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The Evolution of Terrorism Through the Use of Technology:  
al-Qaeda and ISIS

by

Sarah Menish-Geryk

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in the Department of History

Idaho State University

Spring 2019

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## Committee Approval

To the Graduate Faculty:

The members of the committee appointed to examine the thesis of Sarah Menish-Geryk find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

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Name,  
Major Advisor

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Name,  
Committee Member

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Name,  
Graduate Faculty Representative

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	vi
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Evolving with the Times.....	11
Zarqawi, A Dawn of New Brutality.....	15
Social Media, Apps, & Technology.....	19
Conclusion.....	24
Chapter 2: “How To” .....	25
Martyrdom & Suicide Attacks.....	26
Religion.....	32
Guides.....	35
Conclusion.....	38
Chapter 3: The Media’s Impact on Terrorism.....	39
Globalizing through Digital Platforms.....	41
The Followers.....	45
Conclusion.....	48
Conclusion.....	50
Bibliography.....	52

# The Evolution of Terrorism Through the Use of Technology: al-Qaeda and ISIS

## Thesis Abstract – Idaho State University (2019)

The use of technology by terrorist organizations has increasingly influenced their methods. The purpose of my thesis is to show the evolution of terrorism through the use of technology, with a focus on al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The central themes of this thesis are social media, digital magazines, video, and globalization. Social media has allowed al-Qaeda and ISIS to spread their ideology throughout the world. Twitter, Facebook, Whatsapp, and many other forms of social media and apps have been means for terrorist organizations to gain followers. These media have enabled al-Qaeda and ISIS to recruit, indoctrinate, incite, plan attacks, and communicate with one another. Both organizations have utilized the medium of video to deliver content. These videos include “campaign ads” displaying the goal of each organization and why someone should join their mission. Magazines account for an additional medium, which are digital handbooks used to share inspiration for jihadis, as well as guides on how to create weapons to cause the most casualties. Social media and digital content delivered through the magazines and video have enabled al-Qaeda and ISIS to reach a broad audience in the age of globalization. Therefore, the more advanced technology becomes, the more opportunities terrorist organizations will have to indoctrinate and incite.

**Key Words:** Terrorism, ISIS, Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, Technology, Social Media, Cyber Terrorism, Extremism, Middle East, History

## Introduction

Imagine a video playing in front of you. As the video starts, you hear the soft, repeating chant of a catchy Arabic song. As the camera zooms in, a black Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) flag waves over the city. The narrator begins in English to claim that the Islamic State and the Khilafah (Caliphate) is taking over the world. The leader of ISIS, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, claims to be the Muslim world's new caliph and he has led his fearless army to take over a swath of territory larger than Britain.<sup>1</sup> This newly formed Caliphate is said to be built on the Qur'an and not the man-made laws of the secular states built by British and French colonizers. The video cuts to photographs of United States presidents, with the narrator's voice stating that the leaders of Western Nations are liars, fornicators, and infidels. These leaders partake in, what is considered by ISIS as, immoral agendas; this includes those who fight for equal rights for the LGBT community. This section of the video is to ingrain the idea that ISIS is a group of men who are obedient to God, fight against all the wrongs that infidels commit, and fight jihad as holy war as part of their religious duties.

As the video progresses, an armor-clad man with a gun stands on top of ancient ruins near a fiery blaze.<sup>2</sup> The narrator states that ISIS is for all races, ages, sexes, and the main ideologies which divide ISIS from the rest, is religion and devotion to God. During this scene there are photographs of individuals from all races and ages smiling, connected by a brotherhood unified by their devotion to ISIS. Boys and girls are both depicted as being educated and trained

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<sup>1</sup> "WATCH: ISIS Releases New 'No Respite' Propaganda Video in English." Heavycom. November 24, 2015. <http://heavy.com/news/2015/11/new-isis-islamic-state-news-pictures-videos-no-respite-english-language-propaganda-full-uncensored-youtube-daesh/>.

<sup>2</sup> 'No Respite' Propaganda Video in English."

to defend ISIS and help it grow in size; they will be the future leaders and it is important for them to be educated and stalwart.<sup>3</sup>

Convincingly, the narrator speaks about the struggles the United States has been experiencing with racial tension, economic debt, and mental illness amongst U.S. soldiers. This information is proudly declared by the narrator propagating inaccurate statistics, such as 50,000 U.S. soldiers died in the American invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>4</sup> According to the Huffington post in 2014, less than 10,000 U.S. soldiers were killed in both wars.<sup>5</sup> By spreading these inaccuracies, ISIS bends historical information to fit their agenda. The video is mesmerizing with its high-quality editing, HD video, and overall aesthetics. The next scene shows planes flying while bombs are being dropped on Syria, as well as an animated short of bullets going through victims' heads. The video is then concluded with a statement directed toward all non-believers to "bring it on" while insinuating that anyone who is against the Islamic State will be sent to hell for being an infidel.<sup>6</sup> This statement and the video as a whole is employed to incite fear and draw a line between believers and non-believers. It also attempts to convince would-be jihadis to feel like they have a purpose, and that they can also join the fight both abroad and at home.

The video's appearance is similar to that of an action movie; it also surfaces emotions of all types. Regardless of whether someone is against, on the border of supporting, or actually a follower of ISIS, this video is incredibly intriguing. The editors deliver information that combine fact and fallacy. The information is used as a way to gain followers, and it paints ISIS as a brotherhood. As consumers, we are attracted to well-produced, aesthetically pleasing, imagery.

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<sup>3</sup> "WATCH: ISIS Releases New 'No Respite' Propaganda Video in English."

<sup>4</sup> "WATCH: ISIS Releases New 'No Respite' Propaganda Video in English."

<sup>5</sup> "WATCH: ISIS Releases New 'No Respite' Propaganda Video in English."

<sup>6</sup> "WATCH: ISIS Releases New 'No Respite' Propaganda Video in English."



This video hits all of those needs. The most convenient part for ISIS is that news websites, social media, and other online outlets provided a medium for the video to be disseminated.

The purpose of this thesis is to show how technology has played a role in the evolution of terrorism, with the focus on al-Qaeda and ISIS as global terrorist organizations from 1996-2019. The use of technology by terrorist organizations has increasingly influenced their methods. The news media, Twitter, Facebook, Whatsapp, and many other forms of social media and apps have been conduits for terrorist organizations' followers and members to recruit, indoctrinate, incite, plan attacks, and communicate with one another. ISIS is known to have a heavy presence on social media, as well as their use of online propaganda. ISIS regularly posts videos of beheadings and "campaign ads" as to why you should join their mission. Both al-Qaeda and ISIS have magazines with guides on how to be a proper soldier and perform attacks. Overall, this has led to a globalized online community for both terrorist organizations. Through primary sources from al-Qaeda and ISIS, as well as secondary sources from experts on the subject I will show how al-Qaeda and ISIS have utilized technology for their organizations gain.

There are many misconceptions of those who are involved in terrorism. Due to Islamic Terrorism, especially after the 9/11 attacks, Islam and Muslims are negatively shown within the media. This stigma not only harms the majority of the Muslim population, but also impacts how the West perceives terrorism committed by Muslims and non-Muslims. The media regularly portrays groups such as ISIS as having psychological issues, which is just not the case with the majority of those involved, when a person may join an organization or become a "lone wolf" for many reasons.<sup>7</sup> In 2016 President Barack Obama stated, "ISIL has already used chemical weapons — there is no doubt if these madmen ever got their hands on a bomb or nuclear material

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<sup>7</sup> Meeus, Wim. "Why Do Young People Become Jihadists? A Theoretical Account on Radical Identity Development." *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, vol. 12, no. 3, May 2015, pp. 275–281. 279

they would use it to kill as many as possible.”<sup>8</sup> In February 2019, in a CNN interview an ex al-Qaeda member and MI6 spy explained, “The ideology of the Islamic State is so potent it liberates the inner psychopath.”<sup>9</sup> Both of these terrorist organizations are beyond violent, but inappropriately labeling them as mentally ill, backwards, and unintelligent. undermines their intelligence and abilities. These organizations take cutting edge technology of the time, (ie: social media) and utilize it to advance their organization.

Chapter One discusses how both al-Qaeda and ISIS use social media and online apps in order to connect, recruit, plan attacks, and spread propaganda. Both groups do not let language barriers get in the way of their motives. They have propaganda and material to indoctrinate and incite in English, French, Arabic, Spanish, Japanese, and many other languages. Their primary mission is to encourage English-speaking Westerners to join them in their quest, as well as providing contact and resources to those who are already involved. In the 1990’s and early 2000’s al-Qaeda, videos and mass media were used to get their name and message across the world.<sup>10</sup> This chapter will argue, both al-Qaeda and ISIS have used news media, social media, and other digital platforms to advance and evolve their organizations.

Chapter Two goes into detail of how digital magazines are important tools of recruitment and incitement for the al-Qaeda and ISIS. One of the most well-known magazines for al-Qaeda is *Inspire*, whose goal is to inspire followers and members to be a perfect soldier of their organization. It also glorifies jihadis and teaches its readers how to make bombs and other weapons out of household objects. ISIS also has many magazines; my focus will be on *Rumiya*.

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<sup>8</sup>Abdullah, Halimah. "Obama: Deadly Consequences If 'Madmen' Terrorists Get Nuclear Material." NBCNews.com. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/obama-deadly-consequences-if-madmen-terrorists-get-nuclear-material-n549186>.

<sup>9</sup> “20 Jobs That Will Be Replaced by Technology”. <https://www.msn.com/en-gb/video/topvideos/jihadist-turned-spy-isis-unleashes-inner-psychopath/vi-BBiDGRF>.

<sup>10</sup> KellyWurx. "Exclusive Osama Bin Laden - First Ever TV Interview." YouTube. January 10, 2012.. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqQwnqjA-6w>.

These magazines modify history, motivate readers to be martyrs, encourage people to kill infidels, and romanticize the life of jihadis. Both groups' magazines are not only well put together in aesthetics and wording, but also reach a multitude of crowds. This chapter will show how al-Qaeda and ISIS use their magazines in order to influence their members and readers, as well as gain recruits. They use digital magazines in order to spread the fundamentals of their politics, belief system and guide the reader on how to be a soldier and perform attacks

Chapter Three is about the intersection of technology and globalization. Both al-Qaeda and ISIS are global terrorist organizations, unlike organizations that are primarily concerned with a nationalist agenda, such as HAMAS. al-Qaeda and ISIS rely specifically on internet technology to reach populations all over the world with their messages of jihad, martyrdom, and violence. Without the technology that is available, these terrorist organizations would not be able to connect with mass amounts of people throughout the world. Therefore, the al-Qaeda and ISIS would be much smaller and more centralized without their utilization of communication technology. The focus for this chapter is on ISIS as they have created their own digital jihadi network. Technology has motivated and enabled their anti-national, globalized ideology by allowing them to have members and followers in other countries, as well as bring recruits back to their home bases, for example in 2015 25,000 foreign fighters were recruited into ISIS.<sup>11</sup> It is only in the age of globalization, then, that these movements can dream of world domination in a way that is convincing to their followers.

For primary source material I use magazines, videos, Tweets, and news articles from al-Qaeda and ISIS. The website Jihadology.net has a collection of al-Qaeda and ISIS magazines

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<sup>11</sup> Cozine, Keith. 2016. "Social Media and the Globalization of the Sicarii." *Global Security Studies* 7 (1): 1. <http://search.ebscohost.com.libpublic3.library.isu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edb&AN=113999650&site=eds-live&scope=site> p. 4

and videos. The *Inspire* and *Rumiyah* magazines that I have accessed are archived on Jihaology.net. Bestgore.com, LiveLeak.com, and archive.org were also valuable for propaganda, as some ISIS content is still up on them. I also reference multiple news articles, to show what was being reported at the time. These news articles were important for debunking al-Qaeda and ISIS inaccurate current events in their propaganda. I reference Twitter policy on what is terrorist content from the Twitter.com website. I also reference actual tweets that followers of ISIS have tweeted. I carefully chose my primary sources as evidence to support my thesis.

For my secondary sources, I use many different books and journal articles. During the 1960's and 1970's the study of terrorism began to flourish.<sup>12</sup> There became a distinction between terrorist attacks and other crimes.<sup>13</sup> In the early years, those who created the field of study organized conferences, seminars and two scholarly Journals; *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* and *Political Violence*.<sup>14</sup> In the 1980's the study of terrorism became a legitimate field of research.<sup>15</sup> Fast forward to the September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 terrorist attacks there were many books released. For example, subjects ranging from the history leading up to the attack, the history of al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden, the Iraq War, conspiracy theories, and even novels. Photographic book memorial for 9/11 called *Sometimes Lofty Towers* by Robert Hutchinson, was released in 2001.<sup>16</sup> Two very important resources on the history of 9/11 and al-Qaeda are *The 9/11 Commission Report* and *Unmasking Terror: A Global Review of Terrorist Activities* which

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<sup>12</sup> Jackson, *Terrorism: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. 10

<sup>13</sup> Jackson, *Terrorism: A Critical Introduction*. 10

<sup>14</sup> Jackson, *Terrorism: A Critical Introduction*. 11

<sup>15</sup> Jackson, *Terrorism: A Critical Introduction*. 11

<sup>16</sup> Hutchinson, Robert, and Jake Rajs. *Sometimes Lofty Towers: A Photographic Memorial of the World Trade Center*. San Francisco: Browntrout Publishers, 2001.

were both released in 2004.<sup>17</sup> Both of these sources explain the history of Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda, the events leading up to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, as well as the aftermath.

In 2006 Lawrence Wright released the book *The Looming Tower*.<sup>18</sup> This well researched book gives the reader an in-depth history of Osama bin Laden and how al-Qaeda planned the 9/11 terror attacks. Within the book there is one section that is specifically dedicated to bin Laden's use of the news media to spread the existence of his group and message. I reference this section within my thesis. In 2011 Robin L. Thompson published the article "Radicalization and the Use of Social Media".<sup>19</sup> At this point in time, Thompson argues that al-Qaeda realized just how much the West relies on technology.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, they were able to recruit young people, which led to following through with plans, transporting items, and social media was used to facilitate all of this.<sup>21</sup> What is particularly important for the time this article was written, is the fact Thompson states governments need to start to be more vigilant when it comes to monitoring the internet and the way terrorists use it.<sup>22</sup> She states "Unfortunately, social media capabilities change rapidly and unless one is actively using the social media application and keeping up with the changes, one cannot truly understand the capabilities of the application, especially how others are using it for their own benefit."<sup>23</sup> She was foreshadowing the future of online terrorist propaganda.

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<sup>17</sup> National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States. *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States*. New York: W.W.orton, 2004.

Heffelfinger, Christopher. *Unmasking Terror: A Global Review of Terrorist Activities*. Washington, DC: Jamestown Foundation, 2005.

<sup>18</sup> Wright, Lawrence. *The looming tower: Al-Qaeda and the road to 9/11*. New York: Vintage Books, 2011

<sup>19</sup> Thompson, Robin L. "Radicalization and the Use of Social Media." *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no. 4 (2011): 167-190

<sup>20</sup> Thompson, "Radicalization and the Use of Social Media." 168

<sup>21</sup> Thompson, "Radicalization and the Use of Social Media." 172

<sup>22</sup> Thompson, "Radicalization and the Use of Social Media." 178

<sup>23</sup> Thompson, "Radicalization and the Use of Social Media." 179

Within the 2010's the globalization of terrorist organizations was a focus of many books. In 2011 *The Threat Matrix: The FBI at War in the Age of Global Terror* by Garrett M. Graff was released.<sup>24</sup> This book focuses on how the FBI has been dealing with global terrorism throughout the years. In 2014 *The Evolution of the Global Terrorist Threat: From 9/11 to Osama bin Laden's Death* by Bruce Hoffman and Fernando Reinares was released.<sup>25</sup> This book is one of the most detailed accounts of how al-Qaeda has globalized, including attacks around the world and forming AQI affiliate groups. Though this book is important to the study of globalization, it lacks much information on globalizing through social media and other digital platforms.

As ISIS was quickly spreading in 2014, researchers and writers began digging deep into the history and ideologies of ISIS. In 2015 *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State* by Will McCants was published.<sup>26</sup> A large part of McCants' book is on how ISIS has built their organization around brutality, apocalyptic ideology, and a focus on gaining recruits. In 2015 *Under the Black Flag: At the Frontier of the New Jihad* by Sami Moubayed was released.<sup>27</sup> Moubayed gives a detailed description of the history of ISIS, what a caliphate is, and explains different terrorist organizations within the region. Moubayed's research gives a brief explanation how ISIS has used social media as a recruitment tactic. In 2015 the article "Beyond anything we have ever seen: beheading videos and the visibility of violence in the war against ISIS" by Simone Molin Friis was published.<sup>28</sup> This article explains

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<sup>24</sup> Graff, Garrett M. *The Threat Matrix: The FBI at War in the Age of Global Terror*. New York: Little, Brown, 2011.

<sup>25</sup> Hoffman, Bruce, and Fernando Reinares. *The Evolution of the Global Terrorist Threat: From 9/11 to Osama Bin Laden's Death*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016.

<sup>26</sup> McCants, William F. *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*. New York: Picador, 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Moubayed, Sami M. *Under the black flag: at the frontier of the new Jihad*. London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2015.

<sup>28</sup> Friis, Simone Molin. 2015. "'Beyond Anything We Have Ever Seen': Beheading Videos and the Visibility of Violence in the War against ISIS." *International Affairs* 91 (4): 725–46. doi:10.1111/1468-2346.12341.

what a viewer is seeing when they watch an ISIS beheading video. Friss also makes it clear that by the news media circulating these videos, they are aiding in spreading propaganda.

In 2016 *A History: ISIS* by Fawaz A. Gerges was published and in 2017 *Anatomy of Terror: From the Death of Bin Laden to the Rise of the Islamic State* by Ali Soufan was published. Both of these books which give a very deep and detailed history on how ISIS transitioned from al-Qaeda in Iraq.<sup>29</sup> Both of the books also indicate how the study of terrorism has expanded across the academic disciplines of history, political science, sociology, psychology, and many other fields. For the history of al-Qaeda and ISIS both of these books are very important to my research.

In the past few years, scholars shifted their focus more on the history of ISIS utilizing social media, the news media, and other digital platforms. In 2016 Malcom Nance wrote *Defeating ISIS: Who They Are, How They Fight, What They Believe* and in 2017 *Hacking ISIS, How to Destroy the Cyber Jihad* was released.<sup>30</sup> Nance's 2016 release was focused heavily on the historical background of ISIS, including online recruitment tactics. The 2017 release is a historical handbook on the origin of how al-Qaeda began using digital resources and how ISIS has evolved their use of technology into what it is today. Nance explains that the goal of ISIS's online activity is to gain recruitment through spreading their propaganda.<sup>31</sup> Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi incorporated a cyber-system into ISIS, which involved recruits who were trained in

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<sup>29</sup> Soufan, Ali H. *Anatomy of Terror: From the Death of Bin Laden to the Rise of the Islamic State*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2018.

Gerges, Fawaz A. *ISIS: a history*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017.

<sup>30</sup>Nance, Malcolm. *Defeating ISIS: Who They Are, How They Fight, What They Believe*. Place of Publication Not Identified: W W NORTON, 2017.

Nance, Malcolm W., Chris Sampson, and Ali H. Soufan. *Hacking ISIS: How to Destroy the Cyber Jihad*. New York, NY: Skyhorse Publishing, 2018.

<sup>31</sup> Nance, *Hacking isis: the war to kill the cyber jihad*. 25

graphic design, print, visual and audio, as well as propaganda.<sup>32</sup> There was now a group of people who would work specifically on communication through the apps WhatsApp and Telegram. Their goal was to educate members.<sup>33</sup>

There have also been studies of those who join terrorist organizations. *Cyber-Extremism: ISIS and the Power of Social Media* by Imran Awan goes into detail about the many types of people who join ISIS due to online recruitment.<sup>34</sup> This is incredibly useful information when trying to figure out why social media is an effective tool for recruitment. Another important study is *Who Watches an ISIS Beheading and Why* by Sarah Redmond, Nickolas M. Jones, E. Alison Holman, and Roxane Cohen Silver, which was published in 2019.<sup>35</sup> This study covers who in the general public watches beheading videos, and why. I use this study in my thesis as evidence for how the news media has an impact on spreading extremist propaganda. As presented, there are many different approaches to how terrorism has been written about. My focus is on the technological advancement al-Qaeda and ISIS have made.

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<sup>32</sup> Nance, *Hacking isis: the war to kill the cyber jihad*. 34

<sup>33</sup> Nance, *Hacking isis: the war to kill the cyber jihad*. 34

<sup>34</sup> Awan, Imran. "Cyber-Extremism: Isis and the Power of Social Media." *Society* 54, no. 2 (April 2017): 138-149. SPORTDiscus with Full Text, EBSCOhost (accessed April 20, 2017).

<sup>35</sup> Redmond, Sarah, Nickolas M. Jones, E. Alison Holman, and Roxane Cohen Silver. 2019. "Who Watches an ISIS Beheading—and Why." *American Psychologist*, February. doi:10.1037/amp0000438.supp (Supplemental).



## **Chapter 1**

### **Evolving with the Times**

After the September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 attacks, Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda were well known names throughout the world. Though there had been terrorist activity and acts of terrorism prior to 9/11, this specific attack is what truly brought attention to the threat of terrorism. The reason is because if a group could easily facilitate the murder of 2,996 people in the most powerful country in the world, what was the future going to be like? Over the years, terrorism has become a pressing matter within the United States security community. This has led to the advancements in counter-terrorism, and the ways in which terrorist organizations utilize technology. With the more restriction's governments make to protect the people, the more creative terrorist organizations have had to become with causing mass destruction and fear.

After the death of Osama bin Laden May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011, the popularity of al-Qaeda in the media has been overshadowed by the ISIS, especially within the past years. There has been constant mention of vehicle rammings, stabbings, suicide bombings, threats, and other violence. It is important to note that these forms of attacks are not new to jihadis. For example, there were 16 vehicular ramming attacks (prior to ISIS) during a 45 years span, from 1973-2007.<sup>36</sup> During the time period from 2008-2018 there were 62 vehicular ramming and half of those occurred during 2017-2018.<sup>37</sup> Though not all of these attacks were carried out by the same groups, they were carried out by jihadis that are using similar if not the same propaganda to incite. What this shows, is there may be a difference in ideology between the many Islamic terrorist groups, but they do have an influence on one another.

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<sup>36</sup> Jenkins, Brian Michael, and Bruce R. Butterworth. "An Analysis of Vehicle Ramming as a Terrorist Tactic." [https://transweb.sjsu.edu/sites/default/files/SP0518\\_Vehicle\\_Ramming\\_Terrorism.pdf](https://transweb.sjsu.edu/sites/default/files/SP0518_Vehicle_Ramming_Terrorism.pdf). 5

<sup>37</sup> Jenkins, Butterworth "An Analysis of Vehicle Ramming as a Terrorist Tactic." 5

ISIS is also well known for their heavy use of social media and use of digital resources. They have been seen on platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, WhatsApp, LiveLeak and many other sites and apps. Their goals are to spread propaganda, gain recruitment, and plan and follow through with attacks. Al-Qaeda also uses social media and digital tools to facilitate the needs of their own organization. ISIS developed as an affiliate of al-Qaeda, which is why both groups have such similarities. Learning how to use social media and other digital resources is not new to Islamic terrorism and in order to understand how both groups use these resources, it is important to know how they started using them in the first place. Social media has opened up a platform for terrorists to reach out to others, drawing them in with promises and flattery.<sup>38</sup> In return this manipulation is potent to the recruitment of foreign youth.<sup>39</sup>

During the early 1990's there were online forums for young Muslims to prevent them from straying.<sup>40</sup> Al-Qaeda recognized the online guidance these forums provided, they started to create their own digital versions to seek out youth to recruit. They were able to recruit in small numbers and spread their message and propaganda throughout cyberspace.<sup>41</sup> In addition to online platforms, Al-Qaeda used VHS tapes, DVD's and digital mp3's to spread their messages as these were easily passed from person to person.<sup>42</sup> In 1996 there was a video that changed the tune of how future terrorists would proceed with their violence and propaganda online. A Russian Army Soldier by the name of Yevgeny Rodionov was recorded being beheaded on his 19<sup>th</sup> birthday. This video became incredibly popular within al-Qaeda's online network.<sup>43</sup> There is a lot of

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<sup>38</sup> Goodman, Anka Elisabeth Jayne. 2018. "When You Give a Terrorist a Twitter: Holding Social Media Companies Liable for Their Support of Terrorism." *Pepperdine Law Review*, no. Issue 1: 147. 155

<sup>39</sup> Goodman, "When You Give a Terrorist a Twitter: Holding Social Media Companies Liable for Their Support of Terrorism." 155

<sup>40</sup> Nance, Malcolm. *Hacking isis: the war to kill the cyber jihad*. Place of publication not identified: W W Norton, 2017. 25

<sup>41</sup> Nance, *Hacking isis: the war to kill the cyber jihad*. 25

<sup>42</sup> Nance, *Hacking isis: the war to kill the cyber jihad*. 26

<sup>43</sup> Nance, *Hacking isis: the war to kill the cyber jihad*. 26

mixed information about Rodionov but looking at the trends in which Jihadis have spread their beheading videos online, this beheading may have been an important influencer in current online propaganda.

Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda began spreading their message by utilizing the news media. On many occasions bin Laden granted interviews with journalists, which aired on popular media networks throughout the world. Some of these networks were ABC, CNN, and Al-Jazeera.<sup>44</sup> Ayman al-Zawahiri, an important figure and member of al-Qaeda, was usually the one to facilitate these interviews.<sup>45</sup> He would make sure appropriate images and videos were taken of bin Laden, keeping with bin Laden's self-image and brand was important to the cause.<sup>46</sup> The September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 attacks were displayed on the media, around the world. This was public advertisement for both Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda. On December 27, 2001 Al Jazeera aired a video of bin Laden telling the world that now was the time for Muslim awakening and the spread of al-Qaeda ideology.<sup>47</sup>

Prior to 9/11, journalists and jihadis had a working relationship. Journalists were able to get information from these groups, such as what their ideologies are, how they function, and in fact they were actually quite hospitable to them.<sup>48</sup> Jewish-American journalist Jeffrey Goldberg explains that journalists had a type of protective armor when they visited jihadi camps.<sup>49</sup>

Goldberg, even as a Jewish man was able to safely do interviews with Hezbollah, the Taliban,

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<sup>44</sup> Wright, Lawrence. *The looming tower: Al-Qaeda and the road to 9/11*. New York: Vintage Books, 2011. 299

<sup>45</sup> Aboul-Enein, Youssef H. "Osama bin-Laden Interview, June 1999: Entering the Mind of an Adversary." *Military Review* 84, no. 5 (September 2004): 109. MasterFILE Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed December 1, 2017) P. 1

<sup>46</sup> Wright, *The looming tower: Al-Qaeda and the road to 9/11*. 299

<sup>47</sup> Bergen, Peter L., and George Guidall. *The Osama Bin Laden I Know*. Place of Publication Not Identified: W.F. Howes, 2007. 370

<sup>48</sup> Goldberg, Jeffrey. "Before the Beheadings: Remembering a Time When Islamist Extremists Wanted to Persuade Reporters, Not Kill Them." *The Atlantic*, 2014 18

<sup>49</sup> Goldberg, "Before the Beheadings: Remembering a Time When Islamist Extremists Wanted to Persuade Reporters, Not Kill Them." 18

and Harakat-ul-Mujahideen an al-Qaeda affiliate.<sup>50</sup> Bin Laden had come out in 1998 with a fatwa calling for the death of Americans and Jews. Goldberg had the protection of being a journalist because he would be sharing their cause and ideology with the world. Goldberg states,

Fazlur Rehman Khalil, the leader of a terrorist group then called Harkat ul-Mujahideen...had co-signed bin Laden's 1998 fatwa calling for the killing of Americans and Jews. He gave me tea and told me that he would happily use nuclear weapons to eradicate the enemies of Islam. "If we had them, we would use them as necessary. But they're very expensive," he said. The conversation turned to the fatwa. Why Jews? I asked. "Because you are from Satan".<sup>51</sup>

Goldberg's life, however, was spared because he was a journalist.

The working relationship with journalists and al-Qaeda later changed. In 2002 a Jewish-American Journalist Daniel Pearl was kidnapped in Pakistan, and a video captured bin Laden's followers beheading him.<sup>52</sup> Daniel Pearl was abducted by al-Qaeda and held hostage for multiple weeks.<sup>53</sup> Pearl's executed body was not used just as a scare tactic, but also exploited as a political and propaganda weapon for al-Qaeda's hate against the West, Jews, and Israel.<sup>54</sup> The impact this murder had drastically changed the future of jihadi activity. Due to technological advancements, terrorist organizations have no longer relied on old media to get their cause out into the world. Journalists in these warzones are no longer looked at as resources to spread

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<sup>50</sup> Goldberg, "Before the Beheadings: Remembering a Time When Islamist Extremists Wanted to Persuade Reporters, Not Kill Them." 18

<sup>51</sup> Goldberg, Jeffrey. "Before the Beheadings: Remembering a Time When Islamist Extremists Wanted to Persuade Reporters, Not Kill Them." p.18

<sup>52</sup> Nance, *Hacking isis: the war to kill the cyber jihad*. 26

<sup>53</sup> Urban, William L. "Who Killed Daniel Pearl?" *Magill's Literary Annual* 2004, June 2004, 1-3.

<http://libpublic3.library.isu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lfh&AN=103331MLA200411910300302244&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

<sup>54</sup> Urban, "Who Killed Daniel Pearl?"

terrorist propaganda. Instead, they became victims displaying the group's brutality through media networks.

### **Zarqawi, A Dawn of New Brutality**

The founder of al-Qaeda in Iraq, which would later become ISIS, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (1996-2006) was fond of using the internet to broadcast his brutality. Zarqawi was born in 1966, in Jordan.<sup>55</sup> In his younger years he dropped out of school, was accused of sexual crimes and he began dabbling in jihadi ideologies. His criminal activities led him to serve time in prison.<sup>56</sup> Zarqawi spent six years in a Jordanian prison where he had to learn how to defend himself. In return it taught him how to become extremely cold and brutal. Prisons in general are known for radicalization and introducing extremist ideologies.<sup>57</sup> Zarqawi spent his time networking within the prison system, where he created his first jihadist group.<sup>58</sup> In May 1999 Zarqawi was let out of prison due to King Abdullah II granting amnesty to political prisoners.<sup>59</sup> In 2003 Zarqawi formed a jihad network in Iraq.<sup>60</sup> He played on the US occupation of Iraq as a motivation to gain support from followers, which led thousands of people from all over the world to join his cause.<sup>61</sup> Zarqawi's early jihadi network included people from Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Palestine, as well as Europe.

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<sup>55</sup>“Zarqawi's Legacy: Al Qaeda's ISIS “Renegade” by Anthony N. Celso, *ISIS: A History* by Fawaz A. Gerges, “Al-Qaeda and the Rise of ISIS” by Donald Holbrook, and “From al-Qaeda in Iraq to Islamic State: The Story of Insurgency in Iraq and Syria in 2003-2015” by Tomáš Kaválek. 74

<sup>56</sup> Gerges, A. *ISIS: a history*. 75

<sup>57</sup> Hamm, Mark S., Ph. D. "Prisoner Radicalization: Assessing the Threat in U.S. Correctional Institutions." <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/224085.pdf>.

Gerges, *ISIS: a history*. 76

<sup>58</sup> Gerges, *ISIS: a history*. 76

<sup>59</sup> Gerges, *ISIS: a history*. 77-78

<sup>60</sup> Celso, “Zarqawi's Legacy: Al Qaeda's ISIS Renegade”. 3

<sup>61</sup> Celso, “Zarqawi's Legacy: Al Qaeda's ISIS Renegade”. 22

Zarqawi began using social media and technology to his group's advantage. In Spring, 2004 Zarqawi uploaded an execution video in which he and others beheaded twenty-six-year-old Jewish-American Nicholas Berg.<sup>62</sup> Zarqawi also kidnapped and beheaded UK citizen Kenneth Bigley, but this video did not have as much of an impact in the media as Berg's execution.<sup>63</sup> These videos were a response to American soldiers torturing Iraqis in Abu Ghraib.<sup>64</sup> Berg's execution video spread throughout media outlets across the world, putting Zarqawi's name in the headlines.<sup>65</sup> The media attention helped increase his recruitment for his own network as well as scare those who didn't follow him.

In fall 2004 Zarqawi made an alliance with al-Qaeda Central and formed al-Qaeda in Iraq. Al-Zarqawi began to utilize propaganda videos to their full potential. Anthony Celso states, By 2006 Zarqawi eclipsed Osama bin Laden as a center of attention among jihadists. This was facilitated by AQI's propaganda videos featuring suicidal jihadist martyrdom operations, car bombs, and IED attacks against coalition forces, Iraqi army units, and Shiite, Christian, and Kurdish communities. AQI's videos evoked a culture of death that dazzled thousands of young men who came to Iraq for honor and glory. The Jordanian leader's use of video and social media has been copied by other jihadi groups, including al Qaeda central.<sup>66</sup>

It needs to be noted that bin Laden wanted to keep a good reputation when it came to the image of al-Qaeda. This reputation did not mean there would not be any violence, but it would be violence with what he believed was tied to the cause. Bin Laden was a rich man, with war

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<sup>62</sup> Gerges, *ISIS: a history*. 77

<sup>63</sup> James, Malcolm. "The colonial representation of Jihadi John: matters of life and death in the 'war on terror'." *Soundings* no. 62 (2016): 138. Literature Resource Center, EBSCOhost (accessed December 1, 2017). 141

<sup>64</sup> James, "The colonial representation of Jihadi John: matters of life and death in the 'war on terror'". 141

<sup>65</sup> Gerges, *ISIS: a history*. 77

<sup>66</sup> Celso, Anthony N. "Zarqawi's Legacy: Al Qaeda's ISIS "Renegade". *Mediterranean Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (June 2015): 21-41. Political Science Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed October 9, 2017). 25

experience, described as a “born leader”, who was willing to answer questions and engage in conversation, and his personality traits made everyone in the al-Qaeda community accept who he was.<sup>67</sup> Bin Laden was violent, but he wanted Zarqawi to tone down his brutality.<sup>68</sup>

To justify killing other Muslims, especially Shi’is, Zarqawi declared them as apostates.<sup>69</sup> To do so he looked to the 14<sup>th</sup> century scholar Taqi ad-Din Ahmad ibn Taymiyya (1263-1368), as he came up with an idea of a purest form of Islam.<sup>70</sup> He targeted Christians, Sufi and Shi’a Muslims because he believed they were un-Islamic.<sup>71</sup> What this means is Ibn Taymiyya targeted those with different Islamic backgrounds than his own. After the Mongol invasion of Iraq in 1258, Ibn Taymiyya developed militant beliefs towards those who did not follow his ideals of what Islam should be, mainly Jews and Christians.<sup>72</sup> Ibn Taymiyya believed this made jihad against those who did not follow what he considered to be proper Islam, permissible, as he explains that jihad is to prohibit wrong doings.<sup>73</sup> He also wanted to preserve the purity of Islam.<sup>74</sup> Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, the founder of Wahhabism has also been an influence on many jihadi ideologies. Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab believed that those who did not follow Islam as a purist and non-believers were ignorant.<sup>75</sup> He motivated others to dislike anyone of another sect or faith, and he accused Jews, Christians and Muslims, who believed in one God, that they were worshiping multiple Gods. These accusations caused the destruction of Sufi Shrines and tombs in Mecca and Medina.<sup>76</sup> The destruction of Shi’i holy places, for example the Tomb of Husayn a

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<sup>67</sup> James, "The colonial representation of Jihadi John: matters of life and death in the 'war on terror'." 146

<sup>68</sup> Nance, *Hacking isis: the war to kill the cyber jihad*. 27

<sup>69</sup> Celso, “Zarqawi's Legacy: Al Qaeda's ISIS Renegade”. 3

<sup>70</sup> "The Life Account of Shaykh Ibn 'Abd Al-Wahhab and Ibn Sa'ud." Al-Islam.org. Accessed March 30, 2016. <http://www.al-islam.org/new-analysis-wahhabi-doctrines-muhammad-husayn-ibrahimi/life-account-shaykh-ibn-abd-al-wahhab-and>.

<sup>71</sup> Algar, Hamid. *Wahhabism: A Critical Essay*. Oneonta, NY: Islamic Publications International, 2002. 11

<sup>72</sup> "Sayed Hossein Al-Qazwini - "Examining Wahhabism"" YouTube. Accessed February 17, 2016.

<sup>73</sup> Hroub, Khaled. *Political Islam: Context versus Ideology*. London, UK: SAQI, 2010. 48

<sup>74</sup> Hroub, *Political Islam: Context versus Ideology*. 48

<sup>75</sup> Hroub, *Political Islam: Context versus Ideology*. 48

<sup>76</sup> Esposito, John L. *Islam: The Straight Path*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. 149

major pilgrimage site and Shia populations were massacred.<sup>77</sup> It is important to understand the impact of Taymiyya and 'Abd al-Wahhab on present day radical ideologies as they have influenced many terrorist groups and political powers.

Zarqawi began a campaign of brutality rooted in the idea of killing infidels. This involved IED attacks, suicide bombings, beheadings, being a martyr and other forms of barbarity. These actions led to new recruits.<sup>78</sup> Al-Qaeda still did not agree with what AQI was doing; in fact, they thought it was too barbaric. Ayman al-Zawahiri (1951-present), at the time bin Laden's right-hand man, attempted to reach out to Zarqawi about the AQI's methods.<sup>79</sup> He told Zarqawi these actions were not good for the public eye, but Zarqawi disagreed. This disagreement continues to the present, even though al-Qaeda and its affiliates do participate and promote awful criminal activities. After bin Laden's death in 2011, Zawahiri became the leader of al-Qaeda and in 2019 is still the current leader of al-Qaeda.<sup>80</sup> His goal is to gain recruits by making al-Qaeda a more moderate choice, rather than an extreme one like ISIS.<sup>81</sup> Zawahiri has not been able to knock ISIS out of the spotlight due to the superiority of followers and popularity it has in the digital realm. Zarqawi died on June 7, 2006. After his death there were other successors that took the leadership role, but none had a significant impact on the development of the group as their current leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*. 149

<sup>78</sup> Celso, Anthony N. "Zarqawi's Legacy: Al Qaeda's ISIS "Renegade." P. 24

<sup>79</sup> Celso, Anthony N. "Zarqawi's Legacy: Al Qaeda's ISIS "Renegade." P. 24

<sup>80</sup> Starr, Barbara. "US Officials Say New Al Qaeda Leader Video Shows Terror Group Is Still a Threat." CNN. February 06, 2019. Accessed April 29, 2019. <https://www.cnn.com/2019/02/06/politics/al-qaeda-leader-threat/index.html>.

<sup>81</sup> Holbrook, Donald. "Al-Qaeda and the Rise of ISIS." P. 95

<sup>82</sup> Kaválek, Tomáš. 2015. "From al-Qaeda in Iraq to Islamic State: The Story of Insurgency in Iraq and Syria in 2003-2015." 12



## Social Media, Apps, & Technology

In June 2010 Al-Baghdadi became the leader of AQI. He split the group from al-Qaeda and changed the name of AQI to ISIS.<sup>83</sup> He also advanced the way ISIS works in cyberspace by setting up a media system. This system incorporated soldiers who were trained in graphic design, print, visual and audio, as well as propaganda.<sup>84</sup> There was now a group of people who worked specifically on communication through the WhatsApp and Telegram apps. The goal of this branch is to educate members on how to be a proper soldier of the caliphate.<sup>85</sup> It is important to know that this activity was present before they had established their official caliphate in the summer of 2014.<sup>86</sup> There is also a division for online fundraising efforts.<sup>87</sup> The more skilled divisions are “brothers” and “sisters” who reach out to others all over the world to recruit them to ISIS, as well as the small group of soldiers who are specifically trained in hacking.<sup>88</sup> By having an online team, they are able to reach potential recruits from different angles and platforms.

In 2014 YouTube became a major platform for terrorist video activity. In ISIS videos “famous” figures play a role in not only intimidation, but also credibility. For example, the Bulldozer, was one of the multiple morbidly obese soldiers who was known for executing innocent individuals. Behemoth in size as an intimidation tactic, ISIS would make sure the viewer knew what kind of monstrosities were working in their ranks. ISIS’s “golden” soldier was Jihadi John, whose real name was Mohammed Emwazi (1988-2015). A seven-video series starring Jihadi John as the executioner was posted on YouTube.<sup>89</sup> It started with the beheading of American journalist James Foley. Once the media got ahold of these videos, they went viral

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<sup>83</sup> Nance, *Hacking isis: the war to kill the cyber jihad*. 31

<sup>84</sup> Nance, *Hacking isis: the war to kill the cyber jihad*. 34

<sup>85</sup> Nance, *Hacking isis: the war to kill the cyber jihad*. 34

<sup>86</sup> Nance, *Hacking isis: the war to kill the cyber jihad*. 29

<sup>87</sup> Nance, *Hacking isis: the war to kill the cyber jihad*. 34

<sup>88</sup> Nance, *Hacking isis: the war to kill the cyber jihad*. 34

<sup>89</sup> James, "The colonial representation of Jihadi John: matters of life and death in the 'war on terror'.

across news outlets, once again creating free publicity that reached a wide spectrum of the public.<sup>90</sup>

Over the years ISIS has become more bloodthirsty and sophisticated with visual appearance with their digital propaganda. For example, though brutality was high in many of the professionally produced videos in the past a lot of the brutality would be dramatized with cut shots or fading in and out. ISIS soldiers in the videos would be made to look larger than life and more dominant compared to their victims. The reason why there is so much effort placed into these videos, is because they are meant to get into the hands of the media outlets. From there the media aids in spreading propaganda throughout the news. With that said, there are more raw, uncut videos also created. These videos are specifically gory and violent, showing victims who are being mutilated, tortured, and killed, with every detail included. In these more homemade videos, there's little to no editing. An example of a homemade video, on December 17, 2018 ISIS soldiers filmed a video of themselves beheading 28-year-old Maren Ueland, from Norway and 24-year-old Louisa Vesterager Jespersen from Denmark, while they were on a backpacking trip in Morocco.<sup>91</sup>

More recent videos like *Flames of War II: Until the Final Hour* is well produced with sophisticated movie quality, sound, HD imaging, and fully shows victims being decapitated, shot, and killed in other horrific manners. This video is downloadable in English and its purpose was to be seen by Westerners as it states that the Las Vegas attack by Stephen Paddock was the

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<sup>90</sup> James, "The colonial representation of Jihadi John: matters of life and death in the 'war on terror'.

<sup>91</sup> Serenata, Seraphim. "FINAL UPDATE 24 Year Old Danish Female Backpacker in Morocco Makes Final Trek with Beheading." Best Gore. Accessed April 29, 2019. <https://www.bestgore.com/beheading/24-year-old-danish-female-backpacker-morocco-final-trek-beheading/>.

"Fifteen Men Charged over Beheadings of Female Hikers in Morocco." Sky News. Accessed April 29, 2019. <https://news.sky.com/story/fifteen-men-charged-over-beheadings-of-female-hikers-in-morocco-11595382>.

work of ISIS and there will be more to come.<sup>92</sup> This video is also a recruitment video as it shows the brotherhood and “bravery” of being part of the caliphate.

Both al-Qaeda and ISIS are dynamic, postcolonial movements that use the tactics of western media to recruit internationally to build an alternate international community around their own interpretation of Islam. With both groups the community is in person and in cyberspace. In the virtual realm, they are able to target large populations of people from all over the world. They have videos, audio files, documents, images, even memes all translated into many downloadable languages. This allows them to reach a plethora of people. It also brings unity to disparate people. ISIS frequently preach in their videos that they do not discriminate when it comes to race, nationality, or the gender of soldier, which is a direct attack on current social issues in the West.<sup>93</sup>

In 2015, it was much easier to access ISIS propaganda online. For example, to find Telegram channels all one would have to do is to go on Twitter or go on the website Justpaste.it. There were links to channels of where to find them. From there, download the application, search for the channel and watch what they post anonymously. The viewer can choose to join the channel or just watch the channel. Their main channel is still Nashir, but due to the channels being shut down regularly they have to make less obvious names for the new channels.

In 2019, it is still possible to find Telegram channels, but it is much more difficult than before. This is due to Telegram taking down jihadi channels.<sup>94</sup> Encrypted applications such as Telegram, WhatsApp, and others have been used to facilitate terrorist attacks.<sup>95</sup> The harder these apps are to access, the harder it will be for jihadis to communicate through encrypted channels.

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<sup>92</sup> "New video message from The Islamic State: “Flames of War II”." A clearinghouse for jihādī primary source material, original analysis, and translation service. Accessed December 01, 2017. <http://jihadology.net/?s=Flames%2Bof%2Bwar>.

<sup>93</sup> "New video message from The Islamic State: “Flames of War II”.

<sup>94</sup> Nance, *Hacking isis: the war to kill the cyber jihad*. 59

<sup>95</sup> Nance, *Hacking isis: the war to kill the cyber jihad*. 56-63

At one-point jihadis had to correspond through passing flash drives to one another.<sup>96</sup> Now there are applications and platforms that provide instant communication, from anywhere in the world.<sup>97</sup> Even Skype and Facebook messenger have been used to bring recruits to Syria; any form of social networking can be used as a tool.<sup>98</sup>

Organizations web pages and online forums vital platforms for al-Qaeda and ISIS to spread lectures, speeches, reports, and other propaganda digitally.<sup>99</sup> These websites have been around since al-Qaeda and ISIS have known the importance of the internet. Social media sites are also useful, both al-Qaeda and ISIS have accounts on Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram, Facebook, and practically any other social media site, app, and platforms available. Here, their members and followers can post links to websites, videos, memes, false news articles, show progress in conquering the land and killing the infidels, get in touch with others, and share many types of propaganda.

Hacking groups and platforms have been working to take down jihadi profiles, which has made it more difficult for them to share their information out in the open. With every profile that is taken down, they put up a new profile. They come up with more discrete hashtags on Twitter, but it is still easy to find their propaganda online. For example, after large terrorist attacks one can find followers under hashtags of #kuffar, #ISIS, and #infidel. It can be observed that social media platforms do not have as tight of a policy on shutting down the supporters or members of terrorist organizations of groups. One of the worst offenders is Twitter, whose policy on violence and terrorism states:

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<sup>96</sup> SOUFAN, ALI. *ANATOMY OF TERROR: from the death of bin laden to the rise of the islamic state*. S.I.: W W NORTON, 2018. 18

<sup>97</sup> Soufan, *Anatomy of Terror: from the death of bin laden to the rise of the islamic state*. 18

<sup>98</sup> Nance, *Hacking isis: the war to kill the cyber jihad*. 56-63

<sup>99</sup> Nance, *Hacking isis: the war to kill the cyber jihad*. 43

Violence: You may not make specific threats of violence or wish for the serious physical harm, death, or disease of an individual or group of people. This includes, but is not limited to, threatening or promoting terrorism. You also may not affiliate with organizations that — whether by their own statements or activity both on and off the platform — use or promote violence against civilians to further their causes....We consider glorification of violence to be behavior that condones or celebrates violence (and/or its perpetrators) in a manner that may promote imitation of the act. We also prohibit the glorification of violence where protected categories have been the primary target or victim.<sup>100</sup>

Some examples of this include, but are not limited to, the glorification of mass murders, terrorist attacks, rapes and sexual assault. Some examples of behavior that would not fall under this policy include: acts of war, military attacks, state-sanctioned executions, natural disasters. However, we will take enforcement action if any of the above glorifies violence where protected categories have been the primary targets or victims.<sup>101</sup>

Reading this alone, one would assume that terrorist accounts would automatically be taken down. Yet there are plenty of accounts that have been up for years still publishing propaganda. Whereas an average user making a minor infraction such as an offhand joke, conservatives, and other Western political groups take precedence for banning. This is why there are offshoots of Anonymous, for example CtrlSec fighting the digital war.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> "Violent Threats and Glorification of Violence." Twitter. Accessed October 08, 2018. <https://help.twitter.com/en/rules-and-policies/violent-threats-glorification>.

<sup>101</sup> "Violent Threats and Glorification of Violence."

<sup>102</sup> CtrlSec. "CtrlSec (@CtrlSec)." Twitter. October 02, 2018. <https://twitter.com/ctrlsec?lang=en>.

## **Conclusion**

Technology has undoubtedly changed the course of Islamic terrorism. From the early years of Osama bin Laden, to Zarqawi, and al-Baghdadi, there has been a complex development of terrorist cyber activity. Followers in these organizations are no longer just in their own homelands, but they are able to influence all over the world which is what makes them such a threat. Undoubtedly, there has been more force and restrictions when it comes to accessing jihadist propaganda online. There has not been enough work stopping the actual user.

All of the digital tools mentioned in this chapter were on the Surface Web, and popularly downloadable apps, which means anyone can access them. It should also be noted, though it is necessary for jihadist accounts and activity to be monitored and taken down online, there is the issue of lack of accessibility to older information for research. Many videos have been completely wiped from websites and search engines. Finding transcripts of what has been said in popular execution videos is difficult if not impossible. Though this helps in lowering online propaganda, it is also censoring the important historical information that is part of the digital world.

## Chapter 2

### “How To”

Terrorist organizations al-Qaeda and ISIS have honed in on using these digital forms of “entertainment” for their own propaganda. One of the most powerful forms of digital propaganda they produce are magazines. Just like other digital material, these magazines are easily spreadable from platform to platform. Each magazine has its own theme, but usually the core message is to spread the word of their ideologies. Within these magazines, terrorist organizations focus on glorifying the jihadi life. Al-Qaeda and ISIS believe they are true heroes because they are killing the non-believers and fighting for their religion, and others should aspire to be like them. Digital magazines use fewer physical resources compared to physical print magazines. They are also able to get into the hands of a more diverse population because they are spread online. The magazines come in many languages and are easily found and accessible throughout the online world. The combination of ease of access and the content within these magazines is what makes them so potent. They tell stories of martyrs and devoted soldiers, inform readers of current events pertaining the group’s activities, stress the importance of God and brotherhood, depict victories and violence, and even have “how to” guides for committing attacks and creating weapons.<sup>103</sup>

There are many different sects and beliefs within Islam, for the most part inciting hatred and violence is not permissible. 15th century scholar Ala al-Andariti explained that it is the government's duty to eliminate those who kill peaceful people and raise bigoted slogans.<sup>104</sup> Al-Qaeda and ISIS both have incited violence on innocent civilians in these magazines.<sup>105</sup> They are

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<sup>103</sup> Tāhirulqādrī, Muḥammad, John L. Esposito, and Joel S. A. Hayward. *Fatwa on Terrorism and Suicide Bombings*. Lahore: Minhaj-ul-Quaran International, 2015. 35-36

<sup>104</sup> Tāhirulqādrī, *Fatwa on Terrorism and Suicide Bombings*. 203

<sup>105</sup> Tāhirulqādrī, *Fatwa on Terrorism and Suicide Bombings*. 203

just one more source of propaganda against others. The purpose of this chapter is to show how terrorist organizations utilize digital magazines in order to spread the fundamentals of their politics, belief system and guide the reader to be a soldier and perform attacks. The focus of this chapter is martyrdom, religious ideology, as well as the guides on how to create weapons and follow through with attacks. Within the ideology of al-Qaeda and ISIS martyrdom is used to influence others to become soldiers and act violently for the cause.

### **Martyrdom & Suicide Attacks**

Martyrdom plays a large role within al-Qaeda and ISIS's ideology. From an operational standpoint, martyrdom and suicide attacks are both a financially cheap and resourceful way to get operations done.<sup>106</sup> By using a soldier who is dedicated to be a martyr, they will be able to cause destruction, terrorize the community, and physically harm or kill others in the process. For example, strapping a bomb onto a soldier is minimal effort and minimal loss for the terrorist organizations and effective in causing casualties and fear. In this regard, suicide attacks are used as a form of martyrdom. Tactically, ISIS uses suicide bombers for ambushing their enemy forces, destroying enemy barricades such as barbed wire fences, and gates, and for attacks in public places.<sup>107</sup>

Many suicide bombers are willing to commit attacks, while other are forced. An example of this, women and children have been used for different purposes within bombing. Paris has had multiple terrorist attacks, in 2015 a woman shouted from a window pretending to be a hostage of

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<sup>106</sup> Webber, David & Kristen, Klein & Kruglanski, Arie & Brizi, Ambra & Merari, Ariel. (2015). "Divergent paths to martyrdom and significance among suicide attackers". *Terrorism and Political Violence*. 1-2

<sup>107</sup> Nance, Malcolm. *Defeating ISIS: Who They Are, How They Fight, What They Believe*. Place of Publication Not Identified: W W NORTON, 2017. 328



a man.<sup>108</sup> This lured French authorities into the build, resulting in the man setting off his suicide vest.<sup>109</sup> ISIS affiliate Boko Haram are notorious for recruiting Nigerian girls who have been raped for suicide bombing, because they are seen as dishonorable.<sup>110</sup> Infiltration with live and dead babies with bombs attached to them have also been reported. Both al-Qaeda and ISIS have kidnapped and forced non-believers into committing attacks as well. In these situations, someone who is considered an infidel is kidnapped, tortured, and forced into performing suicide attacks, for example ISIS using young Yazidi boys.<sup>111</sup> The victims' bodies are weaponized, and they are sent in to create as many casualties as possible. The benefit to the organization is they are not losing any current soldiers.<sup>112</sup> By this, ISIS is manipulating and forcing innocent civilians in order to perform tasks. It is important to note that within the Qur'an suicide is not permissible. In 4.29 of the Qur'an it states, "And do not kill (or destroy) from yourselves: Surely, to you Allah has been Most Merciful!"<sup>113</sup> 4.30 of the Qur'an further explains that those who commit hate and injustice through suicide will be thrown into hell by God.<sup>114</sup> Therefore, suicide bombings are not permitted by God.

When understanding the purpose of martyrdom, it is important to realize where terrorist organizations took it from. Religiously in the Qur'an, jihad and martyrdom are only acceptable in situations where Muslims needed to fight against non-believers, oppression, and evil doers.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Nance, *Defeating ISIS: Who They Are, How They Fight, What They Believe*. 330

<sup>109</sup> Nance, *Defeating ISIS: Who They Are, How They Fight, What They Believe*. 330

<sup>110</sup> Nance, *Defeating ISIS: Who They Are, How They Fight, What They Believe*. 330

<sup>111</sup> Yesica Fisch Kabarto Camp, Iraq. "Isis Starved Yazidi Children and Told Them They Could Eat in Paradise If They Carried out Suicide Bombings." *The Independent*. May 11, 2017. Accessed April 01, 2019. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-yazidi-children-syria-iraq-starved-suicide-bombings-eat-in-paradise-a7729581.html>.

<sup>112</sup> Webber, David & Kristen, Klein & Kruglanski, Arie & Brizi, Ambra & Merari, Ariel. "Divergent paths to martyrdom and significance among suicide attackers". 1-2

<sup>113</sup> Qur'an 4:29

<sup>114</sup> Qur'an 4:30

<sup>115</sup> Esposito, John L. *Islam: The Straight Path*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. 15

Sacrificing one's life is necessary if it is for resistance and to fight for the word of God.<sup>116</sup> August of 1996, Osama bin Laden explained he wanted young Muslims to sacrifice their lives while fighting the United States.<sup>117</sup> Bin Laden stated, "Our youths believe in paradise after death. They believe that taking part in fighting will not bring their day nearer and staying behind will not postpone their day either."<sup>118</sup> Bin Laden further states that,

A martyr's privileges are guaranteed by Allah; forgiveness with the first gush of his blood, he will be shown his seat in paradise, he will be decorated with the jewels of belief (Imaan), married off to the beautiful ones, protected from the test in the grave, assured security in the day of judgment, crowned with the crown of dignity, a ruby of which is better than this whole world (Duniah) and its entire content, wedded to seventy-two of the pure Houries (beautiful ones of Paradise) and his intercession on the behalf of seventy of his relatives will be accept.<sup>119</sup>

If someone commits jihad or is a martyr, they will reap benefits from God, in this life and the afterlife. Textually and religiously, soldiers who fight in jihad will be rewarded.<sup>120</sup>

In the Quran, 4.31 explains, "If you (only) avoid the most (excessively) evil of things that you are forbidden to do, We shall expel out of you all the evil in you, and admit you to a Gate of Great Honor (the Paradise)."<sup>121</sup> If someone commits suicide or unjustly kills others, they are going against the word of God. Bin Laden was able to take actual religious text out of the Quran and mix it with his own extremist ideologies. Therefore, he was able to manipulate others to join

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<sup>116</sup> Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*. 15

<sup>117</sup> Moghadam, Assaf. "Motives for Martyrdom: Al-Qaida, Salafi Jihad, and the Spread of Suicide Attacks." *International Security* 33, no. 3 (2009): 46-78. 59-60

<sup>118</sup> Moghadam, "Motives for Martyrdom: Al-Qaida, Salafi Jihad, and the Spread of Suicide Attacks." 59-60

<sup>119</sup> Moghadam, "Motives for Martyrdom: Al-Qaida, Salafi Jihad, and the Spread of Suicide Attacks." 59-60

<sup>120</sup> Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*. 15

<sup>121</sup> Qur'an 4.31

his organization and commit terrorist attacks, validated by religion. The use of religion and push for martyrdom is present in the text of al-Qaeda and ISIS's digital magazines.

Al-Qaeda's most popular magazine is called *Inspire*, the goal of which is to convince Muslims that they are faced with great threats from the West, Israel, and infidels.<sup>122</sup> Thus, there is a need for war against the enemy.<sup>123</sup> The first issue of *Inspire* was released in the summer of 2010.<sup>124</sup> Just like a basic magazine it features a table of contents, well edited pictures and stories.<sup>125</sup> For example, in Issue 17 the author states,

co-existence in the West is being eroded with every passing day. And this does not affect Muslims alone, but all races other than the 'white race' (as they love to portray themselves). With the permission of Allah, this trend will prove to be in the interest of Muslims, since it will awaken the conscience of the Ummah and make it cognizant of the reality of Western Crusader savagery. Thereupon, it will rise and return to confront its enemies, and examples of heroism and selfless sacrifice will be revived in the Ummah, which will return it to its erstwhile position of leadership and dominance, with the help of Allah.<sup>126</sup>

This passage explains current issues within Western societies such as a division between religion, race, and politics are breaking up the country. In return, God and God's soldiers will prevail at wiping out the "crusaders". Of course, this is just one instance of the incitement against the West.

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<sup>122</sup> "New Issue of Al-Qā'idah in the Arabian Peninsula's Magazine: "Inspire #17"." *A Clearinghouse for Jihādī Primary Source Material, Original Analysis, and Translation Service*. Accessed March 16, 2018. <http://jihadology.net/?s=inspire>. 28

<sup>123</sup> *Inspire* #17. 28

<sup>124</sup> *Inspire* #1, 2010. <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2010/06/aqap-inspire-magazine-volume-1-uncorrupted.pdf>. 33

<sup>125</sup> *Inspire* #1 33

<sup>126</sup> *Inspire* #17. 42

Within these magazines al-Qaeda and ISIS express their belief that they are following the true interpretation of Islam and that they need to protect the Muslim community with jihad.<sup>127</sup>

Also in issue #17 of al-Qaeda's *Inspire* magazine Osama bin Laden's son, Hamza bin Laden explains the reasons for martyrdom:

1) Anyone who goes against their religion and the prophet are crossing a REDLINE thus shall be punished like Charlie Hebdo.<sup>128</sup>

2) Palestine is the reason for Islamic Ummah and those who support Jewish occupiers "shall never dream of peace, with the permission of Allah."<sup>129</sup>

3) Individuals in Shaam (Syria) are faced with genocide, by both the West and Bashar al-Assad, therefore they will be punished.<sup>130</sup>

4) Western occupation of Muslim territories will keep the West as a target until this occupation ends.<sup>131</sup>

5) There are many aircrafts that are unleashing bombs on the children, and influencing the decline of wealth and resources.<sup>132</sup>

Through further analysis, reason 1) Charlie Hebdo is a satirical magazine that was founded in 1970 and has been known for criticizing many ideologies and religions, but there has been a focus on Islam.<sup>133</sup> The criticism of Islam influenced a terrorist attack on November 13th, 2015 by recruits pledging allegiance to ISIS and killing 12 people.<sup>134</sup> What al-Qaeda is referring to, is anyone who mocks or makes fun of Islam are now a target. Reason 2) is referring to the 1948

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<sup>127</sup> *Inspire* #17. 28

<sup>128</sup> *Inspire* #17. 28

<sup>129</sup> *Inspire* #17 16

<sup>130</sup> *Inspire* #17 16

<sup>131</sup> *Inspire* #17 16

<sup>132</sup> *Inspire* #17 16

<sup>133</sup> Sharro, Karl. "Charlie Hebdo and the Right to Be Offended." *The Atlantic*. January 13, 2015

<sup>134</sup> Donadio, Rachel. "What the November 13 Attacks Taught Paris." *The Atlantic*. November 14, 2018.  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2018/11/paris-attacks-three-years-later/575629/>.

creation of the State of Israel and the current conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.<sup>135</sup> Those who support Israel such as the United States are a target. Reason 3) is response to the genocide that has been taking place within Syria due to Bashar al-Assad's regime and Western forces.<sup>136</sup> Reason 4) Western troops have occupied the Middle East and Muslim countries.<sup>137</sup> Al-Qaeda wants the West to no longer be involved in these areas. Reason 5) is tied in with reasons 3 and 4, as Western countries have been bombing areas such as Syria and other countries in retaliation to fighting terrorism.<sup>138</sup>

One of ISIS's most well-known magazines is *Rumiyah*. They have released 13 issues; the magazine was first published in September 2016 and the last issue was created in September 2017.<sup>139</sup> Each magazine is set up similar to al-Qaeda's with tales of being a good martyr. In issue "Rome 13" ISIS tells a tale of a "lone knight" in Russia stabbing 7 victims, showing how easily it is for a soldier to fulfil their duties as a jihadi with household items.<sup>140</sup> This attack actually did happen in the Siberian city of Surgut, but 8 people were stabbed, not 7.<sup>141</sup> They also mention a soldier in Belgium who attacked Belgium soldiers until he was killed.<sup>142</sup> In 2017, two Belgian soldiers were attacked, there were no casualties and the attacker was shot and killed.<sup>143</sup> Therefore, the stories ISIS presented to their followers was fabricated to make the terrorist look

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<sup>135</sup> U.S. Department of State. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/creation-israel>.

<sup>136</sup> Al Jazeera. "Profile: Bashar Al-Assad." Syria News | Al Jazeera. April 17, 2018. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2007/07/200852518514154964.html>.

<sup>137</sup> Ahmadi, Alireza. "What Should We Learn from 40 Years of U.S. Intervention in the Middle East?" The National Interest. January 14, 2019. <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/middle-east-watch/what-should-we-learn-40-years-us-intervention-middle-east-41542>.

<sup>138</sup> Ahmadi, "What Should We Learn from 40 Years of U.S. Intervention in the Middle East?"

<sup>139</sup> Editors. "What We Know about the U.S. Airstrikes on Syria." USA Today. April 15, 2018. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2018/04/14/us-airstrikes-syria-trump-putin-what-we-know/517060002/>.

<sup>140</sup> Rumiyah. <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2017/09/rome-magazine-13.pdf>. 5

<sup>141</sup> Baynes, Chris. "Isis Just Claimed Stabbing Attack in Russia." The Independent. August 19, 2017. Accessed April 01, 2019. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/russia-attack-isis-claims-responsibility-stabbing-siberia-surgut-latest-a7902176.html>.

<sup>142</sup> Rumiyah. <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2017/09/rome-magazine-13.pdf>. 5

<sup>143</sup> Delk, Josh. "ISIS Takes Responsibility for Brussels Knife Attack." TheHill. August 26, 2017. Accessed April 01, 2019. <https://thehill.com/business-a-lobbying/348127-islamic-state-takes-responsibility-for-brussels-terrorist-attack>.

more deadly. In the magazine it is explained that his martyrdom and sacrifice is important because it is an attack on the “Crusaders, Jews, and murtaddin in their own homelands, killing and wounding large numbers of them...”<sup>144</sup> later warning that with God’s permission the attacks would continue.

## **Religion**

What can be seen in propaganda videos, posts, and magazines from al-Qaeda and ISIS is that religion is used as the focal motivator as to why someone should join and fight for their cause. Both al-Qaeda and ISIS also influence their children with their religious ideology. They make their followers believe that the danger of the apocalypse is imminent. Therefore, their followers must act now if they want to be a good Muslim. Dr. Haroro J. Ingram a researcher and specialist on radicalism explains,

IS draws on the notion of a caliphate as a multidimensional mechanism to appeal to its supporters rationale and identity-choice decision-making. In IS propaganda the caliphate emerges as simultaneously the inevitable product of purely applying its methodology (manhaj) and thus a politico-military ideal as well as a jurisprudential imperative and eschatological precursor.<sup>145</sup>

With applying this ideology of an imminent apocalypse and an established caliphate, under the control of al-Baghdadi the goal is to motivate followers into becoming young fighters.<sup>146</sup> They had the resources of money, fighters, territory, and weapons which mad them seem that much

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<sup>144</sup> Rumiyah. <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2017/09/rome-magazine-13.pdf>. 5

<sup>145</sup> Ingram, Haroro J. "Islamic State's English-language Magazines, 2014-2017: Trends & Implications for CT-CVE Strategic Communications." *Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism Studies*, 2018. doi:10.19165/2018.1.03. 5

<sup>146</sup> McCants, William F. *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*. New York: Picador, 2016. 116, 122-123

more legitimate.<sup>147</sup> Masked in religion is a promise of support, family, financial gain, protection, a brotherhood, status, a caliphate, but the basis of it all is formed around their radical interpretation of what Islam is supposed to be.<sup>148</sup>

Within the *Inspire* and *Rumiyah* magazines al-Qaeda and ISIS put emphasis on how awful it is to be an infidel and apostate,

An individual cannot be a Muslim without worshiping Allah alone and disbelieving in all others worshiped besides him, as clarified by the hadith of the five pillars: “Islam has been built upon five matters: Worshiping Allah and disbelieving in anything [worshiped] besides Him” (Reported by Muslim from Ibn ‘Umar). So there is no Islam without worship of Allah (istislam) and there is no Islam without disbelieving in the taghut (salamah). An individual is not saved from the filth and impurity of shirk and its people as long as he does not disbelieve in the tawaghit of his era, their shirk, and those who commit this shirk, such as the apostate partisans of democracy, nationalism, and manmade laws. Included among them are the candidates and voters in the elections and referendums from the so-called “Islamic” parties, as well as those who refer to the courts of manmade laws for judgment under the pretext of maslahah and necessity. Also included are the soldiers and supporters of taghut such as their military recruits and “scholars”.<sup>149</sup>

This quote comes from the first publication of *Rumiyah* and utilizes religious text in order to push the agenda against nonbelievers. The five pillars of Islam are guidelines for the most

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<sup>147</sup> McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*. 122-123

<sup>148</sup> News, VICE. "The Islamic State (Full Length)." YouTube. August 14, 2014. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUjHb4C7b94&has\\_verified=1&bpctr=1544146958](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUjHb4C7b94&has_verified=1&bpctr=1544146958).

<sup>149</sup> Rumiyah. <https://clarionproject.org/factsheets-files/Rumiyah-ISIS-Magazine-1st-issue.pdf>

important parts of the religion. This is just another example of how actual religion is exploited to push an extremist ideology.

In many of the articles there is a section for “Words of Wisdom”, from leaders and important figures within the organization. These words of wisdom are useful in projecting what the organization believes one should do in order to honor Allah correctly. An example of this is by deceased Taliban leader Mullah Muhammad Umar, who states:

Our trust and confidence in Allah is great even if the entire world gathers against us, we will never forsake our principles and beliefs; and by the permission of Allah, we will never deviate from this path. We believe in our religion and we will never abandon it. For indeed the true death of a Muslim is when he abandons his religion. The true death of a Muslim is when he abandons his religion and despises it or does not implement its rulings. And the physical death is nothing in comparison to (such a) death of a Muslim when he forsakes his religion. And if it is life that we seek, then true life is in clinging on to our religion. And if we are unable to live (as Muslims) then let us die, for death is an inevitable cup which all must drink from.<sup>150</sup>

What can be interpreted from this quote is how important being devoted to God and one's religion is. That no matter what obstacles come in their way, with God's permission they will fight against their enemy. With their faith, they have nothing to lose and everything to gain in this life and the afterlife. Therefore, they can devote themselves entirely. In *Rumiyah* Rome 13 there is a page dedicated to “some good characteristics mentioned in the Noble Quran”. Mentioned is patience, trustworthiness, pardoning, humility, thankfulness, fear, uprightness,

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<sup>150</sup> *Inspire* #17. 17



mercy, truthfulness, and bashfulness.<sup>151</sup> Under each characteristic is a quote taken from the Quran, in order to back up their interpretation.

## Guides

Al-Qaeda and ISIS both use magazines as a handbook in order to promote how to mentally and physically prepare for an attack, as well as follow through with the attack. There are planning guides that strategize how one should pray before and during an attack, as well as the best times and places to perform the attack. The reader will also learn how to make explosives, knives, and other weapons from these sections of the magazines. Having such a digital platform allows inconspicuous activities on one's electronics and is easy to access by the consumer.

In issue 17 of *Inspire*, al-Qaeda provides a guide on how to be a proper "Lone Mujahid". A passage from *Inspire* states, "What is important is to strive hard to attain the best and sound results. The most important thing is sacrifice upon the correct path even though the results may be witnessed long after a decade or more..."<sup>152</sup> Though al-Qaeda uses extremist tactics and ideologies, they also are explaining that following their interpretation of Islam to perfection is how one is supposed to be a soldier during an attack. This means that though actions are destructive and violent, there is a method behind them that follows their ideas of religious law. This passage further explains,

During the preparation stage, a Mujahid takes necessary measures and precautions that will lead him to his target. Among the most important of these measures is secrecy. And after that he should have faith and trust and then leave

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<sup>151</sup> Rumiyah. <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2017/09/rome-magazine-13.pdf>.

<sup>152</sup> *Inspire* #17. 62-63

the matter to Allah Alone - and this is the reality of tawakal (putting your trust and dependence towards Allah)... in the final stage, just before executing an operation, one should increase in prayers and supplication. This is because he is close to meet Allah and stand before him. And whoever is true in his words and deeds, and reaches this level, then he will live the most beautiful moments of his life...<sup>153</sup>

In order to make sure an attack goes successfully; a soldier must plan and prepare beforehand. This means with gathering materials, mental preparation, religious preparation, planning how and where the attack will take place, and secrecy. These actions will allow the attack to come together and secrecy prevents the attack from being disrupted. The connection with God during the preparation is the biggest part, as God is the one that will allow the operation to take place.

How to be a lone wolf is just one example of the guides. In the first issue of *Inspire* there is an article titled “Make a bomb in the kitchen of your Mom The AQ Chef”.<sup>154</sup> This article starts out with a quote from the Qur’an stating people are responsible for themselves, converting the non-believers is important, and Allah will punish the non-believers.<sup>155</sup> This quote is used in the context of preparing for an attack. The author explains how important small attacks are, stating that small attacks may make the president of the United States resign.<sup>156</sup> The goal of this article is to elevate the importance of the basic soldier, to make them think they are destined for greatness. The article is based around the creation of a bomb that can be made in one to two days and will kill at least 10 people.<sup>157</sup> If a soldier plans at least a month ahead they can create a bomb

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<sup>153</sup> *Inspire*, #17. 62-63

<sup>154</sup> *Inspire*, #1. 33

<sup>155</sup> *Inspire*, #1. 33

<sup>156</sup> *Inspire*, #1. 33

<sup>157</sup> *Inspire*, #1. 33

that will cause even more casualties. Then there is a step by step guide on how to make this bomb, some items involved; Inflammable substances, Christmas lights, and an iron pipe.<sup>158</sup> The bomb needs an electric source to set it off, clocks are explained as being a good source. Adding nails to the bomb also helps to inflict more damage.<sup>159</sup> Within 3 pages, al-Qaeda sufficiently gives a guide on how to create a small powerful bomb.

In the issue “Rome #3” of *Rumiyah*, ISIS gives the reader a guide on how to attack by vehicle rammings. The article explains a check list before an attack,

Assessing vehicle for roadworthiness, filling vehicle with a sufficient amount of fuel, Mapping out the route of the attack, Surveying the route for obstacles, such as posts, signs, barriers, humps, bus stops, dumpsters, etc. which is important for sidewalk-mounted attacks, keeping in mind that more obstacles might be set up on the day of a targeted event, and doing the surveillance in an inconspicuous manner, especially if one suspects being monitored by an intelligence apparatus, If accessible, a secondary weapon should be attained.<sup>160</sup>

The author goes on to further explain potential places to attack. Some of these places are outdoor events, celebrations, festivals, and political rallies.<sup>161</sup> By giving these details the organizations are planting seeds into the mind of their soldiers, influencing where attacks take place and how they are done.

In the most recent edition of *Inspire* magazine, al-Qaeda calls for attacks on trains in the West. This article explains there are three ways to attack trains: attacking the wagon from the

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<sup>158</sup>*Inspire*, #1. 33

<sup>159</sup>*Inspire*, #1. 33

<sup>160</sup>"New Release of The Islamic State's Magazine: "Rome #3"." A Clearinghouse for Jihādī Primary Source Material, Original Analysis, and Translation Service. Accessed March 16, 2018. <http://jihadology.net/?s=rumiyah>. 12

<sup>161</sup> "New Release of The Islamic State's Magazine: "Rome #3" 11-12

inside and outside, derailing the train, and targeting train stations.<sup>162</sup> The author precedes to go into detail of how train tracks work and how to create your own, “homemade derail tool.”<sup>163</sup> The article guides the reader how to get through security, plausible aftermaths of a derailment, and even supplements the reader with a list of railways used in the United States of America. This is just one example of a terrifying issue of *Inspire* magazine, which can be easily accessed by the general public.

### **Conclusion**

It is very apparent that both al-Qaeda and ISIS have become masters at the art of creating magazines. With the aesthetics of the pages being so vivid as well as the stories on the pages being relatable, magazines are an effective way to gain recruits. Just like magazines for fashion, music, and drama, their magazines are entertaining and visually stimulating to the viewer. With this form of indoctrination and incitement, al-Qaeda and ISIS have been able to create a digital handbook that can be passed to anyone in the world. Spreading information on how to perform attacks and which methods to use them. Though there are plenty of resources online on how to create weapons and use them, al-Qaeda and ISIS have the ideology attached to the methods which make them that much more powerful tools.

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<sup>162</sup> *Inspire*, #17 67

<sup>163</sup> *Inspire*, #17. 71-88

## Chapter 3

### The Media's Impact on Terrorism

With the development of social media and video platforms such as YouTube and Twitter, viral videos and memes have become part of our everyday online culture. Overnight a video or image can go from barely any recognition, to the whole world watching and sharing. One of the first viral videos was “badday.mpg”. This video depicted a disgruntled office employee bashing his computer in with a keyboard.<sup>164</sup> The video was staged, but that did not prevent it from being circulated throughout large company emails in 1997.<sup>165</sup> This funny video was relatable to the frustration’s office workers have. With the development of new digital platforms, online culture and community has evolved. In 2019, viral videos circulate social media by the masses. Some videos have a quick expiration date, while others are still popular after months and years.<sup>166</sup> Cute animals, political and religious figures, and practically anyone can be subject of these viral videos.

The content of the videos has to be just right in order to become viral. According to Kevin Allocca, Head of Cultures and Trends at YouTube, there are three common links when it comes to creating a viral video.<sup>167</sup> The first link is participation, this can be a viral challenge (i.e. Ice Bucket Challenge), quotable lines, controversial opinions, or even dance moves.<sup>168</sup> Participation makes the viewer actively involved in the viral video.<sup>169</sup> The second link is

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<sup>164</sup> Veix, Joe. "The Strange History of One of the Internet's First Viral Videos."

<sup>165</sup> Veix, "The Strange History of One of the Internet's First Viral Videos."

<sup>166</sup> Allocca, Kevin. *Videocracy: How YouTube Is Changing the World-- with Double Rainbows, Singing Foxes, and Other Trends We Cant Stop Watching*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury USA, an Imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2018. 259

<sup>167</sup> Allocca, *Videocracy: How YouTube Is Changing the World-- with Double Rainbows, Singing Foxes, and Other Trends We Cant Stop Watching*. 262

<sup>168</sup> Allocca, *Videocracy: How YouTube Is Changing the World-- with Double Rainbows, Singing Foxes, and Other Trends We Cant Stop Watching*. 262

<sup>169</sup> Allocca, *Videocracy: How YouTube Is Changing the World-- with Double Rainbows, Singing Foxes, and Other Trends We Cant Stop Watching*. 265

unexpectedness, this refers to a video being unique.<sup>170</sup> These types of videos either answer questions, have shock value, or bring something new to the viewer.<sup>171</sup> The third link is accelerators, these are “people, publications, or other mechanisms that rapidly accelerate the spread of something by broadcasting it to a larger community of viewers.”<sup>172</sup> The power of the connected interaction through social media and the influence of the news media has an immense hand in bringing popularity to online content, this includes violent content.

There is also a dark side to viral trends. An extreme example of this is the April 20th, 1999 Columbine High School shooting.<sup>173</sup> Due to the popularity, this specific massacre has inspired dozens of shootings and attempted shootings.<sup>174</sup> The Columbine terrorists are infamous throughout media and school shooting history.<sup>175</sup> This negative impact from the media has had the same result on other forms of terrorism. Whenever there is an attack in the United States or other Western countries, the media is on it to share the gruesome details and all of the information about the attacker. In chapter 1 and chapter 2 I have covered how al-Qaeda and ISIS have used technologies such as social media in order to grow. The reason why this information is relevant is because terrorist organizations have created their own online culture. The spread of extremist propaganda through the use of technological resources has allowed al-Qaeda and ISIS to form an interactive network online. Their ideologies, methods, and influence are no longer local to their region, globalizing them through digital platforms. Technology has connected

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<sup>170</sup> Allocca, *Videocracy: How YouTube Is Changing the World-- with Double Rainbows, Singing Foxes, and Other Trends We Cant Stop Watching*. 265

<sup>171</sup> Allocca, *Videocracy: How YouTube Is Changing the World-- with Double Rainbows, Singing Foxes, and Other Trends We Cant Stop Watching*. 265

<sup>172</sup> Allocca, *Videocracy: How YouTube Is Changing the World-- with Double Rainbows, Singing Foxes, and Other Trends We Cant Stop Watching*. 267

<sup>173</sup> ABC News. Accessed March 27, 2019. <https://abcnews.go.com/US/columbine-shootings-grim-legacy-50-school-attacks-plots/story?id=26007119>.

<sup>174</sup> ABC News. Accessed March 27, 2019. <https://abcnews.go.com/US/columbine-shootings-grim-legacy-50-school-attacks-plots/story?id=26007119>.

<sup>175</sup> ABC News. Accessed March 27, 2019. <https://abcnews.go.com/US/columbine-shootings-grim-legacy-50-school-attacks-plots/story?id=26007119>.

members and followers, including those who commit lone wolf attacks. Al-Qaeda has an online network, but ISIS have been at the forefront of evolving their network online. The purpose of this chapter is to show how technology has allowed a virtual jihadi network to form within ISIS.

### **Globalizing through Digital Platforms**

The digital realm is a spider web of platforms connecting everyone and everything in some way. Due to ISIS being social media savvy, the organization was able to recruit 25,000 foreign fighters in 2015.<sup>176</sup> These new members traveled to Iraq and Syria to fight for ISIS. Also, in 2015, ISIS gained roughly 20,000 English speaking followers on Twitter. This massive number lead to nearly 200,000 ISIS Tweets being sent out daily by its followers.<sup>177</sup> During the first five months of 2015, ISIS published over 1,700 magazines, videos, and photo reports.<sup>178</sup> ISIS had the means to produce content, and through social media they were able to spread it. Technology has helped ISIS reach a multitude of people; they would have not reached before. Their online globalizing has recruited diverse members from different backgrounds,

Though al-Qaeda began utilizing the media, ISIS has evolved their methods for the most successful outreach. Malcolm Nance explains,

Now that global extremists are transitioning from the underground al-Qaeda cells to above ground ISIS platoons, we've seen a dramatic advancement in how the cult disseminates its message of bloodlust with the power and near-universal presence of the Internet. ISIS is formidable at harnessing social media for shock and value simple because the media are now enmeshed in a revolutionary

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<sup>176</sup> Cozine, Keith. 2016. "Social Media and the Globalization of the Sicarii." *Global Security Studies* 7 (1): 1. <http://search.ebscohost.com.libpublic3.library.isu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edb&AN=113999650&site=eds-live&scope=site> 4

<sup>177</sup> Cozine, "Social Media and the Globalization of the Sicarii." 4

<sup>178</sup> Cozine, "Social Media and the Globalization of the Sicarii." 5

advance-tech world.<sup>179</sup>

Nance further explains that the “new generation” of jihadists have been raised with technology, the internet, video games, action movies, which has influenced their methods.<sup>180</sup> If al-Qaeda would have had the technology that is present today during the 9/11 attacks they would have spread photos of the attacks on Twitter.<sup>181</sup> ISIS has evolved terrorism with the times. They have become in tune with what consumers use and what they want, leading to globalizing online<sup>182</sup>

Producing well-made digital content has help ISIS establish their own online communities. Videos have played a major role being spread online and through the news media, therefore, they have created their own video production teams. There are three branches which shoot videos for ISIS. The first type are squads of fighters who use GoPro cameras. These videos are shot in first person, they are raw cut videos featuring what is going on in a brutal attack.<sup>183</sup> The second type are video support teams, these are soldiers who are not fighters, nor do they have weapons, their sole purpose is to capture video.<sup>184</sup> The third type are professional news media teams, they capture the high-quality video reserved for movies and high-end content.<sup>185</sup> The video production teams also participates in making different genres of films. Beheadings are a well-known type, especially in the way that the media has cycled them through the news. The aesthetic quality of cinematography became a concern of ISIS, which led them to start recording execution videos in better scenery compared to before.<sup>186</sup> The execution video of Nicholas Berg

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<sup>179</sup> Nance, *DEFEATING ISIS: Who They Are, How They Fight, What They Believe*. 381

<sup>180</sup> Nance, *DEFEATING ISIS: Who They Are, How They Fight, What They Believe*. 381

<sup>181</sup> Nance, *DEFEATING ISIS: Who They Are, How They Fight, What They Believe*. P. 381

<sup>182</sup> Nance, *DEFEATING ISIS: Who They Are, How They Fight, What They Believe*. 380-381

<sup>183</sup> Nance, *DEFEATING ISIS: Who They Are, How They Fight, What They Believe*. 388

<sup>184</sup> Nance, *DEFEATING ISIS: Who They Are, How They Fight, What They Believe*. 388

<sup>185</sup> Nance, *DEFEATING ISIS: Who They Are, How They Fight, What They Believe*. 388

<sup>186</sup> Nance, *DEFEATING ISIS: Who They Are, How They Fight, What They Believe*. 393



was recorded in a dingy basement.<sup>187</sup> ISIS adapted and began filming videos outdoors with different sceneries.<sup>188</sup>

Confession tapes of victim's wrong doings and devotion videos are other genres within ISIS videos.<sup>189</sup> In these videos they will even go as far to manipulate a person's corpse to make it look like they are smiling.<sup>190</sup> Both al-Qaeda and ISIS have to compete with the growing amount of violent material that is presented in the media, beheading videos, and other recorded atrocities has helped keep them news worthy.<sup>191</sup> They are imitating what they have seen in Western media and integrating it into their own jihadi culture. For example, some ISIS execution videos are edited in the same way a horror film would be edited. There have been instances where they jump cut, not showing the actual act of the beheading. Rather showing the decapitated head in the executioner's hand or on the victims' feet.<sup>192</sup> This makes the viewer imagine what actually - took place.

In 2019 a study about who watches ISIS beheadings was published. The research found that those who watch beheadings do it for three main reasons. The first reason is because they have current fears of future terrorist attacks.<sup>193</sup> The second reason is for their own research purposes, especially after a type of crisis.<sup>194</sup> The third reason involves the medias influence in motivating them to watch the videos.<sup>195</sup> The article states,

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<sup>187</sup> Nance, *DEFEATING ISIS: Who They Are, How They Fight, What They Believe*. 393

<sup>188</sup> Nance, *DEFEATING ISIS: Who They Are, How They Fight, What They Believe*. 393

<sup>189</sup> Nance, *DEFEATING ISIS: Who They Are, How They Fight, What They Believe*. 390

<sup>190</sup> Nance, *DEFEATING ISIS: Who They Are, How They Fight, What They Believe*. 390391

<sup>191</sup> Guelke, Adrian. *Terrorism and Global Disorder*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2006. 156

<sup>192</sup> FRIIS, SIMONE MOLIN. 2015. "'Beyond Anything We Have Ever Seen': Beheading Videos and the Visibility of Violence in the War against ISIS." *International Affairs* 91 (4): 725–46. doi:10.1111/1468-2346.12341. 735

<sup>193</sup> Redmond, Sarah, Nickolas M. Jones, E. Alison Holman, and Roxane Cohen Silver. 2019. "Who Watches an ISIS Beheading—and Why." *American Psychologist*, February. doi:10.1037/amp0000438.supp (Supplemental). 10

<sup>194</sup> Redmond, Holman, and Silver. "Who Watches an ISIS Beheading—and Why." 10

<sup>195</sup> Redmond, Holman, and Silver. "Who Watches an ISIS Beheading—and Why." 10

First, the media may broadcast incomplete or limited coverage of an event, which potentially seeds ambiguity that individuals may feel compelled to resolve by seeking information on platforms without editorial oversight (e.g., social media). Second, during the string of released beheading videos, the media typically broadcasted still images of the moments before victims were beheaded, opting not to air the gruesome footage entirely.<sup>196</sup>

In the study it is explained that the media will hint at how graphic one of the beheading videos are, as well as where to access the videos.<sup>197</sup> This sparks curiosity within the viewer, and they are influenced to watch the video. In return, the media helps bring in more traffic to the video through views and sharing. ISIS has also been known for using pop culture in order to increase their popularity.

ISIS has their own music, including rap. A German rapper, Denis Cuspert who went by the stage name Deso Dogg joined ISIS in 2013 and produced rap music to support the group.<sup>198</sup> Prior to his jihadist involvement, Deso Dogg was rather popular, touring around the world just like any other rap artist. In 2010 he ended his rap career, then eventually joined different extremist groups.<sup>199</sup> It was reported that in October 2015, Deso Dogg was killed in an American air strike. An article in Vice News stated,

The former rapper has appeared in a number of IS propaganda videos under the nom de guerre Abu Talha al-Almani, including one released in November 2014, in which he brandished a severed head described as belonging to a man killed for opposing the group.

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<sup>196</sup> Redmond, Holman, and Silver. "Who Watches an ISIS Beheading—and Why." 10

<sup>197</sup> Redmond, Holman, and Silver. "Who Watches an ISIS Beheading—and Why." 10

<sup>198</sup> Darville, Jordan, and Jordan Darville. "Deso Dogg, German Rapper Turned ISIS Militant, Reportedly Killed in Airstrike." The FADER. January 19, 2018. Accessed March 27, 2019. <https://www.thefader.com/2018/01/19/deso-dogg-german-rapper-isis-killed-airstrike>.

<sup>199</sup> Darville, Jordan, and Jordan Darville. "Deso Dogg, German Rapper Turned ISIS Militant, Reportedly Killed in Airstrike."

In another, he renounced the rap scene as "brainwashing," complained about his life in Germany surrounded by kuffar (a derogatory term for non-Muslims) and advised wannabe German Mujahedeen to save up their unemployment benefit so that they could travel to fight in Syria or at least move to majority-Sunni Muslim Turkey.<sup>200</sup>

The statements of Deso Dogg's death were later retracted as there were images of him still being alive in 2016.<sup>201</sup> Then in January of 2018, ISIS came out and stated he was officially dead.<sup>202</sup> By recruiting Deso Dogg into their forces, they have been able to show the world how influential their organization is. They can get a celebrity with a luxurious life to become a soldier of the caliphate, which validates their cause even more. This was also a powerful step in gaining establishing more media coverage and gaining Western followers. Having music dedicated to one's cause also makes the organization more modern, as well as hip and cool.

### **The Followers**

Digital platforms have inspired many types of people to join the fight for ISIS. Imran Awan explains that cyber mobs create a mob mentality online. They motivate others to fight for ISIS's goals.<sup>203</sup> The first type are fantasists, they are those who romanticize the jihadi lifestyle, which in return motivated them to fight for them.<sup>204</sup> The second type are thrill seekers, they get a thrill out of claiming they are using social media for extreme purposes and some of them actually become involved in violent behavior of murder and torture.<sup>205</sup> The third type are moral crusaders, these are people who are either part of ISIS or believe in their agenda due to moral purposes.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> "The German Islamic State Rapper 'Deso Dogg' Has Been Killed in a US Airstrike | VICE News."

<sup>201</sup> Darville, Jordan, and Jordan Darville. "Deso Dogg, German Rapper Turned ISIS Militant, Reportedly Killed in Airstrike."

<sup>202</sup> Darville, Jordan, and Jordan Darville. "Deso Dogg, German Rapper Turned ISIS Militant, Reportedly Killed in Airstrike."

<sup>203</sup> Awan, Imran. "Cyber-Extremism: Isis and the Power of Social Media." 143

<sup>204</sup> Awan, Imran. "Cyber-Extremism: Isis and the Power of Social Media." 143

<sup>205</sup> Awan, Imran. "Cyber-Extremism: Isis and the Power of Social Media." 143

<sup>206</sup> Awan, Imran. "Cyber-Extremism: Isis and the Power of Social Media." 143

There are also narcissists: “These people are using political, foreign policy and individual grievances as a means to whip up a climate of revenge seeking and wanting to fight for the Isis mission and goals.”<sup>207</sup> These are just a few examples of the types of people who join terrorist groups. Since foreign fighters are recruited online, knowing the type of person they are seeking out is important to combating their methods.

Sami Moubayed explains the online indoctrination process a Londoner went through in order to be recruited into ISIS. Moubayed explains,

I was always active in online discussions. We didn’t talk politics, just religious affairs. Most of us lived in the Greater London area, and shared similar backgrounds. A Muslim brother from Spain told me that he was leaving his job in Madrid to fight for Islam in Syria. He sent me YouTube videos of the [Assad] regime’s brutal treatment of Muslims. He asked me to join and I agreed.<sup>208</sup>

This quote is from a man named Abu Osman Al-Baritani, who became a member of ISIS. This is just one example of how digital platforms, such as YouTube has been used to recruit soldiers into ISIS.

With joining a terrorist organization such as ISIS, there are those who do not realized what they are actually getting themselves into by becoming a soldier. In 2015 a Vice News article explaining some of the reasons why foreign youth have joined ISIS was written by John Horgan. Horgan states in the article,

The don’t have much going on in their lives, they’re pissed off, and they find nothing keeping them at home. Though some foreign fighters clearly know what they are buying into, others haven’t a clue. They don’t know about the ugly reality of

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<sup>207</sup> Awan, Imran. "Cyber-Extremism: Isis and the Power of Social Media." 143

<sup>208</sup> Moubayed, Sami M. Under the black flag: at the frontier of the new Jihad. London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2015. 153

sectarian strife. Many of them would shy away from watching video of a beheading, much less play a part in one.<sup>209</sup>

Over all, many of those who chose to leave their country and fight for ISIS did not fully know what they were getting themselves into. The propaganda online makes ISIS seem like a brotherhood and tight community. Members who are inciting and indoctrinating online, also depict the organization to be humanitarians. An example Tweet, username @TheSyrianAda62 stated, “Assad Rapists Killed By ISIS near the road of Athriyah/khanassir in rural #Aleppo.”<sup>210</sup> To a young person who is ignorant of what ISIS truly stand for, such Tweets can be interpreted as ISIS being heroes.

Furthermore, on Twitter, there are Tweet depicting ISIS as community builders, with beautiful homes, safe places such as parks, and destroying drug use.<sup>211</sup> Those recruiting on social media feed on civil unrest, war, genocide, and corrupt leaders such as Bashar al-Assad in order to manipulate fighters to come and fight for a great humanitarian cause. Most soldiers who have joined the fight are local, but the propaganda is directed towards those abroad. Therefore, when you have these young, impressionable, individuals traveling from Western countries, they also believe they are truly fighting an important fight.

Roughly 4,500 girls and women from abroad travelled to join ISIS.<sup>212</sup> The average age for these young women to join ISIS was 15 years old.<sup>213</sup> It is also explained, “Those who are educated and with high ambitions but no real prospects for advancement are the ‘frustrated

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<sup>209</sup> "Don't Ask Why People Join the Islamic State - Ask How | VICE News." VICE News RSS. Accessed November 14, 2015. <https://news.vice.com/article/dont-ask-why-people-join-the-islamic-state-ask-how>.

<sup>210</sup> Accessed November 14, 2015. <https://twitter.com/TheSyrianAda62>

<sup>211</sup> [https://twitter.com/Mussliimahl\\_](https://twitter.com/Mussliimahl_)

<sup>212</sup> Perry, Smadar. "ISIS Wives: The Lost Women of War." Ynetnews. Accessed May 01, 2019. <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-5444409,00.html>.

<sup>213</sup> Shackle, Samira. 2016. “The London Girls Lost to Isis: What Became of the ‘Jihadi Brides.’”

achievers' increasingly tempted by radicalism."<sup>214</sup> ISIS can appeal to many crowds of people, some are bored, some want a meaning in life, but others do not realize that their glamorized façade is all just a lie. On social media there have been many instances of ISIS members from Western countries complaining about how they live in mud huts, there is no Starbucks, phone service, western food, and even decent hair salons.<sup>215</sup> This indicates that some of the people being recruited were not only ignorant towards what ISIS is about, but ISIS does an incredible job at convincing people they are a good organization to be a part of. For example, recruiters in ISIS Tweeting, "I wonder if I can pull a Mulan and enter the battlefield" and "You know, if you're not able to come and join us in this Islamic State, then carry out acts of terror at home,".<sup>216</sup> These are foreign fighters who are attempting to influence others around the world. Al-Qaeda and ISIS portrays a sense of brotherhood and community, this attracts people who are lacking that foundation in their life.

## Conclusion

When it comes to the digital globalization of Islamic terrorism, though al-Qaeda and bin Laden were the fathers of advancing through technology, ISIS adapted to modern needs. Fawaz A. Gerges explains, "Al Qaeda believed that the presence of the caliphate could not be virtual and that it required territorial authority for its establishment and continued existence."<sup>217</sup> Al-

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<sup>214</sup> Taşpınar, Ömer. "You Can't Understand Why People Join ISIS Without Understanding Relative Deprivation." HuffPost. November 08, 2016. Accessed May 01, 2019. [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/isis-relative-deprivation\\_b\\_6912460](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/isis-relative-deprivation_b_6912460).

<sup>215</sup> "Some of the Complaints Made by ISIS Brides Are Utterly Bizarre." Mirror. November 13, 2015. Accessed November 13, 2015. <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/isis-jihadi-brides-complain-twitter-6825942>.

<sup>216</sup> "Western Young Women Who Join ISIS Can't Fight, but They Sure Can Tweet." Public Radio International. Accessed March 27, 2019. <https://www.pri.org/stories/2015-01-28/isis-wannabe-mulans-cant-fight-they-can-tweet>.

<sup>217</sup> Gerges, A. *ISIS: a history*. 226

Qaeda was obviously wrong in this belief, as the virtual caliphate is still thriving even after physical territory has been destroyed.

ISIS is a prime example of how technology has allowed them to globalize and recruit many people from all over the world. ISIS evolved into the master of hacking, digital propaganda, recruitment, social media usage, online criminal activity, the black market, and overall globalization. With every video and magazine these groups publish they are becoming more and more powerful. Through war, the physical bodies and territory can be controlled, but the ideology will not die even if some of their soldier do. Globalization through digital platforms will keep that ideology thriving and evolving. Therefore, with technological advancement, extremists from all groups will prosper.

## Conclusion

What can be learned from the history of al-Qaeda and ISIS is that underestimating terrorist organizations is dangerous. Al-Qaeda and ISIS have evolved in a way in which modern technology is a resource for them to spread their propaganda. These platforms have allowed al-Qaeda and ISIS to create their own virtual communities, connecting one another and recruiting people from all over the world. They encourage English-speaking Westerners to fight for them and anyone else they can get their hands on. As modern technology advances, the way in which terrorist organizations and other organized crime is going to advance. What can be seen through the history of al-Qaeda and ISIS is there organizations have evolved their tactics around modern technology.

ISIS have their own hackers, as quickly as propaganda goes down online, it is back up. Social media platforms have gotten better at controlling extremist content online, but these communities are still thriving. Both al-Qaeda and ISIS magazines are high-quality in aesthetics and effective content. *Inspire* and *Rumiyah* magazines inspire followers and members to be a perfect soldier of their organization. It teaches its readers how to create weapons, plan, and follow through with attacks. These magazines have high quality aesthetics and spread the fundamentals of their politics and belief systems. Their videos are practically action movies, spreading real life genocide and violence. They are effective recruitment resources because they can be accessed anywhere on any device, connection followers with one another.

ISIS managed to recruit people from all backgrounds, including the rapper Deso Dogg. Through an online presence, terrorist organizations can make themselves look cool and relatable, which is attractive to some people. There has been a misconception that terrorist organization are unintelligent amateurs, but that is simply not the case. Through observation bin Laden learned



that utilizing the media was the most effective way to spread al-Qaeda's message. Zarqawi adopted this method while being in charge of al-Qaeda in Iraq. ISIS has perfected the use of digital platforms. They have successfully been able to copy Western media and turn it against its enemies. With al-Qaeda and ISIS, we may be able kill them and take back territory, but their ideology's will never die, especially online.

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