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Digital Jihad: Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State Dabiq vs. Inspire

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ABSTRACT

On April 15, 2013, Dzhokar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev placed two self-made bombs at the finish-line of the Boston Marathon, killing three individuals and injuring roughly 300 more. To make the bombs, the brothers consulted Inspire magazine's Open Source Jihad section. Of the Islamic State's 3,000 fighters, two-thirds of them come from foreign countries, an emigration that the magazine's portrayal of the Caliphate fuels tremendously. Hence, The Islamic State and Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's most recent jihadist magazines continue to galvanize support for radical Islam to a degree never witnessed in the past. This research analyzes all editions, publicly available to date, of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's digital magazine, *Inspire*, and The Islamic State's digital magazine, *Dabiq*. It seeks to extract differences between the world's two most prominent terrorist groups through information that articles in each organization's respective magazine provide. Most specifically, this paper focuses on the differences between ISIS and AQAP in regards to their ideology, call to action, methods of motivation, outlook on the Arab Spring, and views of each other.

* The views expressed in this publication are solely those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT).

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INTRODUCTION

On July 11th, 2010, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula released its first-ever English digital magazine, *Inspire*, designed to present issues facing the Islamic community as a result of western oppression.¹ Its goal: as its name suggests, to inspire disenfranchised Muslims in western countries to carry out attacks against the West, most prominently the United States, in the hope of terrorizing America and its allies into retreating from the world stage.² Although Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula was not the first to spearhead the publishing of an English jihadist magazine, *Inspire's* quality, creativity, and most importantly, effectiveness, are unmatched by any of its predecessors. With advertisements, interactive sections, and a sharp layout equivalent to the world's most famous publications, *Inspire* incites the impetus of the lone wolf to wreak havoc upon the United States. Currently, Al-Qaeda's weakened central leadership wields far less capability to carry out 9/11-esque attacks, a fact that puts pressure on the group to regain its post-9/11 glory. Thus, instead of meticulously planning large-scale attacks from safe havens in Afghanistan's tribal regions, Al-Qaeda's prominence on the world stage largely depends on its ability to inspire individuals unknown to intelligence agencies—specifically in America, Britain, France, and Canada—to inflict maximum damage upon western societies. The magazine provides the religious justification, leadership advice, and most importantly, recipe, to succeed in this respect.

June 1, 2014, the focus shifted from *Inspire* to the emergence of a new magazine labeled *The Islamic State Report*, a publication fronted by the former Al-Qaeda splinter group that once carried its name.³ As time progressed, and Abu Bakr announced the creation of the Caliphate on the first day of Ramadan (June 28, 2014), ISIS presented a

¹ "Al Qaeda Releases First-Ever English Terror Magazine," *ADL*, July 15, 2010, <http://www.adl.org/combating-hate/international-extremism-terrorism/c/inspire-magazine-issue-1.html#.U0MLjVfQt-0>. (accessed June 18, 2015).

² Michael Ryan, "Decoding Al-Qaeda's Strategy," *Columbia University Press* (2013) Print.

³ Jack Moore, "Iraq Crisis: ISIS Launces Online English Magazine to recruit Western Jihadis," *International Business Times*, June 25, 2014, <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/iraq-crisis-isis-releases-online-english-magazine-recruit-western-jihadis-1454092>. (accessed June 30, 2015)

newer, sleeker, and more streamlined magazine in order to outline its goals, ideology, and appeal. Its name: *Dabiq*.⁴ Unlike *Inspire*, The Islamic State's magazine comes in a variety of European languages—in addition to English—in the hope of galvanizing and radicalizing the largest support base possible. Its introductory photograph portrays two American soldiers carrying a wounded comrade surrounded by photo-shopped flames.⁵ Its title: *Until the Crusader Army Burns in Dabiq*.

The Islamic State's digital magazine gets its name from a town in Syria that wields tremendous religious significance, as one of Mohammad's ancient prophecies sites Dabiq as the location where Muslims will defeat the Crusaders in a battle that will erase the prolonged western oppression of the *Ummah*.^{6,7} The organization derives this interpretation from the *Hadith*⁸, which describes Dabiq as the location of Armageddon between Christians and Muslims.⁹ The magazine is littered with high-quality photographs, perfect grammar, and articles by Muslim clerics to boast the legitimacy and appeal of immigrating to the Islamic State. However, *Inspire* and *Dabiq* present completely different narratives regarding their respective organizations. Most prominently, *Dabiq* and *Inspire* present stark contrasts in five main groups: ideology, call to action, methods of motivation, views on the Arab spring, and lastly, views of each other.

⁴ Michael Ryan, "Dabiq: What Islamic State's New Magazine Tells Us about Their Strategic Direction, Recruitment Patterns, and Guerilla Doctrine," *The Jamestown Foundation*, August 1, 2014, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=42702&no_cache=1#.VZJQBmCx2FF. (accessed June 30, 2015).

⁵ "Until the Crusader Army Burns in Dabiq," *Dabiq 1*, Ramadan, 1435, 1.

⁶ Michael Ryan, "Dabiq: What Islamic State's New Magazine Tells Us about Their Strategic Direction, Recruitment Patterns, and Guerilla Doctrine," *The Jamestown Foundation*, August 1, 2014, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=42702&no_cache=1#.VZJQBmCx2FF. (accessed June 30, 2015).

⁷ This term translates roughly to "worldwide Islamic community."

⁸ Islam's second holiest book that describes the saying and actions of Prophet Mohammad.

⁹ Ibid.

IDEOLOGY

The Islamic State

Analogous to Al-Qaeda's current leadership, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's Jamaat al Tawhid wal-Jihad (JTJ) viewed the creation of an Islamic Caliphate as a long-term goal, one that was not an immediate objective but rather a distant hope.¹⁰ Zarqawi's group strove to, in his words, "expel the enemy" through whatever means possible.¹¹ In 2004, JTJ pledged allegiance to Al-Qaeda and established a new jihadist group: Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI).¹² However, the group's goals remained the same: to terrorize occupying forces and US-backed apostate governments while spreading the message of *tawheed*, or oneness of God.¹³ Zarqawi's repeated destruction of all those who opposed AQI's agenda earned him the name "the sheikh of the slaughterers."¹⁴ Al-Qaeda's second in command, Ayman al-Zawahiri, disapproved of Zarqawi's overt brutality towards Sunni and Shia Muslims, an attitude that foreshadowed Zawahiri's current sentiment towards the Islamic State.¹⁵ Until 2006, Zarqawi and AQI launched a brutal campaign against Shia and coalition forces, when American F-16's dropped two 500-pound bombs on his place of residence.¹⁶ Abu Hamza al-Muhajir was then announced as the head of Al-Qaeda in Iraq. However, after al-Muhajir's promotion, the group adopted a different name.¹⁷

¹⁰ Ahmed S. Hashim, "The Islamic State : From Al-Qaeda Affiliate to Islamic Caliphate," *Middle East Policy Council* XXI, 4. (2014).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ "The Islamic Concept of Tawheed (Monotheism)," *Ahya*, <http://www.ahya.org/tjonline/eng/02/1tawheed.html>. (accessed July 12, 2015).

¹⁴ Ahmed S. Hashim, "The Islamic State : From Al-Qaeda Affiliate to Islamic Caliphate," *Middle East Policy Council* XXI, 4. (2014).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Cal Perry et al., "Cell Phone Tracking helped find al-Zarqawi," *CNN*, June 11, 2006, <http://edition.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/meast/06/09/iraq.al.zarqawi/>. (accessed June 12, 2015).

¹⁷ Ahmed S. Hashim, "The Islamic State : From Al-Qaeda Affiliate to Islamic Caliphate," *Middle East Policy Council* XXI, 4. (2014).

In June of 2007, Al-Qaeda in Iraq’s leadership shifted to Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, and under him, AQI became the Islamic State in Iraq.¹⁸ At this point, Zarqawi’s former organization changed its main goal from expelling coalition forces to creating an Islamic State.¹⁹ However, the group’s first attempt to establish an Islamic Caliphate failed dramatically, as by 2010 coalition governments had either killed or captured 80% of ISI’s leadership, including Abu Hamza al Muhajir and Abu Omar al-Baghdadi.²⁰ Their death paved the way for Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi to emerge, a man purportedly from the same tribe as Mohammad, the Quraysh.²¹ Baghdadi used his tribal prestige— one of four “check-in-the-boxes” that qualify him as a Caliph— to exploit Syria’s civil war and successfully rally support in Iraq from marginalized Sunni’s, a move that substantially increased ISI’s size. He subsequently renamed ISI the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and clearly articulated the group’s goals to topple illegitimate governments and create an immediate Islamic Caliphate, one that uses the Qur’an as a book of governance and legislation.²²

Thus, the Islamic State’s ideology is rooted in law, custom, and lifestyle from the seventh- century.²³ In other words, as Graeme Wood from *the Atlantic* outlines, members of the Islamic State “are smack in the middle of the medieval traditional and are bringing it wholesale into the present day.”²⁴ The Islamic State believes it is outright apostasy to waver from the governing principles of Mohammad’s time, principles in which the Caliphate believes are under attack by non-Muslims. Hence, as Wood’s publication states, “Slavery, crucifixion, and beheadings are not something that freakish [jihadists]

¹⁸ Ahmed S. Hashim, “The Islamic State : From Al-Qaeda Affiliate to Islamic Caliphate,” *Middle East Policy Council* XXI, 4. (2014).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Graeme Wood, “What ISIS Really Wants,” *The Atlantic*, March, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2015/02/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>. (accessed July 9, 2015).

²² “The Concept of Imamah is from the Millah of Ibrahim,” *Dabiq I*, Ramadan, 1435, 24.

²³ Graeme Wood, “What ISIS Really Wants,” *The Atlantic*, March, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2015/02/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>. (accessed July 9, 2015).

²⁴ Ibid.

are cherry-picking from the medieval tradition.”²⁵ As a result of their overtly fundamental approach to the Qur’an, the Islamic State uses Sharia law to govern its legal, social, and economic infrastructure. Whereas Saudi Arabia solely enforces the penal code of Sharia—such as beheading individuals for repeated drug abuse or amputating the hands of thieves—the Islamic State’s implements *all* aspects of Sharia including “free housing, food, and clothing for all.”²⁶ Akin to the problem that the earliest Muslims faced when the prophet established the religion, members of the current Caliphate view themselves as a group of Sharia-obeying believers surrounded by non-Muslims.²⁷ The group’s rapid territorial gains and use of repugnant forms of brutality towards non-repenting individuals serves as the sole method of reversing this trend, with the object of reestablishing Islam as the dominant social order.

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

In an article titled “What is Al-Qaeda,” Al-Qaeda leader Fazul Abdullah states, “Al-Qaeda is an Islamic group which raises the flag of jihad to espouse and support the *Haqq* (truth of Islam) wherever it is found.”²⁸ Thus, the group desires to instill a *Salafist*²⁹ form of Islam in Muslim societies, through, as the former head of AQAP Sheikh Abu Basir al-Wuhayshi states, “driving out the occupiers from the Arabian Peninsula and purifying its land from them, establishing the law of *sharī`ah*, the establishment of khilafa, spreading the call to the oneness of Allah, and defending against the transgressors and helping the weak.”³⁰ Although al-Wuhayshi mentions the establishment of a Caliphate, Al-Qaeda’s primary goal since its inception in 1988 has been to force the oppressive United States to withdraw from Muslim lands, dissolve US-backed apostate

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Fazul Abdallah, “What is al-Qaeda,” *Inspire 10*, March, 2013, 35.

²⁹ A strand of Islam that advocates for strict adherence to facets emulated in the time of Mohammad.

³⁰ Abu Basir, “Interview with Shaykh Abu-Basir,” *Inspire 1*, January, 2010, 13.

regimes in the land of Mohammad, and destroy Israel.³¹ In the words of Wood, “Bin Laden viewed his terrorism as a prologue to a caliphate he did not expect to see in his lifetime.”³² The sheikh also rarely mentioned the apocalypse, a leitmotif in *Dabiq*, and when he did, “he seemed to presume that he would be long dead when the glorious moment of divine comeuppance finally arrived.”³³ Furthermore, as Will McCants of the Brookings Institution states, “Bin Laden and Zawahiri are from elite Sunni families who look down on this kind of speculation and think it’s something the masses engage in.”³⁴

Instead, the organization acts as a clandestine political movement that seeks to expel all non-Muslims from the Arabian Peninsula, topple illegitimate Muslim governments, and erase the State of Israel.³⁵ They view the United States as the source of all three aforementioned problems. In Al-Qaeda’s view, if the head of the snake is lobbed off, then the body’s metaphorical three limbs – Israel, apostate governments, and American troops in Muslims lands—will vanish. In addition to this, although Bin Laden’s top leadership routinely appeared, and continues to appear, in videos with long beards and flowing *thawbs*³⁶, the majority of the group’s operators live particularly western lifestyles. Al-Qaeda’s soldiers, although radical in nature, navigate “the modern world confidently,” and do not allow the Qur’an’s binding decrees regarding lifestyle to interfere with their ability to attack the United States.³⁷ Mohammad Atta is a perfect example of this trend, as on his “last full day of life, he shopped at Walmart and ate

³¹ Ibid.

³² Graeme Wood, “What ISIS Really Wants,” *The Atlantic*, March, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2015/02/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>. (accessed July 9, 2015).

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ An ankle-length garment with long sleeves worn by Arab men, particularly in the Arabian Peninsula and Levant. Also called a dishdasha.

³⁷ Graeme Wood, “What ISIS Really Wants,” *The Atlantic*, March, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2015/02/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>. (accessed July 9, 2015).

dinner at Pizza Hut.”³⁸ Thus, although Al-Qaeda employs an extremely radical rhetoric, it does not let apocalyptic ceilings restrict its ability to terrorize the West.

Comparison:

Unlike Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State desires to conquer the “near” instead of “far” enemy.³⁹ Therefore their main nemesis is not the United States but rather apostate regimes in the area that stand in the way of their goal. These include Assad in Syria and Abadi in Iraq.⁴⁰ As a result, the majority of victims the Islamic State kills are Muslims.⁴¹ As Daniel Byman, the director of research at the Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings, states, “Baghdadi favors first purifying the Islamic community by attacking Shia and other religious minorities as well as rival jihadist groups.”⁴² Akin to the Islamic State, Al-Qaeda views Shia Muslims as apostates. However, AQAP disagrees with slaughtering them, as the act may potentially anger their broader support base who solely views the attacks as “Muslims killing other Muslims.”⁴³ Thus, instead of carrying out spectacular attacks to force the United States to withdraw from Muslim lands, the Islamic State uses a mix of conventional, guerilla, and suicide military tactics against local rivals to chip away at establishing a worldwide Islamic Caliphate. In June of 2014, the group

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Daniel Byman and Jennifer Williams, “Al-Qaeda vs. ISIS: The Battle for the Soul of Jihad,” *Newsweek*, March 27, 2015, <http://www.newsweek.com/al-qaeda-vs-isis-battle-soul-jihad-317414>. (accessed July 9, 2015).

⁴⁰ Daniel L. Byman and Jennifer R. Williams, “ISIS vs. Al Qaeda: Jihadism’s global civil war,” *Brookings*, February 24, 2015, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/articles/2015/02/24-byman-williams-isis-war-with-al-qaeda>. (accessed June 27, 2015).

⁴¹ Robert Spencer, “Islamic State; Qur’an says that fighting Infidels takes precedence over fighting Israel,” *Jihad Watch*, June 8, 2014, <http://www.jihadwatch.org/2014/07/islamic-state-quran-says-that-fighting-infidels-takes-precedence-over-fighting-israel>. (accessed June 30, 2015).

⁴² Daniel L. Byman and Jennifer R. Williams, “ISIS vs. Al Qaeda: Jihadism’s global civil war,” *Brookings*, February 24, 2015, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/articles/2015/02/24-byman-williams-isis-war-with-al-qaeda>. (accessed June 27, 2015).

⁴³ Ibid.

announced the embryo of the Caliphate.⁴⁴ Now, its goal is to expand it, a narrative that its magazine *Dabiq* outlines in great detail.

As aforementioned, Al-Qaeda views the United States' seemingly secular, liberal, and more importantly, oppressive, ideals as the biggest threat to the worldwide Muslim community. Al-Qaeda defines the targeting of these interests as “defensive jihad,” in which the group's actions are justified through defending Islam from the west's “heavy boots” and their support of local apostate governments.⁴⁵ The Islamic State employs this notion as well, however, when compared to al-Qaeda, ISIS places a much heavier emphasis on “offensive jihad” against aforementioned groups, most notably Shia Muslims, rival terrorist factions, or more broadly, all those unwilling to repent.⁴⁶ Abu Bakr al Baghdadi purportedly urged his Saudi proxies in November to “deal with the *rafida* [Shia] first ... then *al-Sulul* [Sunni supporters of the Saudi monarchy] ... before the crusaders and their bases,” a statement that parallels this concept.⁴⁷

Of the four requirements that a Caliphate must embody, territory holds the greatest significance. Because of this, the Islamic State, unlike Al-Qaeda, cannot survive if it suffers severe territorial losses. As Wood iterates, “Caliphates cannot exist as underground movements, because territorial authority is a requirement: take away its command of territory, and all those oaths of allegiance are no longer binding.”⁴⁸ Contrary to this, due to the nature of its organization and current horizontal command structure, AQAP wields a cockroach-like ability that enables it to suffer tremendous leadership and

⁴⁴ Michael Ryan, “Dabiq: What Islamic State's New Magazine Tells Us about Their Strategic Direction, Recruitment Patterns, and Guerilla Doctrine,” *The Jamestown Foundation*, August 1, 2014, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=42702&no_cache=1#.VZJQBmCx2FF. (accessed June 30, 2015).

⁴⁵ Cole Bunzel, “From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State,” *Brookings*, March, 2015, <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2015/03/ideology-of-islamic-state-bunzel/the-ideology-of-the-islamic-state.pdf>. (accessed June 21, 2015).

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Graeme Wood, “What ISIS Really Wants,” *The Atlantic*, March, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2015/02/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>. (accessed July 9, 2015).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

territorial losses and still maintain legitimacy.⁴⁹ Hence, it is considerably more malleable than the Islamic State. Territory thus holds little significance in an organization that seeks to force the United States to “pull out of the region altogether,” an act that they believe will expose exploitable vulnerabilities within local apostate governments.⁵⁰

CALL TO ACTION

The Islamic State

The Islamic State’s call to action places paramount importance on *hijrah*, or in English, immigration. Its magazine overtly articulates that the prospective member’s primary obligation is to emigrate from their current place of residence and reach the territory of the Caliphate. In the foreword section of its first publication, *Dabiq*’s editor urges recruits to “Rush to the shade of the Islamic State with your parents, siblings, spouses, and children,” and iterates that “there are homes here for you and your families.”⁵¹ The magazine aggressively states that refusing to immigrate is only acceptable if one has “an extraordinary reason.”⁵² If this is the case, then the individual must organize pledges of allegiance to the Caliphate by traveling to local mosques or Islamic centers to garner support.⁵³ Lastly, if the individual cannot do either of these for, as *Dabiq* states, “reasons extremely beyond your control,” then the individual’s belief in the Islamic State and its sanctuary for Muslims may be sufficient enough to protect him or her from Hellfire. This grant—the allowance of entry into Paradise after the Day of

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Cole Bunzel, “From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State,” *Brookings*, March, 2015, <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2015/03/ideology-of-islamic-state-bunzel/the-ideology-of-the-islamic-state.pdf>. (accessed June 21, 2015).

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵¹ “Foreword,” *Dabiq 1*, Ramadan, 1435, 3.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

Judgment—sits at the top of the pyramid of “benefits” that the Islamic State offers, an eschatological view of the world that fuels the Islamic State and its archaic practices.⁵⁴

Accordingly, the Islamic State views even the most devout Muslims as hypocrites if they are able to perform *hijrah* but willingly choose to stay in the lands of the *kufr*.⁵⁵ In its third magazine publication, an unknown author states, “even if one were to spend all his hours at a masjid in prayer, dhkr, and study of the religion, while living amongst Muslims who reside amid kuffar and abandon jihad, then such a person would only be establishing the strongest proof against himself and his sin.”⁵⁶ The magazine also preaches that Allah weakens in the eyes of the one who lives amongst the infidels, and as a result the individual distances him or herself from Islam. To them, the West is a place widespread in facets of fornication, sodomy, alcohol and sin. Jihad, it states, is not possible until the individual removes himself from the land of *kufr* and voyages to the Caliphate, as “there is no life without jihad, and there is no jihad without hijrah.”⁵⁷

Al- Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

Al-Qaeda’s call to action—and their legitimacy as a global actor—relies heavily on persuading the mujahid to stay in his or her current place of residence and attack the West within its own borders. This method grants the mujahid easier access to notable economic sites, political figures, and most importantly, population centers. The creation of stagnate lone-wolf cells, a goal *Inspire* succeeds in achieving, makes the organization’s aim of “bleeding the enemy out” a reality that is difficult to disrupt. In an article that urges the mujahid to use 4WD pickup trucks to “mow down the enemies of Allah”, Yahya Ibrahim, a prominent AQAP cleric, reinforces the organization’s desire to

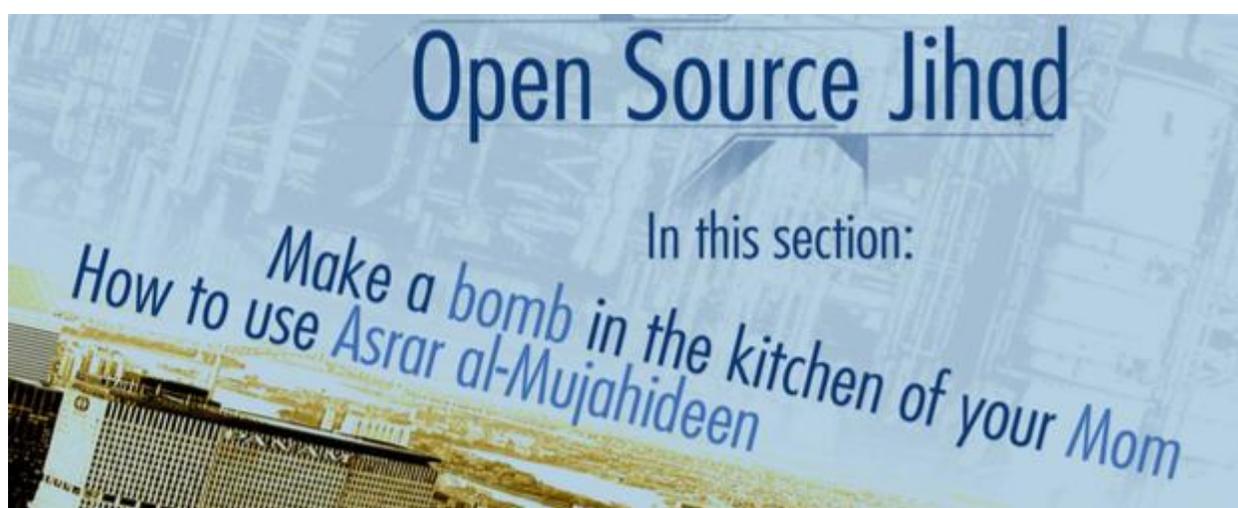
⁵⁴ “The Da’wah of Nuh,” *Dabiq* 2, Ramadan, 1435, 6.

⁵⁵ An Arabic word that translates to “Infidel” in English.

⁵⁶ “Bad Company Destroys the Heart,” *Dabiq* 3, Shawwal, 1435, 32.

⁵⁷ “There is No Life Without Jihad, and there is No Jihad without Hijrah,” *Dabiq* 3, Shawwal, 1435, 32.

keep the West a battlefield for the mujahedeen.⁵⁸ He states, “This idea could be implemented in countries like Israel, the U.S, Britain, Canada, Australia, France, Germany, Denmark, Holland...in such countries we may strike at the public at large.”⁵⁹ In order to equip the lone-wolf with the necessary advice and tools, *Inspire* dedicates an entire section of its magazine to teaching the reader how to make bombs, handle handguns and AK-47s, weld blades onto pickup trucks and concoct volatile chemical mixtures. The section, arguably the magazine’s claim to fame, is labeled “Open Source Jihad.”⁶⁰



⁶¹ Figure 1: The front page of the Open Source Jihad section in *Inspire*'s first magazine.

With pictures and lists of ingredients for each task, it is a step-by-step outline that meticulously details how to inflict maximum damage in the lands of the Jews and Crusaders. The Tsarneav brothers consulted this section whilst they prepared for the Boston bombings, an example of the effectiveness and danger of AQAP’s digital magazine.

⁵⁸ Yahya Ibrahim, “The Ultimate Mowing Machine,” *Inspire 2*, October, 2010, 53.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ “Open Source Jihad: Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom,” *Inspire 1*, January, 2010, 33.

⁶¹ Ibid.

Comparison:

Above all, the greatest difference between AQAP's *Inspire* and the IS's *Dabiq* concerns their call to action, or advice to prospective group members. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula employs an absolute opposite call to action when compared to the Islamic State, as the group views it as illogical for a westerner to travel to the lands of the mujahid if the individual already resides in the nucleus of the oppressor. In its first issue of *Inspire*, a unknown author states "there are many Muslims who have the zeal to defend the *ummah* but their vision is unclear. They believe that in order to defend the *ummah* they need to travel and join the *mujahidin* elsewhere and they must train in their camps."⁶² The author echoes this idea later in the article when, "There is a better choice and easier one to give support to your *ummah*. That is individual work inside the West."⁶³ As this statement proves, Al-Qaeda's call to action actually dissuades potential followers from traveling to Muslim lands and urges them to carry out freelance, or lone wolf, attacks in the territory of the enemy. Contradictorily, the Islamic State views emigration as an outright obligation. Although a handful of people have carried out lone-wolf attacks in the name of the Islamic State, Woods says "most of the attackers have been frustrated amateurs, unable to immigrate to the caliphate because of confiscated passports or other problems," as the attack on Charlie Hebdo's headquarters in Paris was chiefly the work of Al-Qaeda.⁶⁴

In addition to carrying out attacks in the West, *Inspire* offers other alternatives that also do not require immigration. In an article titled "the Way to Save the Earth," Osama Bin Laden urges to Muslims to attack the United States economically by boycotting American goods entirely.⁶⁵ He calls for the Ummah to eliminate their relationship with the dollar under the pretense that their contributions to American corporations fuel the

⁶² "Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of your Mom," *Inspire 1*, January, 2010, 33.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Graeme Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants," *The Atlantic*, March, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2015/02/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>. (accessed July 9, 2015).

⁶⁵ Osama Bin Laden, "The Way to Save the Earth," *Inspire 1*, January, 2010, 10.

spread of global warming. However, beneath the façade lies the fact that any transaction with the American dollar finances its “tyrannical wars against the weak.”⁶⁶ He compares the American economy to a bicycle wheel and explains that when a single link in its chain falters, the wheel stops moving entirely. Among the links are raw materials, capital, and consumers. Thus, the Muslim, whether in Boston or Baghdad, can weaken the third link in the economy’s wheel by refusing to consume American products, a strategy that also does not require *hijrah*.

METHODS OF MOTIVATION

The Islamic State

The Islamic state currently employs as many as 31,000 soldiers. Of this number, two thirds of them (20,000) are foreign fighters, and 3,400 of these are from Western nations.⁶⁷ In addition to offering entrance into paradise, the Islamic State’s magazine vibrantly presents a number of other benefits that have the ability to sway a potential, on-the-border jihadist. First is their glossy portrayal of the “oneness” of the Islamic State. In other words, it is a state that accepts the white and black man, the easterner and the westerner, the poor and rich, the Arab and the non-Arab. In the “breaking news” section of *Dabiq*’s first edition, a spokesman for the Islamic State mentions the Khilafa contains members that are “Caucasian, Indian, Shami, Iraqi, Yemeni, Egyptian, North African, American, French, German, and Australian,” and describes that “their blood mixed and became one, under a single flag and goal, in one pavilion, enjoying this blessing, the blessing of faithful brotherhood.”⁶⁸ Consequently, the magazine leaves no race, ethnicity, skin color, or socio-economic standing out of its potential base of support. As a result the

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Robert Windrem, “ISIS By the Numbers: Foreign Fighter Total Keeps Growing,” *NBC News*, February 28, 2015, <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/isis-numbers-foreign-fighter-total-keeps-growing-n314731>. (accessed June 10, 2015).

⁶⁸ “Glad Tidings for the Muslim Ummah,” *Dabiq* 1, Ramadan, 1435, 7.

reader is led to believe he or she will join a group where their insecurities are not exploited. Thus, the individual feels valued, a feeling that is absent in many of their previous backgrounds.

Furthermore, per magazine, *Dabiq* portrays at least one section that emphasizes its infrastructure and social services. In order to convince foreign fighters that they will not arrive at a community littered with twisted metal, shattered stone, and severed human heads, *Dabiq* presents sharp, high quality pictures of bustling markets, clean hospitals, and organized checkpoints. In its 9th issue, the magazine—in what looks like a photo taken from the inside of the New York’s Columbia Presbyterian Hospital— presents a picture illustrating clean, state of the art incubator’s in Ar-Raqqah hospital’s pediatric wing.⁶⁹ The section subsequently describes how to acquire a medical degree within the Islamic State, and provides a table of statistics that detail the various services the hospital offers.

⁶⁹ “Healthcare in the Khalifa,” *Dabiq* 9, May, 2015, 24.

Category	Amount
Outpatients	6711
Emergency Patients	4289
Lab Tests	15688
Minor X-Rays	2384
Kidney Dialysis Sessions	442
Physiotherapy Sessions	233
Children Admitted	170
Blood Donors	1151
General Surgeries	140
Bone Surgeries	261
Urinary Surgeries	18
Nerve Surgeries	15
Ear Surgeries	3
Gynecological Surgeries	47
Emergency Surgeries	16
Births	576
Audiometric Tests	45
Brain Stem Scans	11
Ultrasound Exams	400

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Table 1: The Islamic State's categorization of its various health services.

In the “News” section of *Dabiq*'s second magazine, an unknown author explains how Islamic State soldiers frequently deliver meat among the needy in each *wilayat*, or province. The description:

The Islamic State initiates programs in a number of regions to provide the iftār

⁷⁰ Ibid.

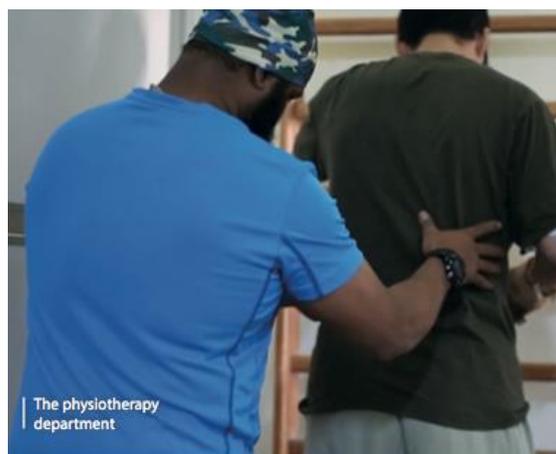
⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.



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Figure 2: The Islamic State cares for a baby in Ar-Raqqah's pediatric wing.



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Figure 3: An Islamic State doctor provides physiotherapy assistance to a patient in Ar-Raqqah's hospital.

meal for the Muslims fasting the month of Ramadan. Other programs and activities taking place during the blessed month included tarāwih prayers, lectures, competitions, da'wah events, and a drive to provide meat to the needy.⁷³

Each description is complemented with a photo that displays the community's jubilation as a result of these initiatives. In its "Caring for the Orphans" section, pictures demonstrate how IS fighters distribute war booty among groups of orphans while other photos display faceless fighters with their hands atop the heads of smiling young boys.⁷⁴ In the same edition, the magazine details the Caliphate's street cleaning services, nursing home locations, bridge repair operations and electrical amenities. Each section includes pictures of men and children smiling, laughing, and dancing with their index finger to the sky, a gesture that alludes to *tawhid*, the supreme oneness of God.⁷⁵ In *Dabiq*'s 9th edition, two children sit on a swing set with ear to cheek smiles, a photo that, without the Islamic State insignia on the children's shirts, could easily be mistaken for an elementary school recess in Greenwich, Connecticut.⁷⁶ *Dabiq*'s editors thus paint a picture of a vibrant, functioning community with an advanced infrastructure that takes care of its citizens and unites under the banner of la 'ilaha 'illa-Allah.⁷⁷

⁷³ "News," *Dabiq* 2, Ramadan, 1435, 33.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁷⁵ Nathaniel Zelinsky, "ISIS Sends a Message," *Foreign Affairs*, September 3, 2014, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2014-09-03/isis-sends-message>. (accessed June 23, 2015).

⁷⁶ "From Hijrah to Khilafa," *Dabiq* 1, Ramadan, 1435, 41.

⁷⁷ Ilene Prusher, "What the ISIS Flag Says About the Militant Group," *Time*, September 9, 2014, <http://time.com/3311665/isis-flag-iraq-syria/>. (accessed June 12, 2015)



⁷⁸ Figure 4: Young children express support for the Islamic State.

The Islamic State also prides itself on its “purity” and abstinence from acts that are considered *haram*, or forbidden by Allah. To exude this notion, *Dabiq* repeatedly displays instances where Islamic State members break up crime rings or burn drugs found at conquered compounds. In its second edition, the IS captions a photo with, “The Islamic Police in Jarablus break up a drug trafficking cell, seizing weapons, hashish, cigarettes and counterfeit money.”⁷⁹ In its fifth magazine, it provides a collage of photos that display piles of burning cigarettes found at a PKK compound.⁸⁰ Thus, *Dabiq* presents instances of “drug seizure” and “cartel breakup” to paint a picture of a culture that refuses lust, illegal substances, and weakness in will. Although one might point out that their founder, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was an alcoholic and rapist; the organization does its

⁷⁸ “From Hijrah to Khilafa, *Dabiq 1*, Ramadan, 1435, 41.

⁷⁹ “News,” *Dabiq 2*, Ramadan, 1435, 33.

⁸⁰ “Ayn al-Islam,” *Dabiq 5*, Muharram, 1436, 17.

best to portray a “pure,” or *halal* society through its digital magazine.⁸¹

Lastly, and most ubiquitously, is the repeated manner in which *Dabiq* decides to portray the Islamic State fighter. In unison, Islamic State fighters tout balaclavas, carry Ak-47’s with yard-long bullet belts, sit atop of tanks and savor an atmosphere saturated with black flags, digital camouflage and bloodthirsty jihadists. Whether *Dabiq*’s editors take the photo on the streets of Ar-Raqqa or on a sunset backed mountaintop, each picture exudes a notion of legitimacy and power through the magazine’s ghastly portrayal of the Islamic State fighter. Men in long robes and shemaghs roam the desert with swords in sheathe. Sand swirls in the air as riders atop of black horses charge into the distance carrying the Black Standard. The effect: the prospective recruit feels a sense of excitement and a spike in adrenaline due to the “badness” of the faceless soldier. For an individual who lives a life marked by disenfranchisement, these photos are hauntingly effective.



⁸² **Figure 5: *Dabiq*’s portrayal of the Islamic State fighter.**

⁸¹ Jeffrey Gettleman, “Abu Musab al-Zarqawi Lived a Brief, Shadowy Life Replete With Contradictions,” *The New York Times*, June 9, 2006, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/09/world/middleeast/09zarqawi.html?_r=0. (accessed July 9, 2015).

⁸² “Abu Bakr As- Siddiq’s Monumental Stance,” *Dabiq* 8, Jumada Al- Akhirah, 1436, 12.

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

Inspire's method of convincing its readers aligns directly with its goals as well. Throughout its 13 editions, *Inspire*'s writers repeatedly illuminate a plethora of oppressive policies that the west employs against the Muslim community. In an article titled "The West should ban the Niqab covering its real face," *Inspire* contributor Yahya Ibrahim blasts French President Nicolas Sarkozy for his desire to implement a law that bans the face veil, or *niqab*.⁸³ In his address, Sarkozy stated, "we cannot accept in our country women who are prisoners behind a grill, cut off from all social life, and deprived of any identity."⁸⁴ Paradoxically, the author describes the women's choice to wear the *niqab* as a "right" and views France's ban as a policy of forced assimilation and oppression against Muslim women. The author iterates that "the West is hiding behind a *niqāb* of human rights, civil liberties, women's rights, gender equality and other rallying slogans while in practice it is being imperialistic, intolerant, chauvinistic and discriminating against the Muslim population of Western countries."⁸⁵ Thus, *Inspire* views the *niqab* ban as small battle in the West's larger overall war against Islam. As a result, and in line with the magazine's overall ideology, the author states that "one should only expect the West to remain a field of operation for the *mujāhidīn*" and states that Ford Hord-esque attacks have no reason to abate.⁸⁶ Other articles with titles that range from "I am proud to be a traitor to America" and "Stinking Rottenyahu," emphasize the desire of the US and its allies to keep the *Ummah* weak.^{87,88} These articles thus anger the relegated reader and give him or her a seemingly legitimate reason to carry out attacks against the west.

Part of *Inspire*'s ability to motivate also lies with the magazine's personal feel. In

⁸³ Yahya Ibrahim, "The West should ban the Niqab covering its real face," *Inspire 1*, January, 2010, 19.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.,20.

⁸⁷ Samir Khan, "I Am Proud to be a Traitor to America," *Inspire 2*, October, 2010, 45.

⁸⁸ "Stinking Rottenyahu," *Inspire 9*, May, 2012, 25.

a section labeled “Inspire Responses,” *Inspire* readers ask questions to the magazine’s editors that fall within the spectrum of extremely critical to overwhelmingly appraising. In *Inspire*’s fifth edition, a writer contests the organization’s targeting of civilians and subsequently receives a lengthy yet respectful response with references from the Qur’an and Hadith to legitimize AQAP’s stance.⁸⁹ Thus, the point of the section is to forge a relationship with the reader that can then be exploited in order to close the gap in ideology between the magazine and its viewers. It essentially invites individuals with wide ranging ideologies to become more familiar with Al-Qaeda’s leadership and overall thought, as many of the response sections feature top leaders such as Anwar al-Awlaki and Adam Gadahn. Hence, the “personal feel” of the magazine gives the organization a better chance to co-opt individuals and convince them to wage jihad.

Additionally, *Inspire*’s readers hear directly from the organization’s power figures in the majority of the magazine’s articles. From the emir of the organization to the most experienced bomb-maker, *Inspire* motivates its readers by providing them with words backed by the weight of the organization’s elite. There is thus a face to the name of the man who urges you to concoct acid peroxide, a face that isn’t a low level jihadist but rather a high level official. Again, this enhances the magazine’s personal feel, a delicacy that effectively galvanizes potential jihadists. Furthermore, the author legitimizes his or her claim with numerous verses in Islam’s holy books and delves into extreme detail as to how they apply. On top of the atrocities of the west that the writer details, the use of direct words and sayings of Mohammad further legitimize the actions that a “grey zone” individual may decide to carry out.⁹⁰ If he or she decides to commit, they are left with every tool, ingredient and piece of advice to harm the United States, and *Inspire* succeeds in upholding its name.

⁸⁹ “Inspire Responses,” *Inspire* 5, March, 2011, 9.

⁹⁰ “The Extinction of the Grey Zone,” *Dabiq* 7, Rabi’ Al-Akhir, 1436, 54.

Comparison:

Whereas the Islamic State motivates its potential followers through its lustrous portrayal of the caliphate's infrastructure, social services, and lifestyle, Al-Qaeda highlights the United States' oppressive policies and collateral murder of Muslim civilians to galvanize its support base. In *Inspire*'s 10th issue, the author, an unknown woman, describes how she "fears the enemy's soldiers will break down the door, and tear up the protective cover of her child," and complains how her family can not sleep "without being awoken by artilleries."⁹¹ She then attributes this to an enemy who "ran over our lands with oppression and force, with power, hatred, and enmity; stealing and robbing."⁹² Thus, Al-Qaeda's ability to motivate followers depends on their magazine's effectiveness to portray the West in a disgraceful light, an aspect in which *Dabiq* does not give substantial importance.

Inspire magazine also employs a much more interactive platform than *Dabiq*. As aforementioned, the majority of AQAP's magazines include a section labeled "Inspire Responses." Unlike *Dabiq*, *Inspire* provides the reader with an avenue for inquiry to familiarize him or herself with their potential companions. The individual thus gains knowledge of the organization through dialogue rather than stagnate photos, a tactic absent in all nine of *Dabiq*'s editions. Another important difference between *Dabiq* and *Inspire*'s means of convincing lies in its article's authorship. In *Dabiq*, it is unclear as to who writes the majority of the magazine's articles, as it is a rarity to see an article with a name attached to it. However, in *Inspire*, as aforesaid, the reader hears directly from al-Qaeda's most important leaders, as Osama Bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and Anwar al-Awlaki contribute to almost every magazine edition. The magazine's editor in chief, Samir Khan, and the former the head of AQAP, Nasir al-Wuhayshi, also appear frequently throughout the magazine's progression. As a result, the reader hears directly

⁹¹ "Women of the Glorious Ummah," *Inspire 10*, March, 2013, 31.

⁹² Ibid.

from organization's power figures whose words carry incomparable weight to *Dabiq*'s ghostwriters.

OUTLOOK ON THE ARAB SPRING

The Islamic State

Throughout its nine editions, *Dabiq*'s authors mention the Arab Spring seven times, and each reference mocks the term more than the last. The term appears in quotation marks in order to signify the Islamic State's lack of regard for the "Arab Spring," a subtle yet important dismissal of the revolution.⁹³ The Islamic State's continuous mockery of the Arab spring and those who support it further illuminate the organizations mentality of "either you alight directly with the view of Islamic State, or you will be slaughtered." In *Dabiq*'s fifth issue, the author poses a question to the reader that blasts the supporters of the Arab Spring and orders them to refuse the revolution's ideals. He states, "As for my message to my mujāhid brothers on all the fronts, what do you desire? What do you aspire for? After a state was established for Islam and the Muslims and a Khalīfah and Amīr for the believers was appointed, suddenly you lag behind by not supporting it and you forsake it by not standing beneath its banner."⁹⁴ The author then states, "settle your matter, gather yourselves, and support your state, for you depend on it and it depends on you."⁹⁵ Thus, the Islamic State strongly believes that the Arab spring holds no positive potential for their ranks, as it consists of group of peaceful revolutionaries that follow an incorrect and progressive version of Islam.

Furthermore, the Islamic State believes the ideology of the Arab Spring not only poisons the mentality of the *Ummah* but also, as a result, halts physical attacks against the near enemy. It attributes the slowing of attacks against Algeria's regime to the Arab

⁹³ Remaining and Expanding," *Dabiq* 5, Muharram, 1436, 27.

⁹⁴ Ibid.,27.

⁹⁵ Ibid.,24.

spring and states that the revolution deviates from “jihad against the apostate regime towards a call for peaceful coexistence alongside the regimes of the so-called ‘Arab Spring.’”⁹⁶ In ISIS’s view, the Arab Spring’s ideological call for the unification of secular and nationalist regimes drastically effects physical jihadist operations in Algeria to, as an author is *Dabiq* iterates, “the detriment of twahid and jihad.”⁹⁷ The Islamic State’s authors also draw a parallel between those who partake in the Arab spring and those who support Crusader and Jewish influence. It legitimizes this claim through its analysis of the banner of the Arab spring, one that, as *Dabiq* states, was designed by British Crusader Mark Sykes.⁹⁸ In the section “the Flags of Jihiliyyah” in its 9th edition, an author outlines the historical significance of the flag that Arab spring supporters boast and blasts these individuals for their lack of knowledge of its corrupted origin.⁹⁹ In the Islamic State’s view, the banner that various “jihad claimants” carry as a result of the Arab spring is a flag that carries with it the promotion of a Jewish state, Crusader influence, and polytheism.¹⁰⁰

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

Since AQAP’s inception, the group has boasted the slogan “here we start and in al-Aqsa we meet.”¹⁰¹ Al-Qaeda thus views US-backed tyrant rulers as the biggest impediment to this goal, a narrative that *Inspire*’s editor, Yayha Ibrihim, echoes in a statement that reads:

There could be no freeing of Palestine with the presence of the likes of King Abdullah to the East, Hosni Mubarak to the West and al-Saud to the South. Now that Hosni is gone, we heard the Imam of the Friday prayers praying: ‘O Allah we

⁹⁶ Ibid.,31.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ “The Flags of Jahiliyyah,” *Dabiq* 9, Sha’ban, 1436, 20.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ “The Objectives of Operation Hemorrhage,” *Inspire* 3, November, 2010, 7.

ask you to allow us to meet in al-Aqsa,' and the millions in Tahrir square roared with one voice: Amin.¹⁰²

Thus, Al-Qaeda views the revolutions in Libya, Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere as a movement that generates a platform in which the Ummah can voice their desires for jihad against Western aggression. The Arab Spring frees them from tyrannical suppression of opinion, and as a result of this, AQAP believes that these individuals now wield the ability to call for the instilment of Islamic ideals. The chief difference between the United States and AQAP's outlook on the Arab spring, both of which view it with fervor, concerns the actual desire of the masses. The United States views the Arab Spring as a rare opportunity for Arab peoples to instill democratic institutions in their respective countries. However, Al-Qaeda believes the movement carries a completely different desire. *Inspire* magazine iterates that America is not aware of what is *really* happening in the Arab Spring, which is the toppling of US backed regimes and the loosening and/or total removal of the noose around individuals that harbor jihadist aspirations.¹⁰³ In AQAP's view, the people now, without fear of punishment, have the breathing room to express their support the defense against western influence through armed struggle.¹⁰⁴

This positive outlook is further reinforced in an article titled "the Way Foreword" in *Inspire*'s fifth issue. Its author, Abu Sahail states:

It has also proved that Al Qaeda's rage is shared by the millions of Muslims across the world whether they are in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Algeria, Yemen or elsewhere. Even in the countries where the protests haven't yet taken form, the sentimentality is apparent such as in Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and elsewhere.¹⁰⁵

Al-Qaeda thus views the Arab spring as a cauldron that has ultimately overflowed, one

¹⁰² Yahya Ibrihim, "Protest Focus," *Inspire* 5, March, 2011, 5.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Abu Suhail, "The Way Foreword," *Inspire* 5, March, 2011, 43.

that the heat of oppression has boiled to its limit. The organization states that the Arab spring is a manifestation of *Inspire*'s goal: to inspire the *Ummah* to eliminate US-backed tyrants and unite under the banner of Islam.¹⁰⁶ This effort requires the Ummah to be on the same page, and AQAP views the Arab Spring as an event that succeeds in achieving this aim. However, Al-Qaeda does not view the Arab Spring as a be-all-end-all, but rather an *opportunity* that the Ummah have to instill Sharia law in countries with previously repressive leaders. Before his death, Samir Khan, the editor in chief of *Inspire*, wrote an article that urged the Ummah to choose what is “islamically” principle instead of what is “democratically principle.”¹⁰⁷ He describes the protestor as in a state of being able to choose their own identity, either as a lousy moderate who supports America or a loyal servant of Allah who refers all matters of disagreement to the Qur’an and Hadith.¹⁰⁸ Khan also states that “the ultimate revolutionaries in Islamic history were our prophets,” whose faith was strenuously tested.¹⁰⁹ For AQAP, the Arab Spring is a present day manifestation of the prophet’s test. The answer: Islam.

In addition to this, Anwar al-Alwaki states that the Arab Spring is a step in the right direction even if the people fail to install an Islamic government in each country. He echoes this in his narration:

We do not know yet what the outcome would be, and we do not have to. The outcome doesn't have to be an Islamic government for us to consider what is occurring to be a step in the right direction. Regardless of the outcome, whether it is an Islamic government or the likes of al-Baradi, Amr Mousa or another military gure; whatever the outcome is, our mujahidin brothers in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and the rest of the Muslim world will get a chance to breathe again after

¹⁰⁶ Fazul Abdallah, “What is al-Qaeda,” *Inspire 10*, March, 2013, 35.

¹⁰⁷ Samir Khan, “The Egyptian,” *Inspire 5*, March, 2011, 45.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 46.

three decades of suffocation.¹¹⁰

Awlaki, Al-Qaeda's former top cleric, considers the Arab spring as a win-win situation. If the *Ummah* succeed in instilling a government that rules by way of Sharia law, then the mujahedeen will be elated. However, if they do not, the United States' new "puppet" government will not have the same oppressive powers it once enjoyed before the Arab spring. This oppression, in Awlaki's view, "would be impossible to repeat in a post-revolution Tunisia."¹¹¹ In Libya's case, Al-Qaeda views it as unlikely for another leader of Gaddafi's caliber to arise. Above all, Al-Qaeda views the mental aspect of the Arab with the most jubilation. This aspect, as Awlaki explains, brought a collective change in the mind of the Ummah. The Muslim community thus "broke the barriers of fear in the hearts and minds that the tyrants couldn't be removed," a notion that AQAP finds invaluable.¹¹²

Lastly, as aforementioned in the "means of convincing section", Al-Qaeda seeks to inspire potential followers by undermining the legitimacy of the American government. The Arab spring offered AQAP a perfect chance to execute this goal. The United States previously supported Ben Ali in Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt. However, a peaceful mass that, in America's view, shouts desires for democracy, forces the United States to reconsider its relationship with these two leaders. As Awlaki states, "The West knows that it would be unwise to stand by their friends when the masses have spoken out and asked for freedom, a principle the West claims to stand for."¹¹³ Thus, Al-Qaeda is able to use America's response to the Arab spring to portray the global hegemon in a hypocritical manner. According to AQAP's rhetoric, Mubarak carried out the dirty work for America, and when in need, America trashed and dumped him. As a result of the Arab Spring, Al-Qaeda has evidence of "America's two-faced policy tactics", an

¹¹⁰ Anwar al-Awlaki, "The Tsunami of Change," *Inspire* 5, March, 2011, 51.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

illumination that discredits the country and helps al-Qaeda turn potential jihadists against the Stars and Stripes.

Comparison:

The Islamic State's opinion regarding the Arab Spring substantially differs from that of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.¹¹⁴ Whereas Al-Qaeda believes that the Arab Spring has removed the metaphorical noose around the *Ummah*'s neck, The Islamic State believes that the peaceful methodology the Arab spring exudes thwarts the *Ummah*'s progress. *Dabiq* sites a drop in attacks against apostate governments, intelligence forces and military personal due to the Arab Spring.¹¹⁵ In its 6th edition of *Dabiq*, an author blames the “Arab Spring” for the Yemeni mujahedeen's refusal to slaughter Houthis and blasts Muslims who will only attack individuals directly involved in American drone strikes.¹¹⁶ The organization considers these individuals as apostates who receive and abide by information from the “sorcerous media, palace scholars, deviant parties, and their herds, all of which they refer to with the blanket term “Ummah,” instead of Allah's pure word.”¹¹⁷ The ideologies of the Arab Spring, whether democratic or theocratic, are thus an infection in the side of the Ummah because they do not coincide with the Islamic State's brutal, regressive view of Islam and governance. The magazine's solution to this, as an unknown author iterates, involves “severely slaughtering them with truck bombs, bus bombs, and car bombs” in order to “resolve the mistakes in creed and methodology.”¹¹⁸

Dabiq also sites the Arab Spring as a central reason to why Al-Qaeda's leadership

¹¹⁴ “The Qa'idah of Adh-Dhawahiri, Al-Harari and An-Nadhari, and the Absent Yemeni Wisdom,” *Dabiq* 6, Rabi' Al-Awwal, 1436, 22.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Remaining and Expanding,” *Dabiq* 5, Muharram, 1436, 27.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

denounces ISIS's methods of killing and brutality against Shia Muslims.¹¹⁹ In *Dabiq*'s 7th edition, the author echoes this opinion and states that after “ ‘the Arab Spring’ began and some prominent leaders of al-Qā ‘idah attained shahādah, there emerged unwise guidelines and policies from adh-Dhawāhirī, al-Amrīkī, al-Bāshā, and Husām ‘Abdur-Ra’ūf.”¹²⁰ In this same section, the Islamic State also condemns AQAP leader Harith bin Ghazi al-Nadhari for harboring these principles for years and exposes al-Qaeda for “placing Yemen beneath the feet of the Rafidah and new taghut, wallahul-musta’an.”¹²¹ Thus, the Islamic State not only cites the Arab Spring as cancer that has infected the Ummah, but also one that has crept its way through the body all the way to the heart of modern jihad, Al-Qaeda. The Arab Spring, and the Islamic State’s dismissal of it, indirectly illuminates its extremely radical nature when compared to al-Qaeda. In an article titled “The Al- Qa’idah of Waziristan- A Testimony From Within,” the author criticizes Zawahiri’s view that rallying in squares, plazas, and roads will “change oppression into justice and kufr into Islam.”¹²² To them, the Arab Spring’s revolutionary base, even those part of the Muslim brotherhood— an organization some purport to be the incubator of modern Salafist organizations— infect the desires of the Caliphate as they do not coincide with ISIS’s hardline approach towards spreading *tawheed*. The Arab Spring thus conflates truth with falsehood, a trap in which the Islamic State believes Zawahiri is eternally tangled.¹²³

¹¹⁹ “The Qa’idah of Adh-Dhawahiri, Al-Harari and An-Nadhari, and the Absent Yemeni Wisdom,” *Dabiq* 6, Rabi’ Al-Awwal, 1436, 22.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Abu Jarir Ash-Shamali, “The Al- Qa’idah of Waziristan- A Testimony From Within,” *Dabiq* 6, Rabi’ Al-Awwal, 1436, 51.

¹²³ Ibid.

VIEWS OF EACH OTHER

The Islamic State on Al-Qaeda

Throughout *Dabiq* issues 6-9, the Islamic State vehemently outlines its disapproval for the policies of Ayman al-Zawahiri's Al-Qaeda. Most prominently, the Islamic State blasts the organization's leader for his lack of appetite for killing members of the Shia denomination.¹²⁴ Ayman al-Zawahiri refers to the scholars of Ahlus-Sunna to justify his outlook on the correct way to treat Shia Muslims.¹²⁵ Zawahiri believes that Shia Muslims "are excused due to their ignorance," and explains that their specific denomination allegiance does not warrant slaughter at the hands of the mujahedeen."¹²⁶ He states, however, that if these members support the crusader coalition against Muslim lands, then a different ruling shall apply.¹²⁷ Instead of slaughtering members of the Shia community, Al-Qaeda's leadership believes they should make *da'wah*— an invitation to Islam for non-Muslims/apostates— with the Shia community, an act that seeks to guide disillusioned Muslims, in this case the Shiite, in the right path. Thus, in Zawahiri's words, those "who have not taken part in any aggression towards the Muslims, nor fought under the banner of the global crusade, our approach with them is to make *da'wah* and "expose the realities" of their incorrect Islamic thought.¹²⁸ The Islamic State believes Zawahiri's method of confrontation profoundly lacks severity, as it treats the Houthis in Yemen as a faction that is "fought with the least amount of force required to repel its aggression, meaning purely defensive fighting containing no harshness or severity."¹²⁹ The correct way, as *Dabiq* outlines, is to target the Shia community's public gatherings with large-scale attacks for rejecting the caliphate of Muhammad's two successors. On June 26th, an Islamic State suicide bomber detonated an explosive vest at a Shia mosque

¹²⁴ "The Qa'idah of Adh-Dhawahiri, Al-Harari and An-Nadhari, and the Absent Yemeni Wisdom," *Dabiq* 6, Rabi' Al-Awwal, 1436, 19.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.,22,

in Kuwait City, a troubling reality that proves ISIS's words usually manifest into acts.¹³⁰ The two group's magazines thus portray a fervent disagreement regarding the confines of jihad.

However, *Dabiq* outlines that Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula *actually does fight* the Houthis in Yemen, an act in direct contradiction to Zawahiri's "code of jihad conduct." The Islamic State attributes this to suspected growing frustration amongst al-Qaeda's lower level soldiers as a result of AQAP's soft policies towards Shia Muslims.¹³¹ The group believes that Al-Qaeda's lower ranks forced Harith ad-Nahar, an AQAP leader, to declare jihad against the Houthis in Yemen in opposition of Ayman al-Zawahiri.¹³² The magazine echoes this in its 6th edition where an unknown author states, "He was forced to go against his amīr, adh-Dhawāhirī, with this takfīr, for indeed the soldiers would not follow him if he persisted with his false opinions that led to the evil of the Rāfidah and the secularists."¹³³ The Islamic State thus exposes the leadership rift in al-Qaeda and portrays ad-Nadhari as a hypocrite of Zawahiri, his emir, in order to discredit the organization. It not only mocks Zawahiri's policy, but also blasts ad-Nadhari's contradictory actions towards a leader's advice in which he should never stray. *Dabiq* further emphasizes the rift between leader and soldier in AQAP when it explains that Zawahiri's initial support for the Islamic State came as a result of objections from the group's soldiers concerning the, as *Dabiq* calls it, "Dhawāhirīness," or neutrality of the organization.¹³⁴ In ISIS's view, if it had not been for the dissent of the low level mujahedeen in AQAP's ranks, the organization would have never shown support for the Islamic State in its primary stages.

¹³⁰ Adam Withnall, "Kuwait mosque explosion: ISIS bombs Shia Muslims during Ramadan Friday prayers," *The Independent*, June 26, 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/kuwait-mosque-explosion-possible-isis-bomb-attack-launched-on-shia-muslims-during-ramadan-friday-prayers-10347740.html>. (accessed July 12, 2015).

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid., 23.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

In addition to highlighting al-Qaeda's internal dissent and disagreeing over the correct methods of how to conduct jihad, *Dabiq*'s writers do not hesitate to cast less substantial arguments against Al-Qaeda's emir and his organization. It describes Al-Qaeda as "a drowning entity struggling to breathe in deep water as it is exhausted and fatigued by tiredness" and states that Zawahiri is a man in a "hollow state" who attempts "to make a place for Tandhīm al-Qā'idah in Shām at the expense of the Islamic State."¹³⁵ *Dabiq*'s rhetoric additionally labels Zawahiri and his followers as "gentle lambs" that concern themselves with convincing those in the Levant to target the Islamic State, a "twisted" narrative that infects al-Qaeda's religious legitimacy.¹³⁶ As a result of this, the Islamic State now views al-Qaeda, and its regional offshoots, most notably Jabhat al Nusra, as a factionalist enemy that spreads the disease of "splitting and differing."¹³⁷ To them, Al-Qaeda and its leadership are a mere bunch of *manhaj*¹³⁸ claimants and supporters of Shia *Rafidah*.¹³⁹

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula on The Islamic State

Unlike ISIS's repeated criticism of AQAP in over half of its magazine publications, Al-Qaeda does not mention the Islamic State once in *Inspire*. Although al-Qaeda recently announced an affiliate in the Indian Subcontinent, the Islamic State continues to grow more rapidly and garner more world attention than the former jihadist hegemon. This, coupled with AQAP's refusal to publicly bash the Islamic State through its digital magazine, raises a series of questions regarding AQAP's will to confront the Islamic State. However, Al-Qaeda's refusal to blast the Islamic State through its magazine directly aligns with its rhetoric of focusing all energy and resources on

¹³⁵ Abu Jarir Ash-Shamali, "The Al- Qa'idah of Waziristan- A Testimony From Within," *Dabiq* 6, Rabi' Al-Awwal, 1436, 51.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.,17.

¹³⁸ This word refers to one's ability to analyze and apply Islamic knowledge.

¹³⁹ A derogatory word used towards Shi'ites that translates to "those who reject" or "those who refuse."

decimating the “far enemy,” whereas *Dabiq* seeks to discredit all near organizations that pose a threat to its expansion. Thus, as mentioned previously, the majority of *Dabiq*’s articles defame groups such as Shia Muslims, Coptic Christians, Kurds, Assad loyalists, regional apostate governments, and in this case, rival jihadists groups. In contrast, *Inspire* points its scope at one target that is responsible for the creation of a Jewish State, Houthi opposition and oppressive regional leaders, America.

CONCLUSION

Before the start of each of its nine magazines, *Dabiq* presents a quote by Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi. It reads, “The spark has been lit here in Iraq, and its heat will continue to intensify—by Allah’s permission—until it burns the crusader armies in Dabiq.”¹⁴⁰ In order to complete this task, the Islamic State prioritizes the recruiting of “Lions of Allah” to fight within the expanding boundaries of the present day Islamic Caliphate. The group has supposedly “erased” the man-made borders of the Sykes-Picot agreement with hopes to further extend the Islamic Caliphate through Constantinople, Rome, and ultimately the entire world. Its magazine serves as an integral catalyst to achieve this goal, as it presents the Caliphate’s various benefits through photos, articles, and religious justifications in an enthrallingly convincing manner.

Although it exudes a dissimilar narrative, the same can be said about the effectiveness of AQAP’s magazine *Inspire*. The Afghani-born terrorist group designed a platform in which the radical individual does not need to forge a fake passport, board a plane, and cross multiple borders to join the jihad, a narrative that *Dabiq* proposes and greatly relies on. In contrast, the reader, with a few clicks of the finger, attains the ability to kill the tyrannical-war-funding American taxpayer in more than twenty ways using regular kitchen supplies, hardware accessories, and Allah’s oversight. To complement

¹⁴⁰ “Until the Crusader Army Burns in Dabiq,” *Dabiq 1*, Ramadan, 1435, 1.

this, the individual's actions are justified through detailed analyses of verses from the Quran and Hadith by top level AQAP officials such as Anwar al-Awlaki and Osama Bin Laden. The magazine thus provides the individual with the tools, religious justification, and most importantly, *inspiration* to achieve Al-Qaeda's goal since America stationed troops in the land of the two holy mosques.

Thus, by analyzing and extracting the information that *Inspire* and *Dabiq* relay, one may gain a fuller understanding of the differences between the world's two most dangerous terrorist groups. It is not the differences between each publication that are important to analyze, but rather the differences between each terrorist group that their respective magazines portray. It is with this information that policy makers, scholars, and service members can gain a better understanding of how to counter-act the story of the 21st century: terrorism.

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