The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS): How ISIS uses media as a mechanism of statecraft

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2015

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How ISIS uses Media as a Mechanism of Statecraft

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Islamic Civilization and Societies and Political Science

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Research Question/Objective

What role does media play in ISIS's state building strategy? This paper seeks to better understand how ISIS uses media as an instrument of statecraft. I look both at how ISIS spreads its message, and what that message entails.
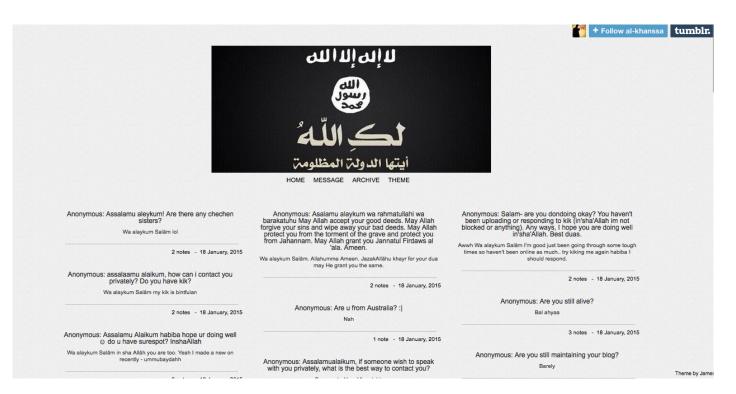

Research Methodology

Research methodology includes assessment and analysis of:
- Pro-ISIS social media
- Web forums
- ISIS publications, videos, and public statements
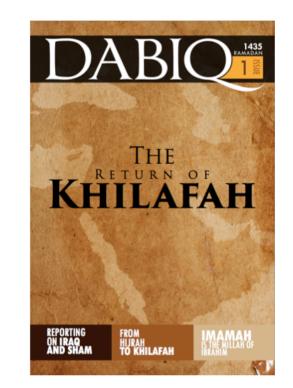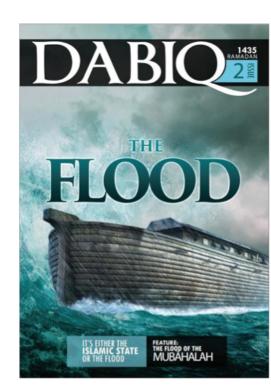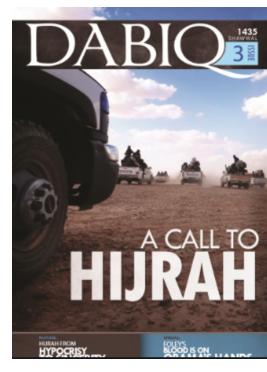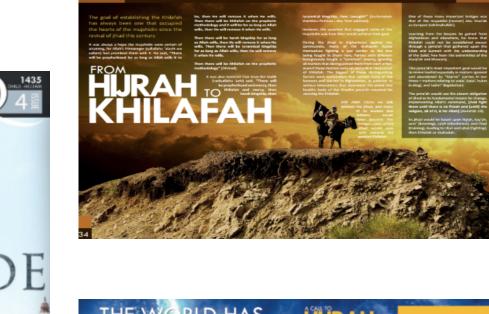- Arabic and English news articles

Introduction

This paper examines the role that media plays in the state building strategy of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). Research findings suggest that ISIS is not merely a disorderly group of militants, but is a sophisticated organization driven by powerful religious and political ideas. The goal of my research is to tap into the intellectual face of ISIS, to uncover ISIS's own arguments and state building aspirations. In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of ISIS, my research analyzes how ISIS spreads its message and the significance of that message as it relates to state formation.
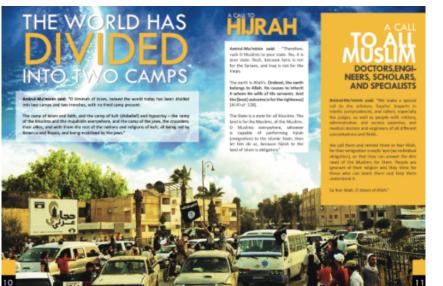

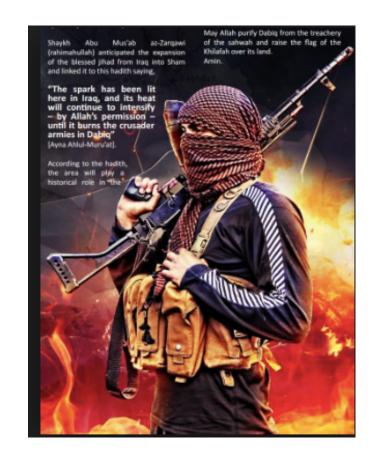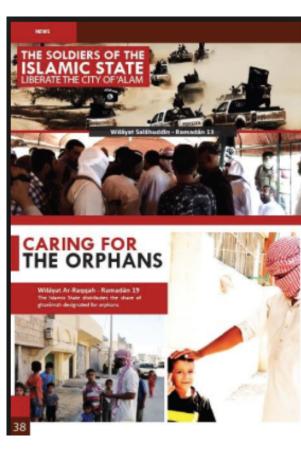## Islamic State Photo Reports (released by ISIS's *wilayat* media centers)

Results and Conclusions

- Global media bolsters ISIS's religious and political legitimacy, contributing heavily to ISIS's overall state building strategy.

- ISIS's use of conventional social media platforms (as opposed to web forums) as a primary means of disseminating propaganda makes ISIS's media campaign decentralized and, therefore, unique. ISIS appears to be sacrificing strict control over the delivery of its message in exchange for widespread circulation and rapid distribution.

- Through its media campaign, ISIS portrays itself as possessing many of the necessary features of modern statehood, including legal structures, a means of providing basic and complex public services, security and educational structures, and a functional economy. ISIS is portraying itself not as a terrorist organization, but as a long-lasting state capable of enduring the post-war era.

References

To assist me in my endeavor to track pro-ISIS media, I make use of several online monitoring services and databases dedicated to re-posting, and occasionally translating, ISIS publications and statements as they are released. The sites I refer to most frequently are Jihadica, Jihadology, SITE Intelligence Group, and TRAC.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to my thesis advisor, David DiPasquale, professor of Political Science and Islamic Civilization and Societies at Boston College

Additional thanks to Kathleen Bailey, Tim McCranor, and Natana DeLong-Bas