unbelievers, as demonstrated in Chapter Three). It is also interesting to note that *Inspire* has a more worldly focus. The enemy is the United States and the primary goal is to expel them from the Middle East. This is quite different from the *Dabiq*, which tends to focus on the idea that the End Times are at hand, in which the US are only a part of the bigger combined forces embodying evil.

When looking at the graphical make-up of *Inspire*, it becomes clear that the magazine is rather bloodless (I mean this in a more literal sense). When it does display wounded or the deceased, *Inspire* does not show any images that are particularly gruesome. Wounds are covered up and the deaths of AQ-members are shown to be relatively ‘clean’. Martyrdom is ‘visually’ clean in *Inspire*. *Dabiq* shows us the most gruesome of deaths: even displaying dead IS members with mutilated bodies as having achieved martyrdom and displaying the enemy casualties as a kind of macabre war

⁶⁶ *Inspire*, 1:32.

trophy.

AQ is not only jihadi organisation that utilized an online glossy magazine to distribute ideological ideas. In 2014, when ISIS declared itself to be the reinstituted caliphate (and changing its name to IS), the first issue of *Dabiq* was published online, affirming the idea that the caliphate was re-established. This magazine showed a different world from that shown in AQAP's *Inspire*. Jihad in *Dabiq* is bloodletting, it requires effort from the entire Muslim community and yes, it is gruesome. In this, IS is far more unapologetic in its displays of the effects of violence.

Dabiq was published by AlHayat Media Center. The editors of the *Dabiq* editorial team chose this name because: “The area will play a historical role in the battles leading up to the conquests of Constantinople, then Rome.”⁶⁷ The first issue explains where the name *Dabiq* comes from: “it is taken from the area named Dabiq in the northern countryside of Haleb (Aleppo) in Sham. This place was mentioned in a *hadith* describing some of the events of the *Malahim* (what is sometimes referred to as Armageddon in English). One of the greatest battles between the Muslims and the crusaders will take place near Dabiq.”⁶⁸ Following that statement, *Dabiq* describes the apocalyptic events as transmitted by Sahih Muslim (a collection of *hadith*).⁶⁹

In the first issue AlHayat Media Center writes that *Dabiq* is about *tawhid* (unity of God), *manhaj* (methodology, program), *hijrah* (migration), *jihad* (IS interprets jihad as an offensive holy war) and *jama'a* (community), announcing that “it will also contain photo reports, current events and informative articles on matters related to the Islamic State.”⁷⁰

It furthermore announced that the mission of al-Hayat Media Center is to “convey the message of the Islamic State in different languages with the aim of unifying the Muslims under one flag. AlHayat produces visual, audio, and written material in numerous languages, focusing on *tawhid*, *hijrah*, *bay'ah* and *jihād*.”⁷¹

A typical *Dabiq* issue consist of an introduction, “Breaking News”, “Reports”, “Articles”,

⁶⁷ McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse*, 103.

⁶⁸ *Dabiq*, 1:4.

⁶⁹ *Dabiq*, 1:4-5.

⁷⁰ *Dabiq*, 1:3.

⁷¹ *Dabiq*, 2:43.

“Wisdoms”, “The Enemy’s Words”, “Features”, “News”, and an end or a conclusion. Every issue of *Dabiq* starts with the same quote from the spiritual founder of IS, Abu Mus‘ab al-Zarqāwī, “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,” demonstrating its apocalyptic content.

Because the magazine is essential in answering the research question the next chapter is exclusively focussed on *Dabiq*.

After IS’ loss of the place Dabiq, the magazine stopped being published. A new magazine was launched in its stead, *Rumiyah*. Its name means the city of Rome in Arabic and the capture of the city is further down the apocalyptic timeline than the battle in Dabiq. At the time of writing, ten issues were released. Further research is required to assess a thematic change.

After the secession of Jabhat al-Nusra from IS and its vow to stay loyal to AQ instead of IS, JaN released its own online glossy: *al-Risallah*. The first issue appeared in 2015 and the fourth, and last was published in January 2017.

Different Salafi-Jihadi groups have used glossy magazines, all differing in content although all are published in English and all describe themselves as Jihadi-Salafi groups and claiming they represent the most faithful interpretation of the Jihadi-Salafi school. The great difference between them is the position of the Islamic Apocalypse and the re-establishment of the Caliphate. *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, both IS magazines claim that the Apocalypse is about to happen, while the magazines of the other Jihadi-Salafi groups are far less focussed on the End Days and seem more interested in providing manuals to fight the unbeliever.

Chapter 3

Framing the Islamic State as Utopia

In this chapter I will analyse different elements of utopianism as described in Chapter One to help us understand how the ideal State and the roadmap that leads to this Caliphate is framed. I will also refer to theoretical elements from the introduction in Chapter One. For example, *Dabiq* describes IS as the “perfect state”, which has been referred to as a transcendental institute, and about its “morally perfect” subjects, what has been described in the introduction as unconstrained utopianism. In addition, I will focus on what has been called the “activation of dynamic duties”, which can be divided in a general part and a part especially aimed at elaborating on the eschatological urgency in activating dynamic duties. I will also analyse some crucial details of the roadmap to build and expand the state. The chapter ends with *Dabiq*’s description of the perfect state’s institutions and what is required of its subjects.

3.1 TRANSCENDENTAL INSTITUTIONALISM

The texts below help us to understand IS as an transcendental institute. These texts try to convince the reader that there is no alternative to the Islamic State and describes IS as a transcendental divine institute. These texts also tend to justify atrocities committed by IS, or as Kloeg was quoted earlier, “the truly awful is transformed into the only apparently awful, providing a readymade justification for the breaching of any previously inviolable moral value.”⁷²

In the third issue of *Dabiq*, Abū Mus‘ab al-Zarqāwī is once again quoted. In his two quotes, he tells us that there are only two camps in the world, “the camp of truth [...] and the camp of falsehood.” He warns the Iraqi tribes against aiding the “crusaders and their apostate agents” who will be targeted, “just as we target the crusaders, and we will eradicate and distinguish them.” Zarqāwī tells us that the punishment for aiding the camp of falsehood is execution, after which “his house also will be destroyed and burnt, after removal of the women and children.”⁷³

Dabiq blames the concepts of individuality and individualism for the treacherous behaviour of the

⁷² Kloeg, “Utopianism,” 452.

⁷³ *Dabiq*, 3:12.

Iraqi tribes. It also accuses the tribes for living in *jāhiliyyah* [ignorance of Islam] for acting with “a mob mentality of tribal arrogance”. The periodical then refers to the prophet’s collective punishment of tribes when they broke their covenants with him. Needless to say, *Dabiq* uses this as an example in how to deal with tribes working with either the Iraqi government or the Americans. However, “unique individuals” might be treated as “exceptional cases, not as the general rule.”⁷⁴ Then, *Dabiq* legitimizes the genocide of the Shu’aytāt tribe⁷⁵ with the claim that they resisted “Sharī’ah with arms.” According to *Dabiq*, they rebelled against IS after having agreed to submit “to the rule of shari’ah (with the condition they hand over all heavy weaponry).”⁷⁶ These examples demonstrate that, *Dabiq* provides no alternative to the new Caliphate and the rejection of the Caliphate means a death sentence.

The furthermore explains that the Shu’aytāt “ambushed Islamic State soldiers, and then tortured, amputated, and executed prisoners taken from the ambushes”.⁷⁷ In response, IS surrounded their villages and demanded the perpetrators to be handed over. The majority of the clan refused and thus, the clan was “shielding the traitors.” *Dabiq* states that the Shu’aytāt were given a 24-hour notice in which individuals “not involved in the transgression” were allowed to evacuate the villages. All “able-bodied men remaining would be treated in accordance with the *Sharī’ah*.” A couple of *hadith* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim are then used to justify the severity of punishment for treason. The treasonous party during the time of the Prophet “were captured [...] He [Muhammad] ordered their hands and feet be cut off, their eyes be put out with hot iron, and they be thrown out on al-Harrah (an area covered with black stones near Madīnah), so they would ask for water to drink, but not given any water, until they died.”⁷⁸ This fragment illustrates the technique of transforming the “truly awful” into the “apparently awful” by using religious texts to sanction bloody retribution. The use of *hadith* informs us that IS is following religious precepts. The execution of tribesmen and the destruction of their homes are shown graphically in the accompanying pictures to the text.⁷⁹

The article “It’s either the Islamic State or the Flood” agitates against the “methodology of free

⁷⁴ *Dabiq*, 3:12.

⁷⁵ Described in detail here: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/08/islamic-state-group-executes-700-syria-2014816123945662121.html>

⁷⁶ *Dabiq*, 3:12.

⁷⁷ *Dabiq*, 3:13.

⁷⁸ *Dabiq*, 3:14.

⁷⁹ The massacre of fellow Sunni Muslims is for some a reason to defect from IS, as can be read in: Peter R. Neumann, *Victims, Perpetrators, Assets: The Narratives of Islamic State Defectors*, (London: King's College London Strand, 2015).

choice” through which its proponents have misrepresented the true message of the prophets of God. The critique is directed to those who claim that the prophets should be regarded more as liberal preachers and guides advocating a “peaceful means of change”. Wrongly, people were told to have free choice, and as such, innovation (*bid‘a*) was introduced. *Dabiq* asserts that there is no choice at all in Islam. Choice will only result in misguidance and deviation (*inhiraf*).⁸⁰ To demonstrate the error of free choice, *Dabiq* tells the story of Noah (*Nūh*). Because people had followed the path of free choice (and therefore worshipped deities other than God), they were punished with the flood and hellfire by God. Only Noah, who worshipped only God, was exempted from this punishment.⁸¹ The story is used to show that there can be no free choice. In fact, free choice leads to punishment.⁸² The lesson *Dabiq* tries to convey is that Muslims who believe in free choice are no longer Muslims, but committers of *shirk* (giving companions to God).⁸³ *Dabiq* accuses the generation living at approximately 220 Hijra (850 AD), who came after the *Salaf al-Salih* as the generations that started “many innovations”. In this period philosophers corrupted the message of the Qur’an. By criticising the principle free choice (liberalism), Muslims will be confronted by the idea that “they’ve turned away from religion”, while the members of IS are holding on to the true religion.⁸⁴ This is a clear marker of IS as being unique, supreme and divinely transcendental. IS claims it is the embodiment of Islam.

In the article “Imamah is political imamah”, different statements from early Muslims are used to come to the conclusion that *imamah* (Arabic for leadership) is both political *and* religious leadership.⁸⁵

The article argues that the Muslim *Ummah* (community) should be united behind a single leader to implement *shari‘a*.⁸⁶ This leader is known as the caliph. *Dabiq* claims that Muslims have forgotten this, because of “secularism pervading the people’s intellects in our era, separating between religion and state, and between the Shariah and governance, and treating the Qur’an as a book of chanting and recitation rather than a book of governance, legislation, and enforcement.” Muslims who don’t want to live “freely in the shade of a Muslim imam,” but rather under the rule of a *taghut* (tyrant), even though they are performing *da‘wa*, (invitation to Islam) and even if they

⁸⁰ *Dabiq*, 2:5.

⁸¹ *Dabiq*, 2:6.

⁸² *Dabiq*, 2:7-9.

⁸³ *Dabiq*, 2:10.

⁸⁴ *Dabiq*, 2:11.

⁸⁵ *Dabiq*, 1:22-23.

⁸⁶ *Dabiq*, 1:24.

who are “making *takfir*” (declaring someone or a group to be infidel or infidels) on the tyrant are declared “renegades whom it’s permissible to fight, and for no reason other than the fact that they refuse to give *bay’ah* (allegiance to one imam or another).”⁸⁷

The article makes an analogy with the prophetic figure of Ibrahim (Abraham) to prove that there is no division between political and religious *imamah*. *Imamah* cannot be achieved without first achieving “*comprehensive political imamah* over the lands and the people”.⁸⁸ According to *Dabiq*, Ibrahim was rewarded with political leadership for carrying out the commands of God.⁸⁹ *Dabiq* says that IS is “the entity that most emulates the *millah* [religion] of Ibrahim with regards to imamah[...].” The article also claims that IS “[...] established the religion in the areas where it exists and continues to pursue this effort vigorously.”⁹⁰ This suggests that IS asserts that Islam no longer had existed after the abolition of the caliphate and its *imamah*. *Dabiq* tries to show that the caliphate state has re-established Islam in its pure, transcendental form.

Furthermore no one, including the caliph, may ever choose to disband the Islamic State. This means that IS is an organization that goes “all the way in”. There is no turning back. Also, if one rebels against the *imamah* inside IS territory, that person or group is declared a renegade: “and it is permissible to fight him after establishing the *hujjah* against hem (i.e. clarifying his error to him with proof”.⁹¹ As such, the Caliphate is the unchallengeable, transcendental supreme institution. Challenging the institution means that one will be fought.

On loyalty to the caliph, *Dabiq* tells us: “we will continue to obey the imam as long as he orders us to obey *Ar-Rahman* (the Most Merciful). But if he orders us to disobey Allah, then we won’t obey those orders. Likewise, we will strike the neck of anyone – whoever he may be – that attempts to usurp his leadership, and we will remain patient in the face of such tribulation with the help of Allah *Al-Hakim* (the Most Wise) and *Al-Mannan* (the Most Gracious).”⁹² This means that loyalty to the Caliph is obligatory, as long as he rules in accordance with the interpretation of what is God’s will. Otherwise, rebellion is permissible in order to restore the institution to its transcendental state.⁹³

⁸⁷ *Dabiq*, 1:24.

⁸⁸ *Dabiq*, 1:25.

⁸⁹ *Dabiq*, 1:26.

⁹⁰ *Dabiq*, 1:27.

⁹¹ *Dabiq*, 1:27.

⁹² *Dabiq*, 1:29.

⁹³ It is permissible for the Islamic state to agree upon impermanent truces with other factions, “*like the Hudaybiyah*

Dabiq frequently mentions that Islam is politics and *vice versa*. Islam cannot be compartmentalized. For example, there is no jihad without *da'wa*, and *hudūd* (strict sharia punishment) must always be applied, during a defensive jihad. Furthermore *Dabiq* tells us that Islam is a holistic religion “that is to be approached from all sides, and defended from all sides.” If any aspect is abandoned for whatever reason, then Satan will thrive.⁹⁴ Thus, the new Caliphate *is* the Islamic religion; any deviation from the Caliphate’s state building project is tantamount to apostasy.. The only option for Muslims to experience Islam is by upholding the Caliphate, as Islam detached from politics and state institutions to enforce sharia is no Islam.

3.2 CRITICISING THE STATUS QUO AND ACTIVATING DYNAMIC DUTIES

A recurrent theme in *Dabiq* is to criticise the status quo in order to activate dynamic duties. In order to achieve this goal, it exaggerates the sense of injustice and the urgency to join IS and defend Islam against its enemies. This paragraph describes the status quo *Dabiq* agitates against and explains what it advocates for instead. In the introduction dynamic duties was described as “the extension of our capability to recognize and battle against injustice.”⁹⁵ Keep in mind that the injustices *Dabiq* mentions are of course injustices as they are defined by the Islamic State.

The first example of the deplorable state of the status quo and what action should be taken against it is what *Dabiq* describes as the “modern day slavery”. *Dabiq* frames living outside IS territory in de abode of unbelief as the “modern day slavery of employment, work hours, wages, etc., that leaves the Muslim in a constant feeling of subjugation to a *kāfir* master.” The magazine contrasts this to the story of Bilāl, a slave who converted to Islam and through this act became a “free man”. *Dabiq* then states that *ghanīma* (war booty) is the “noblest income”, which “was praised in the Qur’ān more so than any other was.” Battle “helps one escape slavery and dedicate his life truly towards his Master,” in contrast to remaining employed by an unbeliever which only results in the humiliation of Muslims.⁹⁶

Treaty between the Muslim state and some kāfir states.” Amān can also be granted to unbelievers so that they may temporarily enter dārul-Islām. [*Dabiq*, 7:24]

⁹⁴ *Dabiq*, 3:16.

⁹⁵ Kloeg, “Utopianism,” 464.

⁹⁶ *Dabiq*, 3:29. More on *ghanīmah* later in this chapter.

Hijra is for IS the only way to break the shackles of the status quo of “modern day slavery” and to live a life of dignity. *Hijra* is a metaphor of the spatial distancing (see Chapter One) of the believer from the unbeliever; the separation between *Dar al-Islam* (the house and territory of Islam) and *Dar al-Kufr* (the house and territory of unbelief).

The article “The Concept of Imamah (leadership) is from the Millah (path) of Ibrahim”⁹⁷ focusses on the true believers around the world who are “openly disassociating oneself from the *kuffar* and *mushrikin* (polytheists)”. According to *Dabiq*, these *mushrikin*, and Muslims who “bowed and prostrated submissively [to the *mushrikin*]”, prevent the true believer from practicing his religion, “falsely claiming that it was for the sake of global peace which the United Nations and the ‘divinely revealed faiths’ called for.” The Islamic State portrays itself as being the force that returns people on the right path (*millah*).⁹⁸ *Imamah* is such an important concept that *Dabiq* lists it as one of three elements that make Islam “possible”: Islam requires *jama‘ah* (community) *imamah*, and *ta‘ah* (obedience).⁹⁹

The concept of *ghanīma* as mentioned above is a recurrent theme in *Dabiq* and a way of attracting new recruits with the prospect of religiously sanctioned looting and enrichment. The magazine uses a *hadith* reported by Imām Ahmad in which the prophet is quoted to have said: “My provision was placed for me in the shade of my spear.”¹⁰⁰ God has permitted to kill the enemies “who refuse to accept tawhīd [the absolute unity of God], legitimizes the spilling of their blood and the taking of their wealth, and enslaves their women and children, and thereby his provision becomes what Allah has given him of spoils from the property of His enemy.” The author of this article, Ibn Rajab al-Hanbalī, writes that the wealth of the enemy is referred to as *fay*, of which the Arabic root is ‘to return,’ or to restore’. “Because it returns to one who is more deserving for it [i.e. IS and its soldiers] and it returns to the usage for which it was created.”

The approval of war booty is seen as a favour of God. This is confirmed by sayings as “War booty is more lawful than other income for a number of reasons.”¹⁰¹ The magazine provides the following arguments. First, it “is seized from one who does not deserve it,” as the enemy is “disobeying Allah” and uses his goods only to help himself. It is also a grant given by God to ease the life of a

⁹⁷ *Dabiq*, 1:20-29.

⁹⁸ *Dabiq*, 1:21.

⁹⁹ *Dabiq*, 1:30-31.

¹⁰⁰ *Dabiq*, 4:10.

¹⁰¹ More *hadith* are mentioned about the nobleness of war booty to further cement that idea. [*Dabiq*, 4:30-31].

mujahid, as a *mujahid* only gains *ghanimah* by being a pious Muslim, not because one simply wants to take war booty out of greed. An interesting distinction is drawn between two types of war booty, *ghanimah* and *fay'*, of which the latter is what the enemy “leaves behind after fearfully fleeing, contrary to *ghanimah*, which is taken through fighting with the sword.”¹⁰² Both types of booty are considered as legitimate sources of provision. A comparison of jihad and its provision is made with farming, which is considered by *Dabiq* a distraction from jihad. Moreover, *Dabiq* tries to distance the mujahedeen from farmers, citing ‘Umar: “Wallāhi, we did not come as farmers, rather we came to kill the farmers and eat their crops.” In a footnote however, *Dabiq* tries to nuance its stance: “This and the previous narration are forms of *tarhīb* (warning against sin, disliked matters, or wasteful actions). They are not to be taken literally, as farming is a *mubāh* (permissible) form of work.”¹⁰³ In short, agriculture is the work of the enemy, taking his produce, is the work of the Mujahedeen.

In the article “Islam is the Religion of the Sword – Not Pacifism,”¹⁰⁴ *Dabiq* argues against Muslims who say Islam is the religion of peace. According to the article, quoting a *hadith*, Muhammad was sent with four swords: One to kill the *muhsrikīn*, one for the *Ahl al-kitāb* (people of the book: Jews and Christians) until they pay *jizyah*, one for the hypocrites and one for the *bughāt* (rebels) until they fall in line. Another *hadith* is quoted to say that a sword has been revealed to fight apostates.¹⁰⁵ “The basis of the religion is a guiding book and the supporting sword.” The sword is further exonerated by saying it is “the salvation from evil and fitnah.” *Dabiq* even makes the etymological argument that *islām* isn’t derived from *salām*, “in actuality it comes from words meaning submission and sincerity sharing the same consonant root.”¹⁰⁶ Ibn Taymiyyah is put forward to explain the etymology: “Islam is *istislām* (submission) to Allah alone.”¹⁰⁷ In short, Muslims should denounce a peaceful interpretation of Islam that supports the status quo and instead should come and fight for the Caliphate.

3.3 ESCHATOLOGICAL URGENCY TO ACTIVATE DYNAMIC DUTIES

One of the beliefs that separates IS from other jihadi organisations, is that IS claims that the End Times are upon us. This gives its mission a great sense of urgency. It is further reinforced by the fact

¹⁰² *Dabiq*, 4:11.

¹⁰³ *Dabiq*, 4:12.

¹⁰⁴ *Dabiq*, 7:20-25.

¹⁰⁵ *Dabiq*, 7:20-21.

¹⁰⁶ *Dabiq*, 7:22.

¹⁰⁷ *Dabiq*, 7:23.

that *Dabiq* often states that the very existence of the Caliphate and its institutions herald the “Signs of the Hour.” This indicates that one of the most prominent themes in *Dabiq* is eschatology. It uses the theme of the End of Days to urge Muslims to come to IS territory before it is too late and to fight or to provide the state with the experts it needs. Thus *Dabiq* uses the Apocalypse to activate the dynamic duties of the “true believer” and to instil urgency as we will see in the following examples.

The very first issue of *Dabiq* opens with the explanation of the name for the magazine. It refers to a prophecy wherein the Muslims will defeat the Romans (*Rum* = Christians) at a place called Dabiq in Northern Syria. After the defeat, the Muslims will conquer Constantinople, after which Satan will shout that the Messiah has arrived. This messiah is the antichrist and he will be destroyed by Isa Ibn Maryam (Jesus) leading the last true Muslims (i.e. IS). At the time of publishing of the first issue of magazine, Dabiq was not under control of the Islamic State, but rather of the *Sahwah* groups.¹⁰⁸ Later, the apocalyptic battle at Dabiq is mentioned again: “May Allah protect this *Khilafah* state and continue guiding it until its legions fight the crusader armies who will gather near Dabiq.”¹⁰⁹

The first issue ends with a reminder about the Apocalypse, as transmitted by Abu Hurayrah. The section describes what the prophet Muhammad is recorded to have said about the end of times: “The Hour will not be established until the Romans land at al- A’maq or Dabiq.” The Romans will be defeated by the Muslims, however, one third of the Muslim army will have fled and another third is killed. The remainder will conquer Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul, former capital city of the East Roman Empire) and will only return home, when Satan shouts that the [false] Messiah has “followed after your families”. Satan’s claim is false and when the Muslims return to Shām (Syria), he shows his true colours. Then Jesus will descend and lead the last Muslims into battle. The anti-Christ is then killed by Jesus. Thus concludes the first issue of *Dabiq*.¹¹⁰

The second issue lacks the eschatology of the first issue, except for the last page of the issue. It cites the prophet Muhammad as saying that the Muslims will invade the Arabian Peninsula, Persia and Rome, after which they will fight the *Dajjal* (the anti-Christ) and through God, they will destroy him.¹¹¹ In the article “The Islamic State Before *al-Malhamah* (the Immigrant to the Land of

¹⁰⁸ *Dabiq*, 1:3-5.

¹⁰⁹ *Dabiq*, 1:41.

¹¹⁰ *Dabiq*, 1:50.

¹¹¹ *Dabiq*, 2:44.

Malāhim),” *Dabiq* states that all the *Muhājirīn* (migrants) gathering in IS territory is to “pave the way for *al-Malhamah al-Kubrā* (the grand battle prior to the Hour).” This again is a reference to the imminent Apocalypse. *Dabiq* goes on to say that it is “a tremendous favour from Allah to [...] plunge into the *malāhim* (the great battles prior to the Hour)!”¹¹² *Dabiq* ends the seventh issue on the note that the Muslims will conquer Constantinople and gain war booty, after which the anti-Christ will emerge.¹¹³ The prospect to fight this ultimate evil is a way of activating the dynamic duties of many believers.

Dabiq tells its readers that the prophet Muhammad referred to Shām and its surroundings as the area of *malahīm* (Apocalypse), specifically al-Ghūtah, Damascus, Dābiq (or al-A’māq), the Euphrates, Constantinople (Istanbul) and Jerusalem, the gate of Lod, Lake of Tiberius, the Jordan River and Mount Sinai, where events related to “al-Masīh, al-Mahdī, and the Dajjāl” will unfold.

Several *hadith* are quoted to support and to provide extra details to the saying of the prophet that the Apocalypse will take place in the Shām area.¹¹⁴ Moreover, a *hadith* from Hamūd al-Tuwayjirī mentions that the *khilafah* will be established in Shām and that it will remain there until God sends the pleasant breeze that will kill the Muslims in a gentle manner. The breeze is mentioned to be sent “a number of years after the demise of the *Dajjāl* and the passing away of the *Masīh* ‘Īsā.[Jesus the Messiah]”¹¹⁵ A short mention of the reward for fighting the *Dajjāl* is made in the seventh issue of *Dabiq*.¹¹⁶ Thus, the *khilafah* of the Islamic state is the revived Caliphate, which is meant to last until the End of Times. The Islamic State frames itself as being the state that will lead the true Muslims victoriously through the Apocalypse.

Then, *Dabiq* mentions *hadith* that say that all the “best people” in the end will have migrated to the Shām (also the destination of “Ibrāhīm’s *hijrah*”), as such separating themselves from all the “worst people,” who reside in other parts of the world. These people are those who are “having intercourse as donkeys do [in front of other people as they watch].” Again, the utopian practice of spatial distancing from unbelievers becomes clear as *Dabiq* tries to promote migration. The medieval scholar Ibn Taymiyyah is also mentioned as saying that those that move to the land of

¹¹² *Dabiq*, 3:6.

¹¹³ *Dabiq*, 7:82.

¹¹⁴ *Dabiq*, 3:9.

¹¹⁵ *Dabiq*, 3:10.

¹¹⁶ *Dabiq*, 7:45.

Abraham's migration and keep to it, are "the best of the people on the earth."¹¹⁷

Dabiq believes that IS is fighting the 'Romans' in the last crusade that will ever occur in history. This crusade will end when Jesus (*Masīh 'Īsa*) descends unto earth to join the Muslims and to break the "*tāghūt* cross."¹¹⁸ *Dabiq* mentions the final battle against the Romans and the descent of Jesus again in *Dabiq* 7:66.

Just after the *hadith* and *Dabiq*'s interpretation of them, IS founder al-Zarqawi is quoted, along with Abū Hamzah al-Muhājir and al-Baghdādī. Zarqawi's quote should come as no surprise, as it is the same quote each issue of *Dabiq* opens with. Al-Muhājir tells us that their army will pass the banner to the *Mahdī* (the redeemer of Islam, an apocalyptic figure).¹¹⁹ Caliph al-Baghdādī made a statement in which IS's jihad is compared to supporting the Mahdī.¹²⁰ Then, *Dabiq* devotes an entire page to the "unshakable belief" of the medieval Islamic scholar Ibn Taymiyyah. A comparison is made of his belief in the downfall of his Tatār (the Mongols) overlords and the "conviction and certainty" of IS leaders in the prophecies of the Apocalypse.¹²¹ Spokesman al-ʿAdnānī follows this up by saying that the crusade will break and that IS will conquer Rome and enslave "your women."¹²²

In the fifth issue, Jesus is portrayed as descending during the Apocalypse, after which he destroys the *Dajjāl*.¹²³ *Dabiq* makes this story into a recurring theme of conflict, in which each prophet, including those before Jesus, faced disbelievers and triumphed over them, not unlike how *Dabiq* frames the struggle of IS.¹²⁴

Another apocalyptic theme is the reinstitution of slavery. The reinstitution of slavery establishes not only a link to the past of the *Salaf*, but, perhaps more importantly, is a major Sign of the Hour. *Dabiq* writes that slavery "has been mentioned as one of the Signs of the Hour, as well as one of the causes behind *al-Malhamah al-Kubrā*." Apparently, one of the signs of the Hour is that "the slave

¹¹⁷ *Dabiq*, 3:11.

¹¹⁸ *Dabiq*, 4:32.

¹¹⁹ *Dabiq*, 4:35.

¹²⁰ *Dabiq*, 4:35-36.

¹²¹ *Dabiq*, 4:36-37.

¹²² *Dabiq*, 4:37.

¹²³ *Dabiq*, 5:4.

¹²⁴ *Dabiq*, 5:6.

girl gives birth to her master.”¹²⁵ *Dabiq* then gives a number of reasons why one should take this verse literally.¹²⁶ Another *hadith* which *Dabiq* considers to be very important is one by Muslim on the authority of Abū Hurayrah, mentioning the Romans’ readiness to do battle at Dābiq. The Romans in this *hadith* say: “Leave us and those who were enslaved from amongst us so we can fight them.” After this, the first battle of the Apocalypse begins.¹²⁷

All the fragments above serve to motivate Muslims to come and fight by referring to eschatological prophecy. It is used to activate the dynamic duties of Muslims by instilling urgency.



Abu Hurayrah reported that Allah's Messenger (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said,

“The Hour will not be established until the Romans land at al-A'maq or Dabiq (two places near each other in the northern countryside of Halab).

Then an army from al-Madinah of the best people on the earth at that time will leave for them. When they line up in ranks, the Romans will say, 'Leave us and those who were taken as prisoners from amongst us so we can fight them.'

The Muslims will say, 'Nay, by Allah, we will not abandon our brothers to you.' So they will fight them.

Then one third of them will flee; Allah will never forgive them. One third will be killed; they will be the best martyrs with Allah. And one third will conquer them; they will never be afflicted with fitnah.

Then they will conquer Constantinople. While they are dividing the war booty, having hung their swords on olive trees, Shaytān will shout, 'The [false] Messiah has followed after your families [who were left behind.]'

arrive to Sham he comes out.

Then while they are preparing for battle and filing their ranks, the prayer is called. So 'Isa Ibn Maryam ('alayhis-Salam) will descend and lead them.

When the enemy of Allah sees him, he will melt as salt melts in water. If he were to leave him, he would melt until he perished, but he kills him with his own hand, and then shows them his blood upon his spear.”

[Sahih Muslim]

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¹²⁵ *Dabiq*, 4:15, “A *hadith* from al-Bukhārī and Muslim on the authority of Abū Hurayrah and by Muslim on the authority of ‘Umar.” [*Dabiq*, 5:6]

¹²⁶ *Dabiq* 4:16.

¹²⁷ *Dabiq*, 4:17.

¹²⁸ A *Dabiq* tekst describing some of the Apocalyptic events. [*Dabiq*, 1:50]

3.4 THE ROADMAP TO THE UTOPIAN ISLAMIC STATE

So, what does one need to do in order to re-establish the long lost utopian Caliphate? *Dabiq* provides us with a roadmap.

The article “From Hijrah to Khilafah” begins with a critique on nationalism and undefined “innovations” (no doubt referring to *bid‘a*) as a force that destroys “the creed and healthy body of the Muslim jama'ah required for reviving the *Khilafah*.”¹²⁹ It then focuses on Abu Mus‘ab al-Zarqawi and his plan for reviving the caliphate. The magazine gives us a step-by-step approach of this plan.

According to *Dabiq*, Zarqawi’s plan was build a *jama‘a* (community) with as foundation the Qur’an and the Sunnah, “with understanding of the *Salaf*, free from the extremities of the *murji‘ah* and *khawwarij*.”¹³⁰ The goal of this community would be to restore unity (*tawhid*) in matters relating to *wala’*, *bara’*, *hukm* (ruling), and *tashri’* (legislation).¹³¹ In order to reach this goal, the community would use jihad as its tool, as legitimized by the Quranic sword verse in Sura Al-Anfal. This jihad would in turn be based on *hijrah* (migration), *bay‘a* (an oath of loyalty), *sam‘* (listening), *ta‘ah* (obedience), and *i‘dad* (training). Adhering to these principles, the community would form a place from which war can be waged in the form of *ribat* (border duty) and *qital* (fighting). The outcome of this sequence of activities would be the establishment of the *khilafah* (the caliphate) or *shahadah* (martyrdom).¹³²

It is worth noting to see how prominent the theme of *hijra* is in *Dabiq*’s roadmap to establish and expand the state. *Hijra* is the Arabic word for migration and is often associated with the *Hajj*, a religious duty Muslims have to perform a pilgrimage to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. It is one of the five so-called pillars of Islam. *Hijra* can simply mean ‘migration’ in modern Arabic, but the Islamic state exclusively links the concept to migration, likely referring to the major religious and historic event of Muhammad fleeing from Mecca to Medinah. Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is cited in the first issue on the obligation of *Hijra* to the Islamic States: “The State is a state for all

¹²⁹ *Dabiq*, 1:34-35.

¹³⁰ *Dabiq*, 1:35.

¹³¹ *Dabiq*, 1:35.

¹³² “And fight them until there is no fitnah and [until] the religion, all of it, is for Allah,” Sura Al-Anfal: 39, as translated by *Dabiq*.

Muslims. The land is for the Muslims, all the Muslims. O Muslims everywhere, whoever is capable of performing *hijrah* (emigration) to the Islamic State, then let him do so, because *hijrah* to the land of Islam is obligatory.” Then, on the same page a special call is made by the caliph to experts who are needed in a modern state: “We make a special call the scholars, *fuqaha*’ (experts in Islamic jurisprudence), and callers, especially the judges, as well as people with military, administrative and service expertise, and medical doctors and engineers of all different specializations and fields.”¹³³ This would suggest that the Islamic State intends to build a modern state build with their interpretation of *shari‘a*.

The ideal place to migrate (*hijra*) to is a place where the mujahedeen, “could operate without the threat of a powerful police state.” These places are considered safe havens for the mujahedeen and as such meet “with conditions that support jihad.”¹³⁴

The issue credits al-Zarqawi for devising a strategy to achieve the goal of *khilafa*. It summarizes it as follows: Create as much chaos as possible with means permitted by sharia while using *nikaya* operations (injury operations) to inflict dealing death, injury and damage to the enemy. The resulting chaos would prevent any *taghut* regime from achieving stability needed to “crush any Islamic movement.”¹³⁵ The most effective weapons to achieve chaos, according to the issue, are vehicle bombs, improvised explosive devices and *istishhadiyyin* (suicide bombings). With these attacks, Zarqāwī tried to provoke non-Sunnis and their Sunni supporters to engage in all-out-war with the *Ahlus-Sunny* (what *Dabiq* calls the true Sunni Muslims). Interestingly enough, Islamists are considered enemies too, because they participate in the democratic political process, which is considered to be tantamount to *shirk* by al-Zarqawi.¹³⁶ *Dabiq* argues that Islamists “gave preference to popularity and rationalization over pleasing Allah,” adding that they are “embarrassed of acknowledging and implementing sharia concepts as *takfir*”.¹³⁷

The *nikaya* operations are to be followed by larger, more complex attacks. These operations are called *tamkin* (consolidation) operations and can best be seen as a means to conquer territory and consolidate the Caliphate’s power in these liberated territories by means of legislation and military

¹³³ *Dabiq*, 1:11.

¹³⁴ *Dabiq*, 1:36.

¹³⁵ *Dabiq*, 1:36.

¹³⁶ *Dabiq*, 1:37.

¹³⁷ *Dabiq*, 1:39.

force.¹³⁸ The best circumstance in which *tamkin* can be achieved is in a state of *tawahhush* (mayhem), the complete collapse of the *taghut* regime. The strategy that is advocated by *Dabiq* is to create a power vacuum in Iraq which happened when the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) was established under the leadership of Emir Abu ‘Umara al Husayni¹³⁹ (by then, Zarqāwī was already killed as a result of an US airstrike).

Should the first step of this plan, *hijra*, not be possible for the mujahedeen, or if there is no land with a weak central authority to migrate to, he is expected to perform *nikaya* attacks in the place where he resides. This should continue until the central state weakens enough to allow the mujahedeen to set up *jama’a* and execute *tamkin* operations.¹⁴⁰ These *tamkin* operations appear to be essential for the establishment of the Islamic State, as *Dabiq* criticises other unnamed jihadi groups as being “stuck” in the *nikaya* phase and that those groups “consider[ing] the attainment of power to be taboo or destructive”.¹⁴¹ It is the concept of *tamkin* that ultimately has led to the establishment of the caliphate.

Unclear, however, is the location of the Islamic State. Zarqāwī is quoted to have said that while his organisation performed jihad Iraq, “our eyes are upon al-Quds [Jerusalem]. We fight here, while our goal is Rome with good expectations concerning Allah that He makes us the keys for the Prophetic good tidings and Godly decrees.” His successor, Abū Hamzah al-Muhājir also is said to have the same goal and as well as al-Baghdādī (“the mountainous man”). Al-Baghdādī uses the words of former president Bush that “*They [IS] strive to establish an Islamic state stretching from China to Spain.*”¹⁴² In the end however, *Dabiq* doesn’t clearly define its territorial aims, but lays down a broad outline.

3.5 THE PERFECT STATE ACCORDING TO DABIQ

Every state, including the most perfect state, is made by its institutions and adheres to certain moral principles. The examples below tell us about the institutions that lay the foundation for the Islamic utopia.

¹³⁸ *Dabiq*, 1:36-37.

¹³⁹ *Dabiq*, 1:38.

¹⁴⁰ *Dabiq*, 1:38.

¹⁴¹ *Dabiq*, 1:38.

¹⁴² *Dabiq*, 4:5.

Dabiq gives a short summary of the most important concepts of IS: The Islamic State requires *jamā'ah*, and *imārah*, in order to establish Islam. This Islam demands *bay'a*, *imāra* and *khilāfa*. Furthermore, there can be “no partisanship, innovation, pride in personal opinion,” as it undermines the tenets of the Islam.¹⁴³

Spokesman Al-‘Adnānī places IS in a larger Jihadi-Salafī tradition: “Rest assured, O soldiers of the Islamic State, for we -by Allah’s permission- will carry on upon the *manhaj* [the method] of the imam *Shaykh* Usāmah [Osama bin Laden], the *amīr* of the *istishhādīyīn* [martyrs] Abū Mus’ab az-Zarqāwī, the founder of the State Abū ‘Umar al-Baghdādī, and its war minister Abū Hamzah al-Muhājir.”¹⁴⁴

First we must understand what is needed in order to be declared territory of IS. In order to establish an official IS province with the approval of IS high command, the following conditions must be met: “Documenting *bay'āt*, unifying the *jamā'āt* [...], holding consultations to nominate a *wālī* and members for the regional *shūrā* assembly, planning a strategy to achieve consolidation in their region for the *Khilāfah* so as to implement the *Sharī'ah*, and presenting all this to the Islamic State leadership for approval.”¹⁴⁵ It is explicitly forbidden to announce a *wilāyah* or to present oneself as representing the IS leadership without the aforementioned conditions being met.

Dabiq makes an interesting statement regarding state services: “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.” The magazine expressly emulates the deeds of the prophet, who is said to have appointed a deputy in a city after its conquest “to remain in the city and look after the affairs of the Muslim families.” According to *Dabiq*, this means that the Caliphate must ensure that the “needs of the Muslims are being met as much as possible.”¹⁴⁶ IS has realised that “a state cannot be established and maintained without ensuring that a portion of the sincere soldiers of Allah look after both the religious and worldly affairs of the Muslims.”¹⁴⁷ To highlight its worldly character, *Dabiq* regularly features articles on different state services.

¹⁴³ *Dabiq*, 4:3.

¹⁴⁴ *Dabiq*, 7:25, *Dabiq* claims that Abū ‘Umar al-Baghdādī and Abū Hamzah al-Muhājir were praised by Osama bin Laden “as well as the former al-Qā'idah leadership.” [*Dabiq*, 2:25]

¹⁴⁵ *Dabiq*, 7:35.

¹⁴⁶ *Dabiq*, 4:27.

¹⁴⁷ *Dabiq*, 4:28.

The following paragraphs each analyse a different subject of the ‘perfect’ state. These are: enjoining in good,¹⁴⁸ infrastructure, medical services, law and policing, economy and coinage, slavery, military and warfare.

3.5.1 DA’WA: ENJOINING IN GOOD

In contrast to the modern secular nation state, a caliphate needs to demonstrate its Islamic credentials and show that its services are based on the true Islam. This can be considered state propaganda. *Dabiq* says that alongside jihad, a *da’wa* campaign is waged to “tend to the [spiritual] needs of its people. To do so, the Islamic State actively works to educate its citizens, preach to and admonish them, enforce a strict adherence to Islamic obligations, judge their disputes, implement the *shari‘i hudūd*, eradicate all traces of shirk and heresy, incite the people to jihād and call them to unite behind the *Khalīfah*.”¹⁴⁹

Dabiq gives different examples of the *da’wa* by the state. Such as the portrayal of providing the *iftār* meal during Ramadan and setting up activities, including lectures, competitions, organising *da’wa* events, and meat distribution to the poor.¹⁵⁰ It also provides *zakāh* (alms) for the “eligible families in the area”.¹⁵¹ Moreover, some of the spoils of war (*ghanīmah*) are given to orphans.¹⁵²

Other examples are the opening of a Qur’an school in Manbij and the distribution *daw’a* material in Salāhuddīn. In Aleppo even a “*da’wa* kiosk” is erected and a campaign is waged to destroy tobacco (Salafi are strictly forbidden to smoke).¹⁵³

¹⁴⁸ After the hisbah concept of ‘enjoining what is good and forbidding what is wrong’: الأمر بالمعروف والنهي عن المنكر.

¹⁴⁹ *Dabiq*, 3:16.

¹⁵⁰ *Dabiq*, 2:35.

¹⁵¹ *Dabiq*, 2:26.

¹⁵² *Dabiq*, 2:38.

¹⁵³ *Dabiq*, 3:16-17.

DA'WAH AND HISBAH IN THE ISLAMIC STATE

When the tribe of Banī Shaybān offered to support the Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) against the Arabs but not against the Persians, the Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) told them, "The religion of Allah will only be supported by someone who protects all of its sides" [Ibn Hajar said, "It was reported by al-Hākim, Abū Nu'aym, and al-Bayhaqī in 'Ad-Dalā'il' with a hasan isnād."]

This hadīth not only demonstrates the level of will and determination Allah demands of us when seeking to establish His religion, it shows that Islam cannot be compartmentalized and approached piecemeal. We cannot adopt the mindset that jihād is acceptable without da'wah, or that the hudūd cannot be established during defensive jihād, or that we are living in an era similar to the Prophet's time in Makkah and must therefore focus on da'wah because there is no jihād.

Rather, Islam is a holistic religion that is to be approached from all sides, and defended from all sides. If any aspect of it is abandoned or ignored, the Shaytān and his soldiers will quickly fill the vacuum.

{O you who have believed, enter into Islam completely and do not follow the footsteps of Shaytān. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy} [Al-Baqarah: 208].

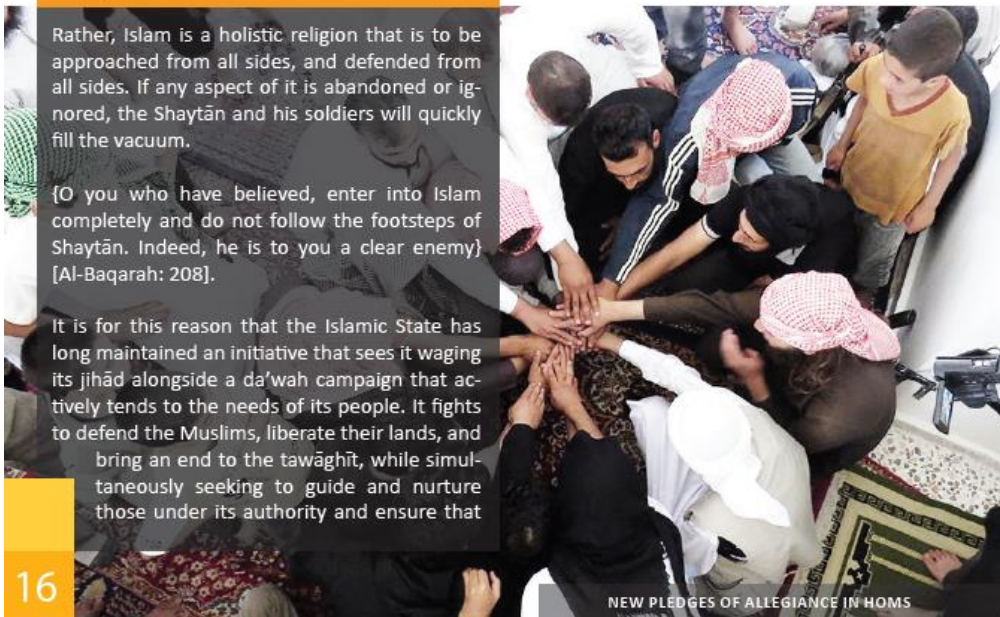
It is for this reason that the Islamic State has long maintained an initiative that sees it waging its jihād alongside a da'wah campaign that actively tends to the needs of its people. It fights to defend the Muslims, liberate their lands, and bring an end to the tawāghīṭ, while simultaneously seeking to guide and nurture those under its authority and ensure that



A QUR'ĀN SCHOOL IN MANBIJ (HALAB)



DISTRIBUTION OF DA'WAH MATERIAL IN SALĀHUDDĪN



NEW PLEDGES OF ALLEGIANCE IN HOMS

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¹⁵⁴ A screenshot from *Dabiq*, 3:16, describing da'wa activities and a bay'a ceremony.

3.5.2 INFRASTRUCTURE

Dabiq devotes attention to the Caliphate's infrastructure, but it is rather limited in scope, most likely due to military secrecy and probably because it is unlikely to be very inspiring to potential jihadi recruits.

For instance, repairs of a damaged bridge are shown,¹⁵⁵ as well as the restoration of the electricity network in Raqqah.¹⁵⁶ The cleaning of streets of rubble is portrayed.¹⁵⁷ After the establishment of *wilāyat* al-Furāt the Generals Services Committee carried out an effort to “enhance and repair the regions infrastructure with projects aimed at restoring electricity, building irrigation networks in agricultural areas, and cleaning and repairing roads and highways.”¹⁵⁸ The perfect state takes care of its infrastructure in order to ensure it looks after the worldly affairs of Muslims.

3.5.3 MEDICAL SERVICES

The Islamic State wants to provide an image of itself as caring for its subjects. Medical services are shown, such as “cancer treatment for children” twice,¹⁵⁹ and day care for the elderly.¹⁶⁰ In the second issue of *Dabiq*, IS claims to have captured The State Company for Drug Industries and Medical Appliances and is using it to foresee in the medical needs of the State's inhabitants.¹⁶¹

3.5.4 LAW ENFORCEMENT

What better way to portray a state in power than by showing it provides legislation and enforces it? In the utopia of IS, law enforcement is swift, harsh and often brutal, but always just.

The following are all sentences carried out by IS. The first mention of justice administered by IS in *Dabiq* is the execution of two so-called highway robbers. They are executed “as punishment for

¹⁵⁵ *Dabiq*, 4:27.

¹⁵⁶ *Dabiq*, 4:29.

¹⁵⁷ *Dabiq* 4:28-29.

¹⁵⁸ *Dabiq*, 4:18.

¹⁵⁹ *Dabiq*, 4:28-29.

¹⁶⁰ *Dabiq*, 4:28.

¹⁶¹ *Dabiq*, 2:40.

hirabah (armed robbery)” while wearing blindfolds. The method of execution is unclear, although the picture of the event suggests a shot in the back of the head.¹⁶²

Eight people, said to belong to the *shabīḥah* (a paramilitary organisation that supports Assad), were executed by means of *Hadd* (punishment mandated by God as described in the Qur’an, for offenses against God). They are photographed as blindfolded.¹⁶³ Later, a Badr militia commander is shown executed.¹⁶⁴ As a warning entire tribes face collective punishment if they rebel against the Islamic State such as the Shu’aytāt, as can be seen in *Dabiq* 3:12-14, which is shown as an example.

IS is also severe in punishing drugs trafficking. The Islamic Police (note: a more secular force than the *hisba* or religious police) broke up a drug trafficking ring in Jarablus.¹⁶⁵ The Islamic Police also apprehended a drug trafficker.¹⁶⁶

Dabiq also claims that the “Islamic State’s security apparatus” had infiltrated and disbanded a *Khawārij* cell.” The perpetrators were punished “according to Allah’s Sharī’ah.”¹⁶⁷

In the article “Clamping Down on Sexual Deviance,” *Dabiq* shows the throwing of a “sodomite” from a building and the consequent stoning of his body. *Dabiq* blames this on “‘sexual revolution’ five decades ago.”¹⁶⁸ This isn’t the only punishment based on sexual morals. An article mentions that “A woman was stoned for committing adultery and a man was flogged for being in possession of pornographic material.” A second occasion of the stoning was mentioned in another article. The act of stoning is displayed, but the woman is kept out of the picture frame.¹⁶⁹ All the punishments mentioned above are accompanied by photos of the punishments and all are administered in public.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶² *Dabiq*, 1:45.

¹⁶³ *Dabiq*, 2:33.

¹⁶⁴ *Dabiq*, 2:34.

¹⁶⁵ *Dabiq*, 2:33.

¹⁶⁶ *Dabiq*, 2:41.

¹⁶⁷ *Dabiq*, 6:31.

¹⁶⁸ As well as being responsible for STDs as AIDS. It also accuses Western governments and churches for protecting homosexuals. It specifically calls out the Roman Catholic Church for protecting “sodomite priests.”

¹⁶⁹ *Dabiq*, 2:36.

¹⁷⁰ *Dabiq*, 7:42-43.

3.5.5 COINAGE, ECONOMY AND STATE EXIGENCIES:

IS has its own perfect, equitable economy, detached from the ‘corrupt’ world economy. In the fifth issue of *Dabiq*, two pages describe an effort to “disentangle the *Ummah* from the corrupt, interest-based global financial system.” To do this, caliph Ibrahīm announced that the Islamic State will use real gold, silver, and copper to mint a new currency, in the form of “the gold *dīnār*, silver *dirham*, and copper *fals*.” The images presented on the coin are symbols interpreted from the Qur’an. “They include an image of seven stalks of wheat, symbolizing the blessings of *sadaqah*, a spear and shield, symbolizing the Muslim’s provisions from jihad, and date palm trees, symbolizing the Muslim’s deep-rooted faith, firm patience, and fruitful deeds.” The Arabic on the coins – aside from its numerical value - read: The Islamic State – Caliphate by the prophetic methodology.”¹⁷¹ Despite all the plans, there has been no evidence that the coins have ever been minted.

Dabiq gives considerable attention to new members the caliphate has attracted. In the first issue it lists tribal leaders who swore *ba‘ya*, a religious oath of loyalty, to the caliph.¹⁷² The information it provides on these new members gives an indication of the totalitarian demands on new recruits. *Dabiq* tells us that IS demands of them: “their wealth, their sons, their men, their weapons, their strength and their opinion, and encourage their sons and their brothers to join the military body of the Islamic State.” In return, loyal tribes gain the following benefits and services from the Islamic State: “Returning rights and property to their rightful owner; pumping millions of dollars into services that are important to the Muslims; the state of security and stability enjoyed by the areas under the Islamic State’s authority; Ensuring the availability of food products and commodities in the market, particularly bread; The reduced crime rate; The flourishing relationship between the Islamic State and its citizens.”¹⁷³

On the next page, *Dabiq* tells us that during a meeting with tribal elders, the following was requested of the tribal elders: “Collecting the *zakah* and presenting it to the *zakah* offices located throughout the *wilayah*; Preparing lists with the names of orphans, widows and the needy so that

¹⁷¹الدولة لاسلاميت - اخلافت على منهاج النبوة, *Dabiq*, 4:18-19.

¹⁷² *Dabiq*, 1:12.

¹⁷³ *Dabiq*, 1:13.

zakah and *sadaqah* can be distributed to them; Encouraging the youth to join the ranks of the Islamic State; Turning in any weapon acquired from the regime or the FSA; Urging those bearing arms against the Islamic State to repent before they are captured.”¹⁷⁴

As we can see, the perfect states demands a lot from its new subjects, while trying to steer away from the global economy.

3.5.6 SLAVERY

Dabiq considers slavery as a just institution that is part of the perfect state. The following is an example of the way *Dabiq* viewed the Yazidis in Iraq. Yazidis were considered by IS to be *mushrikīn* and “unlike the Jews and Christians, there was no room for *jizyah* payment.” Giving the Yazidis the status of *mushrikīn*, allowed IS to take their women and children as slaves, to be divided amongst the IS fighters, “after one fifth of the slaves were transferred to the Islamic State’s authority to be divided as *khums*.”

Dabiq is aware of the controversy of taking female slaves from different sects and takes position in a footnote where it claims that the evidence supports Ibn Taymiyyah and the Hanafis, who say that the companions of Muhammad enslaved apostate women during the “Wars of Apostasy.” The magazine claims that many rulings are observed concerning slavery, “including the prohibition of separating a mother from her young children.” It also tells of Yazidi women and children who “have willingly accepted Islam.” *Dabiq* boasts that this “large-scale enslavement” is “the first since the abandonment of this Sharī’ah law”, which indicates that IS thinks slavery is an obligatory part of Muslim society and religion. Following *Dabiq*’s reasoning, slavery also prevents adultery and fornication: “because the *shar’ī* alternative to marriage is not available, so a man who cannot afford marriage to a free woman finds himself surrounded by temptation towards sin.” Having a concubine is said to prevent these transgressions.¹⁷⁵ The utopian Islamic State thus provides its subjects with slaves because it considers it a religious duty and because it ‘prevents’ sexual deviation.

¹⁷⁴ *Dabiq*, 1:14.

¹⁷⁵ *Dabiq*, 4:15.

3.5.7 MILITARY AND WARFARE

The utopian Islamic State is in a state of constant war. It is one of the major focuses of the magazine and it portrays the army as a glorious and victorious institute, always on the offensive and just in accordance with Islamic law.

What is very interesting is that *Dabiq* uses an outsider's perspective in order to build the myth of the ever victorious military and the strength of the perfect state.

In the first edition of *Dabiq*, Douglas A. Ollivant and Brian Fishman, both scholars who wrote an article on IS, are quoted by *Dabiq*. The magazine uses the statements of these two men for its own propagandistic reasons, boasting that IS is a de facto state, that it is multi-ethnic and that it is a safe haven for Muslims.¹⁷⁶

In the second edition *Dabiq* quotes former presidential candidate John McCain in which he expressed concern for the territorial gains of ISIS and the looting of military equipment. At the end of the quote, McCain mentions (the now late) senior IS leader Omar al-Checheni, who is depicted, next to the quote, stepping out of an American military Humvee, smiling.¹⁷⁷

The third edition derides US president Barack Obama for continuing the “American crusade against Islam and the Muslims of Iraq, only to prove [...] that there is no difference between his partisan politics and that of his predecessor Bush.” Obama’s quote is a response “when his brothers in Yazidi Satanism and Peshmergan Zionism are killed.” Obama’s republished speech describes IS as “especially barbaric towards religious minorities, including Christians and Yazidis. Countless Iraqis have been displaced and chilling reports describe ISIL militants rounding up families, conducting mass executions, and enslaving Yazidi women. [...] Meanwhile Isil forces below [Mount Sinjar] have called for the systematic destruction of the entire Yazidi people which would constitute genocide...”¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ *Dabiq*, 1:32-33.

¹⁷⁷ *Dabiq*, 2:31-32.

¹⁷⁸ *Dabiq*, 3:36.

The republishing of this statement by Obama is telling. *Dabiq* does not refute these statements, rather, it gloats over the statement of the president. The horrific practices Obama accuses IS of, are considered an accomplishment, worth printing in *Dabiq*. The Islamic State *wants* to be seen as ruthless and genocidal of minorities, because this conveys the message it is operating according to the *manhaj al-nabi* (program of the Prophet).

In the fourth edition, *Dabiq* quotes US secretary of defence Chuck Hagel, stating ISIL (IS) poses “a real threat” and that it has “global aspirations.” *Dabiq* is also proud of Hagel’s mentioning the “barbarity” of IS and especially relishes his accusation of IS slaughtering “thousands of innocent civilians, including Sunni and Shia Muslims and Kurdish Iraqis and religious minorities.” Like in Obama’s quote, IS seems to enjoy printing American official quotes that depict the Islamic State as genocidal.¹⁷⁹

The fifth issue uses quotes from scholars and retired military personnel – Liepman, Connable, Rabasa and Robinson - from the RAND Corporation, “a think tank formed to provide research and analysis to the US crusader forces.” In an interview, they talk about how difficult it is to destroy IS and the problematic partnerships the US has in the region. The group laments the defeats the FSA (Free Syrian Army) suffers and regard IS as an “impressive enemy.” Also, Rabasa says: “I’m afraid we may have fallen into ISIS’s trap.” She continues: “Airstrikes will have diminishing returns as ISIS adjusts. And standing up to the United States is likely to enhance its image among both jihadi and non-jihadi constituencies. Like all irregular forces facing a stronger adversary, it wins if it does not lose.”¹⁸⁰

In the seventh issue, journalist Patrick Cockburn’s work, “Isis Hostage Crisis: Militant Group Stands Strong as Its Numerous Enemies Fail to Find a Common Plan to Defeat It” is used for propaganda purposes. Cockburn’s text is used to describe IS territory as “larger than Great Britain.”

The local enemies of IS are not strong enough to defeat IS. Cockburn describes the execution of hostages as a “stage managed in order to gain maximum publicity and inspire general terror.” IS’s loss of Kobani is also told, but “is not necessarily a sign of weakness.” The Washington Post’s

¹⁷⁹ *Dabiq*, 4:46.

¹⁸⁰ *Dabiq*, 5:43-45.

editorial board also says that the loss of Kobani is “no reason to celebrate as the Islamic State gets stronger.” *Dabiq* then uses the conservative news outlet of Fox Media to say that Obama’s policy towards ISIS is failing and that IS territory “has grown in the last five months... despite all of the coalition air strikes.”¹⁸¹ We can see that *Dabiq* uses enemy statements to confirm IS’ narrative of being a capable and victorious army acting in accordance with the *manhaj al-nabi*.

A lot of attention is given to the territorial victories of IS. *Dabiq* regularly prides itself on the military prowess of IS. These articles have a different character than most other articles, as they read more as short and terse news excerpts. They often demonise the enemy as well, to highlight IS is fighting just war. Most articles tend to focus on the mainland of IS (Iraq and Syria), but some exceptions are made to include the distant provinces, such as Libya and operations in the Sinai Desert. For instance, *Dabiq* tells us of the ‘liberation’ of Tal Afar, of which many inhabitants were supposedly murdered by “*Safawi* foces” (*Safawi* being a derogatory term used by IS to describe Shi’ites). The magazine shows us at least seven corpses of what once were Sunni Muslims.¹⁸² It follows up with the decaying corpses of what were “*Rafidi* soldiers” (Shi’ite troops)¹⁸³ and the subsequent capture of Tal Afar.¹⁸⁴ A similar story notifies us of the ‘liberation’ of the Iraqi places al-Adhim and Hawija and the story that describes the “campaign of Asadullah al-Bilawi and *Wilayat* al-Anbar” seems to be an example of a *tamkin* operation, as it outlines a large-scale operation with the aim to “liberate more and more territory, consolidate their gains and win the support of the masses.”¹⁸⁵ More stories of “liberation” can be found in *Dabiq*, which are rarely anything more than a short announcement.¹⁸⁶

In the fifth issue, *Dabiq* tells of “the fight for Ayn al-Islām,” better known as Kobani near the Turkish border. The story tells about the fight against the “communist” PKK/YPG defending

¹⁸¹ *Dabiq*, 7:52-53.

¹⁸² *Dabiq*, 1:16.

¹⁸³ *Dabiq*, 1:18.

¹⁸⁴ *Dabiq*, 1:17,19.

¹⁸⁵ *Dabiq*, 1:46.

¹⁸⁶ Some examples of military victories are: IS says it has ‘liberated’ the city of Dulū’iyyah [*Dabiq*, 2:12] and the city of ‘Alam.[*Dabiq*, 2:37] The capture of the base of the 121st regiment is shown in the second issue.[*Dabiq*, 2:42] Barracks of the “*Safawī*” military are set on fire on Ramadān 20. A corpse is shown of a Shi’ite soldier.[*Dabiq*, 3:15] A short mention is made of IS troops who killed members of the *Sahwah* movement. [*Dabiq*, 3:18]. *Dabiq* often mentions the fight against Kurdish troops. *Dabiq* shortly describes the history of the PKK and its subgroups and the fight that is waged against them in the second issue. The PKK (including the Peshmerga) and YPG are accused of being communist and infidels. They are portrayed as inferior to IS troops: the bodies of PKK soldiers are shown. A short description of a battle against the group follows along with a summary of the spoils of war (*ghanīma*) [*Dabiq*, 2:12] Armoured Personnel Carriers are shown destroyed by IS “tank hunters”. Some of the tanks and APCs are taken as spoils of wars. [*Dabiq*, 2:37]

Kobani who were supported by American warplanes, yet to no avail. Obama is ridiculed for his “decision to keep relying on the incompetence of the PKK.”¹⁸⁷ Kobani turned out to be a loss for IS, but *Dabiq* narrates this in the frame of martyrdom. It describes “mounting numbers of *shuhadā*” during the defence of Kobani. *Dabiq* transforms a story of military defeat into a narrative of glorious martyrdom.

Outside the area of Iraq and Syria, *Dabiq* mentions a couple of victories and attacks. Combat operation and the execution of “spies of Sīṣī” (in the Sinai) are shown in the new *wilāyāt* of Sina’ and Libya.¹⁸⁸ *Dabiq* mentions the attack on the Corinthia Hotel in Libya in the seventh issue and commemorates the perpetrators. In the same article, IS soldiers in Libya are credited with victories against the Egyptian army.¹⁸⁹ Mentioning attacks in the far away fronts from Iraq and Syria is a way of describing IS’ army as an army that can operate from anywhere.

Dabiq makes it no secret that IS deploys child soldiers in the article “The Lions of Tomorrow.” It uses the label of “child soldiers” to describe the perspective of the “*kuffār*,” but *Dabiq* rebuttals this with the *manhaj al-nabi*, saying that the prophet would have allowed every boy to participate in battle. The article is accompanied with photos of children having executed “agents caught spying for Russian Intelligence and an agent caught spying for the Israeli Mossad”.¹⁹⁰

We can see that *Dabiq* displays IS’s military as victorious, defeats are mere setbacks or set in the frame of martyrdom. It even uses the perspectives of outsiders to frame IS’s military. IS’s jihadi fighters are portrayed ruthless, as *Dabiq* gloats with genocide and mass executions.

¹⁸⁷ *Dabiq*, 5:15-16.

¹⁸⁸ *Dabiq*, 6:28-30.

¹⁸⁹ *Dabiq*, 7:40-41.

¹⁹⁰ *Dabiq*, 8:20-21.

NEW RELEASE



STORIES

FROM THE LAND OF THE LIVING



Abu Suhayb
— AL-FARANSI —

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¹⁹¹ To frame IS as a multi ethnic military force, *Dabiq* in this example uses a native Frenchman to portray its diverse members. [*Dabiq*, 8:62]

3.6 THE PERFECT MUSLIM ACCORDING TO DABIQ

In this paragraph I will analyse what constitutes the perfect subject, according to what is known as unconstrained utopianism. *Dabiq* leaves no doubt that it considers the subjects of the caliphate next in line to the *Salaf*. They are believed to be the pinnacle of contemporary humanity. In this paragraph I will analyse the traits and the obligations of the ‘perfect’ Muslim as they are described in *Dabiq*.

The foreword of the second issue instructs its readers in their obligations towards the Caliphate. The first priority is to migrate to the Islamic State (*hijra*) with “parents, siblings, spouses and children.” An analogy with Moses (*Mūsā*) is made, who also “rushed to his Lord.” Typical for its modern content *Dabiq* tries to attract its foreign with the promise of good housing and the glory that is to be gained by capturing Mecca, Medina en Jerusalem.¹⁹²

In the article “The Islamic State before *al-Malhamah* (the immigrants to the land of *malāhim*),” *Dabiq* asks the *muwahhid* (the adherers to the unity of God, *tawhid*) to investigate into any history book at hand because they will not find any state in history that has been established in the way the Islamic state has been established. It asserts that no state ever emerged out of the *hijra* of people all over the world, except for the current Islamic State. *Dabiq* even goes so far to state that the “*Madīnah* state” (the state Muhammad established after the *hijra* to Madina) didn’t have the same level of multi-ethnic unity that the current Islamic State has, since “most if its *muhājirīn* were from Quraysh” (the tribe Muhammad belonged to) and they already shared lineage, marriage, language, acquaintance, history and land. This is in stark contrast to the situation of the current Islamic State, which attracts recruits from all over the world. In a footnote *Dabiq* makes sure that the comparison is not to suggest that the *khalaf* (successor Muslims) are better than the *Salaf* (the earliest of Muslims).¹⁹³ It also warns the readers that utopia has not yet been reached: “Keep in mind that the *Khilāfah* is a state whose inhabitants are human beings. They are not infallible angels. You may see things that need improvement and that are being improved. You may find mistakes that need fixing.

¹⁹² *Dabiq*, 2:3.

¹⁹³ *Dabiq*, 3:5-6.

You may find some of your brothers with traits that need mending.”¹⁹⁴ The most important element is that IS citizens are highly motivated by lofty ideals of establishing the perfect state.

Hadith and Abū Mus’ab al-Zarqāwī are quoted to support the idea of leaving ones family, or tribe, behind to migrate to “Allah *ta’ālā*” (God the most high, i.e. IS territory) and join IS. Those who leave are referred to as “strangers” (*nāzī*’ sing., *nuzzā*’ pl) and an example is used of the prophet who would have welcomed strangers with open arms as long as they became Muslims to underline the universal character of IS. Joining IS is an individual decision. The new subject leaves everything behind and becomes a new person in helping to “enter Islam” and help God and Muhammad. As soon as he joins the Islamic State, he is no longer considered a stranger, as they all are known to each other under “true Islam.” *Dabiq* then praises the future recruit by saying that strangers “are the most wondrous of the creation in the terms of faith,” and endearingly calls them “the strangest of them all.”¹⁹⁵ Two *hadith* of Sahīh Muslim are quoted to further support the idea of *hijra*, as the prophet said that “*Hijrah* wipes out all previous sins.”¹⁹⁶

Dabiq warns these ‘strangers’ that they will have to overcome many obstacles. For instance they will be “opposed and forsaken by ‘the wise ones,’ the ‘theorizers,’ and ‘the elders,’ who label them as [...] *khawārij*, *harūriyyah* (a branch of the *khawārij*), *hashāshīn* [...] and the dogs of Hellfire!” *Dabiq* then tries to counter these allegations by referring to the *hadith*, that state that the best are those that leave family and tribes behind. In a footnote, it is mentioned that dying while fighting outside IS territory, under the command of the *amīr* (commander), does not nullify one’s *hijra*.¹⁹⁷

The feature “*Hijrah* from Hypocrisy to Sincerity”¹⁹⁸ tells us that “an unkept promise of *hijrah* to Allah could result in a devastating ending for the slave”, in the afterlife.¹⁹⁹ *Dabiq* states that *hijrah* is one of the five pillars of Islam and thus is mandatory for every Muslim to perform (except when one is not able because of special circumstances). Ironically, this seems to be a form of *bi’da* (innovation) of the Jihadi-Salafī, as *hijra* is not a pillar of Islam, but *hajj* (the pilgrimage from

¹⁹⁴ *Dabiq*, 3:33-34.

¹⁹⁵ *Dabiq*, 3:6-8.

¹⁹⁶ *Dabiq*, 3:23.

¹⁹⁷ *Dabiq*, 3:11.

¹⁹⁸ *Dabiq* 3:25-34.

¹⁹⁹ *Dabiq*, 3:25.

Mecca to Madinah) is. *Dabiq* seems to have amalgamated the two terms. If one does not perform the *hijra* while he is Muslim, then he is seen as a hypocrite and is destined for hell.

In addition to normal recruits IS also issues a special call to “every Muslim professional who delayed his jihad in the past under the pretence of studying *Sharī’ah*, medicine, or engineering, etc., claiming he would contribute to Islam later with his expertise, should now make his number one priority to repent and answer the call to *hijrah*.” Here as well *Dabiq* threatens those who stay at home, “his claims will become a greater proof against him on Judgment Day.” Significant is that *Dabiq* demands Muslim students to prematurely abandon their studies to join the caliphate and its jihad, instead of finishing the study and then joining the caliphate.²⁰⁰ This could indicate that IS severely lacks educated personnel: even undergraduates are called upon to help the state building project. Not participating IS’s jihad is considered to be a trait of hypocrisy. Abandoning *hijra* then is the same as deserting jihad and thus, according to the magazine, a major offense to God.

Besides joining the jihad and contributing to IS, staying at home means that one remains among the unbelievers. *Dabiq* writes that living amongst infidels (considered all countries except IS, even Muslim countries) is dangerous to a Muslim. Some *hadith* are quoted to say that Muslims living amidst unbelievers are Muslims that are to be disassociated with. Muslims need to leave these infidels behind (perform *hijrah*) in order to avoid *qu’ūd* (staying at home and abandoning duty) and the Godly sentence for it. The third issue ends with a *hadith* from Abdullāh Ibn ‘Amr: “There will be *hijrah* after *hijrah*. The best people on earth will be those who keep to the land of Ibrāhīm’s *hijrah*. Then there will remain on the earth the worst of its people. Their lands will cast them out, Allah will hate them, and the fire will gather them together with the apes and swine.”²⁰¹ The eighth issue starts in its foreword in a lengthy call to perform *hijrah* in the face of “nationalism, patriotism, tribalism and revolutionism”. Furthermore, “pure *tawhīd* and nationalism can never coexist.”²⁰²

We can clearly see that *hijra* is a religious frame that urges the perfect subject to spatially distance himself from undesired elements, typical of utopian projects.

²⁰⁰ *Dabiq*, 3:26.

²⁰¹ *Dabiq*, 3:42.

²⁰² *Dabiq*, 8:3-4, Abū Ramadān is celebrated because “despite his Danish birth and upbringing [...] he targeted Danish Jews and Danish mockers of the Messenger.” *Dabiq* appears to refer to Muhammad cartoons. Abū Ramadān pledged bay‘ah before his act. [*Dabiq* 8:5-6]

One of most important duties a Muslim must fulfil according to *Dabiq* is *bay'a*, the swearing of allegiance to the ruler. The Muslim's priority is to organize *baya'āt* (pledges of allegiance) sessions to caliph Ibrāhīm (Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi). Instead of being secretive about these events, one should "publicize them as much as possible." *Dabiq* even instructs its audience to distribute recordings of these *baya'āt* sessions on the internet to achieve the goal that "*bay'ah* becomes so common for the average Muslim that he considers those holding back as grossly abnormal." *Dabiq* elaborates, stating that it is only allowed to be secretive about these events when one lives in a "police state," when *bay'ah* can be done anonymously; however the *bay'ah* itself should still be made public. *Dabiq* informs its readers that "your published *bay'ah*" has two benefits: 1) It provides a statement of loyalty and prevents *fitna*; 2) It provokes the unbelievers. Ultimately, if one cannot pledge *bay'a* for "reasons extremely beyond your control," then the belief that the Islamic state is the caliphate for all Muslims is sufficient as guarantee to be saved from hellfire. *Dabiq* reminds its readers through a *hadith*, "Whoever dies without having bound himself by *bay'ah*, dies a death of *jāhiliyyah* [ignorance]." ²⁰³ There can be no doubt that demanding *ba'ya* from its audience is one of the fundamental strategies *Dabiq* uses to draw new recruits to the Islamic State. *Dabiq* regularly provides examples of these ceremonies. An example is the *bay'a* ceremony in Homs.²⁰⁴ In the fourth issue, an article covers two pages to narrate the *bay'a* pledge of "Ansār al-Islam in Iraq," another jihadi group operating in Iraq, because "The Islamic State had a presence on the ground as a state with numerous institutions that could hold its weight in the region."²⁰⁵ Another example given in the fifth issue mentions the *bay'a* of jihadi groups in "Sinai, Libya, Yemen, Algeria and the Arabian peninsula, in addition to the *bay'ah* of more than 30 Kurdish villages in *Wilāyat Haleb*.[Aleppo]."²⁰⁶ An appeal is made to the "Muslim Kurds", who are regarded as brothers of the constituents of the Islamic State. *Dabiq* assures Kurds that IS only fights the disbelievers among the Kurds. Pictures show the pledges made by Kurds and the ceremonies celebrating these events.²⁰⁷ The pledges coming from these different territories are later highlighted in the article "Remaining and Expanding".²⁰⁸ It describes the statements by jihadi organisations in the countries mentioned above, along with pictures of these victorious groups (Egyptian soldiers being shot in the head by means of execution and war booty gained in Libya). The pledges are accepted by the caliph who said: "Glad tidings, O Muslims, for we give you good news by

²⁰³ *Dabiq*, 2:3.

²⁰⁴ *Dabiq*, 3:16.

²⁰⁵ *Dabiq*, 4:21-22.

²⁰⁶ *Dabiq*, 5:12.

²⁰⁷ *Dabiq*, 5:13-14.

²⁰⁸ *Dabiq*, 5:22-33.

announcing the expansion of the Islamic State to new lands, to the land of al-Haramayn [ed. The two holy places, Mecca and Medinah] and Yemen... to Egypt, Libya, and Algeria.” He went on to elaborate, “We announce the acceptance of the *bay‘ah* of those who gave *bay‘ah* in those lands, the nullification of the groups therein, the announcement of new *wilāyāt* for the Islamic State, and the appointment of *wulāt* [governors] for them.” This speech suggests that *bay‘ah* is a tool for the Islamic State to expand its influence to areas that are farther away than just the neighbouring territories. The parties above that pledged *ba‘ya* were immediately annexed into the *wilāyāt* system. However, in some cases, *bay‘a* is accepted by IS, but “the announcement of their respective *wilāyāt*” has been delayed, because these groups are smaller and weaker.”²⁰⁹ This indicates that IS only sets up *wilāyāt* in areas that it considers strong enough to expand into and that the new *wilāyāt* should also be able to defend the territory. Also worth of noting is that the caliph encourages Muslims to join the nearest *wilāyah* to them,²¹⁰ suggesting that *hijrah* to the Shām isn’t the only option available anymore.²¹¹ For instance, the seventh issue describes the events of *bay‘a* by mujahidin in Khurāsān (Afghanistan and Pakistan) and the Caucasus.²¹² On this occasion, Hāfidh Sa’īd Khān was appointed as the *wālī* of Khurāsān and urged others to pledge *bay‘a* to the caliph.

In the eighth issue, *Dabiq* devotes several pages to “the *Bay‘ah* from West Africa.”²¹³ The *bay‘a* from Abū Bakr Shekau and his organisation *Jamā‘at Ahlis-Sunnah lid-Da‘wah wal-Jihād* is mentioned. They are praised for enslaving “hundreds of Christian girls.”²¹⁴ Al-‘Adnānī even states that it is allowed to migrate to West Africa to fight jihad there, when emigrating to Iraq, Shām, Yemen, the Arabian Peninsula, or Khurāsān is prevented.²¹⁵

The sixth issue of *Dabiq* features an article written by the late Abū Hamzah al-Muhājir.²¹⁶ It is one of the few pieces in *Dabiq* that provide the name of the writer. *Dabiq* calls his writings “Advice for the Soldiers of the Islamic State.” The feature provides 31 admonitions for the rank and file of the troops of the Islamic State in order to become the ultimate soldier.

²⁰⁹ *Dabiq*, 5:24, *Dabiq* mentions groups in Khurāsān (Afghanistan), al-Qawqāz (the Caucasus), Indonesia, Nigeria, the Philippines, and “elsewhere”.

²¹⁰ *Dabiq*, 5:25.

²¹¹ *Dabiq* then describes the regions it mentioned before, praises the mujahideen stemming from there and describing the current day problems. Of these lands, *Dabiq* claims that in Libya, IS administers some of the “larger cities.” [*Dabiq*, 5:25- 32]

²¹² *Dabiq*, 7:33-37.

²¹³ *Dabiq*, 8:14-16.

²¹⁴ *Dabiq*, 8:14.

²¹⁵ *Dabiq*, 8:15.

²¹⁶ Also known as Abū Ayyūb al Masrī, he was killed near Tikrit in his safehouse in a joint American and Iraqi operation.

The 31 points of advice for the rank-and-file are: 1) Be sincere in word and deed; 2) Seek advice from scholars concerning jihad (so that one know the rulings of war and war booty; 3) Do not let your affection for loved ones distract you from “aiding Allah’s jihad”; 4) Be prudent in using *takfīr*; 5) Treat every Muslim warrior the same in the distribution of war booty; 6) Do not make pacts or grant security to others as a soldier, for this is the prerogative of the Caliph and his deputies; 7) Be wary of sin; 8) Pray, as it is the “pillar of religion and the banner of Muslims.”; 9) Do not become arrogant; 10) There is no victory with injustice and no friendship with a swindler; 11) Control your desires and be austere; 12) Be responsible in all your affairs and only in your affairs; 13) Work with your comrades and listen to the elders; 14) Conceal the faults of your brothers; do not be suspicious to each other; 15) Let the people love Islam, its rulings and the Islamic State; 16) Revere the ruler; 17) Concede to the leader as long as it does not “entail any sinfulness” and aid him in doing just; 18) Be patient with your leader; 19) Organise guard duty at night; 20) Prepare for war; 21) Perform *ribāt* (border duty); 22) Do not fight the enemy out of “self-delusion, your pride, your overconfidence”; 23) Mentally prepare yourself for combat by remembering how horrible the enemy is; 24) Prepare for combat by studying terrain or having a guide and take enough supplies and weapons with you; 25) Act as one when in combat; 26) Do not be frightened by the enemy; 27) Do not be lazy and incompetent in fighting the enemy; 28) Do not flee. It is only permissible to turn away from the enemy as a strategy of war; 29) Make *takbīr* (shout God is greater) when you charge and attack the enemy, however in other situations one should never shout, rather, one should whisper; 30) Don’t steal from the *ghanimah*; 31) “Make lots of *du‘ā* [worship].”²¹⁷

Point 19 (prepare for war) is further elaborated upon later in the issue. *Dabiq* claims that IS has established numerous training camps “dedicated to providing an essential level of training to its mujahidin, including physical, tactical, weapons, and *shar‘ī* training.” The magazine shows photos accompanying the text of the ‘Shaykh Abū Hamzah al-Muhājir Training camp’ in Fallūjah.²¹⁸

Abū Hamzah al-Muhājir is published again in issue seven in the article “Advice for the Leaders of the Islamic State.” He provides 30 admonitions to which the officers should adhere to: 1) Be sincere towards God; 2) Be just and sincere towards your subjects; 3) Seek consultation and hold discussions; 4) Be wary of those that always agree with your opinion and of bad company; 5) Don’t

²¹⁷ *Dabiq*, 6:6-15.

²¹⁸ *Dabiq*, 6:26-27.

seclude yourself from your subjects; 6) The leader must ensure that he and his subjects “are held responsible for the rights that Allah [...] has made obligatory and the limits that He has set”; 7) Be patient; 8) Don’t live a life more opulent than others; 9) Be patient in war; 10) Distribute your veterans amongst various detachments so they keep the less experienced in check. Make sure every fighter gets experience on the front. Also, be wary of spies; 11) Wear the right armour and equipment for the occasion; 13) Provide good food and drink to your subjects; 14) The leader should appoint commanders for each squad and make sure that all equipment is inspected; 14) As a general rule, there should be no “more than three fighters in any car.” Establish secure methods of communications; 15) Embolden your soldiers by letting them hear about feats of strength; 16) Study the battlefield; (17. War is deception. Plant spies, reconnoitre, and feign intent of attack; 18) Take advantage of opportunities; 19) If a soldier wants to commit himself to a martyrdom operation, a leader should allow for it if he knows that his death “will be an incitement for the Muslims to fight zealously to avenge him.” However, soldiers and officers too important for the fight and morale to lose, such as experienced soldiers and commanders, should not be used for martyrdom operations; 20) If the taking captive of some people causes disunity in the ranks, then do not, as disunity is dangerous; 21) Do not shed blood unjustly; 22) Think ahead; 23) Reward those that do well and honour them publicly. Adversely, punish the wrongdoers, but in private. In case of corruption, punish publicly. Never transgress sharia in applying punishment; 24) Never oppress a servant; 25) Be kind to your brothers; 26) Recognize each person’s individual value; 27) Visit the families of the martyrs and prisoners. Also visit the sick and act like a servant; 28) Select the right person for the job at hand; 29) Beware of partisanship; 30) Work hard and avoid incompetence.²¹⁹

The magazine tells us that the life of jihad is the best life for a Muslim and it isn’t possible “until you pack and move to the *Khilāfah*.”²²⁰ Since the reestablishment of the caliphate, jihad now is *fard ‘ayn* (an obligation upon each individual).²²¹ Furthermore, *hijra* is an essential component of jihad, as the prophet Muhammad said. An analogy is made with the son of Adam, whom the devil tried to persuade to not migrate and fight jihad. The son of Adam however refuted the devil and performed both duties.²²² One should not postpone *hijra* out of fear of getting arrested as “that fear is unsure and the obligation of *hijrah* is certain.”²²³

²¹⁹ *Dabiq*, 7:9-16.

²²⁰ *Dabiq*, 3:31.

²²¹ *Dabiq*, 3:32.

²²² *Dabiq*, 2:18-19.

²²³ *Dabiq* 3:33.

It should be noted that even those who fought IS, are still allowed to join the ranks of IS to “redeem” themselves. In the wake of military victories, the defeated are sometimes allowed to ‘repent’ in a ceremony where one must pledge *bay‘ah* to the Caliph.²²⁴ In the article “Dozens of ‘Nusrah’ and ‘Ahrār’ Fighters Repent and Join the Islamic State”, *Dabiq* narrates the repentance of these factions. It claims that the main reason to repent was the caliphate’s “implementation of the *Sharī‘ah*,”²²⁵

There is only but a small segment on the role of women (in addition, it must be said that *Dabiq* is completely devoid of pictures of women), which starts with the story of a man. Abū Basīr al-Ifriqī is celebrated for the January 2014 attack in Paris on a kosher supermarket; however the story of his wife is the central theme in the article “A brief interview with Umm Basīr al-Muhājirah.” In this interview *Dabiq* asks about her *hijrah* and how she feels in the caliphate of which she both is very positive. She provides advice to her “sisters” on how to be good wives: Women should be “bases of support and safety” for their husbands, brothers, fathers and sons. They must be advisors to them. Women should also facilitate “all matters for them”, “learn their religion” and be patient.²²⁶ In eight issues of *Dabiq*, this is the only article about the role of women.

If there is one thing that only those that are loyal to IS can achieve, it is access to Paradise. One can enter Paradise this by having performed (or tried to perform) *hijrah*, *bay‘a* to the caliph, *jihad* and being a pious Muslim. Those who died during their ordeals are remembered as martyrs and they are featured extensively in *Dabiq*. The texts are of little interest, as they only refer to events.²²⁷

²²⁴ *Dabiq*, 1:48-49.

²²⁵ *Dabiq*, 7:38-39.

²²⁶ *Dabiq*, 7:50-51.

²²⁷ The foreword of the sixth edition opens with a laudation of the late Man Haron Monis, notable for the hostage crisis in a café in Sidney. *Dabiq* says that all his previous sins are forgiven for this act, as it claims that western media tried to blemish Monis for his criminal past. Less extensively, *Dabiq* mentions the attacks of Martin Couture-Rouleau and Michael Zehaf-Bibeau in Canada, Zale Thompson in America and Bertrand Nzohabonayo in France. [*Dabiq*, 6:4-5] Man Haron Monis is honoured by *Dabiq* by publishing a page wide photograph of him along with a citation attributed to him in which he pledged *bay‘a*.

More examples:

A depiction of a martyr who died in the battle versus the Kurds [*Dabiq*, 2:13]

Two martyrs are commemorated by name for carrying out suicide operations on the attack of the Division 17 army base near al-Raqqah. [*Dabiq* 2: 42]

Abū ‘Umar at-Tūnisī is pictured with a camera in his hands (being alive). He is martyred at the Tabaqah airbase [*Dabiq*, 3:22]

An entire page is devoted to Abū Dujānah al-Khurāsānī, whose death is used to attack the so-called *qā‘id* (those who stay behind and abandon jihad) in order to motivate *Dabiq*’s readers to perform *hijrah* and fight jihad. [*Dabiq*, 3:28]

The resulting explosion of a “*shahādah operation*” against a “*Safawī military base*” is depicted, the perpetrator: Abū

Martyrdom is celebrated in *Dabiq* and is a narrative to help build the perfect state, since only the subjects of the Caliphate are granted paradise.

Abdillāh al-Jazrāwī. [*Dabiq*, 4:24]

Dabiq devotes five pages to the martyrdom of the prophet Yahyā (John the Baptist) [*Dabiq*, 5:4-9] and uses his death to “*inspire the Muslim*” “to stand firm in the face of *fitnah* no matter how trying the circumstances may be. [*Dabiq*, 5:8] The story also tells the reader to stay firm while enduring hardship and links this to the prophets who also endured serious hardships during their *Da’wah*. [*Dabiq*, 5:9]

Dabiq spends four pages on a heavily romanticized story on the martyr Abū Qudāmah al-Misrī who died of sniper fire while trying to save an IS medic. Of interest is that the magazine shows and describes the way of his death: “*He was breathing for about 15 minutes on his way to the hospital. A brother who stayed with him the entire time testified that despite his severe head injury and with the back of his skull totally shattered, Abū Qudāmah repeatedly uttered the shahādah just before he stopped breathing.*” Martyrdom can be quite gruesome; *Dabiq* isn’t afraid to show that. [*Dabiq*, 7: 46-49]

Dabiq spends four pages on the martyrdom of Abū Basīr al-Ifriqī (Amedy Coulibaly), the man who attacked the kosher supermarket in Paris while the attack on Charlie Hebdo was taking place. The article paints a romanticized picture of his life as a pious Muslim. [*Dabiq*, 7:68-71]

The supposed testament of Abū Khālīd and Abuz-Zubayr is released following their martyrdom as a result of a joint French and Belgium counter-terror operation. [*Dabiq*, 7:75]

The attackers of the Bardo National Museum in Tunis are glorified in the segment *Soldiers of Terror*. “[*Dabiq*, 8 17-19] *Dabiq* displays their bloodied corpses. [*Dabiq*, 8:17-18]

Chapter 4

Conclusions

Dabiq has helped us to map the utopian project that is the Islamic State. After having assessed the magazine, we can now answer the main question: **In what way does *Dabiq* frame the Islamic State as the perfect state and what is the roadmap to reach this utopia?**

The concept of utopianism has proven to be a valuable tool in assessing the messaging of the Islamic State's *Dabiq*. Even though Kolakowski regards utopianism as “a surrender to fantasy, an act of political escapism,” its consequences are manifest in the real world. It is the ambition to build the perfect state that leads to so many atrocities that they become normal and “brutalities are transformed from the truly awful to the apparently awful” in name of this perfect state, as Kloege pointed out.

Dabiq is much more than just a magazine that describes victories, or but a vehicle to recruit new fighters. Rather, *Dabiq* should be considered as a window into the ideology of the Islamic State. So often, parts of *Dabiq* have been selectively used by academics to support their hypotheses, but *Dabiq*'s contents warrant a qualitative research in order to map the state building project.

Dabiq stands in only a recent tradition of jihadi glossies in which it differentiates itself by not being a manual for terrorist acts (such as AQ's *Inspire*), but by promoting the ideology of the state building project and framing it in an eschatological narrative.

Another concept that was useful in understanding the utopian nature of IS is the term transcendental institutionalism. This term has given us the means to identify the ideology of the perfect state in *Dabiq*. *Dabiq* presents the Islamic State as the ultimate state for which there simply are no alternatives. The divine nature of IS cannot be underestimated, as *Dabiq* considers the Islamic State as the embodiment of Islam. This means that Islam ceased to exist between the fall of the earlier caliphate and was only re-established in 2014, the year the caliphate was declared anew. The caliphate is not a mere component for Islam; rather it is a condition for the religion to exist in its ultimate form. In this manner *Dabiq* also underscores the idea that there is no difference between politics and religion; both are seen as the same. Leadership (*imamah*) of the caliph is both religious and political. Even the denial of the legitimacy of the caliphate can lead to a death sentence (for entire groups even). The reasoning leading up to the inevitability of IS is embedded in Salafi

thinking: All actions, measures, laws, policies of the Islamic State are sanctioned by *Dabiq* by referring to what the earliest generations of Muslims had done (*al-salaf al-salih*). They are based on the Qur'an, *hadith* and *sira*. *Dabiq* leaves no alternative to the caliphate, establishing the institution's transcendental, divine nature.

Dabiq also has the task to activate the dynamic duties of its audience and making them urgent. It does this by presenting the status quo as incompatible to Islam, in the sense that its injustice demands immediate action against it. It takes on a sequence of steps: Swearing allegiance (*bay'a*) to the caliph (and thereby IS) and to migrate to IS territory (*hijra*) in order to spatially distance oneself from the unbelievers; taking part in jihad or building the perfect Islamic society. *Dabiq* further tries to entice its readership to make the *hijra* through promises of glory, wealth in the form of war booty (*ghanima*) and the lure of practicing an "unrestrained" form of religion (including the promise of combat, an essential component of IS's interpretation of Islam), detached from modern sensibilities rejecting violence, claiming to return to the authentic purity of early Islam.

Another way to increase a sense of urgency to join the utopian state building project, *Dabiq* frames events and institutions in eschatological narratives of immanent disaster. Even the re-establishment of the caliphate itself is portrayed as one of the Signs of the Hour. That IS is an apocalyptic organisation is confirmed by the eschatological narrative of *Dabiq*. Large parts of the magazines are committed to instilling urgency by comparing the situation to apocalyptic events and the Signs of the Hour (such as the reinstitution of slavery). By doing so, *Dabiq* frames the warriors of the caliphate as the last true Muslims on earth before Judgement Day.

Dabiq furthermore has provided us with a roadmap that will lead to the utopian Islamic State that also demands well-defined steps to be taken. It requires jihad on the basis of *hijra*, (migration) *bay'a* (the pledge of loyalty), *sam'*, (listening) *ta'ah* (obedience) and *i'dad* (preparation, training). Together, these principles will lead to *ribat* (establishment of shelters for securing the borders) and *qital* (combat). The adherence to all these elements will lay the foundation for the *khilafah* (the caliphate) or alternatively *shahada* (martyrdom). This project can only succeed if the community of believers adhere to the principle of *al-wala' wa al-bara'* and is loyal to the community and keeps distance from the unbelievers.

The plan to reach the utopian state of *khilafa* is further reached by following the military strategy of al-Zarqawi and making the *hijra* to a place that allows for the right "conditions that support jihad." There one should start by executing *nikaya* operations (injury operations) to disseminate the chaos

necessary to establish the new state and the weakening of the enemy. When chaos has mounted sufficiently, supporters of the utopian state should consolidate their power through the exertion of *tamkin* (consolidation) operations. These operations are a defining feature of IS, since they focus on territorial conquest. *Dabiq* even states that of all jihadi groups, only IS has ever reached this stage. It is the stage of *tamkin* that allows for conquests and not just mere sting, hit-and-run or martyrdom operations. *Tamkin* is the military foundation of the caliphate.

Ideologically, the perfect state is based on the *manhaj al-nabi* (the prophetic methodology), as interpreted to be practiced by the prophet Muhammad. Its expansion is strictly controlled by IS high command, as new provinces are absorbed in IS only after meeting strict criteria.

Once the Islamic State is established, *Dabiq* gives us an insight into the institutions and beliefs that support the utopian state. It demonstrates that looking after the worldly and religious affairs of Muslims is a duty of the state, just as it was for the prophet Muhammad. First of which is the service of *da'wa*: a service committed to steering the Muslims clear from evil and enjoining in good (or *hisba*). It also gives some attention to IS's infrastructure and medical services, which both are portrayed as excellent. *Dabiq* portrays IS as a state that enforces the law following a strict interpretation of sharia, which implies to implementation of corporal and capital punishment as found in the scriptures. *Dabiq* always portrays the sentences carried out as entirely lawful and in accordance with *shari'a*.

The Islamic State realises that it cannot exist when it is still integrated into the world capitalist system. It therefore wants its economy to be detached from the global economy by minting its own coins. *Dabiq* also describes taxes and further demands on its new allies who in return will gain security and stability, less crime and the possibility to fight for IS.

Dabiq mentions that the institution of slavery is a just institute for IS. It is also said to prevent adultery, because sex with slaves is not considered to be adulterous.

Military issues feature prominently in *Dabiq*. IS's military operations are always portrayed as victorious and superior, using statements from statements from western scholars and leaders to support the idea of IS being a powerful and dangerous foe. Its atrocities are unabashedly regarded as authentically Islamic and based the *manhaj al-nabi*. The *manhaj* also allows IS to recruit child soldiers into the ranks.

It is the goal of the caliphate to create the perfect Muslim. The perfectly morally motivated subject

of IS and *Dabiq* is one who first performed *hijra* to the Islamic state, along with his family (if one is unable, he should initiate *nikaya* operations in his country of residence). Interestingly, IS prides itself on the multi-ethnic background of its subjects, which it considers larger than even the earliest of Muslims. The only criteria for joining IS is total devotion to the cause. *Hijra* functions as a rite of passage between the *Dar al-Harb* and the *Dar al Islam*, evil and goodness, corruption and perfection, wiping out all the past and previous sins. *Dabiq* makes a special call to specialists and experts to join IS, suggesting they are worth more to the state building project. The perfect subject has also pledged *bay'a* to the caliph and is urged to distribute these pledges online.

Finally, the perfect subject also leads the life of jihad, which is considered an obligation upon each individual and allows for the noblest of incomes: *ghanima*. If one has obstructed IS before, in some cases he can be allowed to “repent” and join IS instead of being killed.

IS is a very masculine society and the ideal women of IS are only allowed to facilitate their husbands. They should be patient and “learn their religion”.

The perfect subject of IS is the only one that has access to paradise, which can be gained by having performed (or tried to perform) *hijra*, *bay'a* and jihad.

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Appendix A: Glossary

Listed in alphabetical order, I provide a glossary with a short description of the terminology used by *Dabiq* and the acronyms used in the thesis. It must be noted that some terms are controversial and warrant a complete book to be written, but that is outside the scope of this thesis. I also provide the terms the in the way IS has interpreted them, so this glossary provides by no means an academic discussion on the terms. This glossary should be used for reference for this thesis only.

ACRONYMS:

AQ: al-Qaida

AQI: al-Qaida in Iraq. Also known as al-Qaida in the Land of the Two Rivers.

AQY: al-Qaida in Yemen

AQAP: al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula

Daesh: An acronym of the Arabic initials of IS used by many Arabic states to describe the organisation.

IS: The Islamic State.

ISI: The Islamic State in Iraq.

ISIS: The Islamic State in Iraq and Shām.

JaN: Jabhat al-Nusrah

OSJ: Open Source Jihad

TERMINOLOGY AND NAMES:

al-‘Adnānī: The late spokesperson of IS.

Ahl al-kitāb: ‘The people of the book’, meaning Christians and Jews.

Al-Awlaki: A leader of AQAP, under his supervision the first jihadi magazine was published.

Al-Baghdadi (Abu Bakr): The first caliph of IS.

Al-Baghdadi (Abu Omar): The first emir of ISI.

Bay‘a: A religiously sanctioned oath of loyalty to a person. According IS, pledging *bay‘ah* to the aliph is a requirement for entering Paradise. **Bid‘a:** Unwarranted innovation in religion.

Bughāt: Rebels.

Caliph: A successor in Prophet Muhammad’s stead. He is by no means a prophet, rather a

supervisor of Muhammad's state building project. He is the 'commander of the faithful' and commands all Muslims in worldly and religious affairs. The word is derived from the Arabic 'to be a successor.'

Dabiq: The name of the propaganda magazine published by IS. It is named after the place Dabiq, were according to Islamic prophecy, the final battle against the 'Romans' would take place.

Dajjāl: The anti-Christ.

Dar al-Islam: 'The abode of Islam,' which according to *Dabiq* is the territory that belongs to IS.

Dar al-Kufr: The abode and territory of unbelief.

Da'wa: Known as the 'invitation to the Islamic religion.' It can also be seen as missionary work.

The Echo of Battles: The first ever published jihadi magazine.

***Fay'*:** Possessions left behind by the enemy after fleeing.

Ghanīma: Religiously sanctioned war booty. It is seen as the 'noblest' form of income for a Muslim in *Dabiq*.

Hadd: Punishment mandated by God as described in the Qur'an for offenses against God.

al-Hayat: An official outlet of IS propaganda. It is the publisher of *Dabiq*

Hijrah: 'Migration.' When Muhammad fled Mecca to go to Medinah, he performed what is known as the *Hajj*. His migration is still mimicked today by millions of Muslims, as it is one of the pillars of Islam. *Dabiq* claims that *hijrah* is mandatory for every Muslim since the re-establishment of the caliphate, but rather than Medinah as a destination, one should travel to IS territory.

Hisbah: The religious police of IS.

Hudūd: pl. See 'hadd.'

Ibrāhīm: Abraham.

Imamah: Leadership, both political and religious.

Imam: Can refer to a Muslim preacher, but in IS ideology, it often refers to the caliph.

Inspire: The official magazine of AQAP.

Isa Ibn Maryam: Jesus Christ

Jamaat al-Tawhid wa-l-jihad: The 'group of *tawhid* and *jihad*,' a Salafi-jihadi group, it was headed by al-Zarqawi before he eventually became the head of Al-Qaida in Iraq.

Jizyah: Taxes forced on Christians and Jews in order to be let alive and to practice their religion.

Jihad: A very controversial subject. According to *Dabiq* one perform jihad in combat. *Dabiq's* interpretation of jihad is holy war.

Kaffr: Infidel.

Khawārij: a group of Muslims that is considered by IS to be apostates; they are the 'leavers' of Islam.

Khalaf: successor Muslims.

Kufar: see 'Kaffr'.

Jama'ah: Community.

Khilafa: Caliphate.

Laden (Osama bin): See al-Qaida.

Al-Malhama: The final battle.

Manhaj, Manhaj al-Nabi: The prophetic methodology, or rule as Muhammad would have done.

Al-Mahdī: The redeemer of Islam, an apocalyptic figure.

Al-Masīh: The Messiah (Jesus Christ)

Millah: Religion.

Muhājirīn: Migrants.

Mujahid (pl. mujahedeen): One that fights jihad.

Mushrikin: Polytheists. Used as a derogatory term.

Nikaya operations: 'Injury operation' that focus on dealing death, injury and damage to the enemy.

Nusayrī: Those that belong to Assad's faction.

Rafidi: A derogatory term for Shi'ites.

Rumiyah: The successor of the *Dabiq* magazine, after IS lost the town of Dabiq. *Rumiyah* means 'Rome' in Arabic.

Sahāba: The companions of Muhammad

Romans: Christians.

Safawi: A derogatory term for Shi'ites.

Sahwa: 'Awakening.' A movement of Sunni tribes that fought jihadism in Iraq.

Salafism: A Sunni Islamic school of interpretation that wants to live like the *Salaf*, the earliest generation of Muslims. IS considers itself part of the jihadi-Salafi interpretation, meaning it does not shy away from violence.

Shahada: Martyrdom.

Shām: The Levant area.

Sharia: Islamic law, as based on an interpretation of Quran, Sunna and *hadith*. IS has a hard-line interpretation of Islamic law.

Shu'aytāt: A tribe that was massacred by IS.

Ta'ah: Obedience.

Tāghūt: Tyrant.

Takfīr: Declaring another Muslim to be an apostate.

Tamkin operations: Operations aimed at expanding territories through conquest and consolidation of power.

Tawhid: The belief in the absolute unity of God and His people.

Umma: The global Muslim community.

Al-Qahtani: The first editor of a jihadi magazine.

Al-Qaida: a Salafi-jihadi group that achieved worldwide notoriety due to the bombings of the USS Cole and the destruction of the World Trade Center, and its leader Osama bin Laden. It wants to expel the US and their allies from what it considers Islamic lands, gain popular support and only then establish an Islamic state. The organisation IS came to be through AQ agent al-Zarqawi and declared itself independent from al-Qaida when IS declared itself to be the caliphate.

Al-wala' wa-l-bara': 'Loyalty and disavowal.' It is a concept in which one rejects unbelief and shows loyalty to the *Ummah*.

Wālī: A governor of a *wilāyah*.

Wilāyah: A province under control of IS.

Zaka: the Islamic obligation of giving alms.

Al-Zarqawi (Abu Mus'ab): The spiritual founder of the Islamic State. Known for his brutality and his fervent belief in the imminence of the Apocalypse. He was considered a capable leader by AQ high command, but seen as too extreme in his implementation of sharia and in his attacks. He was of the opinion that it was the duty of the Muslims to re-establish the caliphate. He was killed before

his plans came to fruition, but his successors have done so in his name.

Appendix B: The Apocalyptic Events

William McCants has compiled a chronological list of apocalyptic events as published on the jihadist website *tawhed.ws*. It is based on the book *al-Ayyam al-Akhira* (The final Days) written by Adnan Taha and was released in 1997.

I have summarised the compilation of McCants, as it provides a great deal of useful information on the chronology of the eschatological events that are so often referred to in *Dabiq*.

McCants cites Musnad Ahmad on the stages in history that will lead to the apocalypse: “Prophethood is among you as long as God wills it to be. Then God will take it away when He so wills. Then there will be a caliphate in accordance with the prophetic method. It will be among you as long as God intends, and then God will take it away when He so wills. Then there will be a mordacious monarchy. It will be among you as long as God intends, and then God will take it away when He so wills. Then there will be a tyrannical monarchy. It will be among you as long as God intends, and then God will take it away when he so wills. Then there will be a caliphate in accordance with the prophetic method.”²²⁸

McCants also cites al-Bukhari on the “stage before the *Mahdi*”: “The Hour will not come until the Euphrates lays bare a mountain of gold. The people will fight over it, and ninety-nine out of every hundred will be slain. Every man among them will say, ‘Perhaps I am the one who will be saved.’”²²⁹ It is not very hard to make an analogy to the oil exploitation in Iraq.

Then, “the black banners will come from the east and they will kill you in a manner no people have been killed before.... If you see him, pledge him allegiance even if you have to crawl over snow. For verily he is the caliph of God, the *Mahdi*. (Sunan Ibn Majah)”²³⁰ It remains unclear in *Dabiq* if al-Baghdadi is seen as the *Mahdi*. The *Mahdi* is told to distribute wealth fairly and to bring justice to the world.

After the *Mahdi*’s appearance, The Muslims will fight the Romans at al-A’maq or in *Dabiq*. The Muslims will be victorious, but they will lose one third to desertion, one third is martyred and the

²²⁸ William McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press), 163-164.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 164.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 164.

remaining Muslims will conquer Constantinople. There they will plunder the city.

Following the conquest of Constantinople, Rome is also taken by the Muslims: “The cry will reach them that the Deceiver is behind them at their homes. They will drop what is in their hands and turn back, sending ten horsemen in the vanguard. The Prophet said, ‘I know their names, the names of their fathers and the colors of their horses. They will be the best horsemen on the face of the earth on that day or among the best of horsemen on the face of the earth that day. (Sahih Muslim)’”²³¹

A description is given of the Deceiver: “I said, ‘who is this?’ They said, ‘This is the son of Mary.’ Then I went and saw a corpulent man of red complexion, frizzy hair, and blind in one eye, which was swollen like a grape. I said, ‘Who is this?’ They said, ‘The Deceiver.’ (Sahih al-Bukhari)”²³²

“The Deceiving Messiah is a short man with bowed legs, frizzy hair, and blind in one eye that neither protrudes nor sinks in its sockets. (Sunan Abi Dawud)” “Between his eyes is written ‘Infidel.’ ... Every Muslim can read it. (Sahih al-Bukhari)”²³³

The anti-Christ is able to perform miracles such as resurrection. After the Deceiver camps in the area around Medinah, Jesus “will descend at the white minaret in the eastern side of Damascus [...] Every infidel who catches a scent of his breath can only die, and his breath will reach far away. (Sahih Muslim)”²³⁴ Also: “By Him in Whose hand is my soul, the son of Mary (peace and blessings be upon him) will descend among you as a fair ruler. He will break the cross, kill the swine, abolish the protection tax, and pour forth so much wealth that no one will accept it. (Sahih Muslim)”²³⁵ The Muslims will then, with the aid of Jesus, fight against the Jews who have allied themselves with the Deceiver. There Jesus finishes the Jews and the Deceiver.

At that time, the creatures or people of Gog and Magog come, “Broad of face, small of eye, and covered with hair, coming from every direction, their faces as wide as shields and as thick as a hammer. (Musnad Ahmad).” These mythical enemies will drink out of the Sea of Galilee until the sea itself is no more. They then encircle Jesus and the Muslims at Mount Sinai, where Jesus and his companions will supplicate God and God destroys the enemies. There, Jesus and the Muslims will

²³¹ McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*, 166.

²³² Ibid., 166-167.

²³³ Ibid., 167.

²³⁴ Ibid., 168.

²³⁵ Ibid., 170.

find that nothing remains of the earth but “their stench and smell.”²³⁶

“At that time Allah will send a pleasant wind that will even reach their armpits. It will take the life of every believer and every Muslim. Only the wicked will survive, committing adultery like asses until the Last Hour would come to them. No one will remain on earth saying, “God, God.”(Sahih Muslim)”²³⁷

Following the pleasant death of the Muslims, the Ka’ba will be destroyed by “the thin-legged man from Abyssinia.”²³⁸

Judgement Day follows soon after: “The Hour will not come until the sun rises from the West. When it rises the people will see it and all believe. But by then, no soul will benefit from its belief. (Sahih al Bukhari)”

“At the end, fire will blaze from Yemen, driving the people to their place of assembly. (Sahih Muslim)”

“There you will assemble, there you will assemble, there you will assemble... riding and walking and on your faces.” He pointed with his hand to al-Sham. “There you will assemble.” (Musnad Ahmad)”²³⁹

²³⁶ McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*, 170.

²³⁷ Ibid., 170-171.

²³⁸ Ibid., 171.

²³⁹ Ibid., 171.

Appendix C: Attacking IS's enemies

One easy way to identify oneself is by describing one's enemies. *Dabiq* attacks many groups and individuals who it considers to be opposed to the state building project. These texts are interesting but not necessary for answering the main question of the thesis. I do believe they provide valuable insight in IS' stance against other groups.

ATTACKING ISLAMISTS, 'HYPOCRITES' AND OTHER JIHADI GROUPS

Former Egyptian president and member of the Muslim Brotherhood Morsi is attacked for upholding secular law and falling in line with Americans, Israelis and Mubārak's army.²⁴⁰ In the article "The Extinction of the Grayzone"²⁴¹ *Dabiq* argues against "hypocrites"; Muslims who do not recognise the caliphate. The grayzone has been "demolished" because of the founding of the caliphate. It is now possible to live under Muslim rule, whereas before this was not. The article mocks the "hypocrites" for not upholding the duty of killing those that insult the prophet (a picture is shown of film maker Theo van Gogh, saying that he was "killed after mocking the messenger"). Even worse, these "hypocrites" "gathered the masses in rallies under the banner "*Je Suis Charlie*," leading them on towards the gates of Hellfire designated for the *murtaddīn*."²⁴²

Dabiq writes that because of the extinction of the 'grayzones', the Muslims in the West will "either apostize and adopt the *kufṛī* religion propagated by Bush, Obama, Blair, Cameron, Sarkozy, and Hollande in the name of Islam so as to live amongst the *kuffār* without hardship, or they perform hijrah to the Islamic State and thereby escape persecution from the crusader governments and citizens." According to *Dabiq*, the hypocrites have four traits: they "rush to the *kuffār* so as to gain power while (2) fearing calamity, (3) promising to obey the *kuffār* "in part of the matter," (4) and speaking in a twofaced tone."²⁴³ The most important statement in the article is that the world is divided in "two camps with no third in between" (i.e. the Islamic State versus the world).²⁴⁴

In the article "The allies of *al-Qā'idah* in Shām", *Dabiq* agitates against what it sees as nationalist

²⁴⁰ *Dabiq*, 7:16-19.

²⁴¹ *Dabiq*, 7:54-66.

²⁴² *Dabiq*, 7:60.

²⁴³ *Dabiq*, 7:62.

²⁴⁴ *Dabiq*, 7:66.

doctrines of al-Qaeda's allies (the *Jawlani Front* specifically).²⁴⁵ In the article "The flood of the *Mubāhalah*"²⁴⁶ Abu Muhammad al- 'Adnānī, the spokesperson of IS, called in a speech in March 2014 for *mubāhalah* (supplicating God for a curse to be upon a deceitful party). This *mubāhalah* was aimed at the Jawlānī Front (Jabhat al-Nusra) because Ash-Shāmī, a member of the sharia leadership of JaN, had said that the Islamic State is "more extreme than the original *khawārij*." That statement was refuted by al-'Adnānī. Then, in April 2014, al-'Adnānī again invoked *mubāhalah*, saying: "O Allah, if this is a state of *khawārij*, then break its back, kill its leaders, make it 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 jihād against your enemies, then keep it firm, strengthen it, support it, grant it authority in the land, and make it a *khilāfah* upon the prophetic methodology.[...] O Allah, deal with everyone who has split the rank of the *mujāhidīn*, divided their word, delighted the *kuffār*, angered the believers and set the jihād back many years."²⁴⁷

Other members of IS also invoke *mubāhalah*, this seems to happen each time the Islamic State is accused of being a *khawārij* state (such as by the 'Committee of Elder Scholars, Salmān al- 'Awdah and Nāsir al-'Umar). The invoking of *mubāhalah* stems from the Quranic vers Āl 'Imrān: 59-61. The verses describe Christians debating with the prophet on Islam, and when *mubāhalah* was proposed, the Christian delegation backed out. *Dabiq* also gives examples of companions of the prophet invoking *mubāhalah* to challenge opponents and the Godly curses (i.e. blindness, death, disease, poverty or exodus) that will befall the enemies of Islam within a year of the *mubāhalah*.²⁴⁸ *Dabiq* accuses the Islamist opponents of the Islamic State that they treat "*mubāhalah* like a childish game," and that these opponents accuse Muslims (i.e. IS) with "baseless lies and haughtily make *mubāhalah* over such."²⁴⁹

The article then ridicules Jabhat al-Nusra for its allies, because *Jaysh al-Mujāhidīn* stated that the wearing of the hijab is a personal freedom.²⁵⁰ Another ally, the Islamic Front is denounced for respecting all religious sects in Syria without exception and that they congratulated Erdogan (considered a secularist Islamist by IS) on his electoral victory in Turkey. A third damnation of the Islamic Front is that it released a declaration "with commitments free of Islam." JaN is also

²⁴⁵ *Dabiq*, 8:7-11.

²⁴⁶ *Dabiq*, 2:20-30.

²⁴⁷ *Dabiq*, 2:20.

²⁴⁸ *Dabiq*, 2:21-22, 26-27.

²⁴⁹ *Dabiq*, 2:23.

²⁵⁰ *Dabiq*, 2:24.

denunciated for entering alliances with secularists and slandered for operating “like gangs without any central leadership”.²⁵¹

A problem IS seems to have with AQ is AQ’s condemnation of the killing of “*rāfidah* [...] by the thousands,” who are considered to be Muslims by AQ but not by IS.²⁵² *Dabiq* state that all jihadi groups that oppose IS will eventually prove to be deviant, because of four major sins they commit : “arrogance, envy, anger, and desire.”²⁵³

In a lengthy article written by Abū Maysarah ash-Shāmi, “The *Qā’dah* of Adh-Dhawāhirī, Al-Harārī, and an-Nadhārī, the Absent Yemenī Wisdom,”²⁵⁴ *Dabiq* attempts to depreciate the words of certain Islamic scholars who attack IS. It accuses an-Nadhārī of rambling and interpreting the words of the Caliph “in the worst possible manner”. He is also ridiculed for having Adh-Dhawāhirī (Zawahiri) as his emir. Zawahiri in turn is attacked on not declaring *takfīr* on Shi’ites, because he claims that Shi’ites are excused due to ignorance. Zawahiri also doesn’t declare *takfīr* on “supporters of the *tawāgīt*, except for those officers who torture Muslims and belong to some specific departments of National Security.”²⁵⁵ Furthermore, Zawahiri is attacked on making a differentiation between a faction and its individual members. The problem here is what criteria are used for determining who are Muslims and therefore not allowed to be killed. According to Abū Maysarah Zawahiri did this “so he wouldn’t target the apostates for fear of killing ‘Muslims who have a misinterpretation’.”²⁵⁶ The article in short argues that Al-Qaeda commits heresy because it is reluctant in applying *takfīr*. Mullah Omar, the late Taliban leader is also attacked for seeking good relations with neighbouring countries.²⁵⁷

Dabiq also warns that one should be on guard for “misleading scholars and bewitching media,” as “some eloquence is sorcery.”²⁵⁸

An article written by Abū Jarīr ash-Shamālī describes the encounters he had with al-Zarqawi, the many tribulations al-Zarqawi endured and the jihadi-groups he encountered in Afghanistan, one of

²⁵¹ *Dabiq*, 2:25.

²⁵² *Dabiq*, 2:26.

²⁵³ *Dabiq*, 2:30.

²⁵⁴ *Dabiq*, 6:16-25.

²⁵⁵ *Dabiq*, 6:18-21.

²⁵⁶ *Dabiq*, 6:21.

²⁵⁷ *Dabiq*, 6:24.

²⁵⁸ *Dabiq* 6:38-39.

which was al-Qaeda.²⁵⁹ Abū Jarīr describes al-Zarqāwī's relationship with Bin Laden as a very positive one; al-Zarqāwī even pledged *bay'a* to Bin Laden.²⁶⁰ The organisation of Al-Qaeda is described as weak as it is unable to implement sharia in Waziristan and lacking for not explicitly calling for *takfīr* on Shi'ites.²⁶¹ Al-Qaida is then described as "a methodology of *irjā'* that refrained from many matters under the claim of caution or achieving benefit."²⁶² Jihadi scholar al-Maqdisī is attacked for not declaring *takfīr* on the scholars of al-Azhar.²⁶³ The Taliban are attacked for being too tribally orientated and that many of their sub-factions are engaged in "opium and marijuana production." The best factions among those are the *Tahrīk Taliban Pakistan*, according to Abū Jarīr, because of "a sound creed and are upon the methodology of the *Salaf*." Abū Jarīr blames the internet in the region for not having known about the establishment of the new caliphate as "it is very slow and complicated".²⁶⁴

Al-Zwawahiri is accused of setting people up against the Islamic State and that "his ideas contradict jihad and the carrying of arms, and encourage pacifist methodologies and the seeking of popular support."²⁶⁵

Muslims are warned against allying themselves with "the Jews and Christians." Osama bin Laden is quoted on this: "He who aligns with them by a single word falls into apostasy – extreme apostasy."²⁶⁶

ATTACKING THE ASSAD REGIME

IS is aware that it is framed for not fighting the Assad regime as much as it could. In the short article "The capture of division 17", *Dabiq* tries to negate these accusations. According to the account, all enemy soldiers were rounded up and executed. "The hands of the *mujāhidīn* soaked in the blood of the filthy *nusayriyyah* are a testament to the jihād of the Islamic State against Bashar and his minions." It then provides a short list of other victories against the Assad regime to remind *Dabiq*'s readers that the accusations are lies at best.²⁶⁷

²⁵⁹ *Dabiq* 6:40-55.

²⁶⁰ *Dabiq*, 6:42.

²⁶¹ *Dabiq*, 6:44-45.

²⁶² *Dabiq*, 6:45.

²⁶³ *Dabiq*, 6:46.

²⁶⁴ *Dabiq*, 6:50.

²⁶⁵ *Dabiq*, 6:51.

²⁶⁶ *Dabiq*, 4:44.

²⁶⁷ *Dabiq*, 2:42.

The Assad regime is framed as not “very good at hitting targets accurately,” and as being under the influence of the “Persian Crescent.”²⁶⁸

The sixth issue dedicates an article to Benjamin Netanyahu on the question “if the Islamic State posed a threat to the Jewish state.” Netanyahu says that IS indeed is dangerous and that “it has two million petrodollars a day.” He also is quoted in saying that fighting IS is more important than fighting the Assad regime.²⁶⁹ *Dabiq* uses his quote to depict that IS is a greater threat to Israel than Assad is.

ATTACKING THE USA AND THEIR ALLIES

The third issue of *Dabiq* starts with the fact that the USA started bombing IS on August 7, 2014. This event and others – which *Dabiq* claims have been ignored by the Obama administration and western media – have led to the execution of the journalist James Foley. *Dabiq* complains that the US supported the Maliki regime in Iraq and the Peshmerga. It also agitates against Saudi Arabian involvement. The US are accused of having killed countless of families by US military or by the private military company Blackwater, under the definition of “collateral damage.” It also states that the US were given a chance to exchange hostages, but that they refused and that the US attempted a rescue mission in de al-Raqqah area, but they supposedly failed.²⁷⁰ Furthermore, *Dabiq* declares that the number one interest of the American government is Israel, “which include the Zionist Peshmerga forces.” The photograph accompanying the article depicts Foley’s throat about to be slit by “Jihadi John”.²⁷¹

A transcript of a speech by al-Adnāni can be found in *Dabiq* 4:6-9 in which he challenges the US and their allies. He says: “Being killed [...] is a victory. This is where the secret lies. You fight a people who can never be defeated” He paints a picture of the US as a military giant who fights a losing battle, at such a level that they are being fought with their own military equipment, captured by IS. Furthermore the US are portrayed as a nation that hides behind proxies. Adnāni’s speech continues by saying that in the US and in Europe, people should be “fearing the Muslims”. You will

²⁶⁸ *Dabiq*: 4:40.

²⁶⁹ *Dabiq*, 2:56-57.

²⁷⁰ *Dabiq*, 3:3.

²⁷¹ *Dabiq*, 3:4.

not feel secure even in your bedrooms.”²⁷²

Dabiq is very aware of American politics and military strategy. It regularly quotes high ranking officers and politicians. For example, *Dabiq* challenges the assumption of General Demspey that the US would need a minimum of 15 thousand soldiers to destroy IS. The magazine tells us that the only tools of war the US have are airstrikes which *Dabiq* considers a failed effort. The director of the CIA, Scheuer, even said, as paraphrased by *Dabiq*, that “the only time airstrikes alone succeeded in determining the end of a war was the airstrikes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki!” American politics are used to describe America’s weakness: “And unlike Bush, his [Obama] administration is divided about what war is and how it should be won. They do not even know whether or not they are at war!”²⁷³

Al-Adnānī claims that nine Muslim women were killed by the Americans, the French and their allies “by striking a bus transporting them.” He then calls for IS supporters living outside IS territory to “hinder those who want to harm your brothers and state as much as you can. The best thing you can do is to strive to your best and kill any disbeliever, whether he be French, American, or from any of their allies.”²⁷⁴ These killings are encouraged later in the same issue in addition to other nations: UK, Australia and Germany. “Every Muslims should get out of his house, find a crusader and kill him. It is important that the killing becomes attributed to patrons of the Islamic State who have obeyed its leadership.” This should be done in order to prevent media from making the killings appear as random killings.²⁷⁵ Al-Adnānī orders more killings targeting the West in the seventh issue: “We will argue, before Allah, against any Muslim who has the ability to shed a single drop of crusader blood but does not do so, whether with an explosive device, a bullet, a knife, a car, a rock, or even a boot or fist.”²⁷⁶

An interview with the infamous jihadi Abū ‘Umar al-Baljīkī (Abdelhamid Abaaoud) is published in the seventh issue, long before the Paris attacks in which he participated. He ridicules the Western intelligence services for not detaining him in Belgium (he even claims that he was apprehended by police forces, but they did not recognize him on the photo).²⁷⁷

²⁷² *Dabiq*, 4:7-8.

²⁷³ *Dabiq*, 4:42.

²⁷⁴ *Dabiq*, 4:9.

²⁷⁵ *Dabiq*, 4:44.

²⁷⁶ *Dabiq*, 7:37.

²⁷⁷ *Dabiq*, 7:72-74.

LOCAL ENEMIES: KURDS AND YAZIDIS

Al-Adnānī tries to appeal to Kurdish IS sympathizers by saying that the war with the Kurds is a “religious war [...] We do not fight the Kurds because they are Kurds. Rather we fight the disbelievers amongst them.” The Kurdish Muslims are said to be “the toughest of fighters against the disbelievers amongst their people”.²⁷⁸

Dabiq attacks the PKK for being a “narcotics trafficking” organisation, communist and for the deployment of “flimsy female” fighters. *Dabiq* however does recognize the military experience of the PKK guerrillas gained in fighting Turkey. The FSA is accused of fighting for the “*kufri*” ideology of democracy, except there is no ideology for this “army” except theft and tobacco.” *Dabiq* does not consider the FSA a threat, especially the PKK. The Peshmerga is considered to be in a weakened state. According to *Dabiq* the Peshmerga had great fighters, but the contemporary fighters are “fainthearted mercenaries”.²⁷⁹

In the article “The Revival of Slavery before the Hour”, *Dabiq* tells of IS conquering Sinjar and Nineveh, where it fought Yazidis. *Dabiq* attacks the Muslim community for not having destroyed them before. The magazine cites the infamous sword verse to inform its readers to kill the disbelievers wherever they may be. The Yazidis are accused of devil worship. *Dabiq* tells us that even Christians consider them to be Satanists, “as is recorded in accounts of Westerners and Orientalists who encountered them or studied them.” IS assigned “*Shari’ah* students” to find out whether the Yazidis originated as Muslims and then apostized, or if they were *mushrikān* from the start. The students came to the conclusion that Yazidis were apostates and therefore are to be put to death.²⁸⁰

IRAN

The editors of *Dabiq* claim that Bush and Obama “are determined to do everything possible to strengthen Persian and Russian influence in the Middle East.” Al-Muhājir tells that Bush is responsible for the “spreading of Persian influence.” Supposedly, Bush allowed the Iranians to

²⁷⁸ *Dabiq*, 4:9.

²⁷⁹ *Dabiq*, 4:41.

²⁸⁰ *Dabiq*, 4:14.

exploit Iraqi resources. In addition, he claims that the “Romans” “have become slaves for the Persians.” Former US secretary of Foreign Affairs Henry Kissinger (“a cowardly Jew”) is then quoted to confirm that Iran is dangerous to Middle Eastern stability, even more so than ISIS (which *Dabiq* considers an underestimation of IS capabilities). *Dabiq* tries to counter Kissinger’s analysis by saying that Kissinger’s analysis is a materialistic one, “forgetting that true power relies in the creed of *tawhīd*” and that “Iran will never be a bigger problem than ISIS.” Obama is criticised for strengthening the Iraqi regime, “which is undeniably backed by Iranian intelligence,”²⁸¹ because the Iraqi government after Saddam Hussain mainly consisted out of Shi’ites. It is no wonder then that ties with the Iranian regime (which is also Shi’ite) are assumed by IS.

MISCELLANEOUS

One theme in *Dabiq* is the display of the atrocities committed by the enemy. For example, it shows the mutilated corpses of children, casualties of an airstrike on Ar-Raqqah (Raqqah) by the Syrian regime. *Dabiq* describes these deaths as “civilian casualties”,²⁸² a category that is not very prevalent in jihadi theory.²⁸³ The Islamic State claims to have immediately retaliated.

In any war, misinformation is a given. *Dabiq* is no exception in using misinformation to hide certain missteps of IS and to blemish the enemy instead. The magazine distances itself from the killing of Sunni Muslims in *nikaya* operations. In fact, it claims that the *nikaya* operations never targeted Sunni public places and gatherings. On the contrary, *Dabiq* blames the Shi’ites, apostates and “crusaders” for distorting the “facts”. These enemies are supposedly trying to “blemish the true images of the *mujahidin*.”²⁸⁴

Lastly, Sufism is considered to be “extreme”.²⁸⁵

²⁸¹ *Dabiq*, 4:39.

²⁸² *Dabiq*, 1:42-43.

²⁸³ See: Ella Landau-Tasseron, ““Non-Combatants” in Muslim Legal Thought,” , *Research Monographs on the Muslim World*, Series no. 1, Paper no. 3 (Washington, D.C.: Hudson Institute, December, 2006).

²⁸⁴ *Dabiq*, 1:37.

²⁸⁵ *Dabiq*, 4:15.

Summary

Dabiq is a magazine published by the Islamic State. It provides its readers with a window into the ideology of the organisation. Since the magazine is of a propagandist nature, I have used the concept of utopianism to understand the messaging of *Dabiq*. I have chosen to do this because the magazine frames IS as the perfect state.

In this thesis I argue that *Dabiq* paints a utopian picture of IS and uses an eschatological narrative in order to activate the ‘dynamic duties’ of its audience. I also describe the way *Dabiq* frames the institutions of IS and what is asked of the ‘perfect’ Muslim in the utopian state as well as the roadmap that leads to the re-established caliphate.