**Islam and the Islamic State’s Magazine, *Dabiq***

Prof Tim Jacoby

Global Development Institute

Room 1.014 Arthur Lewis Building

Oxford Road

University of Manchester UK M13 9PL

44 (0)161 275 0414

[tim.jacoby@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:tim.jacoby@manchester.ac.uk)

Tim Jacoby completed his PhD and an Economic and Social Research Council Post-Doctoral Fellowship in the Department of Politics at the University of York, UK. He joined the Global Development Institute at the University of Manchester in 2003 where he is now a professor. He has published more than 30 articles in international journals and is also author of *Social Power and the Turkish State* (Frank Cass, 2004), *Disaster Management and* *Civil Society*: *Earthquake Relief in Japan, Turkey and India* (I.B. Tauris, 2005, with Alpaslan Özerdem), *Understanding Conflict & Violence: Interdisciplinary and Theoretical Approaches* (Routledge, 2008), *Peace in Turkey 2023: The Question of Human Security and Conflict Transformation*, (Lexington, 2013, also with Alpaslan Özerdem) and *The NGO-Military Complex in Afghanistan* (MUP, 2016, with Eric James).

**Islam and the Islamic State’s Magazine, *Dabiq***

Abstract

Since the emergence of the Islamic State, considerable debate has arisen over the relationship (or lack of therein) between its ideological discourse and broader Islamic exegeses and learning. This paper aims to connect these wider discussions to its self-defined ideological standpoint as set out in its magazine, *Dabiq*. All 15 of these, published between June 2014 and July 2016, amounting to more than 900 pages, are examined to assess their authors’ (1) analysis of the Qur’an (2) use of classical scholarship and (3) engagement with contemporary readings of Islam.

Introduction

Named after the eponymous town in Syria mentioned by the prophet as a location for an eschatological battle between the best of Muslims and the worst of disbelievers, the first issue of *Dabiq* appeared in July 2014, the week after the Islamic State (*ad-Dawlah al-Islamiyah* – or simply *ad-Dawlah* to its citizens) captured the country’s largest oilfield (Weiss and Hassan, 2015: xi). It was accompanied by the announcement that it had re-established the *khilafah* with the intention of returning Muslims’ ‘dignity, might, rights, and leadership’ (Issue 1: 7). Continuing for another two years during *ad-Dawlah*’s expansion and consolidation (before being re-titled *Rumiyah* in September 2016), 14 more editions followed in Spanish, German, Russian as well as English, constituting a corpus of 942 pages and over 400,000 words (summarized in Table One). A number of analyses of its content have now appeared. Some commentators, such as Celine Marie Novenario (2016), have, for instance, compared *Dabiq* to other militant magazines, while Brandon Colas (2017) and Haroro Ingram (2016) have considered respectively how it fosters its various potential audiences and a sense of in-group identity. Although its “religious” content has generally been noted in these (as well as in the burgeoning literature on *ad-Dawlah* generally (Alexander and Alexander, 2015; Stern and Berger, 2015; Gerges, 2016; Wood, 2017 etcetera)), there are currently no studies seeking to understand *Dabiq’s* particular approach to Islamic exegeses. I seek to address this by focusing on three areas of *Dabiq*’s content (1) its analysis of the Qur’an (2) its use of classical scholarship and (3) its engagement with contemporary readings of Islam.

While it might be argued that a wider breadth of *ad-Dawlah*’s outputs may provide a fuller approximation of its true thinking, looking at *Dabiq* alone does have a number of merits. Firstly, it is official. There is no doubt that it originates from within the organization – specifically, the *al-Hayat* branch of its central media council (Zgryziewicz, 2015: 23-4). This is not necessarily true of the great range of statements, speeches and videos being uploaded and distributed in its name every day. Secondly, its content is self-selecting. This avoids the problem of methodological circularity – picking, in other words, the content that best suits the analyst’s predetermined argumentative position (such as the six themes presented by the Quilliam Foundation’s Charlie Winter, for instance (2015)). Thirdly, it is well resourced. *Ad-Dawlah* has clearly invested heavily in its production and is therefore likely to take considerable care over its informational content. For that reason, it is generally agreed that ‘Dabiq both concisely reflects the ideological framework of the Islamic State and mirrors its current situation in Iraq and Syria’ (Günther, 2015: 9). Fourthly, it presents a developing narrative of considerable cogency. Examining all 15 of its issues in series allows the reader to follow the complexities of its content, especially when articles and features are spread over consecutive editions. Finally, *Dabiq* is highly influential. Each release increased Google searches by up to a factor of 160 and much of the high-resolution imagery it showcases has been subsequently sold to major international press agencies searching for better quality alternatives to the blurry footage on offer elsewhere (The Carter Centre, 2015: 6; Günther and Kaden, 2016: 17).

\*\*\*\*\*Table One Here

*Dabiq* and the Qur’an

Together, all 15 editions of *Dabiq* contain an overall total of more than 2000 references to the Qur’an drawn from 76 of its 114 chapters. Such a detailed engagement might suggest a reasonably comprehensive cross-section of its content. This is not the case. As Figure One makes clear, its writers have disproportionately concentrated on the latter part of the revelation – a fact which remains true regardless of which of the highly disputed chronologies are employed (I use Theodor Nöldeke’s four-part structure of three Meccan and one Medinan period (see Böwering, 2008)). Indeed, the first of these, which lasted from 610 to 614 and saw the arrival of 48 chapters (Watt and Bell, 2005: 110), is almost ignored altogether with only 39 of its 1235 verses being mentioned across all 15 editions of *Dabiq.* While it is true that these are among the shorter of the Qur’an’s chapters, Table Two shows that those that are most heavily referenced are not necessarily the lengthiest. In fact, the 10 longest chapters considered to be Meccan (each over 100 verses) provide a total of only 94 citations – although it is important to note that a significant proportion of Meccan chapters do contain (a small number of) verses revealed after the emigration to Medina (then known as Yathrib) in 622.

\*\*\*\*\*Figure One Here

While it is, of course, true that all citations are necessarily miscellaneous (and that the Medinan part of the Qur’an is every bit as “Islamic” as that revealed in Mecca), what is important here are the reasons behind such selectivity – why, in other words, *ad-Dawlah* concentrates its attentions so heavily on its later chapters. An explanation for this might be found in the social context of the revelation itself. As Neal Robinson notes, during the first two Meccan periods (which he dates 610 to 617), the prophet was protected by his uncle and leader of the powerful *Hashim* tribe, Abu Talib (2003). By 617, this was weakening and with his passing in 619, followed by the death of the prophet’s wife of 25 years, Khadija (herself an influential and wealthy merchant) a year later, the embryonic Muslim community entered a period of considerable hardship and conflict. The character of the revelation thus moved from what Nöldeke called an ‘imaginative glow’ to become ‘almost entirely prosaic’ (2010: 44-5); away, in other words, from ‘major ethical, eschatological and theological preaching, and [towards] what one might call the more “political” aspects of the message’ (Campanini, 2007: 145). The 24 chapters that Nöldeke believes were revealed after the emigration to Medina in 622, and which make up the bulk of *Dabiq*’s Qur’anic citations, extend these social themes and relate them to the prophet as ‘no longer merely a warner or messenger, but an administrator’ of a diverse and conflictive polity (Fischer and Abedi, 1990: 464). Away from pagan Mecca and within the Muslims’ new cosmopolitan home, this part of the revelation therefore tended to guide the growing Muslim community in its relationship with established Jewish and Christian communities, as well as those who professed to be allies, but secretly connived against Muhammad’s leadership (Abdel Halem, 2005: xviii).

\*\*\*\*\*Table Two Here

As Table Three illustrates, the verses that appear most frequently in *Dabiq* are drawn from this Medinan period (*al-Hashr* (chapter 59) is 102nd in Nöldeke’s chronology). The commonest of these, a*l-Ma’ida:* 51, is perhaps no surprise. It is often used as a basis for disavowing Western culture (part of the notion of *al-wala wal-bara*), but here it is presented in isolation from the two important moderating verses (*al-Mumtahana*: 8 and *Fussilat*: 34 (translated in Table Four)) – neither of which are cited at all in *Dabiq*. These obligate believers to act kindly towards non-Muslims and, for Oliver Leaman, must be read alongside *al-Ma’ida*’s injunctions (2006). Equally contentiously, the translation of this verse in *Dabiq* renders the word *awliya* as “allies”. As Leaman continues though, the fact that these passages were revealed around the time of the Battles of Badr (624) and Uhud (625) suggests that the meaning of *awliya* should be limited to ‘“protectors” or “guardians” in the strict military sense of the terms’ (2006: 679-681). Given that the next four most commonly cited verses deal with martial themes, it is difficult to believe that *ad-Dawlah* would be unaware of this.

\*\*\*\*\*Table Three Here

Of these, the occurrence of *al-Anfal*: 39 and *at-Tawbah*: 5 may also be considered unsurprising. They are two of the five key “war” verses identified by Reuven Firestone in his highly comprehensive survey of the Qur’an, and thus ‘carry the highest authority in all discussions of war’ (1999: 84). There is, however, little agreement on their precise value in translating these debates into action. As Asma Afsaruddin notes (2013: 4), for instance, the idea that these passages are especially instructive (even abrogating earlier revelation) evolved during the ‘the rise and consolidation of the imperial Umayyad and Abbasid’ empires when an emerging and ‘powerful class of religious scholars… were often willing to defer to Realpolitik… [and offer] support for statist policies of territorial expansion’ – ‘freeing the rulers’ hands’, as Blankinship puts it (2009). Others, such as Abdullahi An-Na’im, view these passages as relating to specific groups of belligerents and thus must be treated with caution when attempting to formulate generalized guidelines (1992: 152). What is mostly agreed upon is that both verses ‘do not stand alone in the qur’anic presentation but must be read in conjunction with other revelations taking different positions on the issue’ (Firestone, 1999: 84). Ignoring these, Mohammad Hassan Khalil points out, would overlook the ‘qualified directives’ of other congruent passages and their commonplace call upon believers to restrict warfare to ‘those who attacked you first’ (2018:14). However, despite the great range of restrictions on the use of violence within the first 15 verses of *at-Tawbah*, for instance, only half of these are mentioned at all across all editions of *Dabiq* (Abdel Haleem, 2011: 67).

\*\*\*\*\*Table Four Here

Other verses of the Qur’an (also translated in Table Four) that are often considered to be essential accompaniments to the martial passages set out in Table Three include, amongst others, *an-Nisa*: 94 (highlighted in March and Modirzadeh (2013: 375) and a*sh-Shura*: 40 which Naveed Sheikh cites as demonstrating ‘the moral superiority of patient forbearance and forgiveness’ (2015: 290). Commentaries on the Qur’an have also frequently pointed to the importance of *al-Baqara:* 190 (Amjad-Ali, 2009: 246). Both Muhammad al-Ghazali (2000: 105) and Muhammad Asad (1980: 256), for instance, list it as indispensable when reading *at-Tawbah*: 5. Indeed, if the latter’s insistence that ‘every verse of the Qur’ān must be read and interpreted against the background of the Qur’ān as a whole’ is followed, Richard Bonney concludes, then the sword verses certainly appear less belligerent and more defensive in character (2004: 29-32). Yet, none of these three verses appears at all in any of *Dabiq*’s 15 editions.

Moreover, on three occasions, the later dispensations of *at-Tawbah*: 5 are removed in favor of simply telling its readers to ‘kill the polytheists wherever you find them’ (Issue 7: 21, Issue 13: 18 and Issue 15:28). *Al-i-Imran*: 103 is similarly truncated, being quoted as, ‘And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided’ without the subsequent conciliatory admonition (which I have taken from Arberry’s 1955 translation) in all eight of its occurrences. Such selectivity is, of course, an inevitable part of any form of argumentation, but, as 126 Islamic Studies scholars pointed out in an open letter to *ad-Dawlah*’s leadership, any resultant edict must ‘consider everything that has been revealed relating to a particular question in its entirety, without depending on only parts of it’ if is to have authority (Open Letter, 2014: 3). In this sense, then, the context of the revelation is essential. A complete grasp of the conduct of the early Muslim émigrés before, during and after the battles of Badr in 624 and Uhud in 625 is, for instance, central to understanding *al-Anfal* and *Al-i-Imran* respectively – both in general and the abbreviated excerpts presented in *Dabiq*. Similarly, their opponents’ breaching of the subsequent peace treaty, signed by the prophet despite considerable opposition from his followers at Hudaybiyyah in 628, is, according to Mohammad Hassan Khalil, also crucial in fully comprehending *at-Tawbah* and its infamous sword verse (2018: 13).

*Dabiq* and Classical Scholarship

Excluding references to the great collectors of prophetic narrations (which are almost entirely drawn from standard sources – al-Bukhari, Ahmad, Abu Dawud, Muslim and so on – and therefore reveal little about *ad-Dawlah*’s interpretative position), 65 different classical scholars are cited across the entirety of its 15 editions. At first glance, this appears to be a diverse engagement with a wide range of exegetes, but it actually consists of quite a narrow body of work. In apparent contrast to the commonplace observation that its leadership’s ‘romantic inspiration… [is a] return[ ] to the golden age of the Abbasid caliphate’, *Dabiq*’s authors make little attempt to promote the intellectual tradition of the region’s imperial past (Bazam, 2017). Excluded completely, for instance, are the ‘paradigmatic exemplars’ al-Farabi (d. 950), Ibn Sina (d. 1037), al-Ghazali (d. 1111) Ibn Tufayl (d. 1186) and Ibn Rushd (d. 1198) (Khalidi, 2005: xii). Even ignored is ‘quite possibly the only highly regarded philosopher to be Arabian’, the Kufan polymath, Al-Kindi (d. 873) (Jackson, 2014: 33). Rather, as Table Five shows, *Dabiq* focuses on the small *Athari* jurisprudential school. A third of all its references to classical scholars (92 out of a total of 276) relates to the most important exponent of the *Atharite* school – Ibn Taymiyyah – and two of his students, Ibnul Qayyim (who also taught Ibn Rajab) and Ibn Kathir.

Such selectivity can, much like *Dabiq*’s Qur’anic content, be explained by the social context in which these thinkers wrote.Influenced by the earlier work of Ibn Qudamah, who was born only a short distance south of the Battle Hattin of 1187 in which Salah ad-Din defeated the Frankish Crusade, they were active at a time when Syria and Iraq were being invaded from both the west and the east (Kaminski, 2017: 41). Indeed, Ibn Taymiyyah, himself, was forced to flee his birthplace 130 kilometers north of Raqqah in 1269 following a Mongol attack led by Samaghar –11 years after his commander, Halagu Khan, had completely destroyed Baghdad and brought the Abbasid Caliphate to an end (Amitai-Preiss, 2004). Although subsequently re-established by the Mamluks in Egypt, its Syrian provinces continued to be assailed by both Ilkhanate and Crusader forces which, from 1271 onwards, began to act intermittently in concert (Sicker, 2000: 123). Aleppo fell a number of times during this period and a combined army of Abaqa Khan, Leo II of Cilicia, Demetrius II of Georgia and the Acre Franks nearly took Homs in 1281 (Jackson, 2000). Worse came in 1299 when Ghazan Khan succeeded in occupying Damascus itself, following which the retreating Mamluk army was plundered by largely Alawite and Twelver Shi’a forces from Kisrawan (Harris, 2012: 69-72).

\*\*\*\*\*Table Five Here

From his position as leading professor at the Sukariyyah Institute in Damascus, Ibn Taymiyyah and his students were personally involved in these events. They took up arms against Ghazan and provided the legal justification for the subsequent crushing of Kisrawan (Morkevičius, 2018: 149). They excoriated the Mongol leadership (dismissing Ghazan’s ostensive acceptance of Islam in 1295) and condemned Mamluk society as polluted by a combination of Western philosophy, Eastern despotism, and un-Islamic innovation – particularly from the Shi’a, whose influence over the Mongols grew significantly during the reign of Öljaitü, Ghazan’s successor (Hope, 2017: 174). Especially to blame, for Ibn Kathir, was ‘the failure of the scholars to act as guides for the community’ (Jaques, 2006: 6), who, according to Baber Johansen, both Ibn Taymiyya and Ibnul Qayyim criticized for amassing ‘construct[ed] abstractions that correspond[ed] neither to the life experience of the ordinary Muslim nor to the example of the charismatic members of the early Muslim community’.

The model of the early Medinan state was evoked, Johansen continues, ‘not in order to justify the legal categories that are the product of legal reasoning and its systematic constraints, but to downplay them’, so as to allow, and even promote, judgments not ‘based not only on *fiqh* [legal] norms but also on political considerations and state interest’. The ‘goal of the new doctrine’, Johansen concludes, was therefore ‘not to guarantee the rights of the defendant, but to protect the public interest and the ability of the political authorities to control disturbances and lawlessness’ – or, for Ibnul Qayyim, to prevent ‘a situation in which religion loses control over people’ (2002: 180-186). Far from the usual atavism ascribed to him, Ibn Taymiyyah’s contribution was, in this sense, an iconoclastic, yet empowering, response to the existential threats of the contemporary. Not anti-rational, but grounded on the ‘methodological principle that clear reason and sound tradition necessarily agree, .... [he] made doctrinal discussions not only a privilege for scholars, but also a matter for the public sphere’ (Tamer, 2013: 370-371). As Ovamir Anjum concludes, his ‘reformist endeavors can [therefore] be best understood as a *political* project, namely one fundamentally concerned with the revival of the political sphere in Islam that had vanished in the classical age’ (2012: 9, emphasis in original).

It is precisely this social context that *ad-Dawlah* seeks to emphasize. Their importance to *Dabiq*’s authors is, in other words, based much less on the content of their ideas and scholarly debates than on who they were and when they lived. Disregarding the now increasingly accepted fact that ‘some form of Sufism existed amidst the circle of students and followers of Ibn Taymiyyah’ (Post, 2016: 156), mention is made neither of their admiration for ‘the acknowledged first master of the Sufi path’, al-Junayd (d. 910), nor of their references to the founder of the *Qadiri* Sufi fraternity, al-Jilani (d. 1166), as ‘our shaykh’ (Sarrio, 2011: 275; Anjum, 2010: 165). Instead, there is a pronounced focus on their struggles with the established powers of their day. A six-page article, entitled “Lessons from the Fitnah [strife/chaos] of the Mongols”, from the 14th edition of *Dabiq*, for instance, sets outs to link Ibn Taymiyyah’s ‘utilitarian idiom of costs and benefits’ (Cook, 2000: 154) to the difficulties of mobilizing the Sunni masses against the overwhelming force of today’s Western “crusaders” and their eastern (ie Iranian) allies. Elsewhere, Abu Musab az-Zarqawi’s justification of attacking Iraq’s Shi’a is placed alongside Ibn Taymiyyah’s condemnation of the Nusayris’ and Ismailis’ willingness to co-operate with the Mongols (*Dabiq* 13: 43-4), while Ibnul Qayyim’s warnings against following fabricated textual evidence are used to denounce *an-Nusra*’s decision to leave *ad-Dawlah* in April 2013 (*Dabiq* 2: 26-7).

Similar themes appear in *Dabiq*’s use of the life and works of the eighteenth century Najdi scholar, Muhammad ibn abd al-Wahhab. Like Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibnul Qayyim, alongside whom he is frequently cited, he was motivated by the need both to respond to growing chaos and lawlessness (between the city-states of the Arabian peninsula) and to influence the political authorities of the day – notably through his pacts with the ‘petty tyrants’ Ibn Mu’ammar and Ibn Saud between around 1742 and 1744 (Shahi, 2013: 48). Indeed, it is this politicization of Ibn abd al-Wahhab’s otherwise unremarkable *Hanbali*/*Athari* scholarship on the dangers of *taqlid* (imitation) and the need to resist fabricated religious edicts with increased public engagement (to a point where it was used by the nascent Saudi state to attack the Persians at Karbala in 1801 and to lay claim to the Hejaz in 1804) which largely determines *ad-Dawlah*’s selection of his work (al-Rasheed, 2002: 22). Ignoring the awkward fact that neither he nor his followers advocated establishing a Caliphate in opposition to Ottoman suzerainty, *Dabiq*’s authors prefer to concentrate largely on the same narrow medley of quotations (al-Ibrahim, 2015: 412). Derived less from his writings and more from ‘the practices of the early Saudi wars of expansion, over which Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, during his life, had considerable influence’, the great majority of these focus on three intertwined themes: (1) the obligation to oppose tyranny (such as the Baghdad and Damascus governments of today), (2) the responsibility to emigrate if imperiled (to the new Caliphate) and (3) the need to impose social order (through the domestic policies of the nascent regime in Raqqah) (Macris, 2016: 240).

In this sense, then, *ad-Dawlah’s* engagement with classical scholarship can – much like *Dabiq*’s Qur’anic content – be said to be principally driven by a prosaic search for authority. Social legitimacy is, in other words, its central objective in approaching *Atharism*. As a result, neither Ibd abd al-Wahhab’s vision of a faith ‘revived and reformed in the service of public order and welfare’ nor the earlier Damascene scholars’ attempts to empower an independent intellectual class are related in any cogent or consistent manner (Delong-Bas, 2004: 289). References to Ibn Taymiyyah are no more than a brief smattering taken from just one of the great number of collections of his works currently available (the 20-volume *Majmu al-Fatawa*). Most quotations from Ibn abd al-Wahhab are taken from the generalist compendium, *ad-Durar as-Saniyyah fi al-Ajwiba an-Najdiyyah* (The Sparkling Pearls in Najdi Responses), compiled by Abd ar-Rahman ibn Qasim long after his death (Alnogaidan, 2015). Others come from a short anti-Persian polemic, *Risalah fi al-Radd ala al-Rafidah* (The Rejection of the Rejectionists (Olsson, 2015: 415)) – the other 23 primary sources listed in Delong-Bas’ authoritative study of his work are all ignored altogether (2004: 349-50).

What appears to be important for ­*ad-Dawlah*, then, is less a demonstrable adherence to a particular current of Islamicist thought and more an incongruent apparatus of support for its state-building project. The Persian scholar at-Tabari is, for instance, cited 18 times across all editions, despite being frequently accused of having ‘Shia sympathies’ and refusing to accept the legal authority of the *Athari* patriarch, Imam Ahmad (Hazleton 2009: 220). The *Asharite* thinkers Imam an-Nawawi and Ibn Hajar receive a total of 16 citations even though *Asharism* is generally condemned (see Issue 2: 23 for instance). Even *Mutakallim* theorists, *Mutazilite* rationalists and Sufi mystics (derided by *Dabiq*’s authors as ‘deviant and widespread historical sects’ (Issue 14: 28)) are referenced whenever convenient. The great philosopher al-Juwayni (d. 1085) is a case in point. He is described in *Dabiq* as a ‘scholar of shar’i governance’ and quoted to defend the importance of remaining loyal to a competent, yet fallible, Caliph (Issue 10: 19). The Persian theologian az-Zamakhshari (d. 1144), author of the *Mutazila*’s ‘swan song… [on] the idea of human free will’ (Campanini, 2012: 47), is also cited as support for the eternal life of the martyr in Issue 5 (page 7). Even the work of eminent Sufis, such as the biographer Abu Nu’aym (d. 1038), who is accredited with the miraculous collapse of a mosque in Isfahan (Mojaddedi 2001: 40)), appear as textual references – in this case, espousing the universalism of Islam (Issue 15, page 58).

*Dabiq* and Contemporary Scholarship

Although, *ad-Dawlah* usually prefers to approach exegetic sources directly, *Dabiq* does include references to 57 contemporary scholars – excluding those without any significant training in religious studies (such as Ibn Laden, adh-Dhawahiri, az-Zarqawi and so on). These tend to be quite concentrated, with only three such citations contained within Issues 1, 3, 4, 5 and 9 as a whole. They are also generally not used as academic support for the arguments being made. Of the 57, only 11 are referred to positively. As Table Six illustrates, nine of these are dead and thus unable to distance themselves from *ad-Dawlah* (as almost every living cleric has now done). With the imprisoned ascetic al-Humayd unlikely to offer any support given the chance to comment, the only living cleric favorably referenced in *Dabiq* is the *an-Nusra* go-between, Abd Allah al-Muhaysini.

Many clerics generally cited by other militant groups, such as Hammoud ibn Uqla as-Shuaybi and Abd al-Rahman abd al-Khaliq, are overlooked. Even Nasir ad-Din al-Albani, who Quintan Wiktorowicz places at the heart of the ‘densely connected educational network’ that makes up his ‘anatomy of the Salafi movement’, is notable in his absence (2006: 213). Indeed, of the 25 clerics listed in William McCants’ encyclopedic *Militant Ideology Atlas* (2006), only 11 are referred to in *Dabiq* and just four of these positively. Scholars close to the Saudi establishment have been particularly targeted. An article entitled “Kill the Imams of Kufr [disbelief]” in Issue 13 singles out many of the country’s leading religious voices, including Abdur-Rahman as-Sudays, Hatim al-Awni, Sa’d ash-Shathri, Adil al-Kalbani, Abdullah al-Mutlaq, Muhammad ar-Arifi, Salman an-Nashwan and A’id al-Qarni (who was subsequently shot and wounded by an assailant purported to have links with ­*ad-Dawlah*) (Paton 2016).

\*\*\*\*\*Table Six Here

Instead, nearly all contemporary commentaries on faith and politics in *Dabiq* come from five of *ad-Dawlah*’s own leaders Abu Mus’ab az-Zarqawi (d. 2006), Abu Umar al-Baghdadi (d. 2010) Abu Hamzah al-Muhajir (d. 2010), Abu Muhammad al-Adnani (d. 2016) and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Excluding the eschatological comment on the city of *Dabiq* from the former which appears near to the start of each issue, they are mentioned over 100 times across all 15 editions. While little is known about the background of these men, the first 4 are very unlikely to have had any formal religious training. There have been reports that the latter holds post-graduate religious studies qualifications from the University of Baghdad, but these remain unverified and appear to be based on a biography released by *ad-Dawlah* itself (McCoy, 2014). Despite this, all are frequently referred to as *shaykh* and given the honorific post-nominal suffixes *rahimahullah* or *hafidhahullah* (may God forgive/protect him). Their deployment of Qur’anic verses, *ahadith* and classical scholarship is not generally to support particular strands of Islamic thought. In fact, less than 30 per cent of *Dabiq*’s overall content can, according to Brandon Colas, be classified as “religious” (2017). Rather, ‘universally appealing narratives – security, social justice and so on – feature more prominently than the niche theological ideas that the organisation claims to sustain itself with’ (Winter, 2015: 34). Indeed, NATO calculates that political messaging amounts to 48 per cent of *Dabiq*’s subject matter (Issues 1-10) (Zgryziewicz, 2015: 32).

Within these, commentaries involving *ad-Dawlah*’s leadership tend to revolve around three closely inter-connected ideas: 1) it is doing God’s work 2) resistance is apostasy 3) the punishment of dissent is necessary to maintain order (security, wellbeing and so on). Mostly set out within the longest feature of each edition, the result is a pronounced focus on the value of force. As Aaron Zelin notes of its media output generally, more than five times as much copy is given over to military themes than to proselytising Islam (2015: 90). Al-Muhajir’s 16-page, two-part feature entitled “Advice for the Soldiers/Leaders of the Islamic State” from Issues 6 and 7, for example, focuses almost entirely on combat, logistics and battlefield tactics. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi’s speech from May 2015, partly reproduced in Issue 9, seeks to connect similar topics to prophetic tradition. Islam, he claims, ‘is the religion of war. Your Prophet... was dispatched with the sword... [and] never for a day grew tired of war’ (52-3). Emigration to the Caliphate or the taking up of arms is, *Dabiq*’s narrator continues, mandatory; do ‘not hesitate in doing so, nor consult any supposed “scholar” on this obligation’ (Issue 9: 54).

This is not simply to escape the rule of non-Muslims, but also – or perhaps especially – to resist those defined as apostates. These include the Shi’a as set out in a 15-page feature drawing heavily from az-Zarqawi’s four-hour audio recording, *Hal Ataka Hadith ar-Rafidah* (Has Word of the Rejectionists Reached You?) in which he argues that provoking the newly-formed Maliki government is the only way ‘to awaken the neglectful Sunnis’, mobilize military action and establish a secure homeland (Issue 13: 42). More space, however, is given over to excoriating the Sunni “Allies of al-Qa’idah in Sham”. Presented in five instalments taking up 25 pages of Issues 8 to 12 and including commentary from al-Muhajir and Abu Umar al-Baghdadi, it concludes with a warning from al-Adnani (repeated in Issue 10) that ‘by fighting the Islamic State you fall into kufr’ for which the punishment ‘is a bullet splitting the head or a sharp knife inside the neck’ (Issue 12: 16).

In reaching these judgments, *ad-Dawlah*’s leadership is operating within, what Nelly Lahoud calls, ‘a political space that allows contenders without classical religious training to challenge, on the basis of Islamic teachings, not just the political establishment but also the religious establishment itself’ (2010: 105). Not a single contemporary scholar is cited in any of the articles above and ‘“Salafi Jihadi” claimants’ are condemned as ‘deviant intermediar[ies]’ (Issue 11: 10). Perhaps realizing that such denunciations ‘threaten to erode the support of its core constituencies’, they are also careful to remove their call to action from any broader Islamic debates (Ingram, 2015: 743). Kill ‘in any manner’, al-Adnani tells his readers. ‘Do not ask for anyone’s advice and do not seek anyone’s verdict’ (Issue 6: 4). This anti-clericalism runs right through *Dabiq*, even to the point of ignoring *ad-Dawlah*’s own imamate. Neither its religious leaders killed in the past (such as the Palestinian cleric and az-Zarqawi’s ‘first true spiritual leader in Iraq’, Abu Anas as-Shami (Fishman, 2016: 362)), nor those working there at the time of publication (like its late Mufti, Turki al-Binali (Joscelyn 2017)) receive any mention at all.

Instead, *Dabiq*’s key themes are presented in isolation from substantive scholarly debate. Instead, there is a pronounced emphasis on the immediate priorities of institution building. As Issue 1 (page 25) makes clear, ‘religious affairs cannot be properly established unless the people of truth first achieve comprehensive political imamah [leadership] over the lands and the People’. ‘Action precedes authority in this philosophy’, Harleen Gambhir observes. *Ad-Dawlah* was established through individual agency, not divine intervention – ‘the Caliphate hangs on military victory and consolidation success, as proof of God’s approval’, she concludes (2014: 6-7). *Dabiq* is thus replete with stories of the proto-state’s imposition of order without referring to established jurisprudential standards. The early editions’ focus on recruitment, for example, ignores contemporary writing on living amongst non-Muslims, simply characterizing emigration from the West as an uncontested religious duty. More likely to appear, in fact, are ‘quotes from Western policymakers and journalists that corroborate the image of strength it seeks to project’ (Novenario, 2016: 8) It is no surprise then that, as Andrew March and Mara Revkin note, *ad-Dawlah* neither offers a legal defense of its claim to the territory it controls, nor attempts to codify, in *shari’a* terms, the structure of the social contract it seeks to establish with its residents therein (2015).

Conclusion

This paper has suggested that any easy association of *ad-Dawlah*’s ideology, as evidenced in its flagship magazine, with Islamic exegeses (understood in the three ways outlined above) is highly problematic. *Dabiq*’s writers’ approach to the Qur’an, their concentration on a small selection of classical scholars and their willingness to condemn virtually every living religious authority reveal, it has been argued, a prosaic anti-intellectualism intimately intertwined with the practical expediencies of state-building. While not be particularly unexpected (after all, we might predict that *ad-Dawlah* would choose the scriptures and commentaries that best suit its interests), it is, nonetheless, valuable to trace out the contours of, and reasons behind, such selectivity. Indeed, this type of analysis becomes especially important in an age defined by what Nelly Lahoud calls the ‘decentralization of Islam’ and the resultant growth in organizations such as *ad-Dawlah* attempting to ‘assume[ ] ownership of the classical Islamic corpus’. She, like many others, observes that these ‘are less interested in the intellectual exercise of reading… [it] in the context within which it was intended’ than on highlighting ‘those aspects that lend support to their current programs’, prompting important questions over how such instrumentalization works in practice (2010: 105-106). This paper has thus sought to provide an answer to at least some of these questions in the case of *ad-Dawlah*. In other words, it aims to get beyond the broader observation that ‘practitioners of holy war do not refer to Islamic texts in any extended or exegetic sense’ (Devji, 2005: 119) or, more specifically, that *Dabiq*’sengagement with the Qur’an ‘steps out of any sort of commentary (*tafsir*) tradition’ (Colas, 2017: 182) and to offer an explicatory account of the key areas where this has actually happened in practice.

Similarly, I have also endeavored to explain the magazine authors’ dual focus on the Damascene classicists of the fourteenth century and the early *ahl as-sheikh* tradition of the Arabian Peninsula. Neither, it is argued above, are commended as part of a coherent defense of *Atharism*. Rather, their work is presented as an attempt to equate their struggle to buttress the political institutions of their day against the combined threats of Persian and European hegemony to what *Dabiq*’s authorssee as their own defense of Sunni Arab integrity in Iraq and Syria. These scholars’ usefulness to *ad-Dawlah*’s leadershipis thus not to be found in their contribution to a shared *aqida* (creedal interpretation), but in their discourse on the value of social activism. It is their response to the Mamluk imamate’s ineffectualness and to the ‘disorderly, uncouth and irreligious’ tribal chaos of the eighteenth century Najd that is of interest, not their opponents’ attachment to *Asharism* or Sufi heterodoxy – the politics of resistance are, as such, the principal basis upon which *Dabiq*’s writers engage with classical scholarship (Commins, 2006, 7). There is, in other words, little interest in using these sources to substantiate any specific ideological position and no meaningful attempt to present them as a form of proto-*Salafism*.

Indeed, the magazines’ most scathing content is reserved for contemporary clerics and intellectuals themselves – many of whom are typically thought of as coming from the *Salafi* tradition. With so many of these leading thinkers dismissed and excoriated, its anti-scholarly ideological apparatus might be better regarded as bespoke, rather than indicative of any particular dogma. Indeed, *Ad-Dawlah*’s insistence that any ‘literate individual has the ability to come to *the* correct interpretation of a text’ reveals a call-to-arms grounded more upon a generalized anti-clericalism than on intellectual engagement or theological reasoning (Colas, 2017: 182). It is perhaps no surprise, then, that *Dabiq*’s discourse on law is (in contrast to its ostensive preoccupation with the minutiae of the *shari’a­*) not drawn from any identifiable jurisprudential tradition. Instead it is, as Andrew March and Mara Revkin note of the organization’s legal superstructure more broadly, principally intended to ‘legitimize the regime’s monopoly on violence, resource extraction, and political authority’ (2015).

Again, this perhaps should not be entirely surprising. As former United States Department of Defense analyst Michael Ryan points outs (quoting the militant ideologue, Abu Ubayd al-Qurashi), ‘most revolutionary movements spend some time to set up not only the local administration but also parallel governmental institutions, which act as a pivot point in the struggle for the people’s loyalty’ (2013: 88). In this sense, *ad-Dawlah* might be more fruitfully understood as a ‘revolutionary (or radical) insurgent actor’ which, through the pages of *Dabiq*, is following a well-established practice of utilizing cultural resources in order ‘to mobilize resistance to imperial control, gain access to political power and territory, and exercise power in the construction of new national institutions’ (Kalyvas, 2014: 36; Crawford, 1998: 19). Its religious reference points may therefore be thought of as principally motivational – playing, in Arun Kundnani’s words, ‘an enabling role in cohering a group’ – with the overall aim of achieving a military advantage (2014: 65). The intellectual heritage here is perhaps less in (even supposedly aberrant) variegations of contemporary Islamic thought, and more in much older utopian discourses of the subaltern – a kind of ‘Muslim-based Fanonist perspective’ as Beverly Milton-Edwards puts it (2006: 102).

**References**

Abdel Haleem M A S (2011) *Understanding the Qur’an: Themes and Style*. London: I B Tauris.

Abdul-Khaaliq A-Q (2001) *Iqaamatul-Burhaan: The Establishment of Proof*. Riyadh: Al-Haramain Foundation.

al-Dawoody A (2011) *The Islamic Law of War: Justifications and Regulations*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Alexander Y, & Alexander D (2015) *The Islamic State: Combating the Caliphate without Borders*. Lanham: Lexington.

Afsaruddin A (2013) *Striving in the Path of God: Jihad and Martyrdom in Islamic Thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

al-Ghazali M (2000) *A Thematic Commentary on the Qur’an*. Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought.

al-Ibrahim B (2015) ISIS, Wahhabism and takfir. *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 8(3) 408-415.

Alnogaidan M (2015) The new Qa'ida Wahhabists and the revival of jihad in Saudi Arabia. In *Twenty-first Century Jihad: Law, Society and Military Action* Kendall E and Stein E (eds.). London: I B Tauris.

al-Rashed A (2016) Why exclude Nimr al-Nimr from punishment? *Al Arabiya* January 4 <https://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/middle-east/2016/01/04/Why-exclude-Nimr-al-Nimr-from-punishment-.html>.

al-Rasheed M (2002) *A History of Saudi Arabia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Amitai-Preiss R (2004) *Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamluk-Ilkhanid War, 1260-1281*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Amjad-Ali C (2009) Jihad and just war theory: dissonance and truth. *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 48(3): 239-247.

Ammar J, & Xu S (2018) *When Jihadi Ideology Meets Social Media*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Anjum O (2010) Sufism without mysticism? Ibn Qayyim Al-Gawziyyah's objectives in "Madarig Al-Salikin". *Oriente Moderno* 90(1): 161-188.

Anjum O (2012) *Politics, Law, and Community in Islamic Thought: The Taymiyyan Moment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

An-Na’im A (1992) *Toward an Islamic Reformation: Civil Liberties, Human Rights, and International Law*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press.

Arberry A J (1955) *The Koran Interpreted*. London: Allen and Unwin.

Asad M (1980) *The Message of the Qur’an*. Gibraltar: Dar Al-Andalus.

Bazam A (2017) The biggest enemies of ISIS are the Iranians. So why did they leave them alone until now? *Haaretz* June 27 <https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/why-did-islamic-state-wait-so-long-to-attack-in-iran-1.5488663>.

Bewley A and Bewley A (2013) *The Noble Qur’an: A New Rendering of its Meaning in English*. London: Ta-Ha Publishers.

Bonner R (2004) *Jihad: From Qur’an to bin Laden*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Böwering G (2008) Recent research on the construction of the Qur’an. In Reynolds G S (ed.) *The Qur’an in Its Historical Context*. London: Routledge, 70-87.

Blankinship K (2009) Sword verses. In Esposito J (ed.) *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0979>.

Bunzel C (2018) The Kingdom and the Caliphate: Saudi Arabia and the Islamic State. In Wehrey F (ed.) *Beyond Sunni and Shia: The Roots of Sectarianism in a Changing Middle East*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 239-264.

Campanini M (2007) *The Qur’an: The Basics* (trans. O Leaman). Abingdon: Routledge.

Campanini M (2012) The Mu‘tazila in Islamic History and Thought. *Religion Compass* 6(1): 41-50.

Colas B (2017) What does *Dabiq* do? ISIS hermeneutics and organisational fractures within *Dabiq* magazine. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 40(3): 173-190.

Commins D (2006) *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia*. London. I B Tauris.

Cook M (2000) *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crawford B (1998) The causes of cultural conflict: an institutional approach. In Crawford B and Lipschutz R (eds.) *The Myth of “Ethnic Conflict”: Politics, Economics, and “Cultural” Violence*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 3-43.

Delong-Bas N (2004) *Wahhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Devji F (2005) *Landscapes of the Jihad: Militancy, Morality, Modernity*. London: Hurst.

Firestone R (1999) *Jihad: The Origin of Holy War in Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fischer M, & Abedi M (1990) *Debating Muslims: Cultural Dialogues in Postmodernity and Tradition*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Fishman B (2016) *The Master Plan: ISIS, al-Qaeda, and the Jihadi Strategy for Final Victory*. New Haven CT: Yale University Press.

Gambhir H (2014) Dabiq: the strategic messaging of the Islamic State. *ISW Backgrounder,* August 15 <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/dabiq-strategic-messaging-islamic-state-0>.

Gerges F (2016) *ISIS: A History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Günther C (2015) Presenting the glossy look of warfare in cyberspace – the Islamic State’s Magazine Dabiq. *CyberOrient* 9(1): 1-13.

Günther C, & Kaden T (2016) *The Authority of the Islamic State*. Halle: Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology.

Harris W (2012) *Lebanon: A History, 600-2011*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hazleton L (2009) *After the Prophet: The Epic Story of the Shia-Sunni Split in Islam*. New York: Doubleday.

Hope M (2017) Oljeitu (r. 1304-1316). In May T (ed.) *The Mongol Empire: A Historical Encyclopedia Vol I*. Santa Barbara CA: ABC Clio, 173-176.

Ingram H (2015) The strategic logic of Islamic State information operations. *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 69(6): 729-752.

Ingram H (2016) An analysis of Islamic State’s *Dabiq* magazine. *Australian Journal of Political Science* 51(3): 458-477.

Jackson P (2000) The Mongols and Europe. In Abulafia D and McKitterick R (eds.) *The New Cambridge Medieval History Vol. 5*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 701-719.

Jackson R (2014) *What is Islamic Philosophy*? Abingdon: Routledge.

Jaques K (2006) *Authority, Conflict and the Transmission of Diversity in Medieval Islamic Law*. Leiden: E J Brill.

Johansen B (2002) Signs as evidence: The doctrine of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1351) on proof. *Islamic Law and Society* 9(2): 168-193.

Joscelyn T (2017) CENTCOM confirms Islamic State’s ‘Grand Mufti’ killed in airstrike. *Long War Journal* June 20 <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/06/centcom-confirms-islamic-states-grand-mufti-killed-in-airstrike.php>.

Julaymee S (2015) Imaam Muhammad al-Ameen ash-Shanqeetee. *The Clear Path* July 16 <http://www.theclearpath.com/viewtopic.php?t=48#p77>.

Kalyvas S (2014) The logic of violence in the Islamic State’s war. In *Iraq between Maliki and the Islamic State* (POMEPS Briefings 24: George Washington University) 34-36.

Kaminski J (2017) *The Contemporary Islamic Governed State: A Reconceptualization*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Khalidi M A (2005) *Medieval Islamic Philosophical Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Khalil M H (2018) *Jihad, Radicalism and the New Atheism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kundnani A (2014) *The Muslims are Coming! Islamophobia, Extremism, and the Domestic War on Terror*. London: Verso.

Lahoud N (2010) *The Jihadis’ Path to Self-Destruction*. London: Hurst.

Lea-Henry J (2018) The life and death of Abdullah Azzam. *Middle East Policy* 25(1): 64-79.

Leaman O (2006) *Wali* – issues of identification. In Leaman O (ed.) *The Qur’an: An Encyclopedia*. London: Routledge, 678-682.

Lohlker R (2016) A roadmap to terror in Saudi-Arabia. *Arab Studies Occasional Papers* 8. Oriental Institute University of Vienna <https://islamicstudiespapers.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/astop-8.pdf>.

Macris J (2016) Investigating the ties between Muhammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab, early Wahhabism, and ISIS. *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 7(3) 239-255.

March A, & Modirzadeh N (2013) Ambivalent universalism? Jus ad bellum in modern Islamic legal discourse. *The European Journal of International Law* 24(1): 367-389.

March A, & Revkin M (2015) Caliphate of law: ISIS’ ground rules. *Foreign Affairs* April 15 <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/syria/2015-04-15/caliphate-law>.

McCants W (2006) *Militant Ideology Atlas: Executive Report*. West Point: Combating Terrorism Center.

McCoy T (2014) How ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi became the world’s most powerful jihadist leader. *The Washington Post* June 11 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/06/11/how-isis-leader-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-became-the-worlds-most-powerful-jihadi-leader/?utm_term=.9aa842bfb4af>

Milton-Edwards B (2006) *Islam and Violence in the Modern Era*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mojaddedi J (2001) *The Biographical Tradition in Sufism: The Tabaqat Genre from al-Sulami to Jami*. Richmond: Curzon Press.

Morkevičius V (2018) *Realist Ethics: Just War Traditions as Power Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Murphy C (2010) AQAP’s growing security threat to Saudi Arabia. *CTC Sentinel* 3(6): 1-4.

Nafi B (2005) Ṭāhir ibn ʿĀshūr: The career and thought of a modern reformist ʿālim, with special reference to his work of tafsīr. *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 7(1): 1-32.

Nöldeke T (2010) *Sketches from Eastern History (1892)* (trans. J Sutherland Black). Whitefish MT: Kessinger Publishing.

Novenario C M (2016) Differentiating Al Qaeda and the Islamic State through strategies publicized in *Jihadist* magazines. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 39(11): 953-967.

Olsson S (2017) Shia as internal others: a salafi rejection of the ‘rejecters’. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 28(4): 409-430.

Open Letter to Dr Ibrahim Awwad al-Badri Alias ‘Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi’ (2014) September 19 <http://www.lettertobaghdadi.com/>.

Paton C (2016) Isis: Saudi cleric Sheikh Aaidh al-Qarni injured in Philippines assassination attempt on IS hit list. *International Business Times* March 3 <https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/isis-saudi-cleric-sheikh-aaidh-al-qarni-injured-philippines-assassination-attempt-hit-list-1547040>.

Post A (2016) A glimpse of Sufism from the circle of Ibn Taymiyya. *Journal of Sufi Studies* 5: 156-187.

Ramsden M (2011) Targeted killings and international human rights law: the case of Anwar Al-Awlaki. *Journal of Conflict & Security Law* 16(2): 385-406.

Robinson N (2003) *Discovering the Qur'an: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text*. London: SCM Press.

Sarrio D (2011) Spiritual anti-elitism: Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine of sainthood (walaya). *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 22(3): 275-291.

Shahi A (2013) *The Politics of Truth Management in Saudi Arabia*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Sheikh N (2015) Reclaiming Jihad as a strategy of conflict transformation. *Peace Review* 27(3): 288-295.

Sicker M (2000) *The Islamic World in Ascendancy: From the Arab Conquests to the Siege of Vienna*. Westport CT: Praeger.

Stern J, & Berger J M (2015) *ISIS: The State of Terror*. London: William Collins.

Tamer G (2013) The curse of philosophy: Ibn Taymiyya as a philosopher in contemporary Islamic thought. In Krawietz B and Tamer G (eds.) *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law: Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 329-376.

The Carter Centre (2015) *Overview of Daesh’s Online Recruitment Propaganda Magazine: Dabiq.* Atlanta.

Watt M, & Bell R (2005) *Introduction to the Qur’an*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Weiss M, & Hassan H (2015) *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*. New York: Regan Arts.

Wiktorowicz Q (2006) Anatomy of the salafi movement. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29(3): 207-239.

Wilson T (2008) The Bengali Taliban: Jamaat-Ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh. *Terrorism Monitor* 6(10): 10-12.

Winter C (2015) *The Virtual “Caliphate”: Understanding Islamic State’s Propaganda Strategy*. London: Quilliam Foundation.

Wood G (2017) *The Way of the Strangers: Encounters with the Islamic State*. London: Allen Lane.

Zelin A (2015) Picture or it didn’t happen: A snapshot of the Islamic State’s official media output. *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9(4): 85-97.

Zgryziewicz R (2015) *Daesh Information Campaign and its Influence*. Riga: NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence.

Žižek S (2002) *Welcome to the Desert of the Real! Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates*. London: Verso.

Table One: *Dabiq*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Issue** | **Issue Title** | **Date of Publication** | **Number of Pages** | **Number of Words** |
| 1 | The Return of Khilafah | 5 July 2014 | 50 | 10105 |
| 2 | The Flood | 27 July 2014 | 44 | 12585 |
| 3 | A Call to Hijrah | 10 September 2014 | 42 | 14045 |
| 4 | The Failed Crusade | 11 October 2014 | 56 | 20261 |
| 5 | Remaining and Expanding | 21 November 2014 | 40 | 12914 |
| 6 | Al Qa'idah of Waziristan: A Testimony from Within | 29 December 2014 | 63 | 28397 |
| 7 | From Hypocrisy to Apostasy: The Extinction of the Grayzone | 12 February 2015 | 83 | 35786 |
| 8 | Shari'ah Alone Will Rule Africa | 30 March 2015 | 68 | 30652 |
| 9 | They Plot and Allah Plots | 21 May 2015 | 79 | 32705 |
| 10 | The Law of Allah or the Laws of Men | 13 July 2015 | 79 | 43224 |
| 11 | From the Battles of Al-Ahzāb to the War of Coalitions | 9 August 2015 | 66 | 34288 |
| 12 | Just Terror | 18 November 2015 | 66 | 39751 |
| 13 | The Rafidah from Ibn Saba' to the Dajjal | 19 January 2016 | 56 | 29064 |
| 14 | The Murtadd Brotherhood | 13 April 2016 | 68 | 35167 |
| 15 | Break the Cross | 31 July 2016 | 82 | 45053 |

Table Two: Qur’anic Chapters most commonly cited in *Dabiq*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Chapter** | | **Number of Verses** | **Verses Cited** | **Overall mentions** | **Relative Length** | **Revealed** | **Place of Revelation** |
| **Title** | **Number** |
| At-Tawba  Repentance | 9 | 129 | 48 | 68 | 9th | 113th | Medina |
| Al-Baqara  The Cow | 2 | 286 | 49 | 59 | 1st | 91st | Medina |
| Al-i-Imran  The Family of Imran | 3 | 200 | 43 | 61 | 4th | 97th | Medina |
| An-Nisa  Women | 4 | 176 | 42 | 56 | 6th | 100th | Medina |
| Al-Ma’ida  The Table | 5 | 120 | 25 | 39 | 12th | 114th | Medina |
| Al-Anfal  Booty | 8 | 76 | 19 | 42 | 33rd | 95th | Medina |

Table Three: The Most Frequently Cited Verses in *Dabiq*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Citations** | **Chapter** | | **Verse** | **Translation in *Dabiq*** |
| **Title** | **Number** |
| 13 | Al-Ma’ida  The Table | 5 | 51 | O you who have believed, do not take Jews and Christians as your allies; they are allies of one another. And whoever is ally to them among you – then indeed, he is one of them. Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people. |
| 9 | Al-Hashr  The Gathering |  | 14 | They will not all fight you all together except within fortified cities or from behind walls. Their adversity among themselves is severe. You think they are together, but their hearts are diverse. This is because they are a people who do not reason. |
| 8 | Al-Anfal  Booty | 8 | 39 | And fight them until there is no fitnah and [until] the religion, all of it, is for Allah. And if they cease – then, indeed Allah is Seeing of what they do. |
| Al-i-Imran  The Family of Imran | 3 | 103 | And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided; remember God's blessing upon you when you were enemies, and He brought your hearts together, so that by His blessing you became brothers. You were upon the brink of a pit of Fire, and He delivered you from it; even so God makes clear to you His signs; so haply you will be guided. |
| At-Tawba  Repentance | 9 | 5 | And when the sacred months have passed, then kill the polytheists wherever you find them and capture them and besiege them and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they should repent, establish prayer and pay zakah, let them [go] on their way. Indeed, Allah is forgiving and merciful. |

Table Four: Key Omissions from *Dabiq*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Chapter** | | **Verse** | **Translation** (from Bewley and Bewley, 2013) |
| **Title** | **Number** |
| Al-Baqara  The Cow | 2 | 190 | Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight you, but do not go beyond the limits. Allah does not love those who go beyond the limits |
| An-Nisa  Women | 4 | 94 | You who believe! When you go out to fight in the way of Allah verify things carefully. Do not say, ‘You are not a believer’ to someone who greets you as a Muslim simply out of the desire for the goods of this world… |
| Fussilat  Made Plain | 41 | 34 | A good action and bad action are not the same. Repel the bad with something better and, if there is enmity between you and someone else, he will be like a bosom friend. |
| Ash-Shura  Counsel | 42 | 40 | The repayment of a bad action is one equivalent to it, but if someone pardons and puts things right, his reward is with Allah. Certainly He does not love wrongdoers. |
| Al-Mumtahana  The Woman Tested | 60 | 8 | Allah does not forbid you from being good to those who have not fought you in the deen (religion) or driven you from your homes, or from being just towards them. Allah loves those who are just. |

Table Five: Most Commonly Cited Classical Scholars

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Scholar** | **Citations** | **Origin** | **School** | **Period** |
| Ibn Taymiyyah | 40 | Syrian | Athari | 1263-1328 |
| Ibnul Qayyim | 28 | Syrian | Athari | 1292-1350 |
| Ibn Kathir | 24 | Syrian | Athari | 1300-1373 |
| Ibn abd al-Wahhab | 22 | Najdi | Athari | 1703-1792 |
| At-Tabari | 18 | Persian | Jariri | 839-923 |
| Ibn Qudamah | 11 | Palestinian | Athari | 1147-1223 |
| Al-Khallal | 10 | ? | Athari | ?-923 |
| Ibn Hazm | 9 | Spain | Athari | 994-1064 |
| An-Nawawi | 8 | Syrian | Ashari | 1233-1277 |
| Ibn Hajar | 8 | Egyptian | Ashari | 1372-1449 |
| Ibn Rajab | 7 | Syrian | Athari | 1335-1393 |

Table Six: Favorably Cited Scholars

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Scholar** | **Origin** | **Status** |
| At-Tahir ibn Ashur | Tunisian | Died in old age (Nafi, 2005) |
| Muhammed Ash-Shinquiti | Mauritanian | Died in old age (al-Julaymee, 2015) |
| Hamud at-Tuwayjiri | Saudi | Died in old age (Abdul-Khaaliq, 2001) |
| Abd al-Karim al-Humayd | Saudi | Imprisoned (Murphy, 2010) |
| Hamad al-Humaydi | Saudi | Executed (al-Rashed, 2016) |
| Anwar Al-Awlaki | Yemeni-American | Killed in airstrike (Ramsden, 2011) |
| Abd Allah Azzam | Palestinian | Assassinated (Lea-Henry, 2018) |
| Abu Jandal al-Azdi | Saudi | Executed (Bunzel, 2018) |
| Abd Allah al-Muhaysini | Saudi | Living (Ammar and Xu, 2018) |
| Abd al-Aziz at-Tuwayli’i | Pakistani-Saudi | Executed (Lohlker, 2015) |
| Shaykh Abdur Rahman | Bangladeshi | Executed (Wilson, 2008) |