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THE BELIEVERS AND THE DISBELIEVERS

**An Occidental and Masculinist examination into the
construction of ISIS and the West in Dabiq Magazine**

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ABSTRACT

Following the emergence of ISIS, the organisation developed rapidly into becoming an established movement, demonstrating their success in seizing and holding territory, recruiting foreign fighters and developing an advanced propaganda machinery. The success of ISIS makes it important to investigate the forces behind their success, and the reality they construct themselves within. This project is concerned with investigating how ISIS construct themselves and the West in selected articles featured in Dabiq Magazine. Through a close-reading of three selected articles, this thesis explores the production of meaning, and to what extent this construction can be understood within an Occidental and Masculinist framework.

This analysis demonstrates how ISIS draw on Occidental and Masculinist narratives in the production of a social hierarchy that places categories of people into a pecking order. ISIS is constructed as the elite within their alterative reality, where the West – as disbelievers – are portrayed as lesser breeds. Through the analysis, it becomes clear that ISIS is appealing to the readers’ masculinity in order to communicate forward the notions of ‘the ideal man’ within the ISIS discourse. The construction of ‘the ideal man’ is inherently connected to hyper-masculine behaviour, where humiliation and sexualisation of the enemy is emphasised. The analysis also uncovers how ISIS is producing a comprehensive system of meaning that constitutes the ‘common-sense’ that is being communicated.

The aim of this thesis is to explore and to highlight the importance of a gendered perspective when investigating Occidental movements. Through a double-layered theoretical framework, this thesis hopes to examine the production of meaning within the ISIS discourse from an inter-disciplinary perspective.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Background

The historical trajectories of Iraq and Syria paint a picture of two countries formed by a history of instability and conflict. With the emergence of the Arab Spring in 2011, there was hope for a more liberal shift in the Middle East, but few could have predicted how the hopeful spring turned into a cold winter.

Within the void of the civil war in Syria and the discontinued political situation in Iraq, the world witnessed the emergence of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). In June 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the ISIS leader, proclaimed the re-establishment of a world-wide Islamic Caliphate. Over a very limited period of time, ISIS conquered a third of Iraqi and Syrian territory, successfully creating and upholding a transnational state, and achieving a goal that had previously only been an imagined reality for past Islamic insurgencies (Celso, 2014). In ISIS' quest for a world-wide Caliphate, they have also succeeded in establishing so-called *wilayats* (provinces) in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Algeria, the Caucasus region of Russia, Egypt, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and West Africa (Gartenstein-Ross, Barr & Moreng, 2016: 4), successfully spreading their ideology and encouraging insurgencies in these areas. Since the emergence of ISIS, the world continues to witness the brutality and exaggerated violence being perpetrated by ISIS members. Since their emergence, there have also been numerous terrorist attacks, both within the Muslim world and elsewhere, making the existence of ISIS a pressing matter for world security.

Through ISIS' desire to expand the Islamic State, they have developed a comprehensive propaganda apparatus, which has been identified as one of the most effective tools of both recruitment (Ingram, 2015), and expansion (Gartenstein-Ross, Barr & Moreng, 2016). The West has witnessed its own citizens answering the call to join ISIS, where they are fighting for ISIS' mission of establishing a world-reaching caliphate. The West has also been the victim of home-ground terrorism and lone-wolf attacks, inspired and influenced by ISIS. This raises the question, what is it that makes the ISIS ideology so successful? What is it that attracts and convinces foreign fighters to join their organisation? How have ISIS managed to be so successful in recruiting volunteers to perpetuate domestic terrorist attacks?

In the wake of ISIS, the organisation quickly moved from being a 'typical' Islamic insurgence group, to becoming a movement with territory, military capacity and economic assets. The success of ISIS make it important to investigate the forces behind their success, and the reality they construct themselves within. ISIS seek

to undermine the basic principles of Western society, and to replace these values with their brutal and essentialist interpretation of Islam. Since the emergence of ISIS, numerous military operations have been launched with the purpose of defeating ISIS. Previous experiences of defeating Islamic insurgencies groups indicate that military operations alone have not always been successful to prevent regroupings and new organisations to form. For me, this demonstrate that in addition to military operations, there is a need to obtain a better understanding of the ways ISIS operate. I believe that there is a need to focus on the ideas behind the ISIS ideology; ideas that legitimise and encourage the actions of ISIS. Within the Manichean world view of ISIS, the battlefield is not only taking place in Iraq and Syria, but also through a ‘war of ideas’ between believers and disbelievers.

The success of ISIS’ communication strategy demonstrates the importance of taking ISIS’ propaganda seriously. The propaganda machinery is vast, and is comprised of radio shows, movies, magazines, blogs and Social Media which are exploited as ways of connecting with, and appealing to potential audiences and recruits. In July 2014, the first issue of Dabiq Magazine was published, few days after al-Baghdadi declared that the Islamic State was established. The magazine is published by al-Hayat media, a central media communique within the ISIS organisation (Ingram, 2015). The magazine is most likely written and published in English, before being translated into multiple other languages, including German, French, Russian and Arabic (Colas, 2016). This means that the content of the magazines is designed to be far-reaching. According to Ingram (2015), the languages of the magazine reveal that the targeted audience is primarily Muslims living in the West.

Studying Dabiq Magazine provides an opportunity to investigate how meaning is produced and maintained within the official ISIS discourse. According to Fairclough (2010), discourses can be seen as imaginary realities that have the means to operationalise the establishment of such realities. This understanding of the power of language highlights the relevance of a textual examination of Dabiq. ISIS’ communication strategy has been identified as an important component of their success, and as such it becomes important to investigate the meaning that is produced.

Thesis Question

It is within these thematics I want to anchor the objectives of this thesis. In this project, I will use methods of textual analysis and a theoretical framework of Occidentalism and Masculinities. Through a close reading of three selected articles, I wish to examine how the official ISIS discourse constructs and upholds reality, by addressing the following question:

“How do ISIS construct themselves and the West in Dabiq Magazine? To what extent can this construction be understood within an Occidental and Masculinist framework?”

I believe that Occidentalism provides a fruitful framework in examining to what extent the construction of ISIS depends on the dualism which Occidentalism brings forward. Within the framework of Occidentalism, the construction of masculinities becomes a viable entry into highlighting the power-hierarchy that lies within this dualism, and to expose the construction of ISIS in opposition to the West.

Both the theories of Occidentalism and Masculinities provide useful entries into understanding the discourses which ISIS draw on. I suggest that this study’s engagement with both these theories of power-relation has the potential to shed new light on the production of the ISIS discourse. Religion holds a central role, both within the theories of Occidentalism and Masculinities; these theories, however, have not been examined together. Both Occidentalism and Masculinities order people into a social hierarchy where some groups are given more value than others. The implications of their interrelation need to be explored further, in order to better understand the construction of reality within the ISIS discourse. Looking at Dabiq Magazine within an Occidental and Masculinist framework will help to shed light on the complexity of sense-making within the ISIS ideology. Ultimately, I would argue that demystifying ISIS is also an important entry point into talking about ways of de-radicalisation.

Existing Literature

ISIS is a relatively new phenomenon, and this is also reflected in the existing literature. Since the emergence of ISIS in 2014, there has been a continuous increase in books, reports and academic literature available. Hall (2015), Lister (2015), Stern & Berger (2015) and Weiss & Hassan (2015) were some of the first to publish books focusing on ISIS. These books share a similar broad perspective. The books cover many central themes such as the background and emergence of ISIS, their ideology and objectives, their actions, recruitment and their propaganda machinery. What these books have in common is that they are broad introductory literature to ISIS. Cockburn (2015) has a more specific theme for his book, focusing on the rise of ISIS and the environmental and historical contexts that created the opportunity for ISIS to emerge. In addition to her general introduction to ISIS, Ali (2015) focuses more closely on the themes of propaganda and women. A gendered perspective can also be found in Peresio & Cervone’s (2015) and Pearson’s (2015) research, where the focus lies on the recruitment of women and the radicalisation process. Franz (2015) also focuses on recruitment,

and explores the reasons why women and men decide to join ISIS. In Spens' (2014) article, she has a gendered perspective where she investigates the relationship between performativity, machoism and ISIS, with a particular focus on ideals of masculinity and sexual superiority.

One of the central aspects within the literature regarding ISIS, is the focus on propaganda. Ingram (2015) explores ISIS' central English and Arabic communiques as a way to examine the strategic logic of ISIS' information operation; focusing on the construction of in-group and identity choice. In his more recent articles, Ingram focuses more explicitly on Dabiq Magazine. In his analysis of the content of Dabiq Magazine, Ingram (2016a) identifies and analyses the strategic logic used to appeal to the English-speaking Muslim reader. In a different research, Ingram (2016b) compares Dabiq with al-Qaeda's propaganda magazine, Inspire, to investigate the similarities and differences in their operationalisation of strategic logics. Huey (2015) also compares Dabiq and Inspire; examining and comparing the representation of women in the magazines.

Colas (2016) focuses more concretely on 'what Dabiq does', and is discussing who the magazine is targeted towards. He argues that the magazine is designed to appeal to a number of different audiences at the same time; including English-speaking second generation Muslims and converts, Western policy makers, and "would-be members of ISIS who are not integrating with the organisation itself" (Colas, 2016: 1). Ghambir (2014) published one of the first pieces on Dabiq Magazine. Through his analysis of the first issue published, Ghambir introduces the concept of the magazine and the strategic messages found in the magazine. Winkler, Damanhoury, Dicker & Lemieux (2016) focus on the visual communication strategy of the magazine, and explore the role of the images featured. It has also been published a handful of undergraduate and postgraduate theses concerned with investigating the content of Dabiq Magazine in relation to discursive and rhetorical elements (Franzén, 2015; Steindal, 2015; Bajrektarevic, 2016). It should also be mentioned that the literature concerning ISIS and Dabiq can also be supplemented by the vast literature available on the themes of Islamism, Extremism and Terrorism. This literature is vital in order to immerse oneself into the phenomenon of ISIS.

The existing literature addressing ISIS and Dabiq is constantly developing. What this review of existing literature has revealed is that there is currently no close-reading analysis of the articles featured in the magazine. Most of the research on Dabiq magazine includes all the issues as a part of their corpus. This means that they are not concerned with a close-reading, but rather to identify particular themes and topics across the articles and issues published, not looking at the totality of each article. I believe that there is an opportunity for new knowledge to be uncovered by doing a close-reading of selected articles featured in Dabiq

Magazine, and by seeing how the central themes of the magazine merge within the completeness of the selected articles. For my analysis, the framework of Occidentalism and Masculinities has developed through an interactive process between uncovering the central themes in the selected articles and relevant theory to explain these themes.

As demonstrated above, the majority of the literature having a gendered perspective focuses primarily on women. Meaning that the conversation of the nexus between images of masculinities and ISIS needs to be further engaged. For me, this indicate that there is an opportunity to focus on the construction of Masculinities within an Occidental framework to better understand the construction of the gendered perspective within the official ISIS discourse.

Reading Guide

This thesis will be divided into 6 chapters. The first chapter, as already set out, is the introduction. In the second chapter, I will introduce the framework of this thesis. Here, I will begin by presenting the theory of Occidentalism, before presenting the theory of Masculinities. In the third chapter, I will present my methods and methodology, where I will present the process of writing my thesis, and describe the analytical tools used in uncovering my findings. In the fourth chapter, I will analyse the ‘Amongst the Believers Are Men – Hudhayfah al-Battawi’ article, where I will be concerned with uncovering how masculinity is constructed in the ISIS discourse, and how the Hegemonic Masculinity is established in relation to the ‘the enemy’. In the fifth chapter, I will analyse the ‘Why We Hate You and Why We Fight You’ and ‘By the ‘Sword’ articles. Both these articles express different parts of an Occidental reality, and in this chapter I am concerned with investigating how the articles are making sense of violence and hatred. In the sixth and concluding chapter, I will discuss my findings within the theoretical framework and connect these findings to a larger picture. I will also incorporate my personal reflections and thoughts on further research.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this part of my thesis, I will present the theoretical framework for my analysis. This thesis has a dual set of theories, that of Occidentalism and Masculinities. These two sets of theories will be used together to explore the content of the selected articles in the analysis. The theory of Occidentalism puts forward a framework to understand the construction of reality which ISIS have positioned themselves within. The theories of Masculinities are used to contrast and examine the Occidental world-view through a gendered perspective, focusing on the construction of masculinities within this particular reality. Both the theory of Occidentalism and the theory of Masculinities have limitations, and my hope is that together, these theories can reinforce each other and contribute to creating new ways to explore the themes within the ISIS discourse.

2.1 OCCIDENTALISM

Introduction

Occidentalism is a theoretical concept that can be characterised as “a rejection of the cultural and political inheritance of the West, particularly shaped by the Reformation and the Enlightenment” (Heywood, 2011: 201). In relation to my thesis, Occidentalism provides a fruitful framework in understanding how ISIS, through Dabiq Magazine, portray themselves and their enemies. An important aspect of what makes the theory of Occidentalism such an beneficial entry into analysing Dabiq Magazine is that the ideas itself are not new, and thus the tendencies we are witnessing today can be linked to a wider historical context. With the emergence of ISIS in 2014, the world witnessed a new and more brutal variety of militant Islamism. ISIS demonstrated their success in both seizing and holding territory, their targeting and recruitment of foreign fighters and their advanced propaganda machinery. And as such, Occidentalism provides a framework in analysing this ‘new’ phenomenon in a historical context; demonstrating that the ideas of anti-Westernism hold historical roots and have existed for centuries. ISIS reject what the West represents, and their foremost aim is to establish a Muslim Caliphate and return to a pure Islamic society, not corrupted by modernity (Fox, 2013). The Occidental framework in this thesis allows the findings in the analysis chapters to be put into a cultural analytical perspective that can help us better understand how meaning is produced and fortified.

In this thesis, my analysis will be grounded in the theoretical framework of Occidentalism, with a particular focus on Religious Occidentalism. A more explicit focus on Religious Occidentalism allows for a better understanding of the intersection between anti-Westernism and religion. To explore the ways in which religion is used to legitimise violence against those who in the eyes of ISIS have been corrupted by Western ideas. I will begin this sub-chapter by introducing the concept of Occidentalism. I will then summarise the theoretical field of Occidentalism and present the different ways in which Occidentalism can be understood. After having introduced the concept of Occidentalism, defined it and presented various understandings of it, I will continue to the second part of this sub-chapter. Here, I will engage more specifically with the Occidentalism presented in Buruma's and Margalit's *Occidentalism: In the Eyes of the Enemy*, as my theoretical framework largely draws on their understanding of Occidentalism. Lastly, I will end this sub-chapter by contextualising the notion of Occidentalism and problematize how Occidentalism itself derives from the West.

The theoretical field of Occidentalism is complex, and consists of various different understandings, where scholars employ the notion of Occidentalism very differently. On the one side of the theoretical debate we can find the work of those scholars who position themselves as critics of the concept of Occidentalism. Their focus is to point this out and take a critical stance. This is the same approach taken by Edward Said in his books on Orientalism. On the other side of the debate, we find those who advocate the ideas of Occidentalism, and who believe in the profitability of Occidentalism, as a tool of reinforcing the East on the expense of the West. The work of these scholars consist of further developing and studying Occidentalism, taking an uncritical stance towards it.

The Occidentalist Debate

Occidentalism can be understood as being the counterpart of Orientalism, which builds on the notion that there exists a hierarchical and fundamental difference between the Orient (The East) and the Occident (The West), where the Orient is only negatively different (Thorbjørnsrud, 2001: xxi). In Occidentalism, this notion is flipped up-side down, and it is now the Occident that is portrayed and understood as negatively different. Sims defines Occidentalism as being “the construction of a West through which the Orient identifies itself as a binary opposite” (Sims, 2012: 206). This definition seems to be widely accepted amongst the majority of scholars. Sadik Al-Azm, a prominent Syrian scholar, was the first scholar to introduce the concept of an ‘Orientalism in reverse’. In the ‘Orientalism in reverse’ discourse, the Islamic world is now the civilised world, whereas the Western World is described as degenerate (Thorbjørnsrud, 2001: xxxvii). Just as Said did with his books, Al-Azm is critical to the concept of ‘Orientalism in reverse’, but uses the concept to emphasise that this idea holds currency. For the

purpose of this thesis, I will refer to the ‘Orientalism in reverse’ as Occidentalism in order to avoid any confusion.

On the other side of the debate, Hassan Hanafi is a prominent advocate of Occidentalism, as he believes it to be a necessary counter to the dominance of the West. Occidentalism as he understands it, is a science of liberation (Bonnett, 2004: 162). In his book *Islam in Modern World: Tradition, Revolution, and Culture*, Hanafi explains that “Occidentalism is a discipline constituted in Third World countries in order to complete the process of decolonisation (Hanafi, In: Bonnett, 2004: 162). Hanafi’s objective is to study, and hence objectify the West in order to enable a clearer sense of an independent Islamic identity. Hanafi has been subjected to sharp criticism, as he is advocating forward a dualistic, one-dimensional and essentialist understanding of the West (Bonnett, 2004: 162). By calling for a ‘science of Occidentalism’, Hanafi is taking an uncritical approach to Occidentalism, and by doing so, he is aiding and fortifying a dualistic and hierarchical relationship between the Occident and the Orient (Al-Azm, 2010).

Through a critical lens of Occidentalism, Al-Azm introduces a variety that he refers to as ‘Talibanish Occidentalism’. He describes it as being a particularly vulgar, barbarous and spiteful variety of Occidentalism, that emerged as a way to explain the actions and ideology of the Taliban. The advocators for this variety of Occidentalism argue that “what you, the West [...] call our backwardness is our authenticity, what you [the West] term [as] our primitiveness is our identity, what you [the West] denounce as our brutality is our sacred tradition, what you [the West] describe as our superstition is our holy war, and what you [the West] despise as our illiteracy is our ancient custom, and we are going to insist on their superiority to all that you have to offer” (Al-Azm, 2010: 8). The advocators for this variety of Occidentalism legitimise a hierarchical division between them and the West based on their interpretation of Islam as superior to everything else. Shukri Mustafa is one of the advocators for the ‘Talibanish Occidentalism’, arguing: “Glorified illiteracy and innumeracy in the true Muslim community is a part of the religious ideal of the imitatio of Muhammad himself” (Mustafa, In: Al-Azm, 2010: 8). The ‘Talibanish Occidentalism’ connects the notion of anti-Westernism to religion. The advocators of this version of Occidentalism take an un-critical view of Occidentalism, using it in the same manner as the worst forms of Orientalism have been used against the East (Al-Azm, 2010).

Occidentalism as Ideology

In *Occidentalism: In the Eyes of the Enemy* (2004), Buruma and Margalit are taking a critical stance when describing a specific variety of Occidentalism. A variety of Occidentalism that they argue is most prevalent in the Arab and Muslim world; and that connects to Al-Azm’s description of the ‘Talibanish Occidentalism’. According to Buruma and Margalit, the main purpose of this

Occidentalism is to denounce and condemn the West in every possible way (Al-Azm, 2010: 7; Buruma & Margalit, 2004). Occidentalism in this context is thus understood as an ideology that aims to “diminish an entire society or a civilisation to a mass of soulless, decadent, money-grubbing, rootless, faithless, and unfeeling parasites” (Buruma & Margalit, 2004:10-11).

In contrast to Al-Azm who believes Occidentalism is a form of anti-Westernism, Buruma and Margalit separate between the notion of anti-Westernism and Occidentalism. For them, Occidentalism is something more than ‘just’ being against the West. “The dehumanising picture of the West painted by its enemies is what we have called Occidentalism. [...]. Not liking Western pop culture, global capitalism, U.S. foreign policy, big cities, or sexual license is not of great moment; the desire to declare war on the West for such reason is” (Buruma & Margalit, 2004:5). The separation between anti-Westernism and Occidentalism allows for a focus on those who turn their contempt against the West into a catalyst for violent actions. In other words, all Occidentalists holds anti-Western views, but not all anti-Westerns are Occidentalists.

According to Buruma and Margalit, the notion of Occidentalism in the sense of the war-like variety put forward in their book, is a part of a long tradition; stretching back to Japanese anti-Westernism in the early twentieth century. The Japanese antipathy was based on the notion that science, capitalism and modern technology possessed a threat to society, and as such, these problems needed to be overcome (Buruma & Margalit, 2004: 2). Buruma and Margalit point out that the Occidentalism that emerged in the Japanese society could have nothing more than a historical interest if such ideas had lost their inspirational power. But, as Buruma and Margalit argue, such powers have not been lost; “The loathing of everything people associate with the Western world, exemplified by America, is still strong, though no longer primarily in Japan. It attracts radical Muslims to a politicised Islamic ideology in which the U.S. is featured as the devil incarnate” (Buruma & Margalit, 2004: 4).

Contemporary forms of Occidentalism are often equally focused on America, and it should thus be mentioned that ‘anti-Americanism’ can be understood as a response to specific American policies, such as support of Israel, waging war against Middle-Eastern countries, supporting multi-national organisations or anything other which goes under the notion of ‘globalisation’. For some, globalisation is often understood as a communique for U.S. imperialism (Margalit & Buruma, 2004: 8). Thus, the notion of ‘anti-Americanism’ does not always have to be grounded in specific policies, it can also be grounded in the idea of America itself, a society that is understood by its enemy as a “rootless, cosmopolitan superficial, trivial, materialist, racially mixed, fashion-addicted civilisations” (Buruma & Margalit, 2004: 8). Again, anti-Americanism does not

equal Occidentalism. It becomes a form of Occidentalism when the people living in the West are reduced to being soulless. According to Buruma & Margalit, “the view of the West in Occidentalism is like the worst aspects of its counterpart, Orientalism, which strips its human targets of their humanity. Some Orientalist prejudices made non-Western people seem less than fully adult human beings; they had the minds of children, and could thus be treated as lesser breeds” (2004: 10). “Occidentalism is at least as reductive; its bigotry simply turns the Orientalist view upside down (Buruma & Margalit, 2004:10).

For those who hold an Occidentalist view, the Occidental City is seen as attempts to replace the ‘world of God’ with the ‘world of men’. “Hubris, empire buildings, secularism, individualism, and the power and attraction for money – all these are connected to the idea of the City of Men” (Buruma & Margalit, 2004: 16). The ‘soullessness’ in the West is seen by many Occidentalists as a consequence of metropolitan hubris. Those who hold Occidentalist views see the city as inhumane, “a zoo of deprived animals, consumed by lust. The city dweller, from this perspective, has lost his soul” (Buruma & Margalit, 2004: 22). The Occident is corrupted by materialism and has sold the soul to accommodate for such materialism. It is precisely this mind-set that is seen as a threat, in the eyes of the Occidentalist. “The Occident, as defined by its enemies, is seen as a threat not because it offers an alternative system of values, let alone a different route to Utopia. It is seen as a threat because its promises of material comfort, individual freedom, and the dignity of unexceptional lives deflate all utopian pretensions. The anti-heroic, anti-utopian nature of Western liberalism is the greatest enemy of religious radicals, priest-kings, and collective seekers after purity and heroic salvation” (Buruma & Margalit, 2004: 72). Within this mind-set, the West is understood as an entity that cannot grasp higher things in life, and as such, they fail to grasp the core of achieving a pure life (Buruma & Margalit, 2004).

Religious Occidentalism

A distinction can be made between secular and religious varieties of Occidentalism. Whereas secular Occidentalism often stems from preserving traditional cultures, or viewing Westernisation as a proxy for (post-) colonialism; religious Occidentalism connects anti-Westernism to religion and spirituality. The Japanese resistance during WWII is a good example of secular Occidentalism. The hostility came from the idea that science, modern technology and capitalism needed to be overcome in order to preserve the Japanese culture and society. With the varieties of religious Occidentalism, Western thoughts are seen as a threat to their religion, especially as the West in many ways represents secularism. In many varieties of religious Occidentalism, leverage to conduct violent actions against the West and those corrupted by the Western way of life, is grounded in a particular interpretation of that religion.

Religious Occidentalism is, according to Buruma & Margalit, often portrayed more as a holy war fighting against the idea of absolute evil, the absolute evil being the West (2004:102). In the contemporary world, the main source of religious Occidentalism is to be found in certain strains of Islamism which understand the West as barbarous and savage, and believe the West represents a form of idolatrous barbarism, where idolatry is understood as the worst possible sin. Thus, it needs to be countered with all means (Buruma & Margalit, 2004:102). The notion of idolatry becomes an issue when worldly authorities demand political loyalty which contradicts the words of God. According to Buruma & Margalit, Islamists understand political reality not only in political terms but also in theological terms. This means, for instance, that Muslim countries with secular governments are accused by radical Islamists of idolatry, or religious ignorance (2004:105).

According to some Islamist discourses, religious ignorance should be understood as barbarism. Thus, there has emerged a division between those who are believers and those who are barbarians. It is a division that distinguishes between two types of human beings (Buruma & Margalit, 2004:105). However, the barbarians are not seen as entirely human. The idea of religious ignorance is understood as dehumanising: “The West, in the Occidental view, worships matter; its religion is materialism, and matter in the Manichaeic view is evil. By worshipping the false god of matter, the West becomes the realm of evil, which spreads its poison by colonizing the realm of the good” (Buruma & Margalit, 2004:106). From an Occidental perspective, matter is seen as the lowest form of being. It represents the God of the West where materialism is the religion. On the other hand, the Occidentals see themselves, the East, as free from ‘Westoxication’, in the realm of deep spirituality: “The struggle of East and West is a Manichaeic struggle between idolatrous worshipers of earthly matter and true worshipers of the godly spirit” (Buruma & Margalit, 2004: 109).

Religious ignorance is according to Buruma & Margalit the main target of radical Islamism, and thus it becomes the core of the religious Occidental discourse (2004: 115). According to Buruma and Margalit, the ‘people of the book’ have not historically been regarded as idolaters. But, within the Occidentalism they are describing, even Christians and Jews are categorised as barbarians, as they have compromised their faith. “The great worldwide clash then, was between the culture of Islam, in the service of God, and the culture of Jahiliyya [idolatry/religious ignorance], in the service of bodily needs that degrade human beings to the level of beasts” (Buruma & Margalit, 2004:120). The Occidentalism put forward by Buruma and Margalit, divides the world between the culture of Islam and the culture of Jahiliyya, where religious ignorance becomes a way to legitimise holy war. The West is presented to be “the hotbed of idolatry, the basest mode of existence, which should be eradicated from the face of this earth”

(Buruma & Margalit, 2004: 122). In the notion of holy war lies the idea of martyrdom. Within the Occidentalism put forward by Buruma and Margalit, martyrdom is presented as being the sacrifice of one's life, for the sake of protecting Islam or an Islamic nation (Gerami, 2005: 452). The idealising of martyrdom does hold historical precedents; deriving from rebellious sectarian cults operating in the Muslim world centuries ago (Buruma & Margalit, 2004: 69). "Historically, the Muslim martyr needs to have pure intentions. It is not glorious to die for selfish reasons, or gratuitously, without any effect on the enemy. The idea that freelance terrorists would enter paradise as martyrs by murdering unarmed civilians is a modern intervention, one that horrifies many Muslims. Islam is not a death cult" (Buruma and Margalit, 2004: 69).

In accordance with the emergence of modernity, and as a result of parts of the Islamic world beginning to adopt Western ideas of secular law, Muslim radicals started to call for a war against the Muslim leaders who had been corrupted by the values of the West (Buruma & Margalit, 2004). The rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in the late 1920s is a prime example of such formations taking place. The Muslim Brotherhood was founded with the goal of establishing an Islamic State based on Islamic law (Mitchell, 1969). They set out to fight both secularism and nationalism, and operated until recently under the slogan: 'Allah is our objective; the Qur'an is the Constitution; the Prophet is our leader; Jihad¹ is our way; death for the sake of Allah is our wish'. This kind of thinking has in later time been adopted by a strain of Islamist movements. "Those who strap themselves with bombs are often motivated by revenge. But those who dispatch them see this as a battle between holy warriors who are ready to die and people addicted to 'Komfortimus'" (Buruma & Margalit, 2004: 70). In more recent time, militant Islamists have, according to Buruma and Margalit, taken a more exclusive view of the 'Unity of God', where there are no longer a division between the peaceful domain of Islam and the war-filled domain of infidels. To these militant Islamists, the whole world is now the domain of war. Thus, the aim of holy war becomes anchored in establishing a divine law to surpass the laws made by humans (Buruma & Margalit, 2004: 125).

The most prominent radical version of such a variety of Occidentalism can, according to Buruma & Margalit (2004), be found in Wahhabi-Salafism. An extremely dogmatic variety of Islam, that advocates strict adherence to Sharia Law and to the social structures of early days Islam (Stanley, 2005). Over the last

¹ The notion of Jihad can be divided between greater (akbar) Jihad and lesser (asghar) Jihad. The literal meaning being 'struggle in the way of God'. For most Muslims, Jihad is understood as an inner struggle for faith (greater Jihad) (Heywood, 2011: 197). In this thesis, however, the notion of Jihad is exclusively used to describe the external struggle for God (lesser Jihad), equated with the notion of 'holy war'.

century, this Wahhabi-Salafism has been exported and spread throughout the world. And with the exportation of Wahhabi-Salafism, a fiery brand of Occidentalism spread along with it (Buruma & Margalit, 2004: 136).

The Occidental Paradox

The emergence of Islamic revolutionaries in the 20th century, was, according to Buruma & Margalit, facilitated, and sometimes even encouraged by secular regimes in the Muslim world. This does, according to Buruma and Margalit, demonstrate the paradox of how Western modernity and nativist revolt both stem from the same establishment. Thus, “No Occidental can ever be entirely free from the Occident” (2004: 144). This shows how the ‘war against the West’ is based on distortions, and itself represents a paradox. According to Buruma and Margalit, it is the synthesis of religious zealotry and modern ideology, of ancient bigotry and modern technology, that makes the tendencies of Religious Occidentalism, communicated through militant Islamism, so lethal (Buruma & Margalit, 2004: 144). All humans have prejudices, but when such fallacies construct a reality where some groups of people are positioned as lesser – and these ideas gather revolutionary force – it can lead to the destruction of society and human beings (Buruma & Margalit, 2004).

2.2 MASCULINITIES & ISLAMISM

Introduction

The study of gender within the discipline of International Relations (IR) and Terrorism Studies has often been reduced to only being relevant for women; who ‘have gender’, whereas the ‘genderless’ men have been dismissed (Jackson, et al. 2011). Such views of gender fail to recognise that gender is just as much about women and femininity as it is about men and masculinity. Just like Occidentalism, gender politics order categories of people into a hierarchy. A hierarchy where those men who conform with gender norms and heteronormative standards (in the given society), have more power than women and those men who do not cohere with the masculine norm (Jackson, et. al. 2011). It becomes imperative to recognise the role of gender in order to understand extremist movements, militarism and violence. As Jackson et al., argue: “political violence and terrorism are shaped and formed by gender dynamics: the former simply cannot be understood without acknowledging the importance of the latter” (2011: 75). For Ni Aolain, it becomes especially important to understand men as gendered subjects, “and think about the ways in which gender identity, gender status, and gender rewards intertwine with the choices of men to become engaged in politically motivated violence, including Jihad” (2016). In the West, it is worth mentioning that the construction of men in the Muslim world has been affected by an orientalist stereotyping, where the diversity of masculine expression within

the Islamic world has been diminished. This essentialist understanding of Muslim Masculinities has constructed Muslim men into being naturally violent and aggressive.

I believe that a focus on masculinities can be a useful strategy to uncover how ISIS view themselves and their enemies. Both Orientalism and Masculinities are implicated through notions of power and recognition; and I believe that these two theories together can support each other to sustain a broader and more complex understanding of ISIS. In my analysis, there will be particularly two focal points. The first being how the authors implicitly draw on certain discourses of masculinities in order to communicate their ideals. And secondly, how the authors sexualise the West. Orientalist theory lacks a focus on gender; this means that combining the theory of Orientalism and the theory on Masculinities can be an opportunity to study ISIS from a new inter-disciplinary perspective.

In this sub-chapter I will begin by introducing the concept of masculinities and the relevance of a gendered perspective in my thesis. I will also put forward central aspects of Connell's theories and concepts, with a particular focus on Hegemonic Masculinity and gender configurations. Then, I will look at globalised masculinities as an entry into the relationship between masculinity, militarism and terrorism. Following this, I will address the topics of Muslim masculinities and Islamist Masculinity. It becomes important to clarify the distinction between Muslim masculinities as an overarching category in which incorporates all expressions of masculinities within an Islamist framework. Whereas Islamist Masculinity is a particular expression of Muslim masculinities. In the last section, I will address the relationship between Islamist Masculinity, hyper-masculine behaviour and sexualisation of the enemy.

The Field of Masculinities Studies

The field of Masculinities Studies has received growing interest over the last few decades (Edley, 2001; Sandberg, Larsen & Pedersen, 2004). Masculinity can be defined as being "the social and physical characteristic associated with being a man, and is stereotypically linked with strength, emotional stoicism, power, dominance, and the like" (Jackson, et al. 2011: 77). This means that Masculinities Studies are concerned with the positioning of men in a gendered order. Connell argues that since gender is a way of structuring social practice in general, and not a specific type of practice, it becomes inevitable to include other social structures such as race and class (2005: 75).

According to Edley, there has been a growing consensus amongst scholars that language should be understood as a key starting-point in understanding men and masculinities (2001: 189). Buchbinder also proposes such an understanding,

elaborating: “the textual representation of gender behaviour is [an] extremely powerful factor in the way people behave. Thus, there is a reciprocal relationship between actual behaviour and the representation of behaviour: the latter may reflect (or be thought to reflect) the former, but may also influence the former” (1994: 76). Such an understanding of the importance of textual representation of masculinity, is vital to the project of exploring the gendered and masculine production found in Dabiq Magazine. This also connects to what Foucault refers to as discursive power, where gender differences are being reproduced through language and symbols.

Connell and ‘Hegemonic Masculinity’

Connell’s *Masculinities* from 1995 is regarded as one of the biggest contributions to the field of Masculinities Studies, and has been widely used, cited and acknowledged. The notion that there are different types of masculinities has opened for new ways of understanding power hierarchies; not only those between men and women, but also those between men (Langeland & Hoel, 2016). In *Masculinities* (2005) Connell identifies four types of masculinities, – Hegemonic Masculinity, Subordinate Masculinity, Complicit Masculinity and Marginalised Masculinity, – which can be placed in a hierarchal pecking order. It is important to emphasise that these masculinities are constructed in relation to each other, and cannot exist without each other. As such, it is important for Connell to examine the relationship between these masculinities and how they intersect with other categories such as race and class (2005: 76). On the top of the pecking order we find Hegemonic Masculinity. “Hegemonic Masculinity is not a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same. It is, rather, the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations; a position that is always contestable” (Connell, 2005: 76). Connell defines Hegemonic Masculinity as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (2005: 77). This means that there will always be one variety of masculinity that is culturally heightened.

The hegemonic position is a position that is associated with having power. Power is however a broad category which can be exercised in a variety of ways. We can talk about soft power, hard power, physical power, psychological power and discursive power, to mention some. This means that for a man to possess the hegemonic position there is not necessarily any need to exercise physical power. Connell argues that “it is the successful claim to authority, more than direct violence, that is the mark of hegemony (though violence often underpins or supports authority)” (2005: 77). This means that the extent of physical power present, will depend upon each given society. According to Connell, violence (physical power) can be a way of claiming or asserting masculinity in group

struggles (2005: 83). Violence is a part of a system of domination, but according to Connell it also measures its imperfection; because “a thoroughly legitimate hierarchy would have less need to intimidate” (Connell, 2005: 84).

For Connell, Hegemonic Masculinity and power become inherently intertwined with holding a large cultural and economic capital (Connell, 2005) Sandberg, Larsen & Pedersen (2004:319) argue that the economic capital is something Connell takes as given when describing the concept of Hegemonic Masculinity. This might be a fruitful starting-point when analysing Hegemonic Masculinity in a Western context, but it becomes more challenging when applied to the study of non-Western societies. Within the Occidental discourse, economic capital is not seen as a positive attribute. Instead it is understood as a key characteristic of the Western society and should therefore be avoided (Buruma & Margalit, 2004). As such, it will be important to identify which types of capital hold currency in the texts. Only then can I determine what desired capital(s) those holding the hegemonic position should possess. Siraj supports such a notion, arguing that it is possible for groups to create their own ‘local’ hegemonic masculinity position (2014: 102).

Globalised Masculinities

Over the last century, the world has become increasingly globalised, a fact which has led to new ways of understanding masculinities. According to Gelfer, it is especially the non-Western masculinities that have been focused on in the works on masculinities and globalisation. However, it is important to acknowledge that the exposure of the global masculinities predominantly takes place from a seat of privilege (Gelfer, 2014: 4). The combination of masculinities and globalisation can manifest itself in various ways. As Bauman notes; “globalisation divides as much as it unites” (Bauman, In: Gelfer, 2014:2). This means that globalisation can also mean localisation. Therefore, masculinities will be influenced by the social, political and historical traditions found in each society. It is within the environment of a global hegemonic masculinity, based on Western ideals, we can talk about the emergence of an Islamist Masculinity. A type of masculinity that emerged as a reactionary force to the expansionist history and objectives of the West, and more concretely the U.S. (Rygiel, Hunt & Barber, 2016). Before engaging with the literature regarding Muslim Masculinities and Islamist Masculinity, I will present some of the literature regarding masculinity, militarism and terrorism.

Masculinity, Militarism and Terrorism

In more recent time there has been an increasing call for a focus on the relationship between masculinity practices and the production of terrorism (Ahmed, 2006; Eichler, 2014; Jackson, et al., 2011; Ni Aolain, 2016). As Higate & Hopton comment; “the nexus linking war, militarism, and masculinities has remained an

enduring and consistent feature of societies and their cultures across time. Despite these close linkages, it is surprising that scholars have tended to overlook the masculinist dimensions of the military” (2005: 432). As such, I believe it becomes useful to talk about Militarised Masculinity in the context of ISIS. Eichler defines Militarised Masculinity as “the assertion that traits stereotypically associated with masculinity can be acquired and proven through military service or action, and combat in particular” (2014: 81). Eichler argues that the traditional characteristics associated with Militarised Masculinity includes toughness, violence, aggression, courage, control and domination. But he also points out that when investigating Militarised Masculinity, it needs to be investigated in relation to the context-specific and dynamic social structure of that particular society or group (Eichler, 2014: 82).

It should be mentioned that even though men are not inherently militaristic, just as women are not naturally peaceful, militarised masculinity is central to the perpetuation of violence in international relations (Eichler, 2014: 81). Higate & Hopton argue that historically there has been a reciprocal relationship between militarism and masculinity. A relationship that on the one hand uses ideologies of idealised masculinity to uphold the ideal of men collectively risking their lives for the greater good and for the rest of society. Whereas on the other hand, militarism contributes to reproduce and uphold the ideals of masculinity (Higate & Hopton, 2005: 434). “The links between hegemonic forms of masculinity and the military are surprisingly tenacious, and in tracing many practices to the level of the state and more globally, it is clear that militarist values continue to have disproportionate influence on the ways in which hegemonic masculinity is both created and reproduced” (Higate & Hopton, 2005: 444).

Muslim Masculinities and Islamist Masculinity

When talking about Muslims and Islam it becomes very important to emphasise the diversity of Islamic culture, identities, traditions and interpretations. Unfortunately, there have been numerous cases where Muslim men have been considered as a single essentialised category (Ouzgane, 2006: 6). This essentialist categorisation of Muslim men has been rooted in an Orientalist context, that was enhanced following 9/11. As a result, Muslim men have been “naturalised as violent, subsumed by discourses of terrorism, patriarchal backwards cultures, and religious fanaticism” (Murthy, 2010, In: Siraj, 2014: 102). Such an essentialist take on Muslim masculinities needs to be avoided in order to prevent stereotyping being reproduced.

In the Muslim world, scholarly attention towards gender issues has largely focused on understanding women and femininity. By contrast, the study of men and masculinities is almost non-existent (Siraj, 2014). There are however a few examples that need to be mentioned. Ghousoub & Sinclair-Webb’s *Imagined*

Masculinities: Male Identity and Culture in the Middle East (2000) has been characterised as being “the first serious collection that addresses the different aspects of being and becoming a man in the modern Middle East” (Ouzgane, 2006: 1). Another important collection is Ouzgane’s *Islamic Masculinities*, which investigates the various aspects of masculinities in the Arab world and how these masculinities are constructed within particular social and historical contexts. Ouzgane understands masculinities in the Islamic context as something that emerge “as a set of distinctive practices defined by men’s positionings within a variety of religious and social structures” (2006: 2). Other scholars, such as Siraj, have also focused on how Muslim masculinities become negotiated through religion. She believes that “in order to better understand Muslim men’s masculine identities there needs to be a greater recognition of religion as an influential aspect in the construction of masculine identity” (Siraj, 2014: 101).

Muslim masculinities should be understood as the overarching category where all types of masculinities are represented. As such, we can say that Muslim masculinities refer to the gender identities of a diverse Muslim world “across boundaries of nationalism, ethnicity and class” (Gerami, 2005: 452). Islamist masculinity being one of these expressions.

Hyper-Masculinity and the Sexualisation of the Enemy

In the emergence of modern day Islamic fundamentalism, that developed in the last part of the 20th century, a new image of an ideal masculinity became constructed. A masculinity that was heavily influenced by the values and attributes found in a purist interpretation of Islam. Gerami (2005) argues that the emergence of this masculinity can be understood as a reaction to the global Western hegemonic masculinity. The Islamic fundamentalism that emerged in the 20th century adopted a retroactive ideology, which also meant that their gender discourses are dictated by religion (Gerami, 2005). Gerami sees the emergence of Islamist Masculinity as a result of this period. A result of an era where Jihad and Shahadat (martyrdom) have become completely externalised “in the service of a persecutory paranoia that is focused on single-mindedly routing out all perceived ‘enemies of Islam’, everywhere” (Ahmed, 2006: 29).

Gelfer argues that it is often the ‘losers’ of globalisation that retreat to religious fundamentalism as an alternative to the ‘new world order’ (Gelfer, 2014: 2). He believes that the attackers behind the 9/11 attacks are prime examples of this. These men were well-educated and middle-class, but Gelfer argues that they were not prospering under globalisation. As a result, they “sought to restore their privileged masculinity in their other campaign for a particular Islamic culture” (Gelfer, 2014: 3). Ni Aolain aids to such an argument, stating that “in the context of terrorism, radicalism and extremism it is critical to recognise the ways in which these sites enable men to authenticate their masculinity through the performance

of and rewards of violence” (2016). She argues that if some men feel as though they cannot meet the normative expectations of masculinity, many find solaces in radical or extremist political mobilisation, as it offers a compelling substitute for regular masculine authentication (Ni Aolain, 2016). She believes that it is not accidental that extremist groups manipulate gender stereotypes in their recruitment process. She notes, ISIS “employs hyper-masculine images to portray its fighters, as well as promised access to sexual gratification, marriage, and guaranteed income as rewards for the glory of fighting. These motifs have proven indisputably alluring to marginalised men whose capacity to access any similar social capital or status in their own communities will be extremely limited” (Ni Aolain, 2016).

When describing Islamist masculinity, it can be helpful to understand it as an expression of hyper-masculinity. Through the militarisation of masculinity, everything considered ‘feminine’ becomes denigrated, and the construction of the warrior is put in opposition to femininity (Tickler, 2011). Through the militarisation of men, stereotypical masculine traits become emphasised and seen to represent power and pride (Scheff, 2006). Hyper-masculinity can thus be understood as a ‘pumped-up’ form of masculinity which can be characterised by a desire for power. Where strictures against femininity and homosexuality have become particularly intense and where there is a high acceptance for physical strength and aggression (Jackson, et al., 2011: 77; Ni Aolain, 2016). We can talk about a ‘re-masculinisation of war’, “which glorifies macho aggression and sharply polarises images of the enemy” (Jackson, et al., 2011).

According to Tickler, “warrior[s] is often contrasted with an enemy who is portrayed as dangerous often through the use of feminised and sometimes radicalised characteristics” (2011: 268). The notion of feminising the enemy is inherently connected to a sexualisation of the enemy. This is a behaviour that is reinforced by hyper-masculine behaviour, where the enemy becomes sexualised as ways of humiliating and discrediting. In the War on Terror, there have been reported multiple cases where Western actors have used the sexualisation of the enemy with the purpose of dehumanising them. Most notorious is the sexual humiliation of detainees in the Abu Ghraib prison by American soldiers. According to Jackson et al., “the process of ‘othering’ the enemy and the humiliation of the enemy combatants and population during war has often involved representing them in propaganda material in homophobic and sexually graphic and humiliating ways” (2011: 80).

With the emergence of ISIS, there has been an inversion of the actions of the West. This inversion demonstrates the similarities found in the Occidental and Orientalist traditions, where Occidentalism and Orientalism reflects the worst aspects of the counterpart. When the ‘othering’ of the enemy becomes inherently

interconnected to the sexualisation of the enemy, the importance of a gendered perspective becomes evident. Jackson et al., note that “the sexualisation of [...] others associated with ‘the enemy’ thus positions or frames ‘the other’ as sexually perverse, thereby reinforcing the boundary between deviants and our ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ sexuality and peaceful way of life” (2011: 81).

In the nexus of hyper-masculine behaviour and Islamist masculinity the exaggerated violence can be seen as a way to assert the position of a superior masculinity in relation to the enemy. As Spens points out: “To reduce a person to something less than human, and to portray a person in sexual terms in order to discredit them, is a way to discredit not only an individual, but the cause and even civilisation that this person is seen to represent” (2014). In this intersection between Islamist Masculinity and hyper-masculine behaviour the relevance of Occidentalism within a gendered perspective becomes clear.

2.3 SUMMARISING THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I have now presented the broad fields of Occidentalism and Masculinities that will provide the theoretical framework for this thesis. By investigating ISIS from an Occidental perspective, one can understand their ideology not from some ‘unique pathology’, but as a phenomenon that has derived from ideas that have historical context (Burma & Margalit, 2004). Through the communique of Dabiq Magazine, it will be interesting to examine what parts of Occidentalism are drawn on, and how Occidentalism becomes manifested within the production of meaning. Occidentalism does not have a gendered perspective; thus, it will be enlightening to investigate how the construction of masculinities within the Occidental discourse is produced. Masculinities provides a framework for understanding the construction of ISIS and their enemies within a gendered configuration. It will be interesting to examine how the distribution of power is divided within the relationship of ISIS and their enemies, and to examine what tools the authors use as a way of degenerate and dehumanise the enemies. Combined, Occidentalism and Masculinities will provide a double layered theoretical framework that will be able to explore different expressions of power and the social hierarchy within the ISIS ideology. Together, Occidentalism and Masculinities provide background and context to understand the world-view enforced through the ISIS ideology.

3. METHODS & METHODOLOGY

The basis for this project is anchored in my desire to explore the construction of reality within the official ISIS discourse. I was curious as to how ISIS constructed their reality, what discourses and meaning-production they drew on, and how the West was constructed within this reality. In the previous chapters I have presented my theoretical framework of Occidentalism and Masculinities, which will form the analytical perspectives of this thesis. In this chapter, I am concerned with presenting and reflecting on the methods and the methodological process of this thesis. I will begin by presenting and discussing the methods used in this thesis. Then I will present the data collection process and the selection of the three articles that are the basis for my analysis chapters. Lastly, I will present my analytical strategy.

Qualitative Research

For this thesis, I have chosen a qualitative approach. A qualitative study can be characterised as being a methodological perspective engaged in an in-depth inquiry of a social phenomenon as opposed to a quantitative study, which emphasises prevalence and quantity (Thagaard, 2013). A central characteristic of qualitative research is its interpretative nature. The interpretations of the phenomenon are grounded on logical arguments that occur during the process between the primary data, the theories and the analytical tools presented to support the findings (Thagaard, 2013). The qualitative approach is concerned with exploring the totality of the situation, highlighting meaning-production and processes that cannot be measured in quantity or frequency. Whereas the quantitative approach focuses on variables independent from a societal perspective, the qualitative approach interprets the phenomenon within its societal context (Thagaard, 2013: 17). For me, it is essential that I analyse the articles in Dabiq Magazine within its societal context in order to better understand their construction of reality.

Within qualitative research, flexibility is a key component in achieving a good analysis. Throughout the qualitative process, the construction of the thesis question and the process of analysing the primary data are overlapping and influencing each other. The qualitative approach is often inductive, which means that the primary data set the premise for the methods and theories available. This means that it is important to create an open research question at the beginning of the process, which allows for flexibility and alternation in accordance with the new content that the analysis of the primary data uncovers (Sørensen, Høystad,

Bjurström & Vike, 2008). As such, the theoretical and analytical tools will develop along the process as a part of the analysis and argumentation.

Such an explorative approach became an important part of my research design, as I felt it was important for the material itself to set the premises for the relevant theories and analytical tools. Thus, in the beginning of the process I had a very open preliminary research question, “*how do ISIS legitimise themselves through text?*”. During the course of this project, this preliminary research question developed in accordance with the primary data, relevant theory and findings, to become more specified and narrow. Having an open research question allowed me to explore the primary data free from any severe restrictions.

Just as with any methodological approach, there are strengths and weaknesses associated with a qualitative study. The qualitative approach allows for a deep understanding of a social phenomenon through a flexible and open process of data collection, theoretical reflection and the interpretation. Together these factors contribute to developing new ways of understanding the social phenomenon within its societal context (Thagaard, 2013). This flexibility means that the objective of a qualitative research is not to ‘test’ a hypothesis, nor to prove a theory right or wrong. Instead, it is an approach used to obtain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon through the close examination of the phenomenon within its societal context.

On the other hand, a close examination of a phenomenon means that the approach is time consuming. As a result, time will put a limitation on the quantity of the primary data. Thus, in comparison with a quantitative approach, the amount of data being processed is limited. This can lead to the validity of the research being questioned. Therefore, it is particularly important to discuss the decisions and selections made throughout the process; in order to demonstrate the transparency and the validity of the research (Taylor, 2001).

In qualitative studies, there is also the question of the role of the researcher in the analysis. To what extent is the researcher partial in the development of the findings in the analysis? As Thagaard (2013) points out; the researcher will always be influenced by his or her existing knowledge and lived experiences. As such, it is also important for the researcher to reflect over his or her role, and any preconceived understandings that might influence the outcome of the thesis. Taylor puts forward the notion that all knowledge produced in research is partial, as all texts are situated within a particular construction of reality and set of interests (2001: 319). My analysis will be influenced by the fact that I am studying ISIS from an outside perspective. I have no relations to the region or to the ideology, except for my interest and studies of these phenomena. As a white,

Western, non-religious female, these categories have shaped who I am and how I see the world, and will thus influence the nature of my analysis.

Document Analysis and Dabiq Magazine

I knew from the beginning of my project that my primary data would consist of ISIS' propaganda magazine, Dabiq. As such, my primary data became the starting-point when deciding on a method. Within the field of qualitative research, the methods most commonly used are interviews, observations, textual analysis and visual analysis (Thagaard, 2013). The nature of my primary data ruled out both interview and observation as feasible methods. As I was concerned with how meaning was produced, I was drawn to the method of text analysis. At its most basic form, text analysis is concerned with how other human beings make sense of the world through text. It is a way to uncover how these human beings make sense of who they are, and how they see themselves in relations to others. I should mention that most qualitative methods are in some ways expressed through texts. As such, it becomes useful to separate documents from other qualitative texts. Documents are here understood as texts that have been written by someone other than the researcher, with a different purpose than what the researcher is using these documents for (Thagaard, 2013). Dabiq Magazine, can be understood to be such a document.

As I have not myself produced the material for this thesis, it becomes important to evaluate the sources behind Dabiq Magazine in relation to the environment where the magazine was created (Thagaard, 2013). Dabiq Magazine was first published in July 2014; shortly after ISIS's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, declared a worldwide caliphate. The establishment of the magazine needs to be seen in direct relation to this event, as the magazine sets out to portray a picture of ISIS as to how they see themselves. The magazine covers the aspects of state-building, holy war, ISIS' interpretation of Islam, and migration. Central aspects of ISIS' campaign to demonstrate the 'true' reality of ISIS, and the 'real' life within the so-called 'Islamic State'. Dabiq Magazine is published by the ISIS run Al-Hayat Media, a media center fully dedicated to communicating the official ISIS ideology. As such, the texts in Dabiq Magazine should be understood as being a part of the official ISIS discourse. This means that an analysis of the content of Dabiq Magazine, will be able to say something about the ideology of ISIS.

As discussed, a qualitative approach is time consuming, and as a result the primary data will consist of a relatively small selection. For my thesis, I have decided to do a close reading of 3 selected articles. A close reading is a method where the researcher engages with the text at a very thorough level. The idea is that a close reading of the text will uncover layers of meaning that would not have revealed themselves the first time reading the text. Thus, close reading as a method

becomes a way to uncover the layers of meaning in the text, that in extension can lead to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied. In regard to my thesis, the quantity of my material can be divided into two groups; the background articles and the selected articles. The background articles become the framework to understand the content and situation of the selected articles; whereas the selected articles are those articles that have become the basis for my analysis chapters. I do recognise that my material is relatively small. But at the same time, the texts are challenging and advanced in their language, requiring time to uncover the layers of meaning.

Data Collection and Initial Analysis

I started the process of collecting my primary data by downloading all the available issues of Dabiq Magazine from the webpage of ‘the Clarion Project’. The Clarion Project is a non-profit organisation that is working towards educating the public of the dangers of Islamic extremism. This webpage is one of two online sources I have found researchers most commonly use. This webpage, along with Jihadology.net, offer secure pdf files of all issues of Dabiq Magazine published in English. When I first began the collection process, there were 13 issues available (January 2016). This number has now increased to 15 issues (May 2017). It should also be mentioned that since the last Dabiq Issue was printed in July 2016, al-Hayat Media have launched a new propaganda magazine, presumably replacing Dabiq Magazine.

After downloading all the issues available, I realised that the corpus of all the issues combined would be too substantial to undertake, given the framework and time restrictions of this master thesis. Thus, in order to narrow down my material, I created a table overview of all the articles featured in each magazine. In this overview, I also included the frequency of each article and identified the main theme or topic of each article.

Name	Issue	Frequency	Theme/Topic/Genre
‘From the Pages of History’	7-15	9	Legitimising current events through ISIS interpretation of history
‘Among the Believers Are Men’	7-15	9	Obituaries of ISIS members
‘Islamic State Reports’/ ‘Operations’/ ‘Military Reports’	1-15	15	News reports
‘To Our Sisters’/ ‘From Our Sisters’	7-13	7	Female etiquette

‘In the Words of the Enemy’	1-15	15	How ISIS is portrayed by their enemies + criticism of how ISIS are portrayed
Interviews	7-15	9	Interview with ISIS members – their motivation, life and goals

(Table: Showing some of the most frequently featured articles/columns in Dabiq)

The overview allowed me to obtain a better understanding of the magazine, as well as to identify the recurrence of certain articles series and the themes most frequently featured. During this process, I realised that the structure and layout of the first 6 issues looked unfinished and unprofessional, compared to the remaining 7 issues published later. For me, this indicated that the first 6 issues were a part of an ongoing development in establishing the identity of the magazine. From the 7th issue and onwards, the layout, content and structure were more concise and more professional looking. In addition to this observation, it also made sense to me to focus on the newest issues of Dabiq released, as the existing literature at this point, mainly focused on the first issues of Dabiq published. Combined, these two factors helped me make the decision of narrowing down my primary data to comprise of issue 7 to 13. However, as mentioned, during the process of writing this thesis, 2 more issues were released. As such, I changed my primary data to consist of the last 7 issues published, namely issue 9 to 15.

At this point in the process I knew I wanted to select three articles that would each make up one of my analysis chapters. To prepare myself for this selection I spent substantial time familiarising myself with my primary data. I knew that I wanted to conduct a close-reading of a few articles, but that these articles needed to be representative for central aspects of the magazine in general. By conferring to the table overview I made, I knew which articles were most frequently featured. This became my starting-point for selecting the first article. Having familiarised myself with the article series most frequently featured, there was especially one article series that caught my attention, namely the ‘Amongst the Believers Are Men’ series. There was something about the glorification of death that caught my attention, a theme that I found to be a central part of what was being communicated throughout all the issues published. As I wanted to do a close-reading of one article, I decided that I needed to find one article within this series that would be a good representation for them all. I made my decision by writing down key components and characteristics of the article series. These characteristics included; glorification of death, the ‘journey’ towards death, a chronological structure and a moral/preach at the end. I decided that the ‘Amongst the Believers Are Men – Hudhayfah al-Battawi’, featured in the 9th issue of Dabiq would be a good representation of the article series. All the characteristics listed

above were present in the article, and I found it to be a ‘typical’ article within the series. I will present the selected article more thorough in the analysis chapter.

There was a time gap between selecting my first article and selecting my remaining two articles. During this time, I had conducted the analysis of the selected ‘Amongst the believers are Men’ article. This analysis contributed in shaping the direction of my thesis, and thus, the selection of the next articles. During this first analysis, I found the direction I wanted my thesis to have, namely how ISIS construct themselves in opposition to the West, within the frameworks of Occidentalism and gender configurations. Having narrowed down the purpose of this thesis through the first analysis, this meant that I now needed to find two more articles that could be incorporated within such themes.

I dismissed my original plan of having three analysis chapters. Instead I wanted to focus on the dualistic relationship between Occidentalism and Masculinities. The ‘Amongst the Believers Are Men’ article focused on the construction of Masculinities within an Occidentalist framework. I now wanted to find two articles that represented different expressions of Occidentalism, in the context of making sense of the ISIS ideology. Having familiarised myself well with my primary data, I knew that the last issue of Dabiq published, explicitly focused on the differences between ISIS and the West. This theme has been a central aspect throughout the issues published, but I found it interesting that the producers decided to explicitly dedicate a whole issue on this topic, especially when it was the last issue of Dabiq published. Going through the issue, there were especially two articles that stood out, namely, ‘Why We Hate You and Why We Fight You’ and ‘By the Sword’. I felt as though these two articles expressed a clear Occidentalist mind-set, but at the same time had a different topic and purpose. These articles will also be better introduced in the analysis chapter.

Analysis Strategy

As an analytical strategy, I decided to continue the explorative approach when first engaging with the selected articles. Thus, I did not have any pre-determined theories or analytical tools decided when starting the analysis process. Instead, it was important to me that the texts themselves set the premises for the relevant theory and analytical tools. Through a close-reading of the texts, I wanted to have ‘thick’ descriptions, meaning that I wanted to engage closely with the texts in order to interpret the meaning behind the themes presented. Even though I did not have any particular theory or analytical tools, I knew that I wanted to have a critical perspective when engaging with my material. According to Thagaard, a critical perspective is particularly concerned with revealing ideologies and taking a critical stance towards the established structures in society (2013). Another important aspect of having a critical perspective is that the findings should be seen

in a more comprehensive way. For me this meant that the findings in my articles should be linked to an overarching discourse or ideology seen in relation to ISIS.

Within the broad field of critical theories and analytical strategies, I have been particularly influenced by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA focuses on uncovering the relationship between discourse, power, domination and social inequality, making it a beneficial approach to understand how language becomes a way of producing and reproducing dominance (Van Dijk, 1993). A central aspect of CDA is to unveil the role of discourse and to determine how these discourses play into an unequal power distribution (Jørgensen & Philips, 2013). This is something I have been particularly concerned with in my analysis. CDA proposes numerous ways of unveiling the power-distribution and hidden discourses; one of these tools are subject positions. To focus on subject positions means to focus on how the author is positioning the different actors within the texts. What do they have in common? Who are seen as 'the ideal'? Which attributes are given to describe the different actors? How are they positioned in relations to each other? To uncover these questions, I have drawn on Reisigl & Wodak (2005) strategy to determine how the authors are categorising and representing the different actors in the texts. In my analysis, I have been particularly concerned with the construction and positioning of the in-groups and out-groups in the texts. To examine these positions, I have focused on the dichotomies, subject positions and metaphors present in the texts. I have also focused on the attributes and characteristics that are used to describe and positioning the actors in the texts.

In this chapter I have set out the methodological framework for this thesis and reflected over the process of conducting my analysis. I recognise that this thesis is heavily grounded within the theoretical framework of Orientalism and Masculinities, where the methods inspired from CDA are used to supplement, and as analytical tools to uncover the thematics within the theoretical framework.

4. CONSTRUCTING 'THE IDEAL MAN'

Introduction

In this chapter, I am going to analyse the 'Amongst the Believers Are Men' series, through a close-reading of the 'Amongst the Believers Are Men – Hudhayfah al-Battawi' article. In this analysis, I am concerned with investigating how masculinity is constructed in the ISIS discourse, and how Hegemonic Masculinity is established in relation to the construction of the enemy. In this analysis, I will be drawing on the theories of Orientalism and Masculinities for a theoretical framework, and will be supplementing by using analytical tools inspired from Critical Discourse Analysis. This chapter will consist of three main sections. In the introductory section, I will present the article series and the selected article that will be the focus of this analysis. I will also discuss the genre of the article series, and what this genre can reveal with regards to the purpose of the articles. I will end the introductory section by summarising the narrative of the 'Amongst the Believers Are Men – Hudhayfah al-Battawi' article. In the main section, I will engage in a close reading of 'Amongst the Believers Are Men – Hudhayfah al-Battawi', where I will follow the article chronologically. In the last section, I will have a concluding reflection, where I summarise the findings and connect loose ends.

The 'Amongst the Believers Are Men' series has been a permanent feature of Dabiq Magazine since first presented in the 7th issue. The series has also reappeared in ISIS's newest propaganda magazine *Rumiyah*. The permanence and continuation of this article series thus suggest that the contents of the articles is perceived as important within the ISIS discourse. The genre of the 'Amongst the Believers Are Men' series can be characterised as obituaries, where each article is a memoir of one specially selected fighter who, according to the articles, succeeded in achieving a martyr death. Each article follows the life of the selected fighter in a chronological order, narrating the reader through the fighter's life and actions on his way to death. In the end of each article, there is always a 'moral' being presented, calling all Muslims to answer. The 'Amongst the Believers Are Men – Hudhayfah al-Battawi' article can be found in the middle of the 9th issue of Dabiq, and consists of 3 pages with text and photos. It is also worth mentioning that the article has no credited author. As discussed in the methods chapter, I understand this article to be a good representation of the article series, as it can be characterised as being a 'typical' article in relation to the characteristics of the series.

The ‘Martyr’s Wedding’

In a Western context, the genre of obituary has been defined as being “a report, especially in a newspaper, that gives the news of someone's death and details about their life” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2017). In larger newspapers, it is common that only people of significance are given obituaries. These obituaries are accounts of one person’s life, of a biographical character. As Dabiq Magazine is an important part of the ISIS propaganda machinery, it could be suggested that the men featured in the ‘Amongst the Believers Are Men’ series are categorised as ‘people of significance’ within the ISIS discourse.

In a research conducted on obituaries in Jordanian newspapers, Al-Ali differentiates between two genres. The first genre communicates so-called ‘normal deaths’, whereas the second category communicates unusual deaths, which Al-Ali refers to as ‘martyr’s wedding’ (2005: 8). Simplified, ‘martyr’s wedding’ is an obituary genre that communicates the death of a martyr, and should therefore be celebrated (Al-Ali, 2005). Al-Ali found that what separates the ‘martyr’s wedding’ obituaries from those communicating ‘normal deaths’, is that the ‘martyr’s wedding’ obituaries also incorporate a promotion of the deceased, as well as communicating a feeling of pride and honour on the part of the announcer (Al-Ali, 2005: 5). Building on the ‘martyr’s wedding’ genre, the ‘Amongst the Believers Are Men’ series can be interpreted as being tributes to those fighters that have entirely devoted their lives to the ISIS ideology. One can also assume that the article series serves an inspirational purpose, where the objectives are to encourage the reader to follow in the footsteps of the featured fighters.

ISIS have seen the death of many of their members. This raises the question; why have these particular men been selected to be featured in Dabiq? My hypothesis is that these individuals have distinguished themselves from the crowd, and represent something that ISIS wish to communicate to the reader. I believe that these men represent an idealism within the ISIS discourse. With idealism, I mean that these men are perfect representations of the attributes and values desired in the construction of ‘the ideal man’. The name of the article series, ‘Amongst the Believers Are Men’, and the opening line of the article featuring al-Battawi, “*Hudhayfah al-Battawi was a man in a time in which men were few*” (Dabiq, #9: 40), both support this claim. According to Fairclough, ‘the ideal’ in a text can be understood as hidden power relations. It is the author that holds the power to narrate the text, thus deciding what to incorporate and what to dismiss (2001: 41). With this in mind, the idealism featured in the article on al-Battawi can then be understood to represent the values and attributes the author regards as ideal. In accordance with the objectives of this analysis, it will be interesting to see how idealism is manifested in the construction of masculinity, and the construction of the hegemonic position.

Summary of ‘Amongst the Believers Are Men – Hudhayfah al-Battawi’

Al-Battawi was an Iraqi commander in the previous Islamic State Iraq (ISI), a predecessor to ISIS. Al-Battawi most likely joined the ISI movement shortly following the fall of Saddam Hussain. According to the article, he began his ‘career’ engaging in bombing against the coalition forces, but eventually he moved into working with media and propaganda. Al-Battawi continued to work in the media section until he was arrested, most likely in the mid-2000s, where he remained incarcerated for a few years. According to the article, during his time in prison, Al-Battawi memorised the Quran and led prayers in the Camp Bucca, the detention facility. Following his release, al-Battawi continued to work for the ISI movement, now as the emir (leader) of the ar-Rasafah region in Baghdad, under the leadership of Mamf al-Rawi, the Wali (governor) of Baghdad. During the period al-Battawi worked together with ar-Rawi, Baghdad became the victim of a series of brutal and deadly attacks. Together the two of them targeted government institutions – the article on al-Battawi explicitly mentions the attack on the Central Bank and the Defence Ministry. Following these events ar-Rawi was arrested, and al-Battawi was, according to the article, assigned the leadership of Baghdad as its new Wali. During his time as Wali, al-Battawi launched an infamous attack against the Our Lady of Salvation Church, slaughtering Christian worshippers during mass. The massacre in the Our Lady of Salvation Church intensified the initiative for the coalition forces to find al-Battawi, and in 2010 al-Battawi was arrested (the Telegraph, 2011). According to the article, al-Battawi was told by no other than al-Malaki, the Iraqi Prime Minister, that he would soon be executed by hanging. One of the last acts of al-Battawi was thus an orchestration of a rebellion in the prison, cooperating with other prisoners and coordinating with allies on the outside. During the attempted jailbreak, it was reported that more than 10 al-Qaeda/ISI militants were killed, one of them being al-Battawi (Reuters, 2011). Al-Battawi was killed in 2011, leaving a wife and a child he never met behind.

The Character of al-Battawi

The author is anchoring the article featuring al-Battawi in spiritual discourses, where the author is narrating the reader through al-Battawi’s spiritual journey towards martyrdom. In the opening line, al-Battawi is positioned as a man, and his family’s reputation as a good Muslim family is used to validate the good character of al-Battawi. “*Hudhayfah al-Battawi was a man in a time in which men were few. [...] He stemmed from a good, muwahhid family known for sacrifice and generosity*” (Dabiq, #9: 40). Through the values of sacrifice and generosity, the author is beginning his journey of producing what makes a man within the ISIS discourse. The author is describing al-Battawi as “*a dentist who did not dream of esteem and wealth like many doctors, because he never saw delight and relaxation in other than Jihad*” (Dabiq, #9: 40). The notions of ‘delight’ and ‘relaxation’ becomes indissociable from the notion of Jihad. Thus, militarism has

become a requirement for the experience of delight and relaxation. It becomes clear that the author is drawing on spiritual and military narratives in the construction of ‘the ideal man’ within the ISIS discourse, where Jihad is portrayed as the ultimate achievement.

In the quotation, the author is also emphasising that even though al-Battawi was a dentist, he distanced himself from materialism and egoism; characteristics that the author is associating with being a dentist. From an Occidental perspective, this is explained by a need to distance al-Battawi from vanity and material things, as finding pleasure in such meaningless things are traits associated with the Occident culture (Buruma & Margalit, 2004). As such, al-Battawi is situated in a lofty spiritual space above the materialist Occident, as he has not been tempted by meaningless materialism. The attempt to distance al-Battawi from materialism also indicates the promotion of a desired masculinity, an ideal masculinity that stands in contrast to how the author sees the ideal masculinity being constructed in the West. Drawing on Connell’s (2005) theory of Hegemonic Masculinity, al-Battawi can be understood as a proxy for the promotion of a hegemonic masculine ideal within the ISIS discourse. As discussed in the theory chapter, in a Western context, the hegemonic man exercises power through the possession of large cultural and economic capital (Connell, 2005). Within the ISIS discourse, materialism is rejected, and power must be exercised by possessing other attributes. In the rejection of the Western symbol of power, it becomes clear that Occidentalism sets the premises for the social construction of masculinity within the ISIS discourse.

The spiritual journey of al-Battawi starts with accounts of violence, and as such, spiritual heights become indissociable from the acts of military violence. “*He used to detonate explosive devices against the crusader patrols – who were insignificant in the sight of this lion – to turn them into severed body fragments mixed with their vehicles’ wreckage*” (Dabiq, #9: 40). The narrative of al-Battawi’s actions communicates a nonchalance in how the enemy is portrayed; the value of their lives being associated with material things, such as a burning car. The dehumanisation of the enemy is a central feature with Occidentalism, where Western society is diminished into being soulless and decadent (Buruma & Margalit, 2004). To reduce the value of certain lives is something Butler addresses in her *Frames of War: When is a Life Grievable?*, where she argues that some lives are portrayed as less grievable, and thus less valuable than others (2009: 24). Just as Western media frames war in a particular way, the author is doing the same in this article. Butler argues that when a life is seen as grievable, that life belongs to someone like ‘us’, someone who you can relate to. Thus, the world can be divided into ‘grievable’ and ‘un-grievable’ lives from the perspective of those who are waging the war (Butler, 2009). In the article, the

author is communicating forward the notion that the lives of ‘the enemy’ is not grievable, but rather a desired outcome.

In the article, the author is putting forward a notion where there is a hierarchical division between ISIS and their enemies, reinforcing the Manichean division of ‘us’ and ‘them’. In the positioning of al-Battawi as superior to ‘the enemy’, the author is drawing on the narratives of hyper-masculine behaviour as a way to humiliate and discredit the enemy. The honour of al-Battawi becomes inherently connected to his excessive and brutal humiliation of ‘the enemy’.

He (rahimahullah [honorary phrase]) was eager to achieve Shahadah [the declaration of faith], so he got what he was yearning for, not dying until he made the apostate cry, deliberated them with wounds, and made them taste death and sadness that kindled in them the pain of defeat and failure (Dabiq, #9: 42).

The author is communicating forward that serving God is not just about sacrifice. It is also about conducting the most brutal forms of militarism, not only killing the enemy but also inflicting pain and humiliation. Within this narrative, the author is also communicating a specific content to the notion of achieving Shahadah, where brutal violence is put forward as a requirement of being a good Muslim, linking militarism to the core of being a devoted Muslim. As discussed, the hegemonic position is associated with power, but power can be manifested in various ways. In the Western context, power is often exercised through having a large cultural and economic capital (Connell, 2005). However, when talking about a militarised masculinity, acts of militarism and masculinism reinforce each other and become expressed through hyper-masculine behaviour (Eichler, 2014). Within a militarised masculinity, the hegemonic position seems to be amplified through physical violence. The notion of exercising power through denigrating and humiliating ‘the other’ is a concept not only seen within expressions of Islamist Masculinity, but also in the West. The torture and sexual humiliation of prisoners in Abu Ghraib demonstrate that the ideals put forward by the author in this article, are also expressions of masculine behaviour found in the West. This displays the similarities that can be found in the hyper-masculine behaviour of the most devoted Occidents and Occidentalists.

So he ignited it with vehicle bombs, demolishing the fortresses of Rafidah as well as their Safawi and Crusader master, in retaliation for the religion of Allah against the filthy mushrikin and in revenge for the honour of Ahlus-Sunnah, which was desecrated at the hands of the most evil creatures to tread on earth (Dabiq, #9: 41).

The author continuously draws on narratives of militarism as a way to demonstrate power, and to reinforce the positioning of al-Battawi as a ‘the ideal man’. In the positioning of al-Battawi as the avenger of Islam, the narratives of militarism and masculinism become inherently interconnected with the spiritual foundation that legitimises and heightens al-Battawi’s actions. In the construction of Islam as being in the midst of a war, al-Battawi is portrayed as the hero in the cosmic war between the believers and the disbelievers.

A Growing Spiritual Capital

The narrative of al-Battawi begins with accounts of violence, but eventually he is transferred from the military department to the media section, “*because of the brothers need for him in this domain*” (Dabiq, #9: 40). It seems important to the author to justify why al-Battawi went from being directly involved with fighting ‘the enemy’, to working in the media department. This can be understood as to imply that there is a notion within the ISIS discourse that some positions are more desirable and ‘ideal’ than others. It indicates that there is a hierarchy within the ISIS organisation which favours direct violence over non-violent contributions. This also aids to the argument that ‘the ideal man’, within the ISIS discourse, is closely connected to physical violence as a way of demonstrating strength and power. Al-Battawi ‘sacrificed’ being involved with direct violence in order to help his brothers, which are spiritual values. It is paradoxical that al-Battawi ‘sacrificed’ being involved with violence in order to help his brothers out. This demonstrates a complexity in ‘the ideal man’ discourse, where militarism and spiritualism becomes undifferentiated. Here we can talk about an ‘ideological dilemma’, where there are opposing ideals in the ‘common sense’ within the ISIS discourse.

Al-Battawi worked in the media department until he was arrested. During his incarceration, he was prevented from engaging in militarism and propaganda. With these possibilities taken away, the author shifts the focus of the article towards explicitly communicating al-Battawi’s spiritual devotion and spiritual journey. Al-Battawi “*remained utterly steadfast and stayed there some years during which he increased his knowledge and studied Allah’s book until he ultimately memorised it by heart completely*” (Dabiq, #9: 40-41). The author is emphasising the benefits of being incarcerated. Prison is portrayed as a place that facilitates spiritual growth. As such, al-Battawi’s time in prison is portrayed as having reinforced his beliefs. In accordance with a growing spiritual capital, the author is situating al-Battawi increasingly within a leading role.

He used to lead the brothers in prayer, completing a whole recitation of the Qur’an, [...]. He mixed with more virtuous brothers, people of goodness, and experience. He used to fast and pray a lot at night, striving to be closer to Allah (ta’ala). He was a close friend for his brothers and a source of steadfastness for them wherever he was (Dabiq, #9: 41).

In accordance with al-Battawi's spiritual growth, the author is introducing new attributes and behaviours to the construction of 'the ideal man' within the ISIS discourse. During al-Battawi's time in prison his spirituality grew, and as such, he increasingly become a leader and role model for his 'brothers'; arising to a more heightened position than previously. Even though the word 'brother' is used, indicating that al-Battawi and his 'brother' are equal, it becomes clear that al-Battawi is of a higher rank. He is portrayed as a leader and someone his 'brothers' and the reader should idealise. This also supports the argument that the hegemonic man within the ISIS discourse becomes powerful and exercises power through possessing a large spiritual capital, linking a specific form of Islamic spirituality to the core of being 'the ideal man'.

The Framing of al-Battawi and the Framing of 'the Enemy'

In the transition from al-Battawi's time in prison to his release, there is a spiritual to military slippage, where the focus on spirituality becomes subordinate to the narrative of militarism. Al-Battawi left prison "*with increased steadfastness, knowledge and experience*" (Dabiq, #9: 41). The author is implying that al-Battawi's time in prison was a spiritual journey that strengthened his beliefs. In accordance with this strengthened faith, the coming narrative of the article reveals that the increased spiritual capital feeds into an increased military capital, where the narratives of brutality and violence against 'the enemy' become increasingly more aggressive and brutal.

The author is continuously drawing on narratives that glorify violence, and these function as a way of demonstrating power. But, as pointed out by Connell, violence also demonstrates the weaknesses of the hierarchy, as a completely legitimate hierarchy would not need to intimidate (2005: 84). This paradox reveals itself in the article. Narrating the reader through the success of al-Battawi's military operations, where "*they raided the most heavily guarded places like the Central Bank and the Defence Ministry, the latter being a base for joint operations with the crusaders*" (Dabiq, #9: 41), al-Battawi can only be portrayed as powerful and successful by also acknowledging the power of the enemy. Because only by acknowledging 'the enemy' as powerful could the successful attacks be communicated as massive achievements.

"He [al-Battawi] ignited war and launched attacks under the leadership of the notable Wali Nanaf ar-Rawi (rahimahullah). Thus, they launched the famous Battles of al-Asir (the Prisoner), by which the strongholds of the Safawi Rafidah collapsed and the Rafidi bastion of shirk and the bases of the mushrik army were demolished" (Dabiq, #9: 41).

In the construction of al-Battawi as a warrior, the author is discursively positioning ‘the enemy’ in opposition to him. Al-Battawi and ar-Rawi are portrayed to be initiators, ‘igniting war and launching attacks’, whereas ‘the enemy’ is the victim of these actions. When naming ‘the enemy’, the author is using derogatory terms to emphasise the dualistic relationship between the true believers and disbelievers. ‘Safawi’ is a pejorative name for Shia Muslims and ‘Rafidah’ is an Arabic word meaning ‘rejecters’. The author is taking the authority to decide who holds the ‘correct’ beliefs, and who, in the option of the author, has rejected Islam. It becomes clear that ‘the enemy’ is not solely confined to being the West, it is everyone who ISIS deem as unbelievers, and thus being an obstacle in ISIS utopian reality. To limit the credibility of ‘the enemy’, the author is using pejorative names as a discursive tool to discredit and legitimise violence towards these groups. *“He terrorised the Safawi regime and degraded it, deploying heroic soldiers armed with silencers. They sent the criminals and leaders of kufr off to Hellfire”* (Dabiq, #9: 41-42). The author is continuing the narrative of heightening al-Battawi’s military achievements. The quotation reveals a power hierarchy, where the distribution of power solely lies with al-Battawi and ISIS. Legitimised through his beliefs, al-Battawi is given the power to decide who is allowed to speak, and who must be silenced. This exposes the intolerability that lies at the heart of the ISIS discourse, where those who oppose the ISIS ideology are refused to speak and need to be exterminated.

It becomes clear that ‘the enemy’ is not only the West. From one perspective, this means that the contents of the article exceeds the theory of Occidentalism, since the theory of Occidentalism divides the world between the Orient and the Occident. However, in this article, the enemy is presented to be everyone who does not support the ISIS ideology. Using an Occidental framework, this can be explained by the notion that within the ISIS ideology, all the enemies have been conflated under the rubric of the West. As discussed in the theory chapter, militant Islamists have taken a more exclusive view of Islam, which includes a rejection of all the other branches of Islam that do not comply with the ISIS ideology. This means that ISIS see their enemies to be those, from their perspective, that are guilty of Jahiliyya (idolatry). As Buruma & Margalit put it; this way “the struggle of East and West is a Manichean struggle between idolatrous worshipers of earthy matter and true worshipers of the godly spirit” (2004: 109).

Throughout the article, the author is drawing on rhetorical tools in order to describe the ‘in-groups’ and ‘out-groups’ in the text. Throughout the text, al-Battawi is referred to as being ‘a man’, ‘good’, ‘heroic’, ‘lion’, ‘close friend’, ‘steadfast like anchored mountains’, ‘knight’ and more. These names, characteristics and metaphors stand in stark contrast to the names used to describe ‘the enemy’. ‘Crusader’, ‘cowards’, ‘filthy mushrikin’, ‘most evil creatures to

tread on earth', 'criminals', 'kufr', 'tyrannical crusader', 'rafidals', 'apostates', 'the enemy of Allah', 'them', 'people of falsehood'. There is a continuous othering throughout the text which promotes and builds up on a Manichean world view, of 'us' and 'them'. The author is drawing on discriminatory discourses as linguistic tools in his objectives of positioning the disbelievers in a dialectic relationship with the believers, reinforcing the Occidental world-view.

Towards Martyrdom

During al-Battawi's time as Wali, he orchestrated an attack against the Our Lady of Salvation Church where he "*sought to avenge the honour of the sisters imprisoned by the tyrannical crusader Copts in Egypt*" (Dabiq, #9: 42). This quotation is the only place in the article which mentions 'sisters'. According to Bourdieu, manliness is, in addition to be determined in relation to sexual and social reproductive capacity, also measured in "the capacity to fight and to exercise violence (especially in acts of revenge)" (Bourdieu, 2001: 51). Al-Battawi is portrayed as having taken it upon himself to restore his 'sisters' honours through physical violence against Christians. According to Bourdieu, women are only able to defend or lose their honour, as their virtues are successively virginity and fidelity. But "a 'real' man is someone who feels the need to rise to the challenge of the opportunities available to him to increase his honour by pursuing glory and distinction in the public sphere" (Bourdieu, 2001: 51). In the construction of al-Battawi as 'the ideal man', his manliness becomes positioned in the opposition to the femininity of his 'sisters'. Drawing on notions of hyper-masculine and hyper-feminine behaviour, where the role of the man is linked to the protection of women.

The attack on the Our Lady of Salvation Church received widespread media coverage, and the pressure to have al-Battawi arrested increased. Following his arrest, "*the Rafidi enemy of Allah, Nouri al-Maliki, met him and told him that he would soon be executed by hanging, he replied to him that he wasn't concerned and that life and death were only in Allah's hands and not in his*" (Dabiq, #9: 42). Knowing his time on earth was limited, al-Battawi would not be killed without putting up a fight.

Then he and the brothers with him began coordinating from inside the prison with the brothers outside. They provided them with two pistols, TNT explosives, and detonators. The smuggling method was clever and their surveillance apparatuses and security procedures were unable to uncover it (Dabiq, #9: 42).

Within this quotation, there is an ambiguity in the ISIS discourse. ISIS' greatest objective is to establish a world-reaching caliphate returning to the purity that was during the time of Mohammad. However, the author is highlighting the use of

modern technology, such as pistols, TNT explosives and detonators to achieve such objectives. The military discourse thus becomes anchored in modern warfare, whereas the spiritual discourse is grounded in an ancient spirituality.

Together, the two quotations above illustrate that al-Battawi did not accept that his life was put in the hands of others. For him, life and death was only in the hands of Allah. As set out in the beginning of the article, al-Battawi's biggest wish was to achieve martyrdom. Within the ISIS discourse, martyrdom becomes inherently linked to military actions against their enemies that ends with the ISIS fighter being killed. Building on the arguments of Baudrillard, the Occidentalists have a 'weapon' that the Occidents do not have, and that is the willingness to sacrifice their own life (Baudrillard, 2003: 20). Through the proxy of al-Battawi, the act of martyrdom is portrayed as both symbolic and sacrificial. As Baudrillard puts it: "they [terrorists] have succeeded in turning their own deaths into an absolute weapon against a system that operates on the basis of the exclusion of death, a symbol whose ideal is an ideal of zero deaths" (2003: 16).

Al-Battawi was both a husband and a father. However, "*the worldly life, its pleasures, and adornments did not succeed in tempting him even for a single day*" (Dabiq, #9: 42). From an Occidental perspective this can be seen in relation to the belief that the world is polluted by the mind of the West; a mind that "cannot grasp the higher things in life, for it lacks spirituality and understanding of human suffering" (Buruma & Margalit, 2004: 75). The author is communicating forward a notion that sacrificing everything for the sake of Allah will be rewarded. This sacrificial decision becomes connected to the core of being 'the ideal man'. "*We ask Allah (ta'ala) not to deprive us of His reward, nor to make us succumb to tribulations, and to generously bestow upon him as well as his brothers the reward and high rank in Jannah*" (Dabiq, #9: 42).

Al-Battawi's journey towards martyrdom is coming to an end and, in the concluding parts of the article, the author is directing his attention to the reader: "*every Muslim should raise his head out of pride for these men, with glory and honour, in the face of the people of falsehood*" (Dabiq, #9: 42). This is what it means to be a man in the eyes of the author, and as such "*Hudhayfah al-Battawi was a man in a time in which men were few*" (Dabiq, #9: 40).

Conclusion: 'The Ideal Man'

The article featuring al-Battawi has been anchored in spiritual discourses, where the author has narrated the reader through al-Battawi's spiritual journey of achieving martyrdom. In the positioning of al-Battawi as 'a man in a time in which men were few', it becomes clear that this article is also communicating forward the values and attributes desired in 'the ideal man'; 'the ideal man' within the ISIS discourse. Through the proxy of al-Battawi, the author has been able to

communicate forward a comprehensive ‘list’ of attributes and values that are a part of the idealism presented in the text. Al-Battawi is portrayed as a devoted believer with a sole mission of achieving martyrdom. He is characterised as being strong – not tempted by worldly matters – and not being defeated in his beliefs when experiencing hardship. Instead, hardship is communicated as an experience that strengthened al-Battawi’s beliefs; growing his own spiritual capital. Al-Battawi is portrayed as a fearless man, not being scared of dying; his greatest wish is to achieve martyrdom. He is portrayed as a man who takes leadership and displays brotherhood. In the construction of al-Battawi as ‘the ideal man’, the author is discursively positioning al-Battawi in opposition to the construction of ‘the enemy’. The author is drawing on dichotomies to reinforce the superior position of al-Battawi over ‘the enemy’. The construction of ‘the enemy’ is thus a tool to heighten al-Battawi and to demonstrate power. The author is highlighting the hyper-masculine behaviour towards ‘the enemy’ as a way of emasculating their value and to de-masculinise their behaviour.

In the construction of ‘the ideal man’, I believe it is a strategic decision to do so through the obituary of al-Battawi. In doing so, the author is creating an environment where manliness is being questioned. I also believe that to question the masculinity of the reader, especially those influenced by the ISIS ideology, is an effective tool in making the reader more receptive of the ‘common-sense’ put forward in the article.

The obituary genre allows the author to present idols for the readers to idealise; idols that represents a particular spiritual masculinity that can only be achieved through martyrdom. Throughout al-Battawi’s journey, he became increasingly more ideal in accordance with his growing spiritual and military capital. His journey towards martyrdom is also a journey of becoming ‘the ideal man’. As such, masculinism is being enforced through Jihad. In the article, death is continuously glorified. The ‘martyr’s wedding’ genre demonstrates that the whole article is a celebration of al-Battawi’s death, and communicates a pride on behalf of his achievements. This analysis has uncovered that serving God, spirituality and militarism become inherently indissociable. In the narrative of being a ‘good Muslim’ (Shahadah), there is a requirement for Jihadism against the Occident and their ‘polluted mind-set’; continuously relating the notion of being a man to violence. The article constructs a brutal variety of masculinity anchored in an Occidentalist world view. The sole purpose for ‘the ideal man’ presented to be Jihad and martyrdom, where all else must be sacrificed. God comes first.

5. MAKING SENSE OF VIOLENCE AND HATRED

In this analysis chapter, I am going to analyse two selected articles featured in the 15th issue of Dabiq Magazine; namely ‘Why We Hate You and Why We Fight You’ and ‘By the Sword’. This will be supported by the framework of Occidentalism and supplemented by theories on Masculinities and methods from Critical Discourse Analysis. In this analysis I am concerned with investigating how the authors are making sense of violence and hatred in these two articles. I am interested in the role of Occidentalism and the role of Masculinity, as well as how these are discursively manifested as ‘common sense’ in the articles.

This chapter will consist of four parts. In the introduction I will present the specific issue of Dabiq from which I have selected the articles. In the second part, I will begin by giving a brief introduction and summary of the ‘Why We Hate You and Why We Fight You’, before analysing the article. In the third section, I will also begin by presenting the ‘By the Sword’ article, providing a short summary, before engaging with the actual analysis. To conclude this chapter, I will have a joint discussion and conclusion of my analysis of these two articles. Here, I will discuss how these two articles are making sense of violence and hatred, and how this can be seen in relation to the objectives of ISIS.

Introduction and background

The articles ‘Why We Hate You and Why We Fight you’ and ‘By the Sword’ were both published in the 15th issue of Dabiq Magazine, which became available in July 2016. Each issue of Dabiq has been assigned to a particular theme, and in the 15th issue the theme was to persuade the Western reader to make sense of the ISIS ideology. *“In essence, we explain why they [‘the Crusaders’, ‘pagan Christians’, ‘liberal secularists’ and ‘sceptical atheists’] must abandon their infidelity and accept Islam, the religion of sincerity and submission to the Lord of the heavens and the earth”* (Dabiq, #15: 4). The theme of the 15th issue can be seen to demonstrate a shift in the primary targeted audience. It moves from predominantly addressing second-generation Muslims in the West to addressing seculars, Jews and Christians in the West.

In the polarity between ISIS and the West, it becomes clear that the authors are narrating the articles through Occidental discourses, that amplifies and legitimise the division between ISIS and the West, in order to make sense of the violence and hatred directed towards the West. The 15th issue of Dabiq is also the last issue published, and as such, the content of this magazine has a particular

important role as one can assume that it is the last thing from Dabiq Magazine the reader will read.

Both these articles demonstrate different expressions of Occidentalism and different ways of producing ‘sense’. In the ‘Why We Hate You and Why We Fight You’ article, the author is focusing on making sense of violence and hatred in the polarisation of the believers and the disbelievers, highlighting the fundamental difference between these poles. Whereas in the ‘By the Sword’ article, the author is making sense of violence and hatred through religious texts, drawing on Jewish, Christians and Western trajectories. Together, these articles express Occidentalist discourses that are inherently intertwined, and aids to the production of a hierarchical division between ISIS and the West. Combined, I believe that these two articles provide a fruitful entry into demonstrating different aspect of how ISIS produce a picture of themselves and the West.

As opposed to the previous analysis, this analysis will not have the primary focus on masculinities and gender configurations. These themes are present, but mainly implicitly. Therefore, I will wait to draw on these implicit lines of masculinities and gender configuration until the concluding part of this analysis. There, I will reflect over the role of masculinity in the rationality of making sense of violence and hatred.

5.1 WHY WE HATE YOU AND WHY WE FIGHT YOU

Summary of ‘Why We Hate You and Why We Fight You’

The ‘Why We Hate You and Why We Fight You’ article is located in the middle of the 82 pages long issue of Dabiq, and consists of four pages with dense text and a few photos. The article has no credited author. The article can be characterised as an information article, where the objective of the article is to make sense of ISIS’ hatred and warfare towards the West. The name of the article indicates that it is communicating directly towards the West, addressing the West as ‘you’. The name of the article also reveals a second targeted group in the usage of ‘we’. ‘We’ being ISIS and ISIS sympathisers. The title of the article already indicates an important aspect of the article, namely how the author is positioning the actors in the text. With this in mind, this analysis will focus on subject positions and how these positions are fortified and confirmed. My analysis of this article will follow the text chronologically.

The article has a traditional structure with an introduction, a main part and a conclusion. In the introduction, the author is grounding the objectives of making sense of violence and hatred within a societal and religious context. In the main section, the author lists six reasons, after importance, that are aiming to

demonstrate the rationality in the author's sense-making. The reasons for hating and fighting the West are presented as being (1) the West as disbelievers, (2) secularism and liberalist societies, (3) Atheism, (4) crimes against Islam, (5) crimes against Muslims and (6) invasions. In the concluding section, the author is summarising these reasons and the 'common-sense' which the article is anchored within. The author is particularly highlighting the first three reasons as the most important ones, because these reasons represent the mind-set of the West. In the concluding part, the author also attempts to put forward a notion that the West itself is responsible for the continuation of violence and hatred, as ISIS have put forward terms of peace.

Establishing 'sense' and 'senselessness'

In the opening line, the author anchors the narrative of this article in a reflection of ISIS' terrorist attacks, and the response these actions received by their enemies.

Shortly following the blessed attack on a sodomite, Crusader nightclub by the mujahid Omar Mateen, American politicians were quick to jump into the spotlight and denounce the shooting, declaring it a hate crime, an act of terrorism, and an act of senseless violence (Dabiq, #15: 30).

The author is using the reaction of American politicians as an entry into the debate on how 'sense' and 'senselessness' should be constructed. In the quotation, the author is positioning Omar Mateen as a mujahid, a warrior of Islam, praising his actions as 'blessed'. On the other hand, homosexuality and 'non-normative' sexual preferences are reduced to being something unnatural, calling the LGBT nightclub for 'a sodomite, crusader nightclub'. Through the positioning of these actors, the author is enforcing a framework of in-group and out-group mentality, where the out-groups are both 'unnatural' and 'irrational'.

A hate crime? Yes. Muslims undoubtedly hate liberalist sodomites, as does anyone else with any shred of their fitrah (inborn human nature) still intact. An act of terrorism? Most definitely. Muslims have been commanded to terrorise the disbelieving enemies of Allah. But an act of senseless violence? One would think that the average Westerner, by now, would have abandoned their tired claim that the actions of the mujahidin – [...] – don't make sense (Dabiq, #15: 30).

In the response to the American politicians, it becomes clear that this article builds on an Occidentalist discourse where the West is positioned in opposition to ISIS. The author is constructing a 'common-sense' (fitrah), based on ISIS' interpretation of Islam. The interpretation that legitimises hatred and violence towards the West, and presents such hatred and violence to be moral obligations for all Muslims. As a result, the author is conflating all Muslims under one rubric;

dictating how a ‘real’ Muslim should think and act. In ISIS’ system of meaning, hatred and violence become a premise for rationality and ‘common-sense’. In the quotation, the author is framing the actions of the Muslims as rational in response to the irrational actions of the West; the West being reduced to ‘liberalist sodomites’ and ‘disbelieving enemies of Allah’, unable to make sense of the rational. The quotation puts forward a Manichean narrative enforcing the dualism between the ‘good’ Muslim, and the ‘bad’ West. A narrative that is continuously present throughout the article, where the West is positioned and reduced to being disbelievers, whereas the Muslims are positioned and heightened as the believers.

The author is appealing to the intelligence of the reader as a way of rationalising the common-sense put forward. In doing so, the author is able to address both the ISIS sympathisers and the Western reader.

Unless you truly – and naively – believe that the crimes of the West against Islam and the Muslims, whether insulting the Prophet, burning the Quran, or waging war against the Caliphate, won’t prompt brutal retaliation from the mujahidin, you know full well that the likes of the attacks carried out by Omar Mateen, Larossi Aballa, and many others before and after them in revenge for Islam and the Muslims make complete sense. The only thing senseless would be for there to be no violent fierce retaliation in the first place (Dabiq, #15: 30).

The author is putting forward a narrative of crisis, where the West is positioned as being the aggressor in the conflict between Islam and the West. Through the narrative of crisis, the author is constructing a reality where there is a need for Islam and Muslims to be defended. Within this narrative, ‘Omar, Mateen, Larossi Aballa and many others’ become positioned as the saviours of Islam and Muslims, as their actions are applauded as vengeance, rational and meaningful.

Directly engaging with the Western reader, the author is communicating forward a particular ‘common-sense’ that needs to be adopted as a premise for not being labelled naïve. In order not to be naïve, the Western reader should think that violence is the only thing rational. Thus, the legitimacy for violence and hatred is here anchored in the rationality of retaliation for the actions of the West. However, this positioning of the West as the aggressor and the Mujahid as the retaliator fluctuates throughout the article, where the rationality of violence and hatred later becomes anchored in the supremacy of Islam over everything else.

Through the deployment of master suppression techniques, the author is attempting to appeal to those Western readers that are sceptical and dissatisfied with Western officials. This implies that the author is trying to polarise two groups within the Western society.

Many Westerners, however, are already aware that claiming the attacks of the Mujahidin to be senseless and questioning incessantly as to why we hate the West and why we fight them is nothing more than a political act and a propaganda tool (Dabiq, #15: 30).

In this quotation lies an ultimatum where the Western reader must either acknowledge the Western political system as corrupt; used to benefit those in power. Or else, the reader is positioned as naïve; fooled by the elite in the West. It seems important to the author to diminish the legitimacy of Western politicians, analysts, journalists, and ‘so-called Imams’. These groups of people are those assumed by the author to have the most power when it comes to how ISIS are portrayed and understood in Western society. Thus, the author is framing these groups using stereotypical characteristics, positioning them as abusers of power and conformed by the expected ‘political correctness’ in liberal societies. Thus, the author is arguing that these groups of people use the events caused by ISIS and affiliates not to tell the truth. Instead they used the events as a tool in order to further their own objectives. Paradoxically, the author is criticising these Western actors for the same reasons as ISIS have been criticised; namely to manipulating the truth.

The author is appealing to the reader by implying that those who understand the rationality of ISIS are smarter than the social, economic and political elite in the West. This suggests a more specifically targeted audience. In addition to speaking to ISIS sympathisers and the West in general, the article is addressing those in the West that are dissatisfied with the power division and feel ignored.

There are exceptions among the disbelievers, no doubt, people who will unabashedly declare that Jihad and the laws of Shari’ah – as well as everything else deemed taboo by the Islam-is-a-peaceful-religion crowd – are in fact completely Islamic, but they tend to be people with far less credibility who are painted as social fringe, so their voices are dismissed and a large segment of the ignorant masses continues believing the false narrative (Dabiq, #15: 31).

Through the deployment of master suppression techniques, the author is validating those in the West that do not see Islam as a peaceful religion, doing so by appealing to their intelligence. It becomes clear that the ‘Islam-is-a-peaceful-religion’ narrative is not compatible with the reality ISIS is constructing. As such, it becomes important for the author to discredit those who see Islam as peaceful, and to credit those who do not separate between Islam and militant Islamism. In the attempt to discredit the ‘Islam as peaceful’ crowd, the author is appealing to those in the West who share ISIS’ understanding of the Western elite as corrupt,

perverted by a political correctness, as such, ignoring the falseness of these narratives. As a result, it becomes important for the author to support those in the West that do not distinguish between Islam and militant Islamism. These people contribute to foster the Manichean division between Islam and the West as two very separate entities. Within the discursive construction of in-group and out-groups, the author is appealing to a specific group of people within the out-group, whose perception of the Western elite the author is attempting to amplify. This indicates an attempt to polarise the out-groups internally.

The Believers and The Disbelievers

Through the narrative of making sense of violence and hatred, the author is positioning the West as disbelievers; a group in opposition to the believers. The positioning of the West as disbelievers also legitimises the negative attributes put forward to describe this group. Within the Occidental world view of ISIS, disbelievers are reduced to being barbarians; not entirely human (Buruma & Margalit, 2004).

We hate you first and foremost, because you are disbelievers; you reject the oneness of Allah (-whether you realize it or not) – by making partners for Him in worship, you blaspheme against Him, claiming that He has a son, you fabricate lies about His prophets and messengers, and you indulge in all manner of devilish practices (Dabiq, #15: 31).

The author is directly addressing the West, positioning the West as ‘you’ and the Muslims as ‘we’. In the positioning of the West as disbelievers, the author is reducing the value of the West, as the West is only being positioned as negatively different. The author is also aiding to this Manichean division between the believers and disbelievers by citing the Quran. “*We have rejected you, and there has arisen, between us and you, enmity and hatred forever until you believe in Allah alone*” (Al-Mumtahanah 4, In: Dabiq, #15: 31). By citing the Quran, the author is conflating the ‘common sense’ with a religious doctrine. The citation also positions Muslims and the West in opposition; where the ‘we’ – Muslims – are the decider and the ‘you’ – the West – is the replier. The ‘we’ is putting forward a construction of reality and a framework which the ‘you’ needs to comply with. Through such a narrative, there are fragments of a utopian dream, where ISIS hold the power of being the decider.

When attempting to legitimise violence, there is a shift in the article, from directly addressing ‘the West’ to directly directing ISIS supporters; writing in a common ‘we’, where the West is positioned as ‘they’. This reinforces the in-group identity, where the ‘we’ are positioned as the warriors of Islam.

We have been commanded to fight the disbelievers until they submit to the authority of Islam, either by becoming Muslims, or by paying jizyah [a religious tax paid by non-Muslims] – for those afforded this option – and live in humiliation under the rule of the Muslims (Dabiq, #15: 31).

The author is proposing two ‘ways out’ for the West in order to end the violence and possibly even the hatred. Through such narratives, the West is blamed for the continuing violence and hatred, as the West is positioned as having the power to decide their own future. However, this power comes with restrictions, and is conditioned by ISIS’ construction of reality. The article puts forward a narrative where the believers are superior to the disbelievers, where the disbelievers will need to comply with the construction of reality put forward by ISIS, and will never be seen as equal human beings until they embrace Islam. In the relationship between the believers and the disbelievers, the author produces a construction of reality in which the believers can only accept there to be disbelievers on earth temporarily, enforcing such a narrative by citing the Quran: “*and fighting them until there is no fitnah [paganism] and [until] the religion, all of it, is for Allah*” (Al-Baqarah 193, In: Dabiq, #15: 31). The Quranic citation reinforces the notion of paganism being the biggest threat to the existence of Islam. As such, paganism is positioned and identified as the obstacle that stands between ISIS and ISIS’ goal of a world-reaching Islamic State.

The ‘Laws of Allah’ and the ‘Laws of Men’

In the positioning of the West as disbelievers, the West is constructed as being the propagator of secularism and liberalism; values that are put in opposition to the values of ISIS.

We hate you because your secular, liberal societies permit the very things that Allah has prohibited while banning many of the things He has permitted, a matter that doesn’t concern you because you separate between religion and state, thereby granting supreme authority to your whims and desires via the legislators you vote to power (Dabiq, #15:31).

For the author, the West represents a clash of ideals between the values of the West and the values of ISIS. Such a clash of ideals can be found at the heart of the religious Occidentalism described by Buruma and Margalit (2004), where the values of the West are put in direct opposition to the values of Islam. The West is portrayed as having corrupted the ‘Laws of Allah’ with the ‘Laws of Men’; doing something that no man has the authority to do. Thus, the author is constructing a narrative of crisis – where there is a need to ensure that the ‘Laws of Allah’ become reinstated – and ISIS are positioned as the enforcers of such objectives.

Throughout the article, the author is highlighting those values and attributes he believes are results of the implementation of the ‘Laws of Men’. *“Your secular liberalism has led you to tolerate and even support “gay rights”, to allow alcohol, drugs, fornication, gambling, and usury to become widespread, and to encourage people to mock those who denounce these filthy sins and vices”* (Dabiq, #15: 32). Continuing the narrative from the beginning of the article, the author is putting a special emphasis on homosexuality as something particularly repulsive. Thus, positioning homosexuals as the worst consequence of the ‘Laws of Men’. The need to especially denounce homosexuals can be interpreted as a way to uphold and reinforce the hyper-masculine ideal that lies at the heart of the ISIS discourse, where homosexuality represents femininity and weakness. As discussed in the theory chapter, within the hierarchy of masculinities, homosexuals hold a subordinate position where the denouncing of homosexuals reinforces the hegemonic position (Connell, 2005). The author is positioning ISIS in opposition to these ‘filthy sins and vices’, reinforcing their Occidental world view and demasculinisation of the West: *“As such, we wage war against you to stop you from spreading your disbelief and debauchery – your secularism and nationalism, your perverted liberal values, your Christianity and atheism – and all the depravity and corruption they entail”* (Dabiq, #15: 32).

Drawing on the historical trajectories of Western imperialism, the West is portrayed as perpetrating an expansionist ideology, spreading the worst values imaginable in the eyes of ISIS. *“You’ve made it your mission to “liberate” Muslim societies; we’ve made it our mission to fight off your influence and protect mankind from your misguided concepts and your deviant ways of life”* (Dabiq, #15: 32). In the positioning of the West as an expansionist force, ISIS are positioned as the counter-measure to prevent the spread of Western ideas. The author is positioning the West as ‘you’, and ISIS or Muslims as ‘we’, creating a collective in-group identity where the rationality of violence and hatred becomes anchored in the interventionist nature of the West. In turn, the actions of ISIS should be seen as counter-measures in order to protect mankind.

In the article, the author has dedicated a whole section to atheism, indicating that atheism is a special evil; not only do atheists reject Islam, they reject the existence of a God all together:

You witness the extraordinary complex makeup of created beings, and the astonishing and inexplicitly precise physical laws that govern the entire universe, but you insist that they all come about through randomness and that one should be faulted, mocked, and ostracized for recognizing that the astonishing signs we witness day after day are the creations of the Wise, Al-knowing Creator and not the result of accidental occurrence (Dabiq, #15: 32).

Through the system of meaning the author is operating within, the ‘common-sense’ positions atheism as irrational and senseless. Within the dualistic world view of ISIS, there is no room for those who do not believe; as such, atheists, along with all others who do not comply with ISIS’ interpretation of Islam, are positioned as irrational in an oppositional relationship with the rational believer. Furthermore, because of their irrationality, the author legitimises hatred. This demonstrates, again, how rationality becomes anchored in a religious discourse. Paradoxically, in the attempt to persuade the disbelievers of ISIS’ rationality, the author fails to recognise that atheists reject religion and therefore it becomes difficult to convince them of any rationality that is solely anchored in religion.

In the beginning of the article, when addressing the disbelievers, the author is proposing two ‘ways out’ to end the violence. When addressing the atheists directly, no such ‘way out’ is offered. This implies that the author believes that atheists cannot be saved, as they have rejected God all together. This indicates that within the out-groups of ‘disbelievers’ there is a pecking order, where Christians and seculars are given more value than atheists and homosexuals.

Crimes of the West

In the beginning of the article, the author legitimises violence and hatred towards the West in retaliation for the crimes perpetrated by the West. This narrative is picked up again when positioning the West as criminals, guilty of crimes against Islam and Muslims.

As long as your subjects to continue to mock our faith, insult the prophets of Allah – including Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Mohammad – burn the Quran, and openly vilify the laws of the Shari’ah, we will continue to retaliate, not with slogans and placards, but with bullets and knives (Dabiq, #15: 32).

The West is positioned as the perpetrators behind mocking and insulting Islam, actions that has led to the cosmic crisis ISIS finds themselves within today. Thus, violence and hatred become grounded in the rationality of retaliating against the actions of the West in order to defend the honour of Islam. In the last part of the quotation, the author is constructing a reality of ISIS as aggressive retaliators. ISIS will retaliate through the deployment of bullets and knives, as opposed to the West’s weak retaliation of slogans and placards. The author is drawing on the discourses of hyper-masculine behaviour where exaggerated violence becomes a symbol for strength and power. The West is put in opposition to ISIS, portraying them as weak, and mocking the ‘peacefulness’ of the West. Ironically, the author has already acknowledged and positioned the West as powerful when making sense of violence and hatred based on the violent actions perpetrated by the West

towards Islam and Muslims. There is a slippage between how the author wants to position the West, and how the author is positioning the West.

We hate you for your crimes against the Muslims; your drones and fighter jet bomb, kill and maim our people around the world, and your puppets in the usurped land of the Muslim oppress, torture, and wage war against anyone who call the truth (Dabiq, #15: 32).

The narrative of the West being responsible for killing innocent people in the Middle East is widely acknowledged amongst Critical Terrorism scholars and readers of International Relations, to mention some groups (Jackson, et. al., 2011). This means that the hatred and desire to retaliate in order to revenge the actions of the West, at some level makes sense. It makes sense not only to those who have adopted the ISIS ideology, but also to certain groups of people around the world. However, it is within this narrative; the author reveals that avenge itself is only a part of a larger objective, namely to subordinate the West under the rule of Islam.

‘There is indeed a rhyme to our terrorism’

Throughout the article, there is an ambivalence as to how violence and hatred are constructed and legitimised as sensible. The article begins by making sense of violence and hatred as retaliation for the actions of the West against Islam and Muslims. Later in the article however, the ‘common-sense’ of violence and hatred becomes anchored in the superiority of Islam, and the superiority of the believers over the disbelievers. As the believers cannot accept there to be any disbelievers living on earth in the long run, violence and hatred become expressions of the ‘sensible’ extermination of all disbelievers. There is an interchangeability in the ISIS mentality between positioning themselves as the aggressors and the suppressed. The intention of the author is to position ISIS as the aggressor and the expander, but he is primarily drawing on narratives of revenge in order to legitimise hating and fighting the West. Thus, the reasons for hating and fighting the West becomes anchored in a fantasy where ISIS are the aggressor and the West is the suppressed. *“Even if you stop bombing us, imprisoning us, torturing us, vilify us, and usurping our lands, we would continue to hate you because our primary reason for hating you will not cease to exist until you embrace Islam”* (Dabiq, #15: 33). The narratives in the article makes it clear that the hatred of the West is primarily grounded in the dismissal of Islam. For ISIS, the rejection of Islam has repercussions and affects the politics and the values found in Western society. The dismissal of Islam is portrayed as the catalyst for all evil that has come out of the Western society, including the West’s crimes against Islam and Muslims.

Aiding to the narrative of ISIS being the hero and the saviour, the author is putting forward a third reason of making sense of violence and hatred.

What's equally important if not more important to understand is that we fight you, not simply to punish and deter you, but to bring you true freedom in this life and salvation in the Hereafter, freedom from being enslaved to your whims and desires as well as those of your clergy and legislatures, and salvation by worshipping your Creator alone and follow His messenger (Dabiq, #15: 33).

Within this missionary narrative, ISIS are positioned as the saviours of the West, where the West needs to be saved from “*the constraints of living for the sake of the worldly life alone so that you may enjoy both the blessings of the worldly life and the bliss of the Hereafter*” (Dabiq, #15: 33). Within the Occidentalist mind-set, the West is understood as soulless, as they lack spirituality and thus they cannot grasp the higher things in life (Buruma & Margalit, 2004). Within the salvation narrative, ISIS become the solution by giving the West a soul. The positioning of ISIS as the saviour, creates a contradictory relationship with the West; not characterised by hate, but by compassion. There is a slippage in the cold front facing the West that stands in contrast to the Manichean dualism that was the starting point for this article.

The author is however quick to resume to the familiar narrative of ISIS as the rational actor engaging in an escalating and calculating war against the senseless West. “*We continue dragging you [the West] further and further into a swamp you thought you'd already escaped only to realize that you're stuck even deeper within its murky waters...And we do so while offering you a way out on our terms*” (Dabiq, #15: 33). The author is highlighting the military achievements of ISIS, and positioning the West as a deteriorating force; where the West is stuck in a sinking swamp, and the more the West tries to resist, it becomes more deeply entangled in a war that there is no escaping from. The illusory image of the West failing in the war against ISIS demonstrates a persistency in upholding and enforcing the utopian dream of ISIS as the aggressor. “[...] *You can accept reality and recognize that we will never stop hating you until you embrace Islam, and will never stop fighting you until you're ready to leave the swamp of warfare and terrorism through the exits we provide*” (Dabiq, #15: 33).

Summary

Throughout this article, the objective of the author has been to rationalise ISIS' violence and hatred towards the West. The rationality has been anchored in a religious discourse, where the author is putting forward a narrative of violence and hatred as justified retaliation for the actions of the West. Within this narrative, the author reveals an overarching objective of an expansionist nature. Not only is violence and hatred made sense of in retaliation for the crimes of the West, but also through a narrative of Islam being superior to everything else.

The author is drawing on Occidental discourses through the positioning of the different actors in the article, where the author is continuously building up under a Manichean narrative divided by believers and disbelievers. By creating in-groups and out-groups, the author is reinforcing the collective identity of the in-group, by putting forward a ‘common-sense’ based on religious discourses. A Manichean division of ‘good and ‘evil also reinforces the legitimacy of hatred and violence, as ISIS becomes positioned as the saviour of Islam and the Muslims; and through a missionary narrative, the saviour of all human beings. *“The gist of the matter is that there is indeed a rhyme to our terrorism, warfare, ruthlessness, and brutality”* (Dabiq, #15: 33).

5.2 BY THE SWORD

Summary of ‘By the Sword’

The ‘By the Sword’ article is the last article featured in the 15th issue of Dabiq Magazine. It consists of three pages with dense text, and one photo on each page. The article can be defined as an argumentative article, where the objective of the article is to persuade the Jewish and Christian reader of the rationality behind religious violence. The author is doing so by citing parts of the Old and New Testament in order to reinforce the ISIS ideology. The article has a clear structure, with an introduction, a main part and a conclusion. In the introduction, the author is grounding the relevance of the article in a societal context, where it becomes clear that the article is a response to the West’s ‘hypocrisy’ for not making sense of violence for the sake of religion. The main section focuses on making sense of violence by using citations from the Old and New Testament that support the ‘common-sense’ put forward by the author. Where the main argument is that Muslims (read ISIS) are only following the obligations of the Qur’an, just as the same obligations for violence can be found in the Old and New Testament and in Western history in general. In the main part, the author is not only trying to make sense of violence in a ‘state of war’, but also in a ‘state of peace’. The majority of the citations used are from the Old Testament, indicating some ambivalence in the usage of the New Testament and the role of Jesus. In the concluding part, the author is shifting from making sense of violence by referring to religious texts, to focusing on criticising the development of Christianity and the ‘move’ away from ‘true’ Christianity to a ‘false’ Christianity. The author does so by fantasising over a utopian alternative world history, where Muslims are in the global hegemonic position, as opposed to the West.

In this analysis I will focus on the role of religion in making sense of violence and hatred, and how Christianity, Judaism and Islam are positioned in relation to each other. I will focus on how religion is used in order to support the ISIS ideology

and the ambivalences that this can lead to. For the sake of simplicity, I will only refer to the citations as from the Torah/Old Testament as the Old Testament.

The hypocrisy of Christianity and Judaism

The author is grounding this article by reminding the reader of the string of terrorist attacks that took place over the spring and summer of 2016, communicating forward a narrative highlighting the ‘success’ of ISIS’ military campaign.

Images of Islamic State lions engaging their prey on the battlefields of Iraq, the Levant, and other frontlines – as well as Paris, Brussels, Orlando, and other cities behind enemy lines – deliver a clear message to the Crusaders and their allies (Dabiq, #15: 78).

The actions of ISIS and affiliates becomes positioned as being a message to the West, indicating that the purpose of this article is also to deliver a message. The author is drawing on Occidentalist discourses in the positioning of ISIS as ‘the lion’ and their enemies as ‘the prey’; a metaphor enforcing the hierarchical position of ISIS as superior in relation to their enemies. The author is narrating the article along Manichean lines, where a war between the believers and the disbelievers is taking place. *“This is a divinely-warranted war between the Muslim nation and the nations of disbelief”* (Dabiq, #15: 78). Through a Manichean lens, the author is dismissing any diversity found within Judaism, Christianity and Islam; taking away the power from anyone who does not comply with the ISIS interpretation of Islam, to define themselves as religious. Such narratives can be seen to reinforce the Manichean division; a division that is essential in the author’s attempt to rationalise violence and hatred.

The article can be understood as being a reply to the criticism ISIS have received from the West, because of their brutality. Drawing on the narratives of Judaism and Christianity, the author sets out to reply to such criticism by ‘demonstrating’ how violence is legitimised in both Judaism and Christianity.

Many people in Crusader countries express shock and even disgust that Islamic State leadership “uses religion to justify violence”. Indeed, waging Jihad – spreading the rule of Allah by the sword – is an obligation found in the Quran, the word of our Lord, just as it is an obligation sent in the Torah, the Psalms, and the Gospel (Dabiq, #15: 78).

By drawing on religious narratives found in the Old and New Testament, it becomes clear that the author is attempting to persuade the Jewish and Christian reader of the religious rationality behind violence. Within such attempts also lies a desire to reveal the ‘truth’ of Judaism and Christianity that will highlight the

hypocrisy of modern-day Christians and Jews. The author is criticising them for being surprised and shocked by the actions of ISIS, when according to the author such obligations are also found in the Old and New Testament. The quotation also reveals an ambivalence in the relationship between ‘true’ Judaism and Christianity and contemporary Jews and Christians. There seem to be some acknowledgement and acceptance of the ‘true’ nature of Judaism and Christianity, but also a hatred for how Judaism and Christianity are being expressed today.

Making sense of violence in the Old Testament

Through the proxy of the Old Testament, the author is communicating narratives that legitimise violence; and as such, enforce the ISIS ideology.

“When the Lord your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you, [...], nations more numerous and mightier than yourselves, and when the Lord your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them, then you must devote them to complete destruction. You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them” (Deuteronomy 7:1-2, In: Dabiq, #15: 78).

The citations put forward in this article, can be understood to represent narratives that reflect the ISIS discourse. As such, these citations become expressions of how the author sees ISIS within the Manichean struggle between believers and disbelievers. The citation from Deuteronomy positions Judaism and Christianity as violent religions; religions that facilitate invasions where the believers should have no mercy for the disbeliever. It appears to be some suggested parallels between the Manichean struggle that took place in the Old Testament, and the Manichean struggle that is currently taking place within ISIS’s construction of reality. In some ways, putting forward the notion that history is repeating itself.

In the beginning of the article, the author defines Jihad as *“spreading the rule of Allah by the sword”* (Dabiq, #15: 78). ‘The sword’ is given the meaning of Jihad, and as such, it becomes important for the author to highlight references to ‘the sword’ within the religious texts of Judaism and Christianity; Thus, legitimising warfare for the sake of religion. The author is emphasising the symbolism of ‘the sword’ through the narrative of the biblical story of David and Goliath. *“Then David ran and stood over the Philistine [Goliath] and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him and cut off his head with it (1 Samuel 17: 51)”* (Dabiq, #15: 79). The narrative of David and Goliath can be seen to symbolise the struggle between the believers and the disbelievers. The story can also be understood to represent how ISIS see themselves; they are the believers fighting against the disbelievers. The narrative of David and Goliath has many symbolic meanings; one of them being the power of the ‘underdog’, where someone smaller, more limited is facing a much larger and stronger opponent. This

connotes with ISIS seeing themselves as the underdog in the relationship with the West; but as the story of David and Goliath tells – the underdog wins.

The story of David and Goliath is well-known, not only within religious circles but also in popular culture. The author is drawing on supposedly familiar narratives in the West to rationalise the use of violence in the pursuit of religious goals. In the David and Goliath story, there is a particular ‘moral’ that correlates with ISIS’ construction of reality, whereby ISIS see themselves in the midst of an ongoing cosmic struggle, where the lines are drawn between the believers and the disbelievers. Violence becomes legitimised as a measure to protect Islam, just as the author argues Jews and Christians have done previously. The author is anchoring the rationality of warfare in the experiences of Judaism and Christianity. Thus, the positioning of ISIS as David becomes yet another expression of history repeating itself.

So far in this article, the author has been making sense of violence within the prerequisite of war; where violence has been rationalised as a necessity in the Manichean struggle between believers and disbelievers. There is also a need for the author to rationalise violence, not only in warfare, but also within the ‘peaceful’ domain of the so-called ‘Islamic State’. There is a shift in the article, where the author focuses his attention towards making sense of violence in a state of peace, arguing that within the Old Testament, violence was used to reinforce the rule of God. *“Once the rule of the Lord was established, the sword was not to be put away but rather remain even unsheathed to implement the Law”* (Dabiq, #15: 79). The author is drawing on religious discourses to find ‘evidence’ that supports his attempt to rationalise physical punishment as a way to uphold ‘the Law’ within the ISIS territory, legitimising the actions of ISIS within the literacy of Judaism and Christianity.

In the ‘state of peace’, the author is reminiscing about some of the laws of punishment that can be found in the Old Testament. *“The blasphemer was killed by stoning. [...] Likewise, the murderer was executed. [...] And sodomites were slain”* (Dabiq, #15: 79). The author is putting forward a ‘common-sense’ of morals and laws that is grounded in citations from the Old Testament. These values also represent some of the laws and values that ISIS are implementing. One of these laws, made sense of by citing the Old Testament, is the killing of homosexuals. *“If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them”* (Leviticus 24:13, In: Dabiq, #15: 79). The opposition to homosexuals is further reinforced by an added photo in the article, picturing a man being mutilated, where the caption reads: *“killed for the abominable crime of sodomy”* (Dabiq, #15: 79). One can assume that this photo, and the other photo in the article, with the caption *“the sword is a part of Allah’s Law”* (Dabiq #15: 80),

showing a decapitation, have been incorporated as ‘evidence’. ‘Evidence’ to demonstrate to the reader that ISIS are ‘true’ to their laws, and do enforce them – as opposed to modern day Jews and Christians.

Furthermore, there was retribution (known as “qisas” in the Shari’ah). “If anyone injures his neighbour, as he has done shall be done to him” (Leviticus 24:19), and “you shall pay life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe” (Exodus 21:23-25) (Dabiq, #15: 79).

Through the proxy of the Old Testament, the author is reinforcing the values desired within the ISIS discourse, connecting the values of the Old Testament to the saying of the Quran. This demonstrates how the author is exploiting certain citations from the Old Testament to comply with ISIS’ ideology. This also indicates a slippage in the ISIS discourse, where religion, regardless of which religion, are used as tools to legitimise violence and hatred. Thus, there is an ambiguity in ISIS’ relationship with Judaism and Christianity. A part of the ISIS discourse hates these religions, whereas the other part is using these religions to further ISIS’ objective; and as such these religions become useful.

The New Testament and the Evolution of Christianity

There is a shift in the article from focusing on the Old Testament to focusing on the New Testament and the nature of Jesus.

Even Jesus, whom the Christians have titled “the Prince of Peace”, is recorded in their scripture as saying, “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword” (Matthew 10: 34). There is also Jesus’ order to his followers of being armed, as it is said, “And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one” (Luke 22: 36) (Dabiq, #15: 79).

It becomes important for the author to place Jesus within a violent position, where he is closely associated with the theme of ‘the sword’, here representing Jihad, using Jesus’ proximity to ‘the sword’ as a way of legitimising violence. The author knows that within Christianity, the New Testament was to replace the Old Testament. Therefore, it becomes important for the author to connect Jesus and the New Testament to ‘the sword’. *“But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me” Matthew 5:17, In: Dabiq, #15: 79).* Jesus is positioned as a legitimiser of violence in the context of punishing those who did not accept him to reign over them. Within the context of the ISIS discourse, this citation can be interpreted as leverage for making sense of violence as punishment for those who do not accept the authority of God.

Drawing on Jesus's own legitimisation of the Old Testament, the author is arguing:

Everything that was mentioned in the Old Testament of war and enforcing laws was kept, unless specifically mentioned otherwise, in the Gospel of Jesus. "Do not think that I [Jesus] have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them" (Matthew 4:17)" (Dabiq, #15: 79).

There is a sense of ambiguity in the construction of Jesus in the article. Jesus is an important character in Islam, and this means that the author cannot dismiss and criticise him in the same way as the author is able to do with modern day Jews and Christians. Instead, the author is constructing an alternative representation of Jesus, as a promoter of violence, in order to persuade the Christian reader of the rationality behind violence. It should be noted that the majority of citations in this article are from the Old Testament. This can indicate that the author has struggled to find relevant citations from the New Testament, and is therefore attempting to persuade the Christian reader of the legitimacy of the Old Testament. There is an ambivalence connected to the positioning of Jesus in the article. The author is drawing on the legitimacy of Jesus in both Christianity and Islam, and as such he needs to be careful with how Jesus is positioned to ensure that he is not violating how Jesus is portrayed within his interpretation of Islam.

The objectives so far in the article have been linked to the attempt to make sense of violence within the framework of Judaism and Christianity. Now that the author has put forward the 'truth' of Judaism and Christianity, the article moves towards criticising the 'blindness' of modern Christianity.

Despite these clear references to violence applying the Law of the Lord, Christians have cast aside such commandments and instead have followed the papal decrees and the sermons of priests – showing that their love for men is greater than their love for the Creator of men (Dabiq, #15: 79).

There is an acceptance of Christianity in its 'pure' form, as presented in the citations, but when it comes to the development of Christianity – from its 'pure' beginning to contemporary times – there is no respect for modern Christians. Arguing that Christians have: "*cast aside their love for the Creator and instead devoted themselves to loving the created, paying no heed to Jesus' recorded word*" (Dabiq, #15: 80). The author is pointing out what he sees as the hypocrisy of modern Christians, positioning them as disbelievers who have dismissed the true nature of Christianity.

“No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other” (Luke 16:13). This is manifested in the hypocrisy of the Crusader public, who “religiously” call to slogans of peace and love, certainly hating and despising the Law of Moses and the Gospel of Jesus, as they favour the law of democracy and the resolutions of the United Nations (Dabiq, #15: 80).

The author is criticising the West for misusing religion as a way to further the notions of peace and democracy – values the author argues are put forward by men and not by God. As such, the ‘laws of Moses and the Gospel of Jesus’ are put in a binary opposition to the ‘laws of democracy and the resolutions of the UN’. For the author, the evolution of Christianity becomes indissociable from secularism, where secularism is seen as the cornerstone of the Occidental society. Thus, peace becomes an expression of secularism and violence becomes an expression of religion, demonstrating how making sense of violence is inherently communicated through religious narratives.

ISIS’ Utopia

The author has spent the majority of the article demonstrating the ‘true’ nature of Judaism and Christianity and how these religions are inherently connected to violence. In the last part of the article, the author focuses on the fundamental differences between Muslims and modern Western society. The author conflates modern Judaism and Christianity under the rubric of the West, and sees the development from ‘true’ religions to ‘false’ religions as expressions of the shift from following the ‘Laws of God’ to following the ‘Laws of Men’. In this, he positions Muslims and the West in a binary opposition.

The clear difference between Muslims and the corrupt and deviant Jews and Christians is that Muslims are not ashamed of abiding by the rules sent down from their Lord regarding war and enforcement of the divine law (Dabiq, #15: 80).

The author is enforcing a narrative where Muslims are constructed as being trustful and abiding by the ‘Laws of God’, as opposed to the untruthful nature of modern Jews and Christians. Operating within an Occidental framework where the objective is to portray the West as negatively different, the author sets out to demonstrate the loyalty of Muslims – as opposed to the disloyalty of the West – by fantasising about an alternative world history; a utopian fantasy where the author is positioning Muslims as the aggressors behind some of the most horrendous events in modern world history.

If it were the Muslims, instead of the Crusaders, who had fought the Japanese and Vietnamese or invaded the lands of the Native Americans,

there would have been no regrets in killing and enslaving those herein. And since those mujahidin would have done so bound by the law, they would have been thorough and without some “political correct” need to apologize years later (Dabiq, #15: 80).

In this utopian fantasy of an alternative world history, Muslims (read ISIS) would have enforced the Law of Allah, either by forcefully converting the Japanese, Vietnamese, Native Americans and the Jews to Islam, or they would have exterminated them. In this fantasy, one can assume that the author is implying that Muslims are in a position where history might repeat itself. Only this time, as opposed to last time, the actions of the Muslims will be ‘thorough’. The author is not criticising the aggressors for their actions, but for their lack of ‘successfully’ following through. There seems to be some sort of an underlying jealousy that the West has had such opportunity to invade, fight and implement Western values. However, in the eyes of the author, the West was unsuccessful in its actions and has been subjugated to the ‘political correctness’ of modern Western society. If given the same opportunity, the author is confident that the Muslims would have succeeded in establishing the ‘Law of Allah’. In the utopian parallel world, the Muslims are the masters, and all else becomes reduced to being their property.

The lucrative African slave trade would have continued, supporting a strong economy. The Islamic leadership would not have bypassed Allah’s permission to sell captured pagan humans, to teach them, to convert them, as they are worked hard for their masters in building a beautiful country (Dabiq, #15: 80).

The author is rationalising and justifying ISIS’ fantasy of committing these actions in order to ensure the emergence of an Islamic Caliphate. To achieve such objectives, ISIS need women to breed children, to ensure a new generation of mujahidins, and slaves to do manual labour. Just as the author previously has made sense of violence by demonstrating the presence of violence in Judaism and Christianity, the author is now making sense of establishing an Islamic state based on the West’s previous actions. Thus, the author is drawing on historical trajectories, be it religious narratives or historical events, as ways to make sense of violence, but also to make sense of ISIS’ expansionist nature. There is a communality throughout the article, where the author is using the past to legitimise the present and the future.

In the concluding parts of the article, the author is emphasising that the actions within the utopian parallel world would be undertaken to ensure that the world of Allah is supreme.

Jihad is the ultimate show of one's love for the Creator, facing the clashing of swords and buzzing of bullets on the battlefield, seeking to slaughter His enemies – whom he hates for Allah's hatred of them. A religion without these fundamentals is one that does not call its adherents to fully manifest and uphold the love of the Lord (Dabiq, #15: 80).

Jihad becomes rationalised in the Manichean battlefield between those Allah loves and those Allah hates. However, it is ISIS' who interprets whom it is that Allah hates, and therefore it is ISIS' interpretation of Islam that positions Jews, Christians and the West in a binary opposition to themselves.

Summary

This article is anchored in a desire to reply to the criticism from the West regarding ISIS' violent actions. Through a comprehensive system of meaning, the author sets out to rationalise violence and hatred, not only within ISIS' interpretation of Islam, but also within their interpretation of Judaism and Christianity. Drawing on Jewish and Christian trajectories, the author is positioning ISIS within, and in relation to, the narratives of the Old and New Testament, selecting narratives that communicate a Manichean struggle between the believers and the disbelievers; that represent the struggle in which ISIS have constructed themselves. In the article, it becomes clear that the author is drawing on those religions that, at the given time, become most appropriate in legitimising the objectives of ISIS, and in this article, when targeting Jews and Christians – it becomes most effective to use narratives from Judaism and Christianity. The author is continuously building up a narrative of crisis. As such, ISIS use the supposed legitimacy of Judaism and Christianity to make sense of the situation ISIS find themselves in today.

In the author's legitimisation of the narratives presented from the Old and New Testament, there is a need to distinguish between the 'true' nature of Judaism and Christianity, and the 'false' Judaism and Christianity that has emerged as a result of the West replacing the 'Laws of God' with the 'Laws of Men'. Making sense of violence becomes rationalised through the hypocrisy of the West, that are criticising ISIS, when they themselves have been the perpetrators of similar situations in the past.

5.3 CONCLUSION: THE POWER OF THE IMAGINED FUTURE

Through a comprehensive production of an alternative system of meaning, the authors of the 'Why We Hate You and Why We Fight You' and 'By the Sword' articles set out to communicate, and reinforce the notions behind the rationality

of making sense of violence and hatred towards the West. The authors are proposing an alternative way of understanding the current situation in the world, by drawing on historical trajectories from Judaism, Christianity and the actions of the West. The West becomes identified as the guilty actor behind the crisis that ISIS have constructed. It is within this alternative production of reality, that violence and hatred become rationalised as a means to enforce and uphold the superiority of Islam in an era where the West is threatening Islam's very existence.

Narrating the articles along Manichean lines, the authors are putting forward the notion of a development in the world where the West has been corrupted by the 'Laws of Men', and as a result has left behind the 'Laws of God'. It is within this reality, that there has arisen a utopian dream of a world reaching Islamic caliphate, where the roles of the West and ISIS are reversed; and ISIS possess the global hegemonic position. It is a utopian dream reinforced by a Occidentalist world view of ISIS as superior to the West; and in this fantasy, ISIS are portrayed as holding the power to decide the future of the West.

Both articles are reminiscing over the actions of the West and the Western history that have developed into creating the situation of today. But in such reminiscing also lies an underlying notion of jealousy, where it should have been ISIS and Muslims, and not the West, who managed to get the global hegemonic position. The imagined future, thus functions as a way to reverse history, where ISIS will hold the current position of the West. In the desire to recreate history, an underlying desire is also revealed; there is a desire to express exaggerated violence towards the West and to humiliate them, giving no regards to the value of their lives. These desires are manifested through a hyper-masculine ideal, where violence, brutality and aggressiveness are understood and applauded as true manhood.

In the intersection between protecting Islam and the Muslims, and the desire to demonstrate power and aggressiveness, the imagined future of an Islamic state has become a powerful narrative that has managed to persuade, convince and gain support throughout the world. Through the narratives of crisis, the authors have managed to rationalise the actions of ISIS by positioning themselves as the saviours of Islam and the Muslims. ISIS is portrayed as the hero of the in-group; where the utopian dream of a future where the Muslims ruling the world has gained revolutionary force.

This demonstrates the importance that discourses drawing on Occidentalism and Masculinities have in order to put forward and uphold a distinct division between ISIS and the West, drawing on in-group mentality to execute the actions needed to become closer to the utopian dream. There is however some ambiguity connected to the rationalisation of violence and hatred. The authors have most

explicitly drawn on the narratives of ‘making sense of violence and hatred’ in the positioning of the West as the guilty party: guilty of crimes against Islam and the Muslims, guilty of discarding the ‘Laws of Allah’; guilty of implementing Western values and spreading these values. These reasons are used to rationalise the actions of ISIS today, but when rationalising the utopian future, it becomes more challenging: as they cannot rationalise their expansionist objectives in the actions of the West, but rather, they need to rationalise these objectives within a divine doctrine of the supremacy of Islam. Thus, it becomes more challenging to persuade the Western reader of the utopian dream as it is not relatable. However, regardless of the success of convincing the Western reader of the rationality behind violence and hatred, the imagined future of an Islamic Caliphate is the catalyst for the actions of ISIS today, and this demonstrates the powerful consequences that the imagined future holds.

6. CONCLUSION

In this project, my objectives have been to investigate how ISIS construct themselves and the West in selected articles of Dabiq Magazine, and to explore to what extent this construction can be understood within an Occidental and Masculinist framework. Through a close reading of selected articles, I have engaged with uncovering how meaning is produced and fortified within the ISIS discourse. The close reading has also allowed me to investigate these themes within the completeness of the texts; to uncover layers of meaning and to see how central themes of the magazine in general, such as warrior mentality, glorification of death, state-building, community and military achievements, are expressed.

Findings and Discussion

Throughout my analysis, ISIS can be seen to communicate an alternative reality. The analysis uncovers the production of a comprehensive system of meaning that is manifested throughout the articles I have analysed; a system of meaning that entails specific values, attributes, behaviours, ‘common-sense’ and rationality. These all correlate with an overarching idealism that provides the reader with an alternate reality, where the three articles I analysed have shed light on different components within this parallel construction of reality.

The analysis of the ‘Amongst the Believers Are Men’ article, uncovers that a distinct ‘ideal masculinity’ is being produced. By appealing to the masculinity and manliness of the reader, the article communicates the attributes and values that ‘the ideal man’ should possess. In the production of ‘the ideal man’, ‘the enemy’ becomes constructed in opposition. The narratives of ‘the ideal man’ become indissociable from hyper-masculine behaviour, where exaggerated violence and brutality are celebrated and encouraged. Through this construction of ‘the ideal man’, ‘he’ also becomes an idolised ambition to the ISIS warriors. Thus, the notion of Jihadism becomes naturalised as an obligation for all ‘good Muslims’, and the position of ‘the ideal man’ becomes achievable through jihad and martyrdom.

Through the analysis of ‘Why We Hate You and Why We Fight You’ and ‘By the Sword’, ISIS can be seen to draw on Occidental narratives as ways of making sense of violence and hatred towards the West. The narratives of violence and hatred are rationalised in the dualistic division where the believers are positioned as superior to the disbelievers. The reality of ISIS is rationalised through the narratives of the West living ‘false’ lives corrupted by secularism, liberalism, sexual transgression and materialism. ISIS’ actions are portrayed both as

retaliation for the actions of the West, and as acts made to save mankind from the falseness of Western society. In this instance, ISIS is constructed as the saviours of Islam, Muslims and the World, where their mission is to establish a world-reaching caliphate and to create a pure Islamic community. This utopian future can be seen as the driving force and the legitimiser behind the actions of ISIS.

Through narratives of crisis, ISIS is constructing a reality where the utopian dream of the future is being threatened. As such, there is a pressing need to demonstrate strength and military power. It is within this narrative of crisis the hyper-masculine behaviour becomes a way of heightening the position of ISIS in opposition to the West; to demonstrate power in the humiliation, sexualisation, violence and brutality against 'the enemy'. My analysis uncovers how the ISIS ideology is continuously constructing a social hierarchy where the ISIS warrior holds the hegemonic position. Within the construction of the hegemonic position, I believe that a gendered perspective provides an opportunity of better understanding the attractiveness of joining the ISIS movement. To draw on Spens (2014) and Ni Aolain's (2016) arguments: joining the ISIS movement becomes an opportunity for those who feel like they are failing to achieve the masculine ideal within the Western society. Thus, ISIS creates an opportunity for these men to authenticate their masculinity through hyper-masculine behaviour; hyper-masculine behaviour being a way of restoring their 'honour'. Within the ISIS discourse, the promotion of hyper-masculine behaviour is something that is inherently intertwined with the production of being a 'good warrior' and a 'good Muslim', in which violence, humiliation and sexualisation become portrayed as ways of demonstrating power and aggressiveness towards the Occident.

Within ISIS' construction of reality, the world can be divided between believers and disbelievers, where it does not matter if the enemy is Muslim (not recognised by ISIS), Christian, Jewish, Secular, Atheist or homosexual. The West has become the symbol and root of all things evil. By naming this reality, my analysis uncovers how ISIS conflate their enemies under the rubric of the West, where all those who do not comply with the ISIS ideology are positioned as being corrupted by the West; they are all victims of the values and ideas that the West is continuously spreading. Within such thematics, I believe it makes sense to talk about a 'war of ideals', where the world is divided between the ideals constituting the West, and the ideals constituting ISIS. The hatred for the disbelievers exceeds the West's actions against Islam and Muslims, it is a fundamental hatred for their way of life, and the values that constitute liberal democracy. It is a hatred because both the West and ISIS have expansionist objectives, and from the perspective of ISIS, they see how the West have been successful in spreading and implementing secularism and liberal democracy throughout the world. The West possess the biggest threat to ISIS, and as such, the hatred for the West will likely continue to be fortified, both through the propaganda apparatus but also through violent

actions. ISIS hates the West for its success and the changes that follows – where the world is increasingly worshipping the ‘God of Matter’.

Paradoxes and Reflections

Through the close examination of the three selected articles, it became clear that in the construction of ISIS in opposition to the West, is emerged paradoxes and ambivalences to the supposedly black and white division between the believers and the disbelievers. ISIS are constructing the West as something negatively different from themselves. However, what I find striking is the many similarities that can be found between ISIS’ discourses and certain Western discourses. I believe Buruma and Margalit (2004) are correct when describing Occidentalism as being the worst aspects of its counterpart, Orientalism. Both these notions place categories of people into a social hierarchy that at its most brutal form strips the counter-part of their humanity and soul. The idealism of the exaggerated hyper-masculine behaviour promoted within the ISIS discourse is not a phenomenon limited to Islamist Masculinity, but is also present in the West. For me, this indicates that one of the most important steps in better understanding ISIS, is to look at our own behaviour toward ‘the others’, and the reality we promote in order to legitimise our actions. In my opinion, ISIS reflect the West’s imperfect society and is a part of a wider discontent towards to the expansionist objectives of the West.

Baudrillard (2001) argues that we are now in the midst of a fourth World War, where globalisation itself is at stake. For every World War, we have moved one step closer to a single world order where the West thrones the hegemonic position. Connell (2005), argues that a completely legitimate hegemony does not need physical violence as a deterrence. I believe this demonstrates that the Western supremacy is not completely legitimate. Both Occidentalism and Orientalism – at its worst – divides the world along the Manichean lines of good and evil. I believe that this Manichean division is misunderstood; I do not think good can conquer evil, or vice versa. Rather, I agree with Baudrillard (2001), who argues that good and evil advance together as counter-parts of the same movement. Buruma and Margalit (2004) also put forward a similar argument, where they argue that the Occidentalism can never be entirely free from the Occident. I believe that this indicates that even though ISIS continuously declare their hatred for the disbelievers, the dualism between believers and disbelievers are an essential premise for the ISIS ideology; it allows ISIS to construct a reality where Islam is being threatened to create an in-group identity towards a collective enemy.

The Way Forward

The dual theoretical framework of Occidentalism and Masculinities has allowed me to investigate the construction of the ISIS discourse from an inter-disciplinary perspective. From this perspective, I consider it fruitful to talk about an Occidentalism Masculinity; one that is continuously produced and fortified

throughout the narratives communicated in Dabiq Magazine. In future research, where the objectives are to obtain a better understanding of Occidental movements, I hope that the concept of Occidental Masculinity can be a fruitful entry into examining the gendered configuration within such phenomena. Furthermore, I believe that a gendered perspective within the theory of Occidentalism – especially on masculinities – can contribute to producing new knowledge about Occidental movements, whether Militant Islamism or other anti-Western expressions. In extension of such knowledge I believe that a focus on gender-configurations and masculinities within the ISIS discourse can provide an important entry into preventing radicalisation. In order to become more aware of what attracts foreign fighters to join the ISIS movement, I believe we also need to theoretically invade the core of radicalisation with the goal of preventing an environment for radicalisation to take place. My hopes for this thesis is that it can contribute to bringing increased awareness of the importance of having a masculinist perspective when investigating Occidental movements. I also hope that this thesis can inspire further inter-disciplinary perspectives being deployed, especially within the Studies of Islamism, Terrorism and Radicalisation.

The ideology of ISIS is not a unique construction, but rather a part of a continuous reaction to Western dominance. This means that in order to defeat ISIS, we also need to ensure that there is not an environment for new Occidental movements to emerge. I believe we must work to challenge the Manichean division of good and evil, that not only is manifested within the ISIS ideology, but also within the West. There is a need to highlight the shades of grey between the dualism of black and white.

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