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ISIS AND THE THEATER OF TERROR: A STUDY OF OFFICIAL ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ISIS VIDEOS (2014-2017)

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Simon Cottee for his continuous support and invaluable guidance over the past years. I also thank my secondary supervisor, Dr. Caroline Chatwin, for her great advice and encouragement.

I appreciate the SSPSSR, the University of Kent, where I spent years of my life and had a lot of great memories.

I am deeply indebted to my family, for their constant understanding and great support.

Abstract

This thesis examines 79 official English-language ISIS videos from 2014-2017 to enhance the understanding of ISIS global propaganda apparatus. It includes a threefold analysis and starts from a content analysis guided by Braddock and Horgan (2016) to explore the prevalence of and the change in production characteristic and thematic distribution of the videos. The second analysis then goes further to quantify the speech acts used in the videos through the lens of Quentin Skinner's (2002) hermeneutic theory of interpretation. Using the previously established methodological approach, the third and final analysis qualitatively examines four major videos that respectively represent four most dominant speech acts used in the videos. The results indicate that, first, the largest portion of themes were about enemy and religion, and the theme of Sharia (Islamic law) is featured most prominently in the videos; second, *directive*, *expressive*, and *assertive* were the most common classes of speech acts, and the four most prevalent individual speech acts were *threatening*, *condemning*, *inviting*, and *inciting*; third, the most prevalent themes and speech acts mostly maintained a consistent presence over the course of three years. This study concludes that ISIS has generated a highly sophisticated global media infrastructure and operation system and that possess a great deal of capacity and flexibility to cope with circumstances that the group faced on the ground to respond to group-related real-world events.

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CHAPTER: INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter consists of five parts. Through the existing literature and discourses on ISIS media and radicalisation studies, the first part aims to provide the context of ISIS' rise and fall with a particular focus on demonstrating that studies on its propaganda remain relevant, even after its fall. The second part explores ISIS propaganda videos with a direct and conventional link to radicalisation in order to contextualise and highlight the critical and social necessity for developing research on ISIS and how it might tentatively contribute to broader knowledge within the scope of media violence and online radicalisation. The chapter then describes this study's research questions and aims, followed by the thesis structure and outline, and ultimately the significance of this research.

PART ONE: 'ISIS IS DEFEATED'

The group's rise seemed unstoppable when ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared a caliphate at the Great Mosque of al-Nuri in Mosul on 29 June 2014 (Chulov 2019). Through the symbolism of the caliphate that represents a golden age of Islam, the self-declared caliph al-Baghdadi urged *Hijrah* (emigrations) and *Jihad* (holy war) and promised to restore 'dignity, power, rights, and leadership' for all Muslims (al-Lami 2019, p.5). In August of that year, US airstrikes on ISIS were authorised to begin after ISIS killed and enslaved a large portion of the Yazidi minority in northern Iraq and decapitated American journalist James Foley (Orr 2014; Malik 2014). At the height of ISIS control, from late 2014 to early 2015, the group seized large swathes of Syria and Iraq, equal in size to Britain, ruled approximately eight million people, and gained billions of dollars from oil, ransoms, robberies, and extortions (Curry 2014; Gilsinan 2014). In late 2015, ISIS suicide bombers attacked Paris, and many devastating ISIS-inspired terror attacks followed in Western countries (Foster 2017). At that time, ISIS continued to attract fringe support among Muslims with its vivid claim of reviving an Islamic caliphate that would bring a secure and enjoyable life, which was found to be a lie that the group fabricated through slick propaganda videos (al-Lami 2019; V14). In addition, ISIS cited the duty of performing *jihad* as part of the war-waging process against opposition to the

group, and in doing so, high-definition horror became a brutal eye-catching component of its overall propaganda machine (V2; V15; V16; V17; V19; V22; al-Lami 2019; Dearden 2014, 2015; Boffey and Jalabi 2015;).

In late 2016, Kurdish and Iraqi forces operated an offensive in Mosul, and in June 2017, the operation succeeded, and Syria started to push towards Raqqa, the de facto capital of the caliphate (Phippen 2017; Damon *et al.,* 2017; Barnard and Saad 2017). By October 2017, ISIS lost both Mosul and Raqqa – and its dual territorial centres fell (Chulov 2019; Phippen 2017; Damon *et al.,* 2017; Barnard and Saad 2017). Since then, ISIS has struggled to project an image of a functioning and flourishing state to maintain its claim of the revived caliphate (al-Lami 2019). From 2014 to late 2017, the territory controlled by ISIS was gradually reconquered; as many as 60,000 ISIS fighters died; the administration and leadership dwindled to a remnant; the vast project of a caliphate crumbled to an end (Burke 2017; Forrest 2019). In March 2019, the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces declared the end of ISIS caliphate following the occupation of the group's final holdout in Baghouz, a village in Syria, although the group continues to have the capacity to mount attacks worldwide (Naijiar 2019; Forrest 2019). The following question remains: is ISIS truly defeated, and will this caliphate ever possibly return (al-Lami 2019)?

President Trump claims that the US and its allies have 'defeated' the Islamic State and insisted that 'we just took over 100 percent caliphate' (Olidort 2019, p.1; Cockburn 2019). Trump's words have sparked a debate about whether ISIS is finally defeated (Cockburn 2019). Truly, it might be very difficult for ISIS to duplicate its 2014 model of a caliphate and completely restore its appeal since it lost its novelty as an intriguing phenomenon, and local communities and foreign recruits who experienced this ISIS caliphate first hand might reject its brutality and empty promises (al-Lami 2019). Nevertheless, most analysts disagree with President Trump's claim regarding the defeat of ISIS and argue that it might continue to remain a major threat (Olidort 2019; Cockburn 2019; Ghosh 2019; Rogers *et al.,* 2019; Ryan and Loveluck 2019; Board 2019). The president's claim was criticised as 'reckless', 'misleading', 'driven by domestic political concerns', and 'ignoring the bigger and much more worrying picture' (Turak 2019, p.2; Cockburn 2019, p.1). The reasons that support the claim that ISIS is 'not defeated' (Gerges 2019, p.1) are as follows: first, after the fall of the caliphate, there continue to be

dispersed networks of active ISIS supporters and sleeper cells hidden worldwide (al-Lami 2019; Gerges 2019; Rogers *et al.,* 2019). Second, the radical ideology left by ISIS will continue to spread and will not be easily eradicated (al-Lami 2019). Third, without the burdens of governing responsibility, ISIS might focus more on traditional insurgency and terrorism; it has already carried out suicide attacks in Iraq and will continue to employ guerrilla tactics to destabilise countries and communities for the foreseeable future (board 2019; al-Lami 2019). Fourth, there was a period of time (from 2006-2010) during which ISIS (named AQI at the time) was previously declared 'defeated' and was then able to return from its insurgent roots (Gerges 2019). ISIS might come back if the conditions that led to its formation are not addressed (*Ibid.)*.

The most worrying concerns have been that the group might transform into a territory-less virtual organisation that specialises in global inspiration for violent attacks, with little physical infrastructure to combat and a great role played by propaganda (Votel *et al.* 2017; al-Lami 2019). Masrour Barzani, the chancellor of the Kurdistan region security council, said (Chulov 2019, p.9),

'ISIS remains one of many symptoms bound to re-emerge in a new form. Isis is about ideology, not fighters or territory. The group has already adapted to territorial defeat by returning to insurgency in areas with pre-existing sectarian fault lines. It has gained renewed momentum in recent months across Iraq's northern provinces using tactics it was always more comfortable with than holding territory. In areas freed from their terror, local sleeper cells have already reappeared to spread panic and fear'.

Just before losing the last pocket of land, ISIS reused its trademark slogan 'remaining and expanding' in its weekly newspaper Al-Naba (21 February edition) (al-Lami 2019, p.4). The radical ideology left by the group cannot be easily eradicated, and a powerful multilingual propaganda apparatus will continue to remain supportive (al-Lami 2019). With the loss of territory, it seems possible that this virtual 'caliphate' will rely on propaganda more than ever before (Kuznar 2017).

PART TWO: ISIS PROPAGANDA AND RADICALISATION

Bastille day in France in 2016 was marked by a gruesome terrorist attack that killed 84 civilians (Chrisafis and Rice-Oxley 2016). Mohamed L. Bouhlel (1985-2016) run over crowds of people with a truck in Nice merely months after another ISIS-inspired attack in Paris that resulted in the death of 130 citizens (Burke 2016). Both attacks were influential worldwide, and the social and political reactions led to questions such as who were the attackers, why did they commit such attacks, and how had these people become radicalised (Grand and Byrne 2016)? These questions were addressed by studies that attribute the actions of ISIS to the wider discourse of Islamic jihadism and radicalisation (Chrisafis and Rice-Oxley 2016; Grand and Byrne 2016). According to these studies, the Nice attack of M. L. Bouhlel is particularly interesting since, unlike the Paris attack, the attacker was a lone wolf, an individual acting alone in an improvised manner. Additionally, in contrast with the attackers in Paris, Bouhlel was a father-of-three who did not travel to the Middle East to receive any physical training, and police investigators found that he had no direct connections to ISIS or any other jihadi groups. This case raised concerns, however, as Bouhlel's laptop 'showed a clear, recent interest for the radical jihadist movement,' and revealed that he carried out a 'near-daily search for ISIS propaganda videos' (Grand and Byrne 2016, p.2). Evidence additionally indicated that, months before he carried out the attack, Bouhlel studied the details of the attacks in Orlando (12 June 2016) and in the Paris suburb of Magnanville (13 June 2016), which were both implemented by a lone wolf without a physical connection to the terrorist group (Labbé and Carraud 2016; Grand and Byrne 2016; Ellis *et al.* 2016). Analysts were able to draw from this case two general but significant conclusions: first, there was a recognition of the sophistication and effectiveness of ISIS's message and its capacity for causing radicalisation without the need for direct physical interaction; and second, the case was a testimony to the complexity of the media infrastructure and overall strategy of the social networks and other platforms utilised.

Cases such as Bouhel's attack are of particular interest because radicalisation was caused without direct exposure to the terrorist group, posing questions about media content for radicalising individuals and for 'inciting them to violence' (Aly *et al.* 2016, p.7). At a Washington summit on countering violent extremism, the former president of the United

States Barack Obama explained that the effectiveness of ISIS propaganda is a result of targeting 'those who may be disillusioned or wrestling with their identity' and of the group's deliberate use of 'the high-quality videos, the online magazines, the use of social media, terrorist Twitter accounts (…) designed to target today's young people online, in cyberspace' (Obama 2015, p.7). Attention is therefore diverted from the superficial content of the ISIS media towards social questions that are rooted within the broader socio-political context of online radicalisation, the jihadi movement, and even technological questions concerning the media's far-reaching impact, for example, the widow of an American soldier who was killed in Jordan was trying to sue Twitter for giving a voice to the Islamic State (Stempel and Frankel 2016).

Government responses fall within two types of approaches; the first is to challenge the terrorist propaganda with counter-narratives (Katz 2014; Gearan 2014; Schmitt 2015), while the second is to censor it (Berger 2014; Greenberg 2015; Sweney 2015). The latter was implemented by government agencies in collaboration with private enterprises and social media giants, which was the subject of much criticism (Ball 2014), while the former was a strategy implemented in a variety of ways, including sponsored social media campaigns with accounts on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube (Jones and Smith 2014), which engage and argue with pro-ISIS groups (Robinson 2014). Politically, the US State of Department makes statements denouncing ISIS and promotes initiatives for the social development of Muslim countries to aid youths, community activists and religious figures to oppose radicalisation tendencies (Ackerman 2012). However, the government's responses were criticised for being 'far from winning the information war' (Winter and Bach-Lombardo 2016, p.7) and were described as 'embarrassing' (Katz 2014, p.1), 'sluggish' and 'outright inept' (Gilsinan 2015, p.1), as they do not 'persuade internet-fluent youths to whom ISIS attempts appeal' (Ackerman 2014, p.1). What the US counter-narrative offers is half a message, 'don't do this', but it lacks a reference to 'doing this instead' (Cottee 2015b, p.5). Furthermore, it was even argued that the result is 'not only ineffective, but also provides jihadists with a stage to voice their arguments' (Katz 2014, p.1) and earns them legitimacy due to the government's engagement with them, producing an equal dialogue between governments and the terrorist group, which is exactly what 'these people like to see' (Ackerman 2014, p.3).

The academic field provided a wider area for debate, drawing on a variety of disciplines and discourses utilised to address more specific questions. While many references have appeared that contextualise the ideological, social and military aspects of ISIS, research on the group's propaganda is centred around the role of its strategy regarding and use of the media. Such research taps into an already established discourse about the relationship between the media and violence in films and games and their influence on youth. Early studies in this field mark a 'dramatic increase in violent crimes' since the introduction of TV in American households, which 'most scholars see [as] a causal connection' since 'children imitate the violence they see' (Prince 2000, p.237)[1]. A recent prominent example of these studies is the discourse surrounding the violent themes in the films by American director Quentin Tarantino, which had been opposed for their 'shallowness and nihilism both on a formal and a moral level' (Horsley 1999, pp.229–231; Gronstad 2014, p.155) with 'critical social consequences' that incite 'violence[s]' (Whalen 1995, pp.2–5; Gronstad 2014, p.155). However, these arguments have been criticised for the lack of empirical evidence regarding the impact of media on the behaviour of the audience and hence the difficulty of drawing strong conclusions (Prince 2000, p.258). While some scholars retain their position regarding the existence of such a correlation (Friedrich-Cofer & Huston 1986; Centerwall 1989), others argue that such an effect has yet to be demonstrated (Freedman 1984; Mcguire 1986). Accordingly, despite many indications of the radicalising impact of ISIS media and propaganda, it remains difficult, if not impossible, to prove empirically, and studies of this sort leave unanswered questions regarding the nature and content of this media and the way in which it exerts its influence.

The difficulty of addressing ISIS propaganda is accentuated by Hatton and Nelson (2016), who identify two major challenges: first, it is nearly impossible to empirically measure the effects of ISIS videos and to gauge their influence, as it remains unclear how they are viewed or received, and second, it is even harder to identify the participants' link to violence, personality traits or other variables, to predict whether a person has chosen to seek out these videos or whether the video itself is a direct force in changing the opinions of such a person (Hatton and Nelson 2016). The effect of the videos is a flowing phenomenon in which resonance is invariably applied to different conditions (Ingram 2016a; al-Rawi 2016a). The legitimacy of a

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[1] Such as the 'Bobo doll' experiment. There is an argument that 'social learning theory' emphasizes this process of imitation, for instance. See the book *Screening Violence* (Prince 2000, p.237-238).

general outcome would remain questionable, and an empirical measurement of the effect falls short in its implementation (Ellul 1973).

All of these factors make it challenging for researchers and analysts to understand the direct link between ISIS videos and radicalisation. However, as Lemieux *et al.* (2014) have argued, it is less likely that consumption alone is sufficient to radicalise an individual. A study of this kind must begin with a new question that moves beyond the attempts to establish a direct and conventional link between ISIS propaganda and violence and instigates an investigation into a more comprehensive understanding of their nature; doing so might further help draw a relationship between the two. Jessica Stern (2014), a terrorism scholar at Harvard University [later Boston University], in her response to Marc Sageman (2014), a former counter-terrorism consultant for the US government, raised the methodological challenge in terrorism studies and the consequential scholastic stagnation regarding the question of 'what leads a person to turn to political violence' (Sageman 2014, p.565). Stern has suggested that what we could do first is to offer a useful framework to comprehensively understand ISIS propaganda since there are 'so many examples' of extremists who are influenced by it (Stern 2014, p.610). In fact, there are many questions we can more thoroughly address about ISIS propaganda, for instance, with regard to the ISIS worldview, the ideologies behind it, how ISIS thinks, how it sees itself or wants to be seen, or what images it wants to put in front of the eyes of the outside world? To address these issues, a search for a new methodological interrogatory approach that relies on the available evidence that is accessible to academia and drawn from the socio-political and cultural-environmental contexts from which ISIS videos emerged or to which they responded are needed, which, before this study, had remained a major challenge for the existing scholarship in this domain.

PART THREE: RESEARCH AIMS AND QUESTIONS

This study sheds a light on ISIS's global propaganda apparatus and rhetorical messaging based on an examination of 79 official ISIS English-language videos. The study contains a threefold analysis and begins by conducting a content analysis developed by Braddock and Horgan (2016) to quantify the overt production characteristics and thematic distribution of the videos. It then goes further to examine these videos through the lens of Quentin Skinner's hermeneutic theory of interpretation to explore ISIS's use of language in line with its strategic objectives and political agenda. The study finishes by qualitatively analysing four prominent videos by focusing on production characteristics, thematic distribution, and the use of language using a previously established methodological approach. The study focuses on the sophistication, breadth, diversity, fluidity, and argumentation of ISIS English-language video propaganda, which is associated with the group's political circumstances, strategic objectives and the challenges it faces in real-world events and aligned with its attempts to intervene in the global political discourse and manipulate existing ideological conventions, so that the videos can be more thoroughly understood.

Specifically, this study aims to do the following:

● Enrich scholarly understanding of ISIS propaganda and contribute to the analytical research on the ISIS media strategy and infrastructure that might eventually aid counter-narratives in the future

● Provide an original comprehensive study of official ISIS English-language videos to understand the diversity and complexity of ISIS rhetoric and reasoning devices

● Highlight the necessity of addressing the shortcomings of existing studies' methods of analysis and respond to those who believe that the analysis of extremist propaganda must engage the 'socio-political' and 'cultural environmental context' (Silva and Crilley 2017; Cottee 2016; Macnair and Frank 2018; O'Halloran *et al.* 2016, p.3; Jones and Norris 2005, pp.110–122; Al-Dayel and Anfinsonb 2017; Salem *et al.* 2008, p.621)

● Test a novel, versatile and critical methodological approach to understanding the sophistication of ISIS's use of language and argumentation when intervening in and manipulating ideological conventions and how these have changed over time in response to particular real-world events that has ISIS faced

● Methodologically expose how a content- or theme-focused analysis remains partial and incomplete.

Using as its primary source a set of 79 official English-language ISIS videos released over the course of three years, this study first provides a content analysis of the videos to identify, quantify, and visualise the video artefacts (Salem *et al.* 2008) to answer the following questions [as detailed in Chapter Four]:

● RQ1: What production characteristics are present in official English-language ISIS videos?

● RQ2: Which of the themes intrinsic to its narratives are most dominantly featured in ISIS English-language videos, and is there a difference between these videos and other ISIS media productions?

● RQ3: What worldview of ISIS ideology is represented and reflected through the core narratives in the videos?

● RQ4: What are the chronological vicissitudes of the core narratives of the videos from 2014 to 2017?

Second, this study provides a quantitative analysis of the speech acts found in the same data to investigate the prevalence of and changes in the group's performance of speech acts through a Skinnerian lens that enables us to 'identify the most pressing priorities' of ISIS's underlying intentionality and to 'determine how it wants to be understood' by both supporters and adversaries (Winter 2017, p1). The following questions will be answered [as detailed in Chapter Five]:

a. RQ5: What is ISIS *doing* and *saying* in its official English-language videos?

b. RQ6: Which classes of speech acts are most commonly performed by ISIS in the videos?

c. RQ7: Which of the speech acts are featured most prominently in the videos?

d. RQ8: How do the speech acts change chronologically from 2014 to 2017?

Finally, I provide a qualitative analysis of four major official English-language ISIS videos: *A Message to America* (2014), *Lend Me Your Ears* (2014), *Eid Greeting From the Land of the Caliphate* (2014), and *There Is No Life Without Jihad* (2014). These videos are chosen because of the massive attention they received globally (Boydstun *et al.* 2014; Tinnes 2015; Mccalmont 2014; Tinnes 2015; Foy 2015; Cantey 2017; Fields 2014; Vinograd 2014; Rose 2014; Siddique 2014; Becker 2014; Cook 2014; Mackey 2017; Malcolm 2018) and, more importantly, because of their respective capacities to exemplify the four most prevalent speech acts of *threatening*, *condemning*, *inviting*, and *inciting* [as detailed in Chapter Six]. The analysis begins with the production characteristics and thematic distribution of the videos using a methodological approach that was previously established in this thesis. By placing these videos into the wider socio-political and ideological contexts from which they emerged or to which they responded, this study adopts a Skinnerian method of interpretation of those videos to recover what ISIS was *doing* as well as saying according to the concept of 'underlying intentionality'. Regarding the four videos, the study addresses the following two questions:

e.   RQ9: What statements and actions are contained in these videos, and what do they mean in a literal or textual sense?

f.   RQ10: What are the core (and non-trivial) speech acts performed in the videos?

It is worth noting that this study does not aim to address questions regarding how the target audiences might digest or consume ISIS propaganda material; that question demands a separate study. This study approaches ISIS propaganda through an inherently 'top-down' perspective by focusing on the group's statement making (Colas 2016; Wright and Bachmann 2015; Ingram 2016a; Ingram 2015; Pelletier *et al.* 2016; Novenario 2016; Droogan and Peattie 2016) rather than a 'bottom-up' consumption perspective or a representation of terrorist media (Jarvis and Lister 2016, p.277; Wyszomierski 2015; Al-Rawi 2016a; Al-Rawi 2016b; Silva and Crilley 2017; Hatton and Nielsen 2016). However, this approach does not mean that the analyst believes that 'for the terrorist, the message matters, not the victim' (Schmid and Graaf 1982, p.14). This research acknowledges the significance of the research into the consumption of ISIS media (Jarvis and Lister 2016, p.277; Silva and Crilley 2017; Cottee and Cunliffe 2018), how the media frames acts of political violence to shape the ways in which ISIS is understood by consumers (Jackson *et al.* 2011, p.71; Robinson 2009, p.1), and, more

broadly, the significant role that readers might play in the overall meaning-generating process in post-modern discourse (Liebes and Katz 1993[2]; Gauntlett 2007).

PART FOUR: THESIS STRUCTURE

The first chapter reviews all the existing major literature on ISIS, with a particular interest in those studies focusing on the ISIS media operation and propaganda apparatus. In doing so, this study explores significant book publications, empirical research, and many other discourses in this domain to provide an overview of the ways in which ISIS has been approached thus far. This chapter aims to develop an understanding of the core literature and references to critically examine the research that this study might find relevant and to eventually expose a discursive scholarly gap regarding ISIS English-language propaganda as well as a widely adopted methodological approach applied by existing studies.

The second chapter contextualises ISIS's use of propaganda from a broader perspective by exploring the manipulative nature of propaganda, its evolution over time, and its contemporary use by jihadi extremists. Through the existing literature, this chapter aims to establish knowledge about questions such as what is propaganda, how might it achieve psychological interference, how has it developed theoretically and technically, and thus far, what does it look like in the hands of jihadi extremists?

The third chapter on methodology combines the theoretical framework and the research methodology adopted for this study. This chapter consists of three parts: First, the chapter rationalises the research method chosen by this study through a short review of existing studies' methods with a particular focus on the methodology of content analysis, which is overwhelmingly used by existing studies on ISIS propaganda and might be a double-edged sword, and how it might restrain our understanding of ISIS's message. Second, the chapter provides a theoretical grounding for the methodology to contextualise both Braddock and Horgan's (2016) content analysis and, most importantly, Quentin Skinner's theories,

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[2] For example, Liebes and Katz (1993), who view television as 'text' and viewers as 'decoders', analyse discourse about *Dallas* among groups in different sub-cultures and point out the gap between the stories themselves and what the viewers bring to them.

especially with regard to his influences on and differences with the various schools of post-structuralist thought, criticisms and Skinner's response, and proposed methods to develop his method for this undertaking to underline a critical aspect of its employment. Finally, it demonstrates and presents the research data and the method applied in this thesis by describing the three-part analysis [devised respectively in chapters four, five, and six] and explaining every stage of the overall analytical process in detail.

The fourth chapter presents the first analysis of this study that quantitatively offers the first content analysis of official English-language ISIS videos from 2014 to 2017 to comprehensively enhance our understanding of ISIS's message using Braddock and Horgan's (2016) proposed guidelines. The chapter comprises four parts. The first part reviews existing studies using content analysis as a research method. This part aims to contextualise and highlight the originality of this analysis and provides the existing main findings for subsequent supplementary comparisons. Following a concise demonstration of the methodology devised for this analysis in the second part, the third part visually presents the empirical results of the prevalence of and changes in the production characteristics and thematic distribution from 79 primary sources of evidence using Microsoft Excel tables and graphs. The last part discusses the primary findings and how they [by showing how they support or contradict others' research] contribute to the existing knowledge regarding what ISIS propaganda is, how it looks and is composed, and what its most dominant themes are.

The fifth chapter presents the second quantitative analysis that examines and quantifies the prevalence and changes in the speech acts used in 79 official ISIS English-language videos from 2014-2017 using Quentin Skinner's analytical approach. This chapter is divided into four parts. First, the chapter contextualises this analysis through a retrospective review of the theoretical work of Quentin Skinner associated with the broader linguistic and post-structuralist discourse of interpretation and meaning. A description of the research method developed for this analysis follows. The third part presents the results of this empirical study showing the prevalence and vicissitude of speech acts over the course of three years in the video data, and the final part discusses the primary findings and highlights the original contributions of this study to our knowledge on ISIS rhetoric and reasoning devices.

The final chapter offers a qualitative analysis of four major official English-language ISIS videos to capture the more nuanced sophistication and complexity of ISIS messages. These releases were chosen to exemplify the four most prevalent speech acts used in the official English-speaking ISIS audio-visual propaganda apparatus: *threatening*, *condemning*, *inviting*, and *inciting*. This chapter entails four analyses of each video. Each video is assessed based on its production characteristics and thematic distribution using a previously established methodological approach. Then the use of language in each video is analysed by placing the videos into the wider political and ideological contexts from which they emerged or to which they responded to highlight their overall underlying intentionality.

PART FIVE: SIGNIFICANCE

This study is original and innovative in several ways. First, thematically, this is the first study to offer an in-depth analysis of ISIS English-language videos. Existing studies mostly tend to analyse *Dabiq* [an official ISIS English-language magazine] (Ingram 2016a, 2016b; Heck 2017; Spencer 2017; Cantey 2017; al-Dayel and Anfinson 2017; Wilbur 2017; Wignell *et al.* 2016, 2017; Novenario 2016; Colas 2016; Winkler *et al.* 2016; O'Halloran *et al.* 2016), whereas those who study ISIS videos largely focus on videos featuring hostages and executions (Barr and Herfroy-Mischler 2017; Auchter 2017; Tinnes 2015; Winter 2015a). To bridge this scholastic gap in the existing literature, a comprehensive study of ISIS English-language videos is necessary. Moreover, although difficult, this study collects and archives a substantial corpus of primary sources that span a period of over three years. This is the largest existing collection of official ISIS English-language videos that has been analysed by any study on ISIS propaganda, fully covering the period from the group's rise to its fall.[3] In addition, this collection of data facilitates a highly inclusive range of thematic elements, perhaps the broadest in existence, so that the coding instrument is able to cope with a greater number of nuances and achieve a broader analysis of jihadist propaganda vehicles.

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[3] Official English-language ISIS videos remain scarce and are usually difficult to find. A recent example can be seen in Nanninga's (2019) content analysis on the production characteristics of 772 official ISIS videos released from 2015-2018 and how they represent the ISIS caliphate in decline. It includes only 23 official English-language ISIS videos (Nanninga 2019, p.8). For more details on the data collection, see Chapter three: Methodology.

In addition, this study offers the first hermeneutic interpretation beyond content/thematic analysis by exploring a semantically deeper layer of meaning in ISIS videos since many existing studies in this field are methodologically fixated on a superficial content- or theme-focused analysis.[4] The ISIS message is highly sophisticated, and these ISIS videos contain acts and performances that are identifiable as both 'conventionally recognisable characters' and 'recognisable interventions' (Skinner 2002a, p.115). The latter purports, just as Fernandez (2015) correctly argues, that ISIS messages contain arguments. The 'sophistication' of ISIS videos can be demonstrated only when these arguments are being made or when their underlying intentions are identified.[5] It is always important that we know what these arguments/intentions are, how they differ over time, and how they are associated with particular real-world events. By developing and testing the viability of a novel method that enables us to draw relations between these videos and the unfolding political situation that ISIS faced and by observing the available ideological/theological conventions that ISIS consciously utilised, this study highlights the sophistication of the ISIS English-language message in responding to global political discourses or interfering with ideological conventions and further tentatively suggests insights beyond the ISIS video material. In doing so, this study tests a new method developed from Quentin Skinner's approach and responds to scholars who are dissatisfied with superficial theme-counting analyses and believe that research must go beyond the data to engage the wider 'socio-political' and 'cultural environmental contexts' (Silva and Crilley 2017; Cottee 2016; Macnair and Frank 2018; O'Halloran *et al.* 2016, p.3; Jones and Norris 2005, pp.110–122; Al-Dayel and Anfinsonb 2017; Salem *et al.* 2008, p.621;). This study exposes how such content- or theme-focused analyses remain partial and incomplete and therefore creates a useful methodological prototype for developing a further in-depth analysis of jihadists' propaganda vehicles.

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[4] For those representatives, see, for example, Cantey (2017), Zelin (2015), Barr and Herfroy-Mischler (2017), Wilbur (2017), Kuznar (2017), Mahood and Rane (2016), Winkler *et al.* (2016), Gråtrud (2016), Allendorfer and Herring (2015), Winkler *et al.* (2016), Colas (2016), Al-Rawi (2016), Abrahms, Beauchamp and Mroszczyk (2017), and Novenario (2016).

[5] To clarify the terms 'sophistication' and 'slickness', which are frequently used in this thesis, the former refers to the sophistication of the argumentative moves with respect to ISIS's use of language, whereas the latter references the technical capacities of the group's high-definition media production values and style.

Furthermore, this study not only provides a macro-quantitative analysis offering a comprehensive picture of the ISIS propaganda apparatus as represented by English-language videos but also captures a nuanced micro-account by offering a specific analysis of those major video examples based on their production characteristics, thematic distribution, and use of and intentionality regarding language at the illocutionary level (Silva and Crilley 2017). This approach enables us to explore how these videos both contribute to and are informed by wider debates circulating around ISIS propaganda as well as help us to understand the wider socio-political and ideological context in which the ISIS English-language videos operate.

Ultimately, this study provides a more robust and nuanced understanding of ISIS propaganda that might help counter-efforts and counter-narratives. This study provides examples of the most intrinsic priorities of the group's overall linguistic intentions and explores the series of changes that serve to map the major events, challenges, or imperatives that ISIS has faced from the zenith of its power to the critical loss of Mosul and thus offers a window onto the events happening on the ground and ISIS's response to them. This exploration generates insights into the group's worldview and ideology and sheds a vivid light on how the group thinks, how it sees itself, and how it wants to be seen. Together, this study offers better-informed material for the development of counter-ISIS narratives (Winter 2017; Winter 2015b; Schmitt 2014).

CHAPTER ONE: AN OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT LITERATURE ON ISIS

This chapter reviews existing literature regarding both ISIS and ISIS propaganda, which includes a large amount of literature and studies of previous, mainly academic, discourse on ISIS. This chapter comprises three parts. The first part describes existing primary book publications that cover a comprehensive variety of aspects of ISIS. The second part explains the existing studies on ISIS from both historic-political and ideological perspectives to a wide range of topics, e.g., the capability and sustainability of ISIS from a political, financial, and military perspective, its recruitment and migrants (both foreign fighters and non-violent religious pilgrims), and possible counter-strategies. The final part reviews existing studies on ISIS media and propaganda to manifest how this thesis contributes to our existing knowledge by highlighting the originality of this research.

PART ONE: MONOGRAPHS

Although the declaration of the caliphate by ISIS occurred fairly recently (in 2014), the last few years have seen an abundance of broad international discourse on ISIS both among journalists and scholars (Tran and Weaver 2014). Many prominent books have been published, and the majority of them either provide a comprehensive picture of ISIS (Stern and Berger 2016; Weiss and Hassan 2015; Atwan 2015) or specifically focus the history and geopolitical context of ISIS (Warrick 2016b; Gerges 2016; Cockburn 2015). Other works focus on ideology (McCants 2015), and some offer a very unique perspective of a first-hand experience within ISIS territory (Todenhofer 2016). Most of the authors are journalists (Warrick 2016b; Cockburn 2015; Atwan 2015; Weiss and Hassan 2015; Todenhofer 2016), while a few of them have academic backgrounds (Gerges 2016; McCants 2015; Stern and Berger 2016). The majority of them mention the significance of ISIS media and propaganda, but only a few focused on this aspect (Atwan 2015, pp.15–31; Stern and Berger 2016, pp.101–147).

First, certain books provide a basic overview of ISIS, such as *ISIS: the State of Terror* (Stern and Berger 2016); *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror* (Weiss and Hassan 2015)*, and Islamic State: The Digital Caliphate* (Atwan 2015). These books are reviewed and approached through four significant facets: comprehensive understanding of the topic, author background, the sources and evidence, and the emphasis of the books. They tackle issues around the rise and evolution of ISIS,[6] the ideological roots of its emergence[7], leadership[8] and administrative structure of the group[9], relations with the other jihadi movements[10], the geopolitical environment[11], foreign fighters[12], and massive adaptation of propaganda as well as its masterful use of digital technology[13].

The book co-authored by Jessica Stern, a Harvard terrorism scholar, and J. M. Berger, a fellow with George Washington University's Program on Extremism, set out to examine ISIS history, the propaganda, the 'unprecedented manipulation of social media' (p.7), the foreign fighters, their difference from the other groups, and extreme ideologies (Stern and Berger 2016). Journalists Weiss and Hassan (2015) examine ISIS and how it has evolved and adapted over the decades. The early chapters of the book mainly focus on the complex history of ISIS. After addressing the history of a conflict between the West and ISIS, the book then looks at the origins of the Syrian revolution, explaining how the Assad regime had long 'facilitated and suborned' terrorism and created the 'fertile conditions' for terrorism to grow inside Syria to portray itself as the victim of its 'erstwhile ally'; then, the book examines ISIS's present status under al-Baghdadi's rule (p.xiv). Atwan (2015), a Palestinian journalist, begins his analysis focusing on the role that digital technology has played in the rise of ISIS, describing the group as 'masters of the digital universe' (p.15); he then explains the genesis of ISIS, the biography of al-Baghdadi, the group's expansion, its structure of governance, and the ideological roots.

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[6] See Stern and Berger 2016, p.13-74; Weiss and Hassan 2015, p.1-96; Atwan 2015, p.32-79
[7] See Stern and Berger 2016, p199-232; Weiss and Hassan 2015, p. 216-225; Atwan 2015, p.153-164 and p.201-216
[8] See Atwan 2015, pp.110–121
[9] See Atwan 2015, pp.137–152
[10] See Stern and Berger 2016, p.177-198; Weiss and Hassan 2015, p.143-159; Atwan 2015, p.59-78
[11] See Weiss and Hassan 2015, p.97-142; Atwan 2015, p.201-216
[12] See Stern and Berger 2016, p75-100; Atwan 2015, p.165-189
[13] See Stern and Berger 2016, p101-176, Weiss and Hassan 2015, p.173-185; Atwan 2015, p.15-31

It is worth noting the authors' backgrounds and their associations with ISIS media and propaganda. Berger is an analyst and researcher with a special focus on extremist activities, propaganda, and the use of social media. Co-author Stern emphasises the role that Internet propaganda plays in leading people to radicalisation (Stern 2014). The main strength of the book comes from the sections on the exploration of ISIS propaganda and ISIS's exploitation of social media (Al-Tamimi 2015). While Hassan is a native Syrian from a border town where it 'has long been a gateway for jihadist moving into and out of Iraq', the co-author Michael Weiss has rich experiences of reporting from the Aleppo suburb of al-Bab (Weiss and Hassan 2015, p.xxi). They dedicate large sections of the book to the Syrian revolution, and in a broader context, Sunni majority versus Shia minority governors, which they believe is in relation to the rise of ISIS (*ibid*.). Abdel Bari Atwan, journalist and editor-in-chief at the London-based daily newspaper *al-Quds al-Arabi*, interviewed Osama Bin Laden twice (Atwan 2015). The interviews prompted him 'to investigate jihadist phenomenon in depth' (p.xiv). Most importantly, Atwan himself says that he has 'developed a strong network of contacts and sources', which many are 'extremely close to the leadership' (p.xiv) of al-Qaeda and ISIS, so that he could draw 'on sources within ISIS itself' and provide a detailed description of the institutional and administrative structures of the caliphate in his work (Falkiner 2015, p.3). Overall, the authors' experience and background of those books enable them to see ISIS through different lenses and grant the books with a variety of emphases.

The significance of these books lies in the methodology and sources of information. Stern and Berger (2016) mainly make observations about violent extremism through 'years of speaking to terrorists' (p.7), creating a rigorous method of 'monitoring' (p.54) their online activities to study the group and beliefs (p.7). In contrast, Weiss and Hassan (2015) chiefly adopt interviews to understand how ISIS's distinctive culture evolved, which enables them to offer a detailed, nuanced story. To recover the history of the rise of ISIS, 'dozens of original interviews' were conducted, with U.S. military intelligence and counterterrorism officials and western diplomats who tracked, fought, and jailed al-Qaeda in Iraq' (p.xiii). Additionally, in the efforts to understand the current situation of ISIS, they interviewed 'active or now-deceased ISIS militants, spies, and sleep cells', 'victims', and 'Syrian tribesmen, rebels, and activists' (p.xvi). Instead of observation and interviews, Atwan (2015) adopts a more

straightforward primary source, who claims to have a 'strong network of sources' that close to the leadership of ISIS and al-Qaeda and is able to reach figures such as Bin Laden (p.xiv).

Although each of them has its own emphasis, together, these books offer rich information on ISIS. First, Stern and Berger's book can 'serve as a useful primer on ISIS regarding the relations between ISIS and media' (Al-Tamimi 2015, p.6). Much of the content contributes to ISIS propaganda materials and ISIS exploitation of social media. Their appendix provides a brief history of Islam, an explanation of Salafism and Wahhabism, how it evolved from quietism to jihadism, the practice of Salafism, and how ISIS situates itself within it. These original ideological roots of ISIS help us to better understand the group. Second, Weiss and Hassan (2015) stress the Syrian situation in relation to ISIS. They explain the reasons for Assad's willingness to lure his regime into 'counterterrorism-based e cordiale' (p.xv) and note that ISIS presents itself to an embattled Sunni in Iraq and Syria as the last line of defence against a coalition of enemies. In doing so, they are able to underline the role that propaganda played in ISIS throughout its history. They also believe that for a decade, prisons and concentration camps have functioned as organising hubs and recruitment centres, which succeed in ISIS brainwashing and own 'vast and well-run' propaganda apparatus (p.xvi). Third, Atwan (2015) highlights ISIS's 'mastery of the Internet' (p.15), and what he describes as 'digital caliphate' (p.ix) [a term also used by Winter (2005) who specialises on ISIS propaganda]; without this characteristic, Atwan (2015) argues, 'it is highly unlikely that ISIS would have come into existence, let alone been able to survive and expand' (p.ix). He explains that ISIS uses the Internet and social media to market their brand and disseminates the materials. Their commanders and recruits are masterful of 'tech–savvy coding' (p.15), and most of their business is conducted online. The ISIS media team that is professional enough to produce slick and high-definition videos and online magazines may spend more time online than other young global users to protect the digital 'health' of their jihadi project. Atwan concludes that ISIS, a group 'born of a perfect storm of historical circumstance' (p.217), rooted geographically, ideologically, and politically, and having mastered the digital universe, is 'more powerful, effective, ruthless, and worrying' than any other extremist entity (*ibid*.).

Moreover, instead of providing a comprehensive picture of ISIS, some literature focuses mainly on the genesis of ISIS, aiming to contextualise ISIS and explaining their rise through

examining their geographical context (Gerges 2016; Cockburn 2015) and key figures (Warrick 2016b), i.e., *ISIS: A History* (Gerges 2016)*, The Rise of Islamic State: ISIS and the New Sunni Revolution* (Cockburn 2015)*, Black Flags: The Rise of ISIS* (Warrick 2016).

The book written by Fawaz Gerges, a professor in Contemporary Middle East Studies at the London School of Economics and Political Science, describes how ISIS emerged in the chaos of Iraq after the U. S invasion in 2003, how it grew because of the Arab Spring and Syrian war, and how it took over al-Qaeda's leading power of global jihadist movement. Gerges (2016) believes that the rise of ISIS signifies an urgent necessity to understand the happening within Arab societies and international relations of the Middle East as the rise of the group's association with specific Iraqi context as well as the outbreak of Syrian war since 2011. The book starts from the path of ISIS from 'inception and consolidation to the military surge' (p.8) that enable it to settle and expand in Iraq and Syria. Patrick Cockburn, a journalist and Middle East correspondent for The Independent, concentrates on the role of the Syrian and Iraqi conflicts from the perspective of analysing the reasons for the failure of the Western foreign policy and its impact on the Middle East. In contrast, the book by Warrick (2016) focuses more on the roots of and rise of ISIS through a key figure of ISIS, its godfather, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (Zahid 2014, p.1). His book provides a biography of Zarqawi and includes many accounts that tracked his career. He shows how the story of one person and strategic mistakes of the Bush and Obama administrations led to the ISIS flag being raised over Syria and Iraq, in an 'unprecedented character-driven account' (Warrick 2016a, p.1).

Furthermore, in contrast to the books that focus on the political-structural context in which ISIS emerged, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of The Islamic State* (McCants 2015), focus primarily on the ideological roots of ISIS. Its author, William McCants, is a fellow at the Center for Middle East Policy, director of the Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World at the Brookings Institution and a former advisor on violent extremism to the U.S. Department's Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism. McCants (2015) proposes some interesting questions: 'Why would such a murderous group claim to do God's bidding and fulfil prophecy? Did it really have anything to do with Islam?' (p.2) The book explores the genesis of ISIS, mentions the leaders, analyses its strategies, and 'eavesdrop[s] on its internal debates' (*ibid*.). Meanwhile, the book explains its 'obscure

allusions to Islamic history and theology' (*ibid*.) to illustrate ways ISIS 'uses and abuses Islam' (*ibid*.) and how ISIS thinks of itself. He argues that ISIS members are governed by their own version of 'Machiavelli's dictum (p.3)'.[14] They stir messianic fervour, he states, rather than suppress it, and hope that the caliphate is established now rather than later. He concludes that, first, the declaration of caliphate in 2014 and the civil wars raging in the region lend credibility to prophecies that the Islamic empire would disappear and return and confirm the prophecy that the final hour is coming. Second, references to the 'end times' fill ISIS propaganda, which attracts many foreign fighters to join. Third, part of ISIS's success is due to the concept of 'the *caliphate'* and the style of governing that has 'carrots' (public services) and 'sticks' (extreme brutality), expressed through its 'online videos of outrageous and carefully choreographed violence' (p.152). Finally, he states, ISIS has demonstrated that a modern caliphate is 'possible' (p.159). Apocalypse acclaim and extreme brutality attract bloodthirsty recruits and 'cutting out the hearts and minds of a population' (*ibid*.) subdues them faster than winning them over, which is a formula that future jihadists will find 'hard to resist' (*ibid*.). It is worth noting that the appendix of the book provides rich information on original Islamic doctrines and prophecies that ISIS currently draws on, which help to answer how ISIS claim to fulfil these prophecies.

Finally, there is a book that is largely based on its author's distinct first-hand sources, entitled *My Journey Into the Heart of Terror: Ten Days in the Islamic State* (Todenhofer 2016). The author, Jürgen Todenhöfer, a German politician, journalist, and a former judge, is the first Western journalist to be granted access to land controlled by ISIS, where he met child soldiers and interviewed ISIS fighters, prisoners, and members of the public caught up in the battle of Iraq and Syria. On his journey, he was accompanied by his son, Frederic Todenhöfer, who photographed the entire journey; 48 of these pictures are shown in the book. This book shows ISIS's growth from al-Qaeda and the roles the West played, largely drawing on what ISIS thinks and wants through face-to-face interviews. The book stems from Todenhöfer's idea that he needed to speak to 'both sides' (2015, p.1), then moves on to a brief history of ISIS, a detailed record of an interview with a jihadist, how he was granted the access, how he entered the border, and eventually a detailed demonstration of his ten days' experience inside the Islamic

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14 Original text, "It is far safer to be feared than loved", quoted by McCants 2015, p.3.

State. The last sections of the book are an 'open letter' (p.227) to the leader and foreign fighters of ISIS and a 'warning to the West' (p.235). He argues that ISIS is 'a program that opposes Islam' (p.229) and that the methods are 'un-Islamic and counterproductive' (p.228), and drawing on the quotations of Quran, he concludes that the ISIS implementations are 'exhibitionistic violations against the Quran' (p.229).

PART TWO: SCHOLARLY ARTICLES ON ISIS

The existing scholarship has made numerous efforts on ISIS from a variety of aspects, e.g., politics (al-Tamimi 2015; Sowell 2015; Whiteside 2016;), economy (Hansen-Lewis and Shapiro 2015), military (Quillen 2016), history (Tønnessen 2015), and counter-strategy (Lister 2015; Watts 2015; Bouzis 2015). Specific focus includes foreign fighters (Gates and Podder 2015; Bakker and Bont 2016; Joffé 2016), female migrants (Peresin and Cervone 2015; Winter 2015c), young generation of ISIS (Horgan et al. 2016), West-attacking commitment (Hegghammer and Nesser 2015), and some studies offers unique prospective in approaching ISIS, i.e., night dreams of ISIS members (Edgar 2015), and the group's strategy with Yazidi minority in Syria (Abdel-Samad 2016). In addition, a few studies focus on ISIS ideology (Byman 2013; Wagemakers 2015), and most of the discourse on it remains debatable (Wood 2015; Hamid 2014; Hassan 2016; Barrett 2014) regarding whether ISIS is truly Islamic (Cottee 2016; Wood 2015; Berger 2015; Aly and Striegher 2012).

There are studies about the capability and sustainability of ISIS from a political (al-Tamimi 2015), financial (Hansen-Lewis and Shapiro 2015), and military perspective (Quillen 2016). Al-Tamimi's research aims to examine ISIS's administrative structure to evaluate its durability. He accessed some ISIS documents that were released by ISIS activists, which leads him to a conclusion that the current bureaucratic system of ISIS has reached 'a level of complexity and professionalism' (p.117) that sustains ISIS even under containment. Similarly, there is a study aiming to analyse the sustainability of the ISIS economy (Hansen-Lewis and Shapiro 2015). They analyse Islamic State as an economic entity and use two methods to estimate economic activities in ISIS territory, 'gross cell product based on GEcon data and luminosity based on DMSP-OLS data' (p.143). Even though these methods 'surely overestimate' (p.148) ISIS's

economic capabilities, both methods show that ISIS has limited economic activities to draw on. The aspects of the ISIS economy, oil extraction, seizure of assets and forced labour, are inconsistent with the broad characteristics of states. It is 'extremely unlikely' (p.151) to be sustainable financially, they conclude. Additionally, there is research that focuses on ISIS military capabilities and chemical weapons in particular (Quillen 2016). Quillen examines the growing chemical weapon capability of ISIS from the period of Abu Musab Zarqawi to the present battlefield use in Iraq and Syria and notes that this revolution of ISIS chemical weapon capability has occurred rapidly. ISIS's intention to use it had been strong from the very beginning, and their capabilities are catching up.

In addition, there is research examining ISIS recruitment and different components of ISIS members, such as foreign fighters (Gates and Podder 2015; Bakker and Bont 2016; Joffé 2016), female migrants and populations (Peresin and Cervone 2015; Winter 2015c), and child soldiers (Horgan et al. 2016). First, Gates and Podder (2015) examine the recruitment of ISIS from an organisational perspective and analyse how the recruitment of foreign fighters influences the group. They think that ISIS is 'effectively managing the mix of foreign and local recruits' (p.107), even though ISIS's reliance on foreign fighters 'fundamentally altered' (p.113), the group and a potential internal conflict emerge because of that. They also explain that there is 'an extensive social media recruitment' (*ibid*.) and 'virtual propaganda' machine (*ibid*.) to recruit these foreign fighters. Bakker and Bont (2016) provide an overview of the phenomenon of ISIS foreign fighters, analysing their characteristics, motivations, and the roles they play. They compare the Belgian and Dutch cases focusing on aspects such as 'age, sex, and geographical and socio-economic background' (p.837). Joffé (2016), who sees this phenomenon from a broader perspective, aims to determine whether there is a global 'structure' to the phenomenon (p.800). He concludes that no such structure exists because the phenomenon is 'far more complex than the superficial appeal of jihadist ideology' (*ibid*.) and is 'multifaceted' (p.812). Second, there is a more specific group, *Muhajirat* (female migrants). Their importance for ISIS is demonstrated (Peresin and Cervone 2015; Winter 2015c), and their motivations, roles and relevance are examined (Peresin and Cervone 2015). They are 'unprecedented' (p.495) in number and remain a substantial 'threat' to the West (p.496). Finally, Horgan et al. (2016) describe the mechanisms of ISIS and the transformation of a special group – i.e., children – to active ISIS members. They suggest that six stages are

consistent with the deepening of commitment, i.e., 'seduction', 'schooling', 'selection', 'subjugation', 'specialisation', and 'stationing' (p.25).

In addition, some studies are interested in analysing counter-strategies. Lister (2015) examines counter-strategies in general, while Watts (2015) and Bouzis (2015) focus on specific strategies. Lister (2015) argues that ISIS is 'the most potently powerful and capable' (p.12) terrorist group in the world and that it represents 'a qualitative step' (*ibid*.) beyond a mere terrorist group, while its strategic thinking is approachable, and its weakness is perceivable. Therefore, a complex task combining united 'multinational effort' that 'incorporate[s] multi-disciplinary action' within politics, diplomacy, society, religion, economics, development, military affairs and many others may be possible (*ibid*.). Watts (2015), however, examines what may happen if ISIS is 'left to its own devices' (p.156), i.e., the 'Let Them Rot' strategy. He argues that the strategy provides 'several perceived advantages' (p.163), but it 'undermines the jihadi narrative of pursuing' its own state and it may be 'incongruent' to the various needs of 'participating nations' (*ibid*.). Bouzis (2015) discusses the tactics and strategies of the USA's counter-ISIS efforts from the onset of Operation Inherent Resolve between 8 August 2014 and early 2015. This research concludes that kinetic measures of the strategy have weakened ISIS's 'tactical capabilities' but that the efforts to degrade ISIS recruitment fail (p.885).

Finally, some special emphasis on ISIS has been made, such as its commitment to attacking the West (Hegghammer and Nesser 2015), dreams of the members (Edgar 2015), and its domestic relations with Yazidi minority (Abdel-Samad 2016). Hegghammer and Nesser (2015) who are interested that to what extent ISIS poses a terrorist threat to the West, by examining ISIS statements and ISIS-related attacks in the West from 30 July 2014 to 30 January 2015. The statements contain various materials from speeches, ISIS English-language magazine *Dabiq*, videos and photos, as well as a collection of interview statements from ISIS fighters during the period. They also identified 30 ISIS-linked plots during the period and categorised them into six levels of threat from highest to lowest. They find that ISIS does not pose the 'same type' (p.27) of the terrorist threat to the West as al-Qaeda. It appears to be more

advanced in triggering 'lone wolf'[15] syndrome in the West, which represents a 'formidable challenge' to the West (*ibid*.). Edgar (2015) believes dreams are of 'great importance' (p.72) to jihadists,[16] both in personal and strategic decision-making. His research asks whether it is true of ISIS. Through reviewing ISIS social media and publications, he concludes that dreams appear to be as important to ISIS as to previous jihadi groups. ISIS members consider dreams 'a potential window into the future and use them to make sense of the world, justify decisions, and claim authorities' (*ibid*.). Abdel-Samad (2016) analyses a variety of internal and external factors influencing political and military choices of the Druze, a small community in Syria, which faces a 'dilemma of what political and military position to take' (p.1), especially with the rise of ISIS. He finds that the 'best choice' is to remain 'neutral' in the conflict and that the 'internal organizational factors' and the 'international community's divided position' are the keys to understanding this choice (*ibid.)*.

However, there are fewer studies on the ideological context of ISIS. Byman (2013) broadly aims to answer how insurgencies with Salafi-jihadist ideology differ from normal ones. He does not think that Salafi-jihadist insurgents are distinct from the other types of insurgencies because many of the 'central concepts remain constant' (p.368), but he believes that ignoring the distinctions will be 'disastrous' (*ibid*.). He argues that Islamist insurgents, like the others, aim to control the government and need money and weapons, but their distinct characteristics – jihad at local, regional, and global levels – provides them with 'instant friends and resources', but also 'enemies and burdens' (p.354). He explains that they organise, recruit, and fund-raise differently, benefiting from 'particular constituencies' but simultaneously facing the challenges 'inherent in their limited appeal' (*ibid.*). More specifically, Wagemakers (2015) examines ISIS's claims of validity in *bay'ah* (pledge of allegiance) to 'caliph' Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and looks at how radical Islamist critics have responded. He explains that given the strong root of *bay'ah* in Islamic traditions and the caliphate claimed by ISIS, the application of *bay'ah* to the leader of ISIS has become a contested issue among radical Islamist. Based on the ISIS ideologue's own writings, Wagemakers (2015) argues that even though

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15 Hegghammer and Nesser's expression is "individual jihad operations by unaffiliated sympathizers" (2015, p27)
16 Interpretive tradition regarding the al-ru'ya (true dream) is a fundamental feature of Islamic theology (Edgar 2015).

ISIS's arguments are closed on the theories on *bay'ah* that jihadi critics themselves claim to adhere to, the critics of ISIS find the reality represented by ISIS, that they need to apply *bay'ah* to ISIS leader, 'hard to swallow' (p.103).

Although there has been less research on ISIS ideology, there has been substantial ongoing debate on this subject. This debate questions the 'role and nature of Islam' (Cottee 2017b, p.454), posing questions such as 'is ISIS Islamic?' (Cottee 2016, p.2) and 'are the leaders of ISIS true believers, or are they employing apocalyptic ideas instrumentally?' (Berger 2015, p.61). The debate stems from Canadian journalist Graeme Wood, who argues that 'Islamic State is Islamic, very Islamic' (2015, p.5). It sparked a broader debate over the relations 'between Islam and jihadist violence' (Cottee 2016). Arguments in this debate mainly adhere to two polarised viewpoints. The first proposes that ISIS presents the true face of Islam (Wood 2015; Ali 2015), while the other proposes that ISIS is a distortion of Islam (Hasan 2015; Cole 2015). It is 'far more complex than the superficial appeal of jihadist ideology' (Joffé 2016, p.800), and its 'religion plays a far lesser role' than 'policy response contends' (Aly and Striegher 2012, p.850). In addition to these two sides, Cottee (2016) provides a neutral way of recognising 'both its secular and theological bases' (p.2), which he illustrates through the lenses of Quentin Skinner's methodological insights (p.22).[17]

Though debatable, those online discourses on ISIS ideology fertilise an understanding of ISIS (Wood 2015; Hamid 2014; Hassan 2016; Barrett 2014) in which Islamic concepts are frequently intertwined in construction of a 'hybrid ideology' (Hassan 2016, p1), i.e., *Sharia, Caliphate* (Wood 2015; Hamid 2014; Hassan 2016), *Takfiri* (Wood 2015; Hassan 2016; Hamid 2014)*, Sahwa* (Hassan 2016)*, Salafi-Wahhabism* (Hamid 2014; Wood 2015; Hassan 2016;)*, and *Apocalypse* (Wood 2015). Hamid (2014) believes that there is a 'need for the caliphate and Sharia' in the Muslim world (Hamid 2014, p.2). Muslim-majority populations may not agree with ISIS's interpretation of the caliphate, but the 'caliphate' itself – the political entity governed by Islamic law and tradition – is a powerful idea, even among secular-minded Muslims (Hamid 2014). Hassan (2016) notes that ISIS massively abuses *Takfiri* (ex-

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17 Cottee draws on Skinner (2002) whereby, "Any course of action will be promoted to the degree that it can be legitimized, it follows that ideological principles and their rhetorical must feature in the architecture of any comprehensive explanation of the course of action in question" (p.156).

communication), a legacy that emerged from al-Qaeda (Wood 2016), and both groups use this to kill under the name of purification of Muslim 'apostates' (Hamid 2014; Wood 2015, p.6). Many consider ISIS as a Salafi-Wahhabi group (Hamid 2014; Wood 2015; Hassan 2016; Barrett 2014), which follows an extreme interpretation of Islam, advocating violence in the name of religion and defining Muslims, and anyone who disagree with its interpretation, as infidels or apostates (Barrett, 2014; Hamid 2014). Hassan (2016) relates the group with *Sahwa*, an intellectual religious movement that began in the 1970s and integrated Salafi concepts with revolutionary ideas influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood because he realises that ISIS uses terms and quotes from Islamic scholar frequently associated with the movement. Wood (2015) finds a distinct characteristic of ISIS from other jihadi movements – enthusiastic emphasis on eschatology and apocalypticism, which believes that the Day of Judgement is coming, and soon there will be the arrival of the Muslim known as Imam Mahdi[18] (Wood, 2016). ISIS believes that 'crusaders' will be defeated in the town of Dabiq in fulfilment of the prophecy (Wood, 2016; McCants 2015).

PART THREE: PREVIOUS STUDIES ON ISIS MEDIA AND PROPAGANDA

While it is true that other jihadist groups produce propaganda (Wyszomierski 2015; Weisburd 2009; Farwell 2010; Lakomy 2017; Holt et al. 2015; Abrahms, Beauchamp and Mroszczyk 2017; Salem, Reid and Chen 2008), ISIS, as a 'slick propaganda machine' (Weiss and Hassan 2015, p.xviii), its media operation has been remarked as 'fascinated' and 'unprecedented' in comparison to other jihadi movements (Zelin 2015, p.85; Winter 2016a, p.43). Existing scholastic efforts have provided a comprehensive overview of ISIS propaganda (Zelin 2015; Greene 2015; Farwell 2014; Fernandez 2015; Mahood and Rane 2016; Pelletier et al. 2016; Iskhan and Zarandona 2017; Winter 2017a; Winter 2017b; Winter 2015b; Winter and Bach-Lombardo 2016; Horgan et al. 2016) and its online activity (Berger 2015; Berger and Morgan 2015). Specifically, studies on certain ISIS media productions include English-language ISIS magazine *Dabiq* (Ingram 2016a, 2016b; Heck 2017; Spencer 2017; Cantey 2017; al-Dayel and Anfinson 2017; Wilbur 2017; Wignell et al. 2016, 2017; Novenario 2016; Colas 2016; Winkler

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[18] Mahdi is a prophesied redeemer of Islam who will rule until the Day of Judgment and will wipe all evil from the world in Islamic eschatology (Wood, 2016)

et al. 2016; O'Halloran et al. 2016), telegram and chat rooms (Bloom et al. 2017), Nasheeds (identical to Islamic poetry/song; Gråtrud 2016), and the public statements (Kuznar 2017; Houck et al. 2017; Foy 2015). Among the existing literature, studies focus on ISIS visual media output entail images (Johansson 2017), games (Al-Rawi 2016), and most importantly, videos (Barr and Herfroy-Mischler 2017; Auchter 2017; Tinnes 2015; Winter 2015a; Akil 2016; Allendorfer and Herring 2015).

Studies Providing an Overview of ISIS Propaganda

Most importantly, studies that provide important analytical overviews facilitate a preliminary grounding for understanding ISIS media (Zelin 2015; Mahood and Rane 2016; Winter 2015b; Berger and Morgan 2015), given that many studies at the time made arguments without demonstrating a rigorous methodology (Greene 2015; Farwell 2014).

Aaron Zelin (2015), the Richard Borow fellow at The Washington Institute and jihadism researcher, provides a snapshot of ISIS official media output by monitoring ISIS media releases for a week and obtaining 123 releases of a mix of media data. He then categorises and analyses the data according to eight variables based on the number of releases. He finds that ISIS relies more on its visual propaganda than its text-based propaganda. Zelin (2015) provides a clear picture of ISIS propaganda apparatuses as a first step, but Zelin's personal judgement replaced rigorous methodological approaches particularly regarding how his coding categories were produced and applied to video data. Mahood and Rane (2016), who examine the core narratives of ISIS, provide a more sophisticated exploratory analysis. They analyse a video (*The Flames of War*) and 10 issues of *Dabiq,* ISIS's official English-language magazine, and they seek to determine the master narratives that feature most prominently, the role of images and sound, and the words ISIS uses to represent a binary worldview of ideology in their propaganda. They argue that ISIS propaganda reflects the group's selective manipulation and extreme interpretations of Islam as well as the war-ravaged social, economic and political conditions from which it emerges, as a contemporary manifestation of the Islamist political ideology.

Charlie Winter, a senior research associate at Georgia State University and ICSR [the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation], provides many comprehensive analyses on ISIS propaganda and media operations (Winter 2018; Winter 2015a; Winter 2017a; Winter 2017b; Winter 2015b; Winter 2015c), among which most significantly offers a taxonomy of both ISIS propaganda and ISIS's target audiences based on an annual online monitoring of propaganda and interviews (Winter 2015b). Winter (2015b) identifies a range of possible strategic objectives of ISIS propaganda (p.32), e.g. to demoralise and intimidate enemies, to agitate, polarise and provide intervention, to leverage Western media, to reinforce ideologies, and to echo its appeals to potential recruits. Winter (2015b) argues that ISIS propaganda has created a brand offering recruits and emigrates a different way of living, which consists of six 'non-discrete' narratives. Among them, 'utopianism' is the most important narrative, while 'brutality' is a 'red herring' (p.6). He additionally made important observations, i.e., that ISIS outsources its propaganda dissemination and provides the raw material for 'jihobbyists' to produce 'unofficial' propaganda and social media has emerged as a 'radical mosque' where people are able to have direct contact with fighters and hear first-hand accounts from the battlefield, whereas there is one interesting argument that might need further clarifications, in which he claims that what propaganda does is to catalyse the individual's radicalisation and to concentrate their 'already-held sympathies' (p.7-8).

Berger and Morgan (2015, p.2) create a 'demographic snapshot' of ISIS supporters on Twitter by investigating a sample of 20,000 ISIS-supporting Twitter accounts' activities from September to December 2014. Berger and Morgan (2015) set out to answer how many Twitter users support ISIS, who and where they are, and how they are reacting to online activities. They illustrate their location, preferred languages, and the number and type of followers of these accounts. They find that during this period, ISIS supporters used at least 46,000 Twitter accounts mostly created in 2014, even though not all of them were active at the same time. ISIS supporters were located within the group's territories and in regions contested by ISIS, and some ISIS supporters were found in the UK, France, Spain, Belgium, Brazil and Australia. Their preferred language is Arabic, but approximately one-fifth of ISIS supporters used English as the main language on Twitter. Each of the ISIS supporters' accounts had an average of approximately 1,000 followers. They were also considerably more active than others. The accounts that tweeted most frequently or had the most followers were more

likely to be suspended. Berger and Morgan (2015) conclude that ISIS's social media success can be attributed to a small group of active users. Their number is between 500 and 2,000, but they tweet in concentrated bursts and in high volume.

Similarly, conducted by Berger (2015) based on the same method to observe interactions of users who participate in ISIS activities, he focuses on ISIS's use social media to activate 'apocalyptic time' online. Berger (2015) explains that ISIS presents itself as an apocalyptic sect through clear and repeated reference to the 'end times' prophecy. The caliphate is idealised and destined to participate in a final war against non-Muslims. It is largely supported by its propaganda and many other statements, while social media amplifies the sense of urgency. Users who react to the content may find themselves 'steered into a more ideological social circle', even if that was not their 'original intent' (p.66). Based on a count of interactions of 329 English-language accounts targeted by ISIS recruiters, Berger (2015) finds the apocalyptic time is the 'second-most influential' topic and concludes that emphasis on the urgency of an apocalypse is an important focus of ISIS appeal (p.68).

There is research aiming to answer why ISIS messages resonate by examining how ISIS 'leverages' *Sharia* (Islamic Law) to support their strategic goals (Pelletier *et al.* 2016, p.871). They regard Islam as a 'defining catalyst of group identity' (*ibid*.) and try to determine how ISIS legitimises its interpretation of Islamic law. Their research is built on 'Social Movement Theory' (*ibid*.) and to understand 'how ISIS tailors its message to the motivations of target audiences' (p.873), they develop and test a conceptual framework and used 'the FFP Fragile States Index' (p.881), a methodology to measure the degree of state failure (Selvik and Stenslie 2011, p.235), to evaluate the mobilisation mechanism for various populations and quantify the presence of catalysts in multiple target audiences. Twelve speeches of ISIS leaders consisting of 645 individual statements in total are analysed to determine the consistency with mainstream Islamic law, and 51 out of 645 statements are selected for evaluation. They conclude that ISIS is arguably the most effective extremist group in terms of spreading a message directly linking to its strategic goals and leveraging the various catalysts for social movement within its target population. ISIS propaganda 'heavily' relates to Islam and *Sharia* (p.894). The specific tactics in disseminating the propaganda contain 'stressing historical precedence to market' and 'reinforce its message' that is consistent with

mainstream Islamic law'; 'obfuscating differences when contradictions exist'; 'leveraging catalysts' consistent with mainstream Islamic law to build consensus for overall objective and future reinterpretation; and eventually radically 'reinterpreting' *sharia* when target audience is ready to accept the change (*ibid.*). They suggest that counter-messages must address both the message and the catalysts allowing radical reinterpretation of *sharia*, and advise that further research analyses other ISIS communications, such as videos and written publications, so the model presented by their research can be reinforced.

Studies on Specific Media Products of ISIS Propaganda

Existing studies vary on specific ISIS media products, among which focus most extensively on ISIS written texts (Ingram 2016a, 2016b; Heck 2017; Spencer 2017; Cantey 2017; al-Dayel and Anfinson 2017; Wilbur 2017; Wignell et al. 2016, 2017; Novenario 2016; Colas 2016; Winkler et al. 2016; O'Halloran et al. 2016; Bloom et al. 2017), due to its easy accessibility and wide viewership, p3; Mahood and Rane 2016, p7). In addition, there is a growing corpus on auditory materials (Kuznar 2017; Houck et al. 2017; Gråtrud 2016) and audio-visual messages such as games (Al-Rawi 2016) and videos (Barr and Herfroy-Mischler 2017; Tinnes 2015; Winter 2015a; Allendorfer and Herring 2015).

First, the literature has a broad focus on specific ISIS media products. Notably, Ingram (2016a; 2016b) aims to explain how Inspire [AQAP's propaganda magazine] and *Dabiq* [the official English-language ISIS magazine] seek to appeal to and radicalise English-speaking Muslims. Novenario (2016) conducts a comparative study of the magazines to reveal the differences between al-Qaeda and ISIS propaganda. Colas (2016) sets out to discover what *Dabiq* does, why the magazine is published in English, and who the target readers are. Al-Rawi (2016), using the Arabic names of video games as search terms, selects the top ten YouTube videos on the games to measure the attitudes of viewers based on their comments. Gråtrud (2016) aims to determine which 'characteristics' make the *nasheeds* 'effective messaging tools' and how they differ from other ISIS propaganda (p.1). However, with respect to visual materials, Tinnes (2015) and Barr and Herfroy-Mischler (2017) provide analyses focusing on hostage videos; Allendorfer and Herring (2015) compare one ISIS video with its American counterpart;

and Winter's report (2015) analyses one ISIS video, entitled *Although Disbelievers Dislike It* (2015), in detail.

Second, a prominent characteristic is the overwhelming usage of content analysis. [19] Novenario (2016) and Cantey (2017) conduct a content analysis based on direct contact with a large number of primary sources[20], including ISIS's *Dabiq* and AQAP's *Inspire*, to compare ISIS and Al-Qaeda propaganda. Novenario (2016) is guided by Kydd and Walter's five strategies and provides a unique perspective, and Cantey (2017) provides an informative and insightful discussion of negotiation artefacts. Colas (2016) and Wilbur (2017) aim to identify the objectives and target audiences of *Dabiq*. Colas divides 14 issues of the magazine into pages and codes them according to Dan Milton's framework, whereas Wilbur adopts ethnographic content analysis and neo-institutional theory to study a single issue. Colas argues that *Dabiq* is primarily a tool for setting group boundaries and changing Western foreign policies. Wilbur addresses the connections between ISIS propaganda and existing rules, norms, and cognitive structures to facilitate an understanding of ISIS propaganda as a form of strategic communication aimed at achieving organizational goals. An interesting perspective taken up by Winkler et al. (2016) is the focus on a specific theme: "about-to-die" images in *Dabiq*. Their study innovatively provides an exhaustive understanding of an ISIS theme by drawing on images from a text-based magazine.

Additionally, regarding ISIS auditory texts, Gråtrud explores the characteristics of nasheeds [hymns] by coding 17 nasheeds and comparing his findings with those of Alex Schmid and Charlie Winter. Gråtrud concludes that the effectiveness of the ISIS nasheed stems from the group's concentration on a limited, set number of themes that have broad appeal among Muslims. In a parallel study, Kuznar (2016) approaches his analysis on ISIS leaders' speech from a fluid perspective to examine ISIS propaganda over time. Kuznar uses a combination of grounded theory, critical discourse analysis, and thematic and content analysis to investigate

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[19] For examples, see Cantey 2017; Zelin 2015; Barr and Herfroy-Mischler 2017; Wilbur 2017; Kuznar 2017; Mahood and Rane 2016; Winkler et al. 2016; Gråtrud 2016; Allendorfer and Herring 2015; Salem, Reid and Chen 2008; Winkler et al. 2016; Colas 2016; Al-Rawi 2016; Abrahms, Beauchamp and Mroszczyk 2017; Novenario 2016; Weisburd 2009; and Nanninga 2019.

[20] Cantey's (2017) study is based on 15 issues of the magazines *Inspire* and *Dabiq.*
Novenario's (2016) study is based on 13 issues of *Dabiq* and 14 issues of *Inspire.*

25 official English-translated speeches by prominent ISIS figures, and he finds that only a small number of themes have shifted significantly over time, with the majority remaining consistent.

Most importantly, regarding the studies on ISIS videos, Tinnes (2015) and Winter (2015) both begin with *Although Disbelievers Dislike It* (2015). Winter (2015a) provides a detailed analysis of the video, but Tinnes (2015) extends his argument to an ISIS hostage video campaign. Winter (2015) divides the video into five segments and analyses them individually. He includes a description of the video's footage but neither investigates deeper aspects of the video's meanings, intentions, motivations, etc., nor explains the methodology of the work. Winter (2015) focuses more on the context of the video than on other aspects; thus, the report appears to be more akin to an intelligence investigation than an academic analysis. Tinnes (2015), on the other hand, by providing examples from primary sources and identifying the commonalities with and divergence from earlier hostage footage, argues that such videos are 'rationally calculated, multifaceted, and constantly changing' (*ibid*., p.76) and cannot be assessed based on 'simple dualistic categories' using black-and-white viewpoints (p.90).

In addition, Barr and Herfroy-Mischler (2017) conduct empirical research based on 62 ISIS hostage execution videos to understand ISIS's media strategy, while Allendorfer and Herring (2015) examine a shortened version of one ISIS video [The Flames of War, 2014] and compare it with another video from the Think Again Turn Away U.S. counter-propaganda YouTube channel. Through content analysis, Barr and Herfroy-Mischler create a codebook of 18 variables. Allendorfer and Herring count every shift in setting, resulting in 18 'scenes', in the shortened version of the ISIS video and code the video thematically based on their perceptions. Barr and Herfroy-Mischler conclude by defining a complex relationship between terrorism and digital media, whereas Allendorfer and Herring conclude by highlighting the ineffectiveness of U.S. counter-propaganda videos. Although both studies provide useful details for analysing ISIS videos, Allendorfer and Herring, who arbitrarily crop the ISIS video to make its length comparable to that of the American counter-propaganda video, compromise the objectivity of their research, and Barr and Herfroy-Mischler, who focus solely on the year after the declaration of the caliphate, fail to capture a broader picture.

CONCLUSION

A letter written by al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq [the predecessor group to ISIS], precisely implies that the media is an important battlefield for extremists (Stern and Berger 2016, p.103). This belief causes damage greater than physical violence (Braddock and Horgan 2016). ISIS, a group that produces more than spectacles of horror and staged beheadings, might arguably be a preeminent example of this (Semati and Szpunar 2018). Although existing scholarship recognises its excessive hyper-violence and masterful use of digital media (Winter 2015b; Atwan 2015), the current focus on ISIS media and propaganda constitutes merely a small portion of the broader literature on ISIS (i.e., its history, geopolitics, economics), and more efforts in this domain are worthwhile.

The existing literature on ISIS media and propaganda indicates some new directions. First, prior research tends to focus on written texts instead of the visual materials produced by ISIS (Ingram 2016a, 2016b; Heck 2017; Spencer 2017; Cantey 2017; al-Dayel and Anfinson 2017; Wilbur 2017; Wignell et al. 2016, 2017; Novenario 2016; Colas 2016; Winkler et al. 2016; O'Halloran et al. 2016), whereas studies of ISIS videos remain scarce and limited in scope.[21] Second, very few studies have approached the ISIS propaganda apparatus from a fluid perspective that captures the changing dynamics of ISIS over time (Kuznar 2017). Third, it would be fruitful to examine, test, and further develop current studies on ISIS thematic content empirically.[22] Finally, the current studies on ISIS English-language videos remain unexamined.

Most importantly, many of the studies of extremist propaganda are methodologically reliant on content or thematic analysis. Calls for such research to go beyond superficial content- or theme-focused analysis and participate in wider 'socio-political' and 'cultural environmental

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[21] In the studies by Barr and Herfroy-Mischler (2017), Auchter (2017), Tinnes (2015), and Winter (2015a) on ISIS videos, the primary focus has been on the videos of hostages and executions.

[22] Notably, arguments on the function and prevalence of 'utopianism' have been made by Charlie Winter (2015b, p.7-8), apocalyptic prophecy has been emphasised by J.M Berger (2015), the use of *Sharia* has been explained by Pelletier *et al*. (2016, p.894), and other analyses of the thematic distribution of ISIS content have been conducted by Colas (2016), Kunzar (2017), Gråtrud (2016) and others.

contexts' have not been addressed (Schaukowitch 2018; Cottee 2016; O'Halloran et al. 2016, p.3; Skinner 2002a, p.85; Jones and Norris 2005, pp.110–122; Salem et al. 2008, p.621). The literature lacks an understanding of the totality of the text that captures the deeper layers of the meanings of ISIS rhetoric and reasoning devices.

Henceforth, these gaps must be bridged through a comprehensive analysis of official English-language ISIS videos that contributes an original understanding of ISIS media texts and tests a novel methodological approach that aims not merely to include but also to go beyond content and thematic analysis. To this end, this study departs from the mainstream of exploration within the propaganda and rhetoric enterprise. The following chapter presents a thematic overview of propaganda in relation to its jihadist applications.

CHAPTER TWO: A THEMATIC OVERVIEW OF PROPAGANDA

Historically, propaganda has been closely associated with parties, groups and individuals such as Nazis, KKK, and Hitler as a result of its strong negative implication (Taylor 2003). Propaganda survives, grows, adapts and develops on both a tactical and technological level, and sometimes, it carries seditious disinformation that is deliberately planted into people's mind without always being consciously noticed (Doob, 1948). This chapter contextualises ISIS propaganda within a broader scope that includes the nature and history of propaganda and jihadist's use of propaganda (Taylor 2003). This chapter consists of three parts. The first part provides a theoretical overview of propaganda, while the second part explores the evolution and history of propaganda, which leads to the final part – the use of propaganda by extreme jihadi groups.

PART ONE: AN OVERVIEW OF PROPAGANDA

This part focuses on the theoretical grounding of propaganda. It begins chronologically browsing the propaganda definition, including the definition given by French philosopher Jacques Ellul (1973). It then explores the current scholastic understanding regarding propaganda's possible functionality and its manipulative nature of persuasion in terms of both dissemination and audience reception based on social psychology.

Historical Overview of Propaganda's Definition

In recent decades, the definition of propaganda has been a contested, highly loaded concept (Jowett and Victoria, 2005). The theoretical evolution of propaganda keeps refreshing over time, although modern theories still stubbornly attached to earlier models (Black 2001). Scholars such as Edward Bernays (1928), Dean Martin (1932), Leonard Doob (1935), Aldous Huxley (1936), William Albig (1939), Terence Qualter (1962), Jacques Ellul (1973), all have added to the development of present theoretical propaganda.

An early implication of the term propaganda, when it was first used by the Roman Catholic Church, was to disseminate ideas that would not occur naturally (Black 2001). In 1622, the Vatican established the *Sacar Congregatio de Propagadn Fide*, the Sacred Congregation for Propagating the Faith of the Roman Catholic Church (Jowett and Victoria, 2005), to harmonise content and then consolidate its power (Black 2001). Henceforth, the term took on more negative connotations and became value laden (*ibid.*). This pejorative connotation of propaganda maintained and additionally intertwined with public relations and psychological warfare into the public psyche during World War One (Black 2001).

However, during the interwar period (1919-1938), efforts were made to whitewash the term. Edward Bernays, the father of public relations, in his book *Propaganda* (1928), depicted the term 'the executive arm of the invisible government' (Bernays 1928, p.20) and explained that propaganda is a 'modern instrument' that helps to 'bring order out of chaos' (Bernays 1928, p.159). Nevertheless, this description offended humanists and progressives who considered propaganda as a threat to democracy and believed that public enlightenment is accomplished only through education (Martin 1932; Doob 1935). Moreover, in the 1930s and 1940s, the definition of propaganda began reflecting social science struggles between behaviourism (stimulus-response model) and value neutrality (Black 2001). Frederick Lumley (1933) regarded propaganda as a way of promotion, and Harold Lasswell (1935) defined it as a technique of social control and a species of social movement (p.189). Aldous Huxley (1936) argued that propaganda highlighted successive movements of popular feelings and desires (p.39), while William Albig (1939) explained that propaganda was crucial for the 'development of unanimity in modern states' (p.296) but arguably reduced the public's cognitive ability. In addition, following World War Two, propaganda was associated with constantly shifting perspectives on political theory and the process/effects and structure/functions of mass communication (Black 2001). Elliot and Summerskill (1957) explained that propaganda was a statement of policy, usually of a political nature; a statement by a government or political party that may be insincere or untrue. Terence Qualter (1962) defined propaganda, 'the deliberate attempt by some individuals or group to form, control, or alter the attitudes of other groups by the use of the instrument of communication, with the intention that in any

given situation the reaction of those so influenced will be that desired by the propagandist' (p.27).

Most recent discussions of propaganda have tended to heavily rely on social psychology. During the past half-century, scholarly analyses of propaganda have tended to focus on either the political or semantic/rhetorical nature, and an equally intriguing set of insights has been offered by social psychologists (Black 2001). Pratkanis and Aronson (2001) define propaganda as 'mass suggestion or influence through the manipulation of symbols and the psychology of the individual' (p.11). Edgar Henderson in his article *Toward a definition of propaganda* (1943) proposed five requirements in defining propaganda, one of which stated that propaganda must be psychological, or at least socially psychological, rather than sociological or axiological.

Lastly, French philosopher Jacques Ellul (1973), whose ideas have significantly affected propaganda research in recent decades, held a sophisticated view construing propaganda as a popular euphemism for the totality of persuasive components of culture (Marlin 2013; Black 2001). Ellul (1973) viewed a world in which numerous elements of society were oriented towards the manipulation of individuals and groups and thus defined propaganda as a 'set of methods employed by an organised group that wants to bring about the active or passive participation in its actions of a mass of individuals, psychologically unified through psychological manipulations and incorporated in an organisation' (p.61).

Propaganda and Ideology

Ideology, a term that has travelled a circuitous route over the last two centuries, is adopted in social and political analysis as well as the discourse of the social sciences. In the spirit of the European Enlightenment, it first emerged as a generic term when it was used by Destutt de Tracy (1754-1836) to refer to the proposed science of ideas and was rapidly weaponised for the language domain and used in political conflict (Kennedy 1978; Kennedy 1979). de Tracy's conception of ideology, as well as Napoleon's opposition to it, were familiar to Karl Marx (1818-1883). Marx undoubtedly has a central role in the history of the concept, even though his use of the term creates ambiguity due to the lack of 'a single, coherent view', which is

partly 'responsible for the continuing debates concerning the legacy of his work' (Thompson 1990, p.29-33). Marx highlights the term in his characterisation of social structure and historical change and situates it in the context of class struggle and class dominance through the notions of domination and the production and diffusion of ideas (Marx and Engels 1978). Its negative connotation [since Napoleon] led to the further neutralisation of the concept by Karl Mannheim (1893-1947), who offered the first thorough account expanding the concept of ideology to the problem of the social determination of thought and called the analysis of ideology 'the sociology of knowledge' – 'aiming not to discredit the adversaries' thoughts but rather all social factors that influence thought' (Kennedy 1978; Mannheim 2018, p.4; Thompson 1990, p.49). Although Karl Mannheim and many other sociologists and institutes in the 20th century have contributed to the concept of ideology, e.g., Pierre Bourdieu and the earlier Frankfurt School, to understand its relations with mass media and propaganda, it is necessary to highlight its genealogy with respect to beliefs and societies (Ellul 1973; Thompson 1990).

The understanding of ideology is limited without an adequate understanding of the term's association with the nature and impact of mass media and communication as the mechanism of social control in modern societies, a 'mechanism through which the ideas of dominant groups could be propagated and diffused, and through which the consciousness of subordinate groups could be manipulated and controlled' (Thompson 1990, p.3). According to Thompson, ideology is the 'social cement' and mass communication is designed to spread the 'glue', and he elaborates, in his *Ideology and Modern Culture* (1990), many debates about ideology and its role in modern societies in the development of mass communication (*ibid.*).

This relations between ideology and mass communication shed light on the linkage with propaganda. Ideology and propaganda meet at the point when an ideology seeks to expand, as propaganda becomes 'a means of spreading an ideology' beyond a group or 'fortifying it within a group' (Ellul 1973, p.194). Propaganda co-exists with ideology and is inspired by its form and content. This description of their relationship is still considered valid, but Ellul (1973) argues that the situation has undergone a shift in modern history – that propaganda is no

longer subject to ideology but instead operates autonomously according to its own laws.[23] National socialist ideology, for instance, allowed ideology only if it could serve an action or a plan. Ideology becomes mere epiphenomena when propaganda abandons the elements of the ideology that cannot be used. Such ideology, i.e., Nazism, is what Stanley (2015) called 'flawed ideology', a set of false or misleading ideas that are impervious to evidence but are reinforced with each use. Stanley also believes that in a given society, 'propaganda relies upon the existence of flawed ideology', exploits it and strengthens it (Stanley 2015, p.8). This coincides with Ellul's view that Nazi ideology was a mere 'accessor[y] used by propaganda to mobilise individuals' (Ellul 1973, p.197): the only concern was with its effectiveness and utility. As Ellul (1973, p.202) argues,

'*The transformation of the Marxist doctrine by propaganda, first Lenin's and then Stalin's, is well known (…) all that is believed, known, or accepted is what propaganda has promulgated*' (Ellul 1973, p.202).

Therefore, in this sense, the traditional understanding that propaganda operates in conformity with ideology might be outdated; it is increasingly contended that, depending on the ideological content that needs to be promulgated, propaganda might constantly be shaping the borderline of a given ideology, as it no longer serves as a deciding factor but rather perhaps as a part of the system of propaganda (Ellul 1973).

Psychological Manipulation[24]

In the modern age, social psychologists have tried to understand what makes a message persuasive, notably within three areas of psychology: psychoanalysis, learning theory and cognitive response (Pratkanis & Aronson, 1991). Packard's (1957) work in the psychoanalytic theory of persuasion was able to rationalise the functionality of propaganda through

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[23] Ellul (1973) explains that, in some cases, ideology prevents propaganda from further developing when the established political order is the seat of that ideology. In such a case, ideology partly determines if a climate is favourable to the creation of propaganda but is no longer the deciding force.

[24] This is a term frequently used by Jacques Ellul (1973) in his analysis of propaganda and is associated with the nature of the sources and goals of propaganda: to inculcate ideas through the manipulation of psychological symbols. The 'manipulation' refers to the 'purpose of changing ideas or opinions, of making individuals believe some idea or fact' (Ellul 1973, p.25).

psychoanalysis. Packard (1957) believes that hidden meanings in physical objects connect to the human subconscious, and each subconscious meaning in turn gives the audience specific feelings. By uncovering what the subconscious meanings are and showing the physical things to people, propagandists can manipulate their audience's feelings by letting them view certain images and videos, without consciously realising that they are under some level of psychologically control (Packard, 1957).

In contrast, propaganda based on learning theory has been used by professionals for over a century (Pratkanis & Aronson, 1991), whereby the theory holds that the process of the public being influenced by propaganda is similar to human learning processes. In terms of learning theory, a message is persuasive when it is accepted and learned by the recipient; thus, it needs four elements: repetition, intensity, association and ingenuity (Scott 1917). However, in the late 1960s, the cognitive response that was developed to accommodate the criticisms of learning theory and psychoanalysis became a relatively more comprehensive theory to explain the way propaganda works (Greenwald, et al., 1968; Petty, et al., 1982).

The use of cognitive approaches in propaganda has thrived because of the increasing acceptance that audiences are not passive receptors of influence, obeying the principles as the learning theory suggested, but are rather active throughout the various processes (Pratkanis & Aronson, 1991). The cognitive approach is based on two psychological phenomena in human cognitive processes (Pratkanis & Aronson, 1991). The first is that people have a tendency to unconsciously conserve cognitive energies by taking mental shortcuts whenever possible – most people are cognitive misers (Fiske & Taylor 1984) and generally respond to propaganda in a mindless fashion (Langer, & Chanowitz, 1978; Pratkanis & Aronson, 1991; Santos & Pratkanis, 1991). Second, cognitive dissonance, one of the most critical theories of social psychology, illustrates that human beings have a tendency to rationalise their behaviour, but dissonance occurs when a person simultaneously holds two inconsistent cognitions (Festinger, 1962). Whenever people cannot rationalise their behaviour and begin to confuse or question it, i.e., the premise of dissonance, they will automatically wish to reduce the dissonance, and psychologically, they tend to provide additional rationales themselves, even though sometimes the given reasons are clearly

unreliable (*ibid.*). In these circumstances, individuals go through a great deal of distortion, denial and self-persuasion to reach the justification so that their self-esteem maintains.

Pratkanis and Aronson (1991) refer to the human being as a 'Rationalising Animal' (p.32). Dissonance reduction leads to a 'rationalisation trap' (Pratkanis & Aronson, 1991). Propagandists intentionally arouse the dissonance, and a solution is then offered to eliminate dissonance (Pratkanis & Aronson, 1991). Propagandists benefit from this process (*ibid.)*.

Dissemination medium

Words and pictures are both common forms of propaganda. The former is highly associated with two phenomena within social psychology: the glittering generality and a self-fulfilling prophecy, whereas the latter, though contested, has been constantly argued as the most significant form (Pratkanis & Aronson, 1991; Werkmeister, 1948). First, the glittering generality utilised very commonly in propaganda (Werkmeister, 1948). It refers to an emotionally appealing phrase closely related to highly valued cognitions that carry conviction without reason or extra information, the phrase such as hope, freedom, glory, honour, and peace, which tends to be extensively used and applied in our use of propaganda with words (Pratkanis & Aronson, 1991). The second phenomenon is related to self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton, 1948). It has been empirically proven that by labelling people, they respond and organise their behaviours towards the object label (Miller *et al.* 1975; Snyder *et al.* 1977).

Moreover, pictures, both static and dynamic, function in the crystallisation of public opinion significantly, which construct and paint images in our minds (Lippmann, 1922). Empirically, although some fail to prove the existence of such an association (Hong 2009; Peracchio 1997), many studies suggest that pictures indeed drive human attitudes, beliefs and actions towards certain objects (Bae 2008; Lee 2002; Mulligan 2011; Braddock 2012; Braddock 2014). George Gerbner (1986), who carried out one of the most extensive analyses of television with his associates, indicated that the world portrayed on TV is misleading, but people take it as a reflection of reality to a very large extent. Craig Haney and John Manzolati (1981) aimed to answer questions by looking at specific human activities, i.e., attitudes towards crime, and concluded that the portrayals on TV have important social consequences. Iyengar and Kinder (1987) aimed to explore whether heavy viewing causes prejudiced attitudes or whether

people who already hold extreme attitudes simply tend to watch more extreme content. Their studies support that viewing can cause a change in perceptions, ideas and actions. This experiment provides strength in the validity of 'agenda setting' in media studies; mass media influencing an event's importance in the mind of the public (Chandler & Munday, 2016).

Audience reception

Propaganda exploits human emotions to cast effects. Fear is one frequently appealed because it might push away careful thoughts (Pratkanis & Aronson, 1991). Howard Leventhal (1970) empirically relates fear with mobilisation. He found that for people with low self-esteem, a low or medium level of fear is the most appropriate type to move them, while a high level of fear can cause delay. For those with high self-esteem, low and medium degrees of fear are hard to move them; only a more intense level of fear can mobilise them. However, if the fear let people feel that there are no ways to cope with, it will also lose effectiveness. This finding shed light on the use of fear in propaganda. A low or medium scare is not effective for people with high self-esteem, while a high level of fear works for people with both low and high self-esteem. Therefore, a combination of high-level fear and specific instructions perceived to solve it, together, might produce propagandistic mobilisation (Pratkanis & Aronson, 1991).

Second, Novelist Kurt Vonnegut (1963) created the phrase 'minimal group paradigm', and Tajfel (1981) develops the term 'granfalloons', pointing to a group of people who share something in common. Strangers act socially connected through labels (Tajfel, 1981). If audiences are rendered with their 'granfalloons', they will be granted with a ready-made way to make sense of the lives (Pratkanis & Aronson, 1991). Usually, as self-esteem is linked to these groups, they have strong collective motivation to defend the group (Tajfel, 1981). For instance, Adolf Hitler was able to create a strong German identity by manufacturing common enemies – Jews and communists – and by emphasising an Aryan heritage.

Ellul (1973) demonstrated a similar idea – individuals and the masses cannot be separate, as the individual is never considered as a single entity but always in terms of what they have in common with others. Although people tend to think that they are individual, they are in fact part of the masses and remain anonymous or average (*ibid.*). Propaganda utilises this by benefiting from the group identity while fulfilling the individual's need for self-affirmation

(*ibid.*). The development of mass communication technology sharpens the situation by making it neater to reach the individual who has been integrated into the mass (Pratkanis & Aronson, 1991).

PART TWO: THE EVOLUTION OF PROPAGANDA

There has been an evolution of propaganda, involving both upgraded technology and propaganda technique. Prominent publications in this domain include Philip Taylor's *Munitions of the Mind* (2003) and David Welch's *Propaganda, Power and Persuasion: From World War I to Wikileaks* (2013). Studies focusing on specific time periods span the Great War (1914-1918) (Connelly 2013), the Second World War (1939-1945) (Baird 1974; Bethell 1972; Manvell and Frankel 1960), the Cold War (1947-1991) (Arbatov 1973; Bathurst 1993; Biskind 1983; Bittman 1987; Shultz and Godson 1984), and the post-Cold War era (Braestrup 1977; Cumings 1992; Hallin 1986; Kellner 1992; Morrison 1992). Based on the literature, a threefold observation can be made regarding the development of propaganda.

First, following the development of technology, new mediums have always been applied to the use of propaganda. At the beginning, the Roman Catholic Church primarily relied on oral communication (Connelly2013). During the Great War (1914-1918), the press, posters, leaflets, and radio bulletins were all employed in a coordinated manner to disseminate pro-official content (Reeves, 1986). The film industry flourished during the Second World War and was heavily applied for propaganda campaigns on both sides (Taylor 2003). During the Cold War, the arrival of Television brought a new era (Taylor 2003). The Vietnam War (1955-1975) was known as the first war fought in front of a mass television audience, the most visualised and visible war in history (Hallin, 1986). Rather than as an issue-based mechanism to provide detailed contextualised analysis, television was perfectly suited for event-based reporting, killing the old myth that *the camera never lies* (Braestrup, 1977; Cumings, 1992; Taylor 2003). After the Cold War, the use of the Internet revolutionised propaganda. The Gulf War (1990-1991) was described as the first information war since its adoptability of satellites, computers and global communications (Kellner, 1992; Mercer et al., 1987; Morrison, 1992). It also changed the conventional battlefields, the emergence of new terms such as cyberwar, cyberattack and media warriors were by-products (Kellner, 1992; Klausen, 2015). In the

present age, extremist jihadi movement fully embraced Internet and social media liberated them from the dependent relations with mainstream media (Klausen, 2015). They have been using social media platforms to post extremist ideologies and to release propaganda products (Klausen, 2015).

Second, the propaganda technique keeps upgraded, and meanwhile the old experiences were learned and still put into practice. During the interwar period (1919-1939), Adolf Hitler in his *Mein Kampf* (1938) expressed admiration of British propaganda in the Great War, i.e., timing and cumulative effects, which subsequently formed his notorious Stab-in-the-Back theory used for anti-Semitic propaganda. During the Second World War, British news systems operated on a daily basis and gained a reputation for telling the truth so that the Americans developed the so-called 'Strategy of Truth', a fundamental propaganda principle by the U.S. during the Second World War (Taylor 2003). Learning from both sides, the U.S. and the Soviet Union developed their propaganda strategies during the Cold War. The Soviets offered a new way to provide an ideal and utopian worldview: a socialist paradise where everyone would benefit equally (Bittman, 1987). To emphasise these utopian messages, terms play a potent role in concepts such as 'peace', 'disarmament', and 'liberation', used in the ideological struggle to create different interpretations from the West (Taylor 2003). America, on the other hand, has relied on the dissemination of cultural products such as films, literature, travelling, language teaching, the universal attractiveness of American products such as Coca-Cola, McDonald, and Hollywood (Taylor 2003). At the time, government-sponsored research into psychological warfare was fully funded (Bathurst, 1993), and the method of censorship learned from British and Nazi German techniques was carried out without tolerance for an alternative perception from each side (Taylor 2003).

It is worth noting that the Middle East has learned lessons from Vietnam when confronting struggles with the U.S. during the Gulf War, when Saddam Hussein adopted the same methods that caused 'Vietnam Syndrome'; the American public's aversion to overseas military engagement (Welch 2013). He decided to allow western journalists to remain after the outbreak of the war to film civilian suffering, and the brutal images were thus on TV and spread to the West (Taylor 2003; Welch 2013). Iraqis hoped to win the war by showing images of the domestic fronts of their enemies (Taylor 2003). They learned Vietnam-style propaganda

and applied them on Iraqi television. During the Iraq War (2003), the Iraqi insurgency's plan was to gain support by using violence as their propaganda instrument (Garfield, 2007; Taylor 2003; Welch 2013).

Finally, the global jihadi movement, as a contemporary political struggle and conflict, seems to continue adopting propaganda on a large scale (Taylor 2003). The development of mass media provides propaganda with a grounding, whereas political conflict creates motivation (Connelly 2013). Propaganda has been associated with stress and turmoil (Welch 2000). In the struggle for power, propaganda is a sharp weapon for those who want to secure or obtain power as much as those aiming to displace them, e.g., the Roman Catholic Church's power-maintaining effort due to the Reformation, modern warfare rationalisation during the Great War, and bi-polar competition during the Cold War (Connelly 2013; Sanders and Taylor 1982l; Welch 2000; Taylor 2003).

Terrorism and counterterrorism might be at the forefront among contemporary political struggles and battlefield of ideologies following the 9-11 attack (Taylor 2003). The hijack of four domestic commercial jets and the strikes on the twin towers of New York and the Pentagon, resulting in the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians (Spencer 2008). The former symbolised not only the triumph of free-market liberal capitalism but also a great representation of modernity, while the latter was the iconic military power of the free world leader (Taylor 2003). This attack, a propaganda of the deed carried out by a group of fanatics who were deeply concerned about the erosion of tradition in their own societies, was therefore symbolic (Taylor 2003; Bolt 2012). In the new battle for winning over hearts and minds, propaganda will continue playing an indispensable role, especially if the war against international terrorism lasts for a long time (*ibid.*). In what follows, this chapter discusses the contemporary terrorist propaganda and communication strategies.

PART THREE: ANATOMY OF EXTREMIST PROPAGANDA

Propaganda of The Deed

Propaganda of the deed (POTD) is a tactic for political action formulated in the 1870s by the anarchist movement, which doubted the capability of existing political systems to offer important social and political reform (Fleming 1980). It is understood as a call for violent actions that inspire the masses to revolt against the established government in a given state, and for some anarchists, it is a proper means of 'educating' the masses (particularly when they are unable or have no time to read) (Fleming 1980, p.4). Its lineage can be traced to early influencers such as Carlo Pisacane (1818–1857) and Mikhail Bakunin (1814–1876), who deplored the exclusive use of the word propaganda and promoted the enacting of deeds as a form of its expression (Garrison 2004). Although Pisacane and Bakunin had a powerful anarchic theoretical thrust, they did not live to engage in the subsequent debate about and practice of political terrorism by a large number of anarchists (Fleming 1980).

There was no distinct anarchist position until the late 1870s (Fleming 1980; Garrison 2004; Colson 2017). In 1876, influenced by Bakunin, Italian anarchists Errico Malatesta (1853-1932), Carlo Cafiero (1846-1892), and Emilio Covelli (1846-1915) developed POTD and believed in its significant role as a reliable method of insurrection (Linse, 1982 in Garrison). It began to be recognised after the Benevento Affair (April 1877), when Malatesta and Cafiero provoked an uprising in southern Italy. In 1877, with the support of his Russian anarchist friend Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921), French socialist Paul Brousse (1844-1912) published an article entitled 'Propaganda by the Deed', in which this new form of propaganda that must be supplemented by deeds was explained (Fleming 1980; Garrison 2004; Iggers and Woodlock 1962). The real-life implications of POTD became clear in 1878, a year that saw many sensational attacks on European leaders and authorities (Fleming 1980). By 1881, POTD was approved by the International Anarchist Congress of London (Abidor 2015). In the 1880s, German-American anarchist Johann Most (1846-1906) popularised POTD in his anarchist newspaper *Freiheit*, widely promoting the utility of POTD as a method of accomplishing social revolution (Fleming 1980).

Propaganda of the deed, as developed from the late 1870s, was established upon sentiments that were able to offer an intellectual justification for the acts that might be perceived as 'terrorist' by existing political order, but for some anarchists, it was 'revolutionary deeds heralding the coming of socialism' (Fleming 1980, p.14). Errico Malatesta and other leading contributory Italian anarchist who propagandised the notion of POTD in the 1870s avoided the 'theoretical trap' between individual autonomy and organised revolutionary force. This left them with a position in which organised violence against the established political order was advocated but violent acts by an individual were disallowed (Fleming 1980, p.17). This reconciled view of violence was complemented by the theoretical position of Elisee Reclus (1830-1905) that actions should be carried to their logical conclusion and that 'the end justifies the means'. The 'means', as instruments used by different hands, could lead to progress or regression (Fleming 1980, p.18-19). This neutrality of means was closely associated with the ideology of terrorism underlying anarchism (Fleming 1980). With other pre–World War II American anarchists, Emma Goldman (1869-1940) and Alexander Berkman (1870-1936) fully embraced this view, which led to the assassination attempt on American industrialist Henry Clay Frick (1849-1919) in 1892, although their views on the efficacy of violence later shifted away from those of their early influencers (Berkman 1912; Fleming 1980).[25]

The concept of the selective use of terror against a specific class of individuals or groups did not last, as the last two decades of the 20th century saw the new reality of terrorism that frequently causes a high number of causalities (Garrison 2004). On September 11, 2001, the world watched as ten Al-Qaeda-associated Islamic fundamentalists hijacked two on-duty civil aviation aircraft and weaponised them, causing the destruction of the World Trade Center and killing 2829 people (Kemp 2018). As it was the symbols of western capitalism and American political power that the terrorists targeted, the underlying rationale for terror as a means of desired change remains largely unchanged (Jester 2016; Ilardi 2009; Garrison 2004). As Garrison (2004, p.260) notes, the writings on POTD underscore the 'continuity of thought' of terrorists, despite differences in their political philosophy or social context.

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[25] While Goldman's theoretical position showed ambivalence towards violence (Goldman 1917; Fleming 1980, p.19; Colson 2017, p.169), Berkman persistently condemned violence after his imprisonment (Colson 2017).

However, with the explosion of liberalised media and its symbiotic relationship with the digital medium, the techniques used to carry out POTD have become numerous and more destructive (Garrison 2004). Neville Bolt (2012), in the book *Violent Image*, shed light on the concept of POTD in this new era, showing how POTD developed from a symbolic technique to a strategic communications tool and how it has become a strategic operational concept for particular global insurgents in our transformed digital media environment. By demonstrating a conceptual theoretical framework around the terrorist act in today's image-driven media landscape, Bolt (2012) developed and defined the concept as 'an act of political violence with the objective of creating a media event capable of energising populations to bring about state revolution or social transformation' (p.2). Since digital environments allow faster, better and more complex linkages between stable and fluid networks to accelerate communications, in order to create a media event, POTD attempts to turn each opportunity into a spectacle that plays into the global media's appetite for dramatic images that will attract viewers' attention.

The modern jihadi movement has long embraced this idea (Bolt *et al.* 2008; Winter 2016a). In his speech on the destruction of the Twin Towers, Al-Qaeda's then-leader Osama Bin Laden announced, 'it is obvious that the media war in this century is one of the strongest methods (…) these young men [the perpetrators] said in deeds that overshadowed all other speeches' (Bolt *et al.*, 2008). Likewise, ISIS fully understands the power of digital media: Winter (2016a, p.3) illustrates how rapidly ISIS reacts in a common format suitable for mainstream media and how the group constantly uses highly staged violence and high-definition spectacles as its primary POTD devices for attracting global attention. In other words, as Bolt suggests (2012, p.2), it uses "the weight of the media against the media' (Bolt 2012, p.2; Winter 2016a). This is a fact that shapes the definition of terrorism in the present age.

Terrorism Communication

Definition of Terrorism

Terrorism can be defined as 'a contested concept generally applied to actual or suggested violence connected to political aims'; however, defining terrorism can be heavily relative, emotive, pejorative or ideologically driven (Scott, 2014, p.757). The usage of the term has incorporated a heavy emphasis on violent jihadi extremism since the attacks of 9/11; however,

a brief reflection on the shifting meaning of terrorism reveals much greater breadth and complexity (Jackson et al. 2009; Scott, 2014). During the French Revolution (1789-1799), terrorism was linked with anti-monarchist violence serving the protection of democracy, and the term was thus used to describe the activities of anti-colonial struggles, right-wing extremism, nationalism, criminal gangs and state-sponsored dissents (Scott 2014). Scholarly attention to terrorism sharply increased after 9/11 (Scott 2014). Additionally, contributions have seen growth throughout areas of social science fields (Vertigans 2013).

Over many years, numerous scholars have attempted to define terrorism (Matusitz, 2013). Many define the term as a type of violence connected to certain purposes, such as the definitions of Walter Laqueur (1987, p.143) and of Alex Schmid and Albert Jongman (1988, p.28). According to Matusitz (2013), the most universally accepted definition is that 'terrorism is the use of violence to create fear for political, religious, or ideological reasons' (p.4). However, Anthony Richards (2014), in his article *Conceptualising Terrorism* (2014), notes that the key to defining terrorism lies with the act of psychological and symbolic violence. Bruce Hoffman (2006, p.143) also argues that terrorism is designed to have far-reaching psychological effects beyond the immediate victims. Richards (2014) adds that terrorism was primarily concerned with creating a psychological impact over and above military gain and that there are three preliminary assumptions when approaching the definition of terrorism: 'terrorism is the use of violence or the threat of violence with the primary purpose of generating a psychological impact beyond the immediate victims or object of attack for a political motive' (p.230).

Terrorist Communication

Gabriel Weimann (2006) and what has been called the 'theatre of terror' (p.38) sheds light on terrorism communication and the way terrorism aims to affect audiences. Victims are chosen because of their symbolic importance (Klausen, 2015); indeed, the Chinese idiom, 'kill one, frighten ten thousand', illustrates the point (Schmid, 2005, p.138). Terrorism needs to have increasingly broader coverage to achieve long-term goals (Weimann, 2006). However, for a clandestine organisation, they need to rely on mainstream media (Weimann, 2006). Dependency on mainstream media constantly drives and forces terrorist behaviour because

the solution for the dilemma is to carry out dramatic violent acts against symbolic targets to compel the media to broadcast the message (Weimann, 2006).

Communication is constantly critical of terrorist strategy (Klausen, 2015). Given that terrorists must largely rely on mainstream media to broadcast, the Internet was a much more convenient tool for terrorists and their activities (Klausen, 2015). Osama Bin Laden wrote a letter to Taliban leader Mullah Muhammad Omar and the leader of al-Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri also wrote one to the leader of al-Qaeda of Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the founder of ISIS, both to demonstrate a common point –much of the battle was happening on media (Klausen, 2015).

Terrorists have a long-dependent relationship with the media (Klausen, 2015). After the 2001 expulsion from Afghanistan, al-Qaeda had to find a way to connect with their audiences through sending tapes to Al-Jazeera (*ibid.*). However, after 2006, Al-Jazeera's loathe of behaving as the publicity arm of al-Qaeda and fears of infiltration pushed all al-Qaeda-related groups to move into closed Internet forums and chat rooms (*ibid.*). Participants needed to know where to go and how to connect to someone who could recommend them to gain access with a secret password (*ibid.*). The forums and chat rooms acted as online jihadist classrooms, which were preoccupied with discussions of scripture and details of doctrine, endlessly attracting believers; however, they were vulnerable and subject to cyber-attacks (*ibid.*).

Social media liberated al-Qaeda from the dependent situation of mainstream media beginning in 2011, and many jihadist groups, media outlets, and individuals moved on mainstream social media platforms (Klausen, 2015). They posted their content to jihadist forums but created social media accounts to release new statements or videos (*ibid.*).

In the social media environment, control over content is decentralised, and volunteers use mainstream interactive and interconnected online platforms, blogs, and file sharing platforms (Klausen, 2015). Cross-posting and retweeting content on social media is a low-cost method to disseminate to wide audiences, and the environment is relatively tracking-resistant (*ibid.*). Control practices that worked in the framework of the vertically controlled environment do

not work in the new environment of social networking and micro-blogging (*ibid.*) The widespread use of lateral integration across multiple file sharing platforms builds redundancy through the manifold postings of the same document, and resilience develops against disruption and suppression by governments and Internet service providers (*ibid.*).

In the past, a failure to communicate to a wider Muslim community restrains the expansion of Islamism (al-Suri, 2010). The distant hierarchical structure of past Islamist movements has also given a way to chain networks within which there are many levels of leadership and a mix of individual, small, and disconnected cells as well as open-front cooperative warfare (Gendron, 2016). The 'leaderless jihad' (Sageman, 2011), largely self-radicalised and self-activated cells linked with terrorist networks through a bottom-up instead of 'top-down' recruitment process, resembles the structure proposed by the al-Qaeda strategist Abu-Musab al-Suri in his work *The Call in Iraq and Syria to Global Islamic Resistance* (Lia, 2015). Although Hoffman (2013) contests the 'leaderless' model because the model questions the evolution of al-Qaeda and its ability to pose a threat to the West, Gendron (2016) explains that the threat to the West by the 'leaderless' model can be evidently illustrated. According to Gendron (2016), 'Toronto 18', a Canadian terrorist group inspired by al-Qaeda, implemented several attacks in 2006. Its members were radicalised just from watching online sermons of Anwar al-Awlaki (McCoy & Knight, 2015), an American and Yemeni imam and Islamic lecturer who was believed to be a senior recruiter and motivator for al-Qaeda (Sperry, 2008).

In 2001, the authors of the RAND Corporation report anticipated that the Internet would significantly change the way terrorists organise (Klausen, 2015). Arquilla and Ronfeldt (2001) proposed the term 'netwar' to predict the coming mode of conflict where protagonists are small and dispersed groups that communicate and conduct their campaigns in an online fashion without a central command. Klausen (2015) agrees that the prediction was accurate in the social media environment and that Twitter now connects terrorist groups operating in multiple theatres of warfare and connects them with tactical support from the outside, eliminating geographical limitations.

In summary, propaganda has constantly been central to terrorism (Klausen, 2015). Terrorists prefer control of the message but lack direct control of mass media, so in the past, terrorists

had to rely on mainstream media to achieve wider communication and to stage the attacks, but social media has changed the situation fundamentally and has wiped out the terrorists' dependency on mainstream media (*ibid.*). A new tendency that reverses the relations by making mainstream media dependent on the jihadist-operational social media is now emerging (*ibid.*).

Radicalisation of Jihad

Fawaz Gerges's book *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (2009) demonstrates that there is a threefold division in the development of jihadism in the twentieth century: traditional jihad, classic or territorially based jihad, and global jihad. Traditional jihad holds that fighting is a responsibility to defend Muslim land, and this movement focuses on liberating land from dictatorship and replacing those in power with an Islamic form of government (*ibid.*). However, the term classical or territorially based jihad was formulated by playing a crucial role in organising foreign fighters to support mujahedeen resistance in the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s. At the time, there was no interest in attacking the West, and individualist jihad was not promoted as a collective duty (*ibid.*). Bin Laden was a close associate with classical jihad, but after the loss of many innocent lives, al-Qaeda had lost much of their popular support (*ibid.*). They failed to build a strong social base at home (*ibid.*). In 1996, Bin Laden abandoned the earlier focus of territorially based jihad and announced '*Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places'* (*ibid.*). By calling for an attack on the United States and its allies, the mission of jihadists was to fight pro-Western Muslim rulers, which extends global jihad beyond territorial boundaries (*ibid.*).

Based on interviews with jihadists, Nilsson (2015) finds three trends in radicalisation: socialisation, normalisation, and use of *takfir* [ex-communication](Nilsson, 2015; Esposito, 2003). First, the results of socialisation depend on what ideas the group exposes the new members while trying to accustom conservative religious doctrines and to institutionalise the conservative Salafi[26] (Levine and Moreland, 1994; Nilsson 2015). It calls for broader global

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[26] a reform movement emphasising the restoration of Islamic doctrines to the pure form (Esposito, 2003)

sympathies that function as the primary motivation for jihad (Nilsson, 2015). Second, a few manners to normalise jihad are facilitated, including promotion of the idea of 'fighting to the death' that depicts jihad as a life-long obligation rather than a time-limited experience (Nilsson, 2015). The extremist groups that possess a large-scale territorial stronghold would encourage jihadists to establish a family in the conflict zone as their home (*ibid*.). Finally, although the doctrine of *takfir* was carefully used, the current tendency expands the domain of *takfir*, using on a large scale to justify extreme use of violence against rebellions (*ibid*.).

Terrorist Propaganda in New Media Environment

The Internet offers unique advantages over traditional media because the messages do not necessarily go through strict scrutiny to publish (Aly et al., 2016). Terrorists seem to recognise this, and they exploit the new media to spread extreme ideology (Aly et al., 2016). Other than winning hearts of the global Muslim community, efforts to maximise the impact on the U.S. and its allies are also made (Gendron, 2007).

Martin Rudner (2016) examines al-Qaeda's self-proclaimed doctrine, strategy and tactics that evolved in utilising Internet technology in pursuit of their self-claimed objectives. He introduces al-Qaeda's conceptualisation of their so-called 'electronic jihad', whereby the group utilised online library resources, a virtual platform for radical preachers, and facilitated forums for extremist discourse. He believes that the digitalisation of information, which enables the materials to be boundlessly copied and incessantly disseminated, was exploited to promote Islamist principles and to stimulate jihadist militancy, especially among the Western diaspora (Rudner, 2016). This further causes Western home-grown terrorism (Klausen, 2015).

Electronic jihad holds jihadi archives contributed by prominent figures' and radical Islamist preachers' sermons (Rudner, 2016). These contain newsgroups, chat rooms, discussion forums served to facilitate online conversations and networking hubs for planning and organising activities (*ibid.*). These actions play a prominent role in propagandising Islamism, mobilising prospective adherents and inciting terrorist attacks (Rudner, 2016; Ince, 2013).

Notably, notorious preacher Anwar al-Awlaki of al-Qaeda established an 'electronic jihad' website to cover specific areas of jihad, e.g., news and jihadi literature, termed this as 'WWW jihad' (p.2). Rudner (2016) additionally notes six terrorist online activities, i.e., incitement, recruitment, training, financing, operations and cyber terrorism, echoing Gabriel Weimann's (2004) eight ways of jihadist use the Internet.

Torres-Soriano (2012), who focused primarily on AQIM [Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb], however, focuses on vulnerabilities of jihadist online activities. He asserts that this phenomenon might provide terrorists with less anonymity and security (Torres-Soriano 2010, 2016). Torres-Soriano (2012) explains that a consistent online presence for terrorist groups is hard to maintain (Torres-Soriano 2012). They often encounter dissatisfactions, criticism, and mimicry from the target audiences, and Torres-Soriano (2012) believes that more exposure correspondingly generates more vulnerabilities.

In fact, the contemporary debate on the role of the Internet in contemporary violent radicalisation is controversial – a few scholars disregard the important role that Internet played in jihadi online radicalisation (Archetti 2015; Ramsay 2009; Awan 2007; Conway 2016). Some believe that contemporary violent online extremists are dilettantes who restrict themselves to using the Internet to support and spur violent extremism but pose no real-world threat (Ramsay 2009; Awan 2007; Conway 2016). An associated argument is that many of those using the Internet to profess a dedication or desire towards violent action is engaged in a type of grandstanding without ever having any real commitment or intention to engage in violence (*ibid.*). The others claim that violent extremist online content violently radicalises individuals is futile because there have been people, scholars, for instance, who are regularly exposed to substantial volumes of violent extremist content without being radicalised (Archetti 2015; Conway 2016).

Nevertheless, the vast majority of researchers in this field would agree that the Internet has played a substantial role in violent extremism (Greenwood 2015; Conway 2016; Sageman 2009). In the future, it will be important to consider how the Internet may become more significant in the rise of jihadi extremism (Conway 2016).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter consists of three parts. The first part reviews existing studies' methods to rationalise the research method chosen by this study. While the second part provides a theoretical grounding for the methodology, the final part presents the research data and the method applied in this thesis.

PART ONE: EXISTING METHODOLOGY IN THE LITERATURE

There is a growing body of literature on ISIS propaganda, much of which adopts content analysis as a research method (Cantey 2017; Zelin 2015; Barr and Herfroy-Mischler 2017; Wilbur 2017; Kuznar 2017; Mahood and Rane 2016; Winkler et al. 2016; Gråtrud 2016; Allendorfer and Herring 2015; Salem, Reid and Chen 2008; Winkler *et al.* 2016; Colas 2016; Al-Rawi 2016; Abrahms, Beauchamp and Mroszczyk 2017; Novenario 2016; Weisburd 2009). Applications of such content analysis varies between different types of ISIS propaganda, (Zelin 2015; Mahood and Rane 2016) from written texts (Cantey 2017; Wilbur 2017; Novenario 2016; Colas 2016; Winkler *et al.* 2016) and auditory texts (Gråtrud 2016; Kuznar 2017) to visual-audio texts [videos] (Barr and Herfroy –Mischler 2017; Allendorfer and Herring 2015). Other than content analysis, other methods that have been used include grounded theory (Foy 2015), social movement theory (Pelletier *et al.* 2016), interviews (Ingram 2015; Winter 2015b), multiple discourse analysis (O'Halloran *et al.* 2016; Wyszomierski 2015), cyclical cognitive reinforcement (Ingram 2016), and thematic network analysis (Droogan and Peattie 2016). Besides, a few studies make arguments based on primary sources, though these bear no clear demonstration of the use of a rigorous method (Farwell 2014; Greene 2015; Tinnes 2015). This part reviews the methodological approaches used by existing studies of ISIS propaganda, particularly with a focus on an evaluation of a widely used method in this field – content analysis, and some other methods that might be applicable for this research.

Content analysis is perhaps the one most widely utilised methods in the literature on ISIS media and propaganda (Cantey 2017; Zelin 2015; Barr and Herfroy-Mischler 2017; Wilbur 2017; Kuznar 2017; Mahood and Rane 2016; Winkler et al. 2016; Gråtrud 2016; Allendorfer

and Herring 2015; Salem, Reid and Chen 2008; Winkler *et al.* 2016; Colas 2016; Al-Rawi 2016; Abrahms, Beauchamp and Mroszczyk 2017; Novenario 2016; Weisburd 2009), though its utilisation might be a double-edged sword (Jordan *et.al.* 2010, p.215; McCormack 1982, p.144; Salem, Reid and Chen 2008; Winkler *et al.* 2016; Colas 2016; O'Halloran *et al.* 2016). On the one hand, using the content analysis method allows for quantitative generalisations about visual and other forms of representation (Leeuwen and Jewitt 2000) and serves to map out themes so that the content collection and analysis of the extremist group's media production can be of significant help to policymakers, intelligence analysts and researchers in better understanding the extremist group's terror campaigns and modus operandi, as well as aid in the shaping of counter-terrorism strategies and tactics (Salem, Reid and Chen 2008). Based on content analysis as a methodological approach on identification of the master narratives that are featured most prominently in ISIS propaganda, Zelin (2015), for instance, found that ISIS relies more on its visual propaganda than its text-based propaganda; Novenario (2016) and Cantey (2017) differentiated the group's strategic objectives and manoeuvres from those of Al-Qaeda, while Gråtrud explored the characteristics of Nasheed (a type of song) to identify what distinguishes it from other forms of ISIS propaganda; Kuznar (2017) illustrated the stability and fluidity of ISIS narratives over time.

On the other hand, the method of content analysis is often challenged by critics on the basis of its objectivity, described as 'spuriously objective' (Leeuwen and Jewitt 2000, p.26). Theme- or word-counting processes can be distorted and may not be an accurate reflection of the meaning of the text, as the meaning can be blurred by weight (Colas 2016). A picture of a terrorist attack, for instance, may carry more weight than an 'unreadable, dull article' about the evils in Islamic theology (Colas 2016, p.3). These criticisms were levelled at Novenario (2016), Zelin (2015), Wilbur (2017), and Allendorfer and Herring (2015), because in their studies, personal judgement replaces contextually informed interpretation. Novenario, who applies Kydd and Walter's strategic logics of terrorism to his research on ISIS, sheds new light on the group's propaganda while maintaining the contested assumption that all terrorist strategies are applicable to his subject[27]. Zelin produces his own categories to apply without

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[27] ISIS can also be seen as a group of insurgents or as a cult and has played many other roles in addition to being a terrorist organization (Byman 2015); therefore, "placing ISIS in the context (…) might help provide a

conducting a pilot or reliability test. Allendorfer and Herring arbitrarily crop an ISIS video to make its size comparable to that of other videos while making many additional compromises to the objectivity of the research. Wilbur (2017) asks very broad questions, and his evidence is very limited and randomly selected. Most importantly, these studies have lost contact with what Skinner would call 'statement-making agents' (Skinner 2002a, p.85). Extremists are participating in wider social movements, yet many studies have reduced their content-focused analysis of online violent extremist messaging without putting the content within 'the socio-political' and 'cultural environmental context' (O'Halloran *et al.* 2016, p.3; Salem *at al.*, 2008, p.621).

Other methods used in the analysis of jihadist propaganda provide us with a wide array of tools and widen the field of investigation. Norman Fairclough's three-tiered approach to critical discourse analysis is applied to the textual media of ISIS by Wyszomierski (2015), while Foy (2015) employs the grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1999) and finds it useful when dealing with open-ended question where one 'cannot anticipate all the themes that arise before analysing the data' (Ryan and Bernard 2003, p.88). Online media monitoring is used by Winter (2015b) and Berger (2015) as a useful means for gathering data, while others still rely on interviews (Ingram 2015; Winter 2015b) and surveys (Hatton and Nielsen 2016). Concepts from other fields are proven to be beneficial in Richards's work (2016), and he also uses David Harvey and Christian Fuchs' informational theory, which examines the media activity of ISIS from an economic perspective. Finally, other social scientifically inspired methods and thematic analysis have also been employable in the discourse on ISIS. For example, the social movement theory makes it possible to understand ISIS mobilisation mechanisms, thus enabling a counter-strategy mechanism (Pelletier *et al.* 2016). The thematic network analysis presented by Droogan and Peattie (2016) examines the magazine *Inspire* using of a modified version of Jennifer Attride-Stirling's method of displaying the themes of jihadi propaganda as a network in which one theme can overlap another or can consist of or constitute another, resulting in one of the most comprehensive theme coding maps.

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more comprehensive view of their media campaign that treating them as a terrorist group such as al-Qaeda" (Colas 2016, p2).

However, these methods hardly fit this study-proposed trajectory given its scope and data. Existing studies have mostly used critical discourse analysis (Wyszomierski 2015), interviews (Ingram 2015; Winter 2015b), and surveys (Hatton and Nielsen 2016) to address questions from an audience-reception perspective rather than from the perspective of the statement-making agent, ISIS. The social movement theory and Christian Fuchs's informational theory were adopted to understand the subject within the scope of ISIS's economy and mobilisation mechanisms (Pelletier *et al.* 2016; Richards 2016). In addition, the existing literature has already established a fairly wide range of categories for constructing the coding instrument in which grounded theory has hardly any application (Foy 2015; Cantey 2017). Finally, Jennifer Attride-Stirling's method of thematic network analysis, by its very nature, does not go beyond a theme-counting analysis in its efforts at content analysis (Droogan and Peattie 2016), as such an analysis was suggested to "lie beyond the surface" and reach a "level of meaning-making in situated contexts" (O'Halloran *et al.* 2016, p.3; Jones and Norris 2005, pp.110–122; Leeuwen and Jewitt 2000).

In summary, the conclusion is threefold. First, content analysis has been the predominant method used to understand ISIS media production. Content analysis is able to inform us what ISIS propaganda is, how it has been constructed, and what its most dominant themes are. However, such a method restricts and simplifies our understanding of the complexity of ISIS rhetoric and reasoning devices that were designed to respond to or impact on real-world events and any associated discourse (Fernandez 2015). Second, although ISIS relies more on its visual media materials than written ones (Zelin 2015), the existing literature on ISIS videos remains scarce, and there has been no study specifically focused on the English-language ISIS videos (Barr and Herfroy -Mischler 2017; Allendorfer and Herring 2015). Hence more scholastic efforts in this domain are needed. Finally, there is no study that has addressed deeper, latent semantic layers of ISIS rhetoric, and speech act theory is a good place to begin such a study (Schaukowitch 2018).

PART TWO: THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

Since the literature still lacks an exhaustive content analysis of official English-language videos of ISIS and a relatively latent layer of such media remains unexplored, this study bridges this gap by using Braddock and Horgan's (2016) theory-based content analysis to approach the overt characteristics of ISIS video productions as well as the themes intrinsic to their narratives. This analysis is followed by Quentin Skinner's analytical approach to interrogate a deeper, latent level of meanings in ISIS videos. Together, these two methodological approaches enable us to construct a comprehensive understanding of official extremist rhetoric and reasoning devices used by ISIS in their English-language videos. The following explains the theoretical foundations of both Braddock and Horgan's (2016) content analysis on extremist propaganda and Quentin Skinner's approach to the interpretation of meanings in text.

Braddock and Horgan's (2016) Content Analysis

Extremist groups adopt a large range of communicative strategies to accomplish strategic objectives and radicalisation, one of the most prominent of which involves the use of narratives that convey extremist ideologies, values, legitimisation, and other core beliefs (Braddock and Horgan's 2016; Braddock 2016; Corman and Trethewey 2008). Although empirical research on the persuasive characteristics of extremist media remains inconsistent, [28] in the context of terrorism, this persuasion might lead to radicalisation (Horgan 2014; Jackson 2006). To develop narratives to contradict this conclusion, Braddock and Horgan (2016), who find a conceptual grounding in Bud Goodall's seminal text, *Counter-Narrative* (Corman and Trethewey 2008; Goodall 2010; Bernardi 2012), seek to provide guidance in constructing narratives that are capable of dissuading audiences from adopting extremist ideologies in an operational procedure in which the most primitive step demands a deep understanding of terrorist narratives.

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[28] Many studies have shown a positive correlation between an individual's exposure to a narrative and the subsequent level of persuasion (Bae 2008; Lee 2002; Mulligan 2011; Braddock 2012; Braddock 2014), while others have not proven the existence of such association (Hong 2009; Peracchio 1997).

Braddock and Horgan (2016) believe that content analysis—a research method applied to examine any form of occurrence of recorded communication to make replicable inferences by locating and presenting important aspects and characteristics of the content—is very useful to this end, due to the method's ability to identify the themes that the extremist group uses as the fundamental tenets of its ideology in their media production (Krippendorff 2012). Braddock and Horgan suggest two types of analysis, the least complex of which entails the quantification of the overt characteristics of the messages, e.g., words, phrases, and production circumstances, but a more sophisticated form of content analysis—thematic analysis—is able to code higher-level concepts that represent values, views, and ideologies, recognising 'patterns' within those texts (*ibid.*). Borrowing from Braddock and Horgan (2016), this study sets out the analytic guidelines as follows (p.387-388):

1.   *Obtain a general feel for the tone, style, and meaning of the terrorist narratives by carefully reading them at least twice before coding*. The first review of the content provides a familiarity, and the second aims to pay closer attention to the terrorists' use of language. This first step gives the analyst an overall impression of the terrorist narratives as well as the potential objectives that the terrorists might hope to achieve.

2.   *Read through the terrorist narrative(s) a third time and generate a preliminary list of codes to identify excerpts that may be related to the terrorist group's ideology or are otherwise important*. These codes are interpretative labels corresponding to portions of content to allow for meaningful organisation (Boyatzis 1995). The parameters of the codes can be of any length and applied to sections of any duration.

3.   *Consolidate similar codes to reduce their number*. In confronting a large amount of narrative data, it is possible that an analyst will generate multiple closely related codes, and these codes can be consolidated into a more reasonable number according to the research questions that the analyst means to address. This will make the coding instrument cleaner and more easily manageable before the codes are organised into themes.

4.   *Sort the remaining codes into overarching themes to identify higher-order concepts within the narratives*. Codes grouped under thematic labels are conceptually similar, but groups of codes should be distinguishable from one another (Patton 2002). At this stage, the groups of codes are the themes that compose the terrorist group's narrative.

5.   *Quantify the thematic elements of the narrative(s)*. To identify the most ubiquitous themes in the narrative, this stage involves tallying the number of times each theme is alluded

to. There can be another independent coder to avoid subjectivity and misinterpretation. During the process, it should be asked whether the thematic categories correspond to the excerpts in the narratives, and the consistency should be compared. Disagreements between coders can be resolved by revisiting and reviewing the narratives and revising the thematic categories.

Content analysis guided by Braddock and Horgan's (2016) analytic guidelines offers a thorough theory-based method applicable to ISIS and other jihadi groups' narratives and is highly relevant to this study's topic, aims, scope, and data. Braddock and Horgan's adaptation of a well-established and widely used method provides useful information for those examining ISIS and jihadi narratives. However, as Braddock and Horgan have acknowledged, though content analysis is important, it is merely the first step (*ibid.*). A rigorous method that enables us to explore ISIS and other jihadi groups' use of language and the underlying meaning of the media beyond the surface level remains indispensable. To address this issue, a more sophisticated theory of the theoretical method of hermeneutic interpretation, as suggested by Quentin Skinner, is explained.

Quentin Skinner's Hermeneutic Approach

Quentin Skinner is one of the foremost historians of the early modern period due to his contributions to two fields of study: a type of methodology in history and the social sciences and the application of that method to both contemporary political theory and the history of modern political thought and actions (Skinner 2008; Tully and Skinner 1988, p.3). Periodically, Skinner focuses on early modern Europe, early modern Britain (Skinner 2012), and early Renaissance political paintings and civic virtue (Skinner 2002b). His published works contain studies on Machiavelli (Skinner 2000; Skinner 2010), Thomas Hobbes (Skinner 1996; Skinner 2002c; Skinner 2008), and the relations between rhetoric and philosophy (Skinner 1996). His most recent work is on Shakespeare and forensic eloquence (Skinner 2014), while his best-known works include the two-volume *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* and the three-volume *Vision of Politics*, both of which span the whole early modern period (Skinner 1979a; Skinner 1979b; Skinner 2002d; Skinner 2002b; Skinner 2002c). Among Skinner's

publications, literatures regarding his method are *Visions of Politics: Volume I Regarding Method* (2002) and *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics* (1988), where revised and updated versions of his original articles regarding his interpretative method are collected in response to his critics (Tully and Skinner 1988).

Contextualising Quentin Skinner in Theoretical Discourse

Skinner's methodological hermeneutic enterprise belongs to a lineage of philosophers to whom he pays homage and whose influence on the formation of his own method of interpretation he acknowledges, the most significant being R.G. Collingwood (1889-1943), Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) and J.L. Austin (1911-1960). Collingwood and Wittgenstein provided Skinner with two critical theoretical foundations that are distinguishable in Skinner's discourse; the first is Collingwood's view of text as 'the logic of question and answer', as he suggested that all texts are answers to questions and in that sense, the interpreter's work is to identify the problems the text was trying to solve.[29] With the aid of Collingwood, Skinner leverages his argument that every historical time has its own issues and that the role of both history and philosophy is 'to reveal and explain to each other these problems, as questions and answers', which is, in other words, to 'seeing things their way', and in doing so, challenging the established conventions of philosophy that aim at 'discovering the perennial truths of political philosophy' (Valle 2014).[30]

The second person Skinner pays homage to is Wittgenstein, who perceived language intersubjectively and believed that it is deeply woven into human action (Drolet 2007). Wittgenstein proposed that the central focus of interpretation can surpass the alleged meaning of words and instead be on the 'different ways' these words are put to use (Prokhovnik 2010). In Wittgenstein's *Sprachspiele*, he underlined the necessity of determining the intentions of the agents in issuing words in an attempt to understand the meaning of words since the words might change according to the occasion associated with the agents' use of language, the agents' objectives, and context in which the words are issued (Valle 2014).

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[29] Collingwood's *An Autobiography* (1983) states that '"anything is evidence which can be used as evidence" and no one tell that "until he has formulated the question"' (Fear 2013).
[30] Skinner criticizes Leo Strauss and Arthur O's approach for creating an "otologization of the texts as concretions of a teleological discourse" and says that their ideas became hypostatized into "a sort of immanent entity". (Valle 2014; Skinner 2002a, p1;83;87)

Wittgenstein's influence is widely used among what is known as the 'Cambridge School' (of which Skinner is a part) as a tool for creating a new method of 'historical contextualism' or an 'intellectual history' against non-positivistic currents (Valle 2014). In summary, while Collingwood rendered the contextuality of language for Skinner and made visible the underlying problems behind the necessity of a particular statement, Wittgenstein provided Skinner with information on the statement-making agent and the notion of intentionality.

Austin's speech-act theory is fully embraced as the most vital tool in Skinner's linguistic stance, as Skinner used it to devastating effect in his polemic against empiricism as a cheap weapon in revolutionising the history of ideas (Drolet 2007). Skinner's work on intentionality is hereby developed in conjunction with Austin's ideas by investigating 'what exactly might be meant by investigating the use of words as opposed to their meaning, and what might be meant by saying that words are also deeds' (Skinner 2002a, p.103; McDonald 2011). Austin's initial analysis was an attempt to disprove the 'descriptive fallacy'[31] and argued that what people say can be intended to perform a variety of functions (McDonald 2011). Skinner believes that Austin was enunciating a doctrine reminiscent of both Wittgenstein and Collingwood (Prokhovnik 2010). However, Skinner finds that Austin's analysis is not merely a linguistic practice but also a political language, which he also refers as 'ideology', and he points out how an author may manipulate the conventions of such ideologies (McDonald 2011). By moving to speech act theory, Skinner was able to explore the history of ideologies (Drolet 2007) because of his approach to interrogating the relationship between authors' changing intentions and the evolving socio-political context of the times in which they were writing (McDonald 2011).

Despite sharing a concern for the significance of text in post-modern discourse[32], Skinner's views divert widely from post-structuralist views on the matter, and Skinner's adaptation of hermeneutics is highly incompatible with that of the post-structuralists, as each affirms what the other denies (Burns 2011). At the outset, Skinner's 'authorial intentionalism' can be seen

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[31] An assertion that all statements are intended to do is to present facts and that they are either 'true or false'

[32] Drolet (2007) demonstrates that Skinner bears a similarity with post-modernism in his ideas on the importance of language, and Lamb (2004) explains that Skinner's conception of history cements the tie to, for instance, post-modernism conceptions of 'power', with the most similarity between his conception and post-modernism being a post-Marxist and post-structuralism notion of power.

as a complete defiance of the post-structuralist legacies of Derrida and Foucault, among others (Norris 1987; Abrams 1991;). Skinner refuses the 'death of the author' and the post-structuralist emphasis on the role of the reader as the producer of meaning (Skinner 1985), and he thinks the role of the reader is greatly exaggerated (Lamb 2004).

Post-structuralists suggest that when reading a text, 'we ought not to think of interpretation as a method of attaining truths' about the meaning of the text and that the intentions of the author are irrelevant in the attempt to discover the meaning of the text (Skinner 1985). This suggestion rejects and makes impossible the 'very idea of textual interpretation' (Lamb 2004).

However, the theoretical distance between Skinner and the post-structuralists may not be as great as it seems (Burns 2011). While retaining a distinct position towards language and interpretation, Skinner emphasises the importance of language in post-modern discourse and his conception of history cements his ties to post-modernist conceptions of power and agency (Lamb 2004; Drolet 2007). This leaves Skinner in a unique position to benefit from hermeneutics and post-structuralism in advancing his view of language as a crucial instrument for social power and individual agency and to further accentuate the political importance of his method. Furthermore, this makes possible a comparison between Skinner's work and that of Foucault. This comparability includes the notion of power as pursued by Foucault in all of his major works, as well as similarities between Skinner's method and Foucault's genealogies and archaeology. Skinner and Foucault both break with presentism to create more convincing accounts of the past and to underline the variability of political activities. Additionally, both Skinner and Foucault believe that discourse and rationality can bear no reduction in schemes of legitimation but, more importantly, can inform political actions and thoughts (Vucina 2011). This belief is further expressed in Skinner's adaptation of the Foucauldian concept of agency, wherein he refers to the outcome of ways of doing and knowing things; in identifying the regime of practices and regimes of knowledge, Skinner extends the Foucauldian concept further, and he uses regimes to refer to the ability of any given author to manoeuvre his or her linguistic context (Drolet 2007).

The differences between Skinner and Derrida are harder to reconcile than those between Skinner and Derrida. Although Derrida himself had been a fierce critic of Foucault since the

late 1960s, his later work that was 'dedicated to reflections on the role of philosophy in a time of international terrorism and thoughts on the contemporary state' reveals a significant move towards a shared intent and purpose with Foucault's genealogy, and it has been even claimed that Derrida recognised the value of Foucault's objections to deconstruction (Drolet 2007). However, Derrida's meeting with Foucault bears no direct resonance with Skinner, who remains a polar opposite of Derrida, as the latter refutes the interpretation of the author. Derrida, whose renowned humourous work on Nietzsche (*Eperons: Les Styles de Nietzsche*, 1979), demonstrates, by way of a dramatic interpretation of a hypothetical note found in Nietzsche's archives about a lost umbrella, the extents to which interpretation and misinterpretation are possible. Interestingly, Skinner's response to Derrida references a commitment they both share,[33] which is the commitment to the 'context' that Derrida accentuates in relation to the text and that Skinner recovers in relation to the author (Burns 2011).[34]

Quentin Skinner's Method

There is a direct link from dissatisfaction with the liberal and Marxist forms of analysis to Skinner's method for addressing the 'tripartite axis' to which Skinner dedicated his entire cadre of works: the 'interpretation of historical texts, surveyance of ideological formation and change, and analysis of the relation of ideology to the political action it represents' (Tully and Skinner 1988, p.7). Skinner's initial analysis proposes methodological problems in the history of political thoughts in a twofold manner: first, Skinner rejects 'unit ideas'; he thinks that in understanding 'a given idea, even within a given culture at a given time', the priority of the existing analysis has been to 'simply concentrate (…) on studying the terms in which it was expressed', though an understanding of the literal meaning of the expression is insufficient for understanding the full meaning, and one should fully engage in 'all various contexts' to explore underlying meanings (Skinner 2002a, p.84); second, by such a reading, 'our narratives

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[33] Skinner agrees that it may not be possible to know what Nietzsche meant in writing 'I have forgotten my umbrella' but proposes that a recovery of 'intentionality' through context might be the 'best evidence available' to begin (Skinner, 2002c, p. 93).

[34] Derrida rejected both the principle that 'anything goes!' and the idea of 'the death of the author' (Norris, 1982, pp. 21–22, 43–44, 59–60, 138–140, 173; 1983, pp. 20, 113, 139, 219; Culler, 1983, pp. 131–132; Wood, 1987, pp. 176–177; Burke, 2008 [1992], pp. 133–144) and suggests explicitly that one must pay close attention to the 'context' (Derrida, 1976 [1967], p. 158; 1988b, pp. 111–154), though in looking at the context, one does not aim to unmask the intentions of the author.

almost instantly lose contact with statement-making agents', and 'the use of such expression (…) and reasons for continuing to employ it' will not be learnt (Skinner 2002a, p.85).

To address the issue, Skinner's method of interpretation, built over Austin's speech act theory, involves different layers of meaning of socially significant utterances: 1. what agents say (the locutionary act), 2. what agents mean in saying something (the illocutionary act), and 3. what agents mean by saying something (the perlocutionary act). Skinner explains these concepts through the example of a police officer shouting to a skater that the ice of the pond he or she is skating on is very thin. An analysis stripped of context may reduce the words to a description of facts about the ice, while what the policeman means in saying what he does is to warn the skater to leave the pond as an illocutionary act. Furthermore, in saying what he says, the police officer may, at the same time, bring on the perlocutionary consequences of frightening or irritating the skater (Skinner 2002; Valle 2014). Skinner uses this example to demonstrate the reduction in understanding that results from isolating the locutionary act (Valle 2014), whereby 'our narratives almost instantly lose contact with statement-making agents' (Skinner 2002a, p.85). Accordingly, it is necessary to Skinner that the intentional or illocutionary force of language is preserved to understand the meaning beyond the semantic constitution of the utterance so that we 'grasp not merely the meaning of what is said' but also the 'intended force with which the utterance is issued' in order to understand 'what they are doing in saying it' (p.82). With that, Skinner makes it an 'essential aim in any attempt to understand utterances' to 'recover intentions' as the first and primary task of an interpreter (*ibid*.). However, to do so, one must first be acquainted with Skinner's conception of intentionality, which is a critical and problematic concept in Skinner's analytical regime.

Intention

For Skinner, to understand a text, one must understand both 'the intention to be understood and the intention that this intention is understood' (Skinner 2002a, p.86). Skinner clarifies this mission by drawing on Collingwood and Wittgenstein in asserting that intentions are the embodiment of a particular intention on a particular occasion and that embodiment is addressed to the solution of a particular problem and is thus specific to its context in a way that it would only be naïve to try to transcend (*ibid.)*.

Skinner makes a key distinction between two types of intentions: between the intention to write (Skinner calls this 'motive') and the intention in writing (Skinner's notion of 'intention'). While the former is an act that anybody can perform by deciding to write something, the latter is the intention inherent within the text itself. This distinction is crucial because the majority of Skinner's critics (as demonstrated later in this manuscript) have objections to the concept of intention and argue for the difficulty of recovering it. Skinner agrees that that is the case for motives and admits that their recovery is often impossible. Instead, by recovering intention, Skinner aims to learn 'what speech acts they may have been performing in writing what they wrote', while to learn about motives is to know 'what prompted those particular speech acts' (Skinner 2002a, p.96). The former seems to be 'alluding to a feature of the work itself', while the latter seems to speak of 'a condition antecedent to the appearance' of the works (*ibid.*). While useful, the recovery of motives is 'irrelevant' to the activity of interpreting the meanings of texts because motives are 'factors standing outside their [writers] work'. A writer's intentions, by contrast, exist 'inside' of his or her texts (*ibid.).*

Skinner further identifies two categories of intentions: 'perlocutionary intentions' and 'illocutionary intentions' (Skinner 2002a, p.99). The former needs to consider whether 'it may have been intended to achieve a certain effect or response,' while the latter is 'what their exact intentions were in writing what they wrote' (*ibid.*). Skinner believes that a writer's perlocutionary intentions (what they may have intended by writing in a certain way) need 'no further consideration' because 'illocutionary intentions' need a separate study of context, while 'perlocutionary intentions' can be accordingly inferred from the work itself and the embedded illocutionary intentions (*ibid.*). In other words, what is meant by a 'separate study' is that before one reads, as an essential step to grasp an author's intention, one must study 'context' (Fear 2013).

To better illustrate his concept of intention in both verbal and non-verbal acts, Skinner (2002, p.134) additionally leverages H.P. Grice's (1957) concept of non-natural meaning and uses his dictum, 'linguistic intentions are very like non-linguistic intentions' (p.388). Skinner thinks that intention in 'a whole range of non-linguistic actions' seems 'equivalent to understanding the nature of the illocutionary act performed by the speaker' (Skinner 2002a, p.133-134). Decoding of the meaning of an (unnatural) action is equally done to gain the 'agent's

intentions in performing their action' and to understand what a person meant by acting in a certain way. Skinner even went a step further to argue "certain illocutionary acts are invariably performed non-verbally" (Skinner 2002a, p.133). This non-verbal applicability of Skinner's interpretative approach makes it accessible to a wide range of 'texts', not restrained to written ones.

Recovery of Illocutionary Acts

A study of the use of language should focus on the illocutionary force of language to understand the meaning beyond the semantic constitution of an utterance, as previously demonstrated (Valle 2014). From Skinner's perspective, these utterances are not propositions or references to facts but are instead arguments or instruments, as described by positivistic philosophies of language. (Valle 2014). Skinner emphasises, "we need to grasp not merely the meaning of what is said" (Skinner p.82) but also "the intended force with which the utterance is issued", which, in other words, means "what they are doing in saying it" (*ibid*.). An "essential aim in any attempt to understand utterances" (*ibid.,* p.63), Skinner claims, must be the "recovery of intentions" (*ibid.,* p.64).

Skinner readily acknowledges the difficulties of such an undertaking (2002a) while simultaneously emphasising that the consequences of neglecting such an effort would result in an incomplete understanding and a reduction of the utterance. Accordingly, Skinner distinguishes two determinants. The first and most obvious one 'must be the meaning of the utterance itself', which helps 'limit the range of illocutionary forces they can bear' and thus 'serve[s] to exclude the possibility that certain illocutionary acts are being performed' (p.114). This literal meaning functions as a 'structural constraint' and a 'resource for the agency' (Palonen 2003, p7). The second determinant Skinner emphasises is the linguistic-rhetorical-discursive context, which can be seen as a framework of the conditions of possibility of the speech act, as authors do not write in an institutional vacuum and could have systematic or programmatic objectives (Valle 2014). This context acts as 'a sort of court of appeal for assessing the relative plausibility of the incompatible ascription of intentionality' (Skinner and Tully 1988, p.64); it serves to frame the semantic-rhetorical conditions of the utterance and helps to restrain anachronism (Valle 2014). Skinner describes the procedure of such an undertaking as follows:

(…) (the) most illuminating way for proceeding must be (…) to delineate the full range of communications that could have been conventionally performed on the given occasion by the issuing of the given utterance. (…) The next step must be to trace the relations between the given utterances and this wider linguistic context as a means of decoding the intentions of the writer (Skinner 2002a, p.87).

Accordingly, it seems that, as Vucina observes (2011), understanding an utterance is a three-step process that begins with 1. uncovering the meaning of the utterance itself, 2. mapping the context in which the utterance is issued, and 3. examining the linkage between the two (Skinner 2002a).

It is worth noting that Skinner does not reduce the entire work of the historian into searching for the illocutionary act (Valle 2014). He accepts that texts have unintended surplus meanings for the readers (Skinner 2002a, pp.109-111). Skinner also accepts that not all authors know how to craft their intentions so that certain texts are not transparent for the authors (Keane, 1988) and that not all authors are clear about their intentions (Valle 2014). Skinner's point is that what the author was doing in writing what he wrote must be central in the interpretation of the text (Skinner 2002a, p101). This view of seeing political texts implies a focus on context and rhetoric; as Skinner said:

'Th*e chief aspiration underlying the method I have been describing is that of enabling us to recover the historical identity of individual texts in the history of thought. The aim to see such texts as a contribution to particular discourses (...) [recognising] the way in which they followed, or challenged or subverted the conventional terms of those discourses themselves'* (Skinner, 2002, pp. 124-5; Valle 2014).

Context
Because texts and social acts are public, intersubjective communication, they should be fully socially understandable, and their meanings, as public and intersubjective intentions, can be inferred from the text itself and the context (Valle 2014). Utterances are "characteristically intended as acts of communication", so they characteristically occur either as acts of a

"conventionally recognisable character" or more broadly in the form of "recognisable interventions" that can "never be simply viewed as the strings of propositions" (p.115).[35] Utterances are seen more as "a move in an argument" than as parts of a proposition (*ibid*.). To understand an utterance, "some means of identifying the precise nature of the intervention constituted by the act of uttering" must be found, and the available convention or the broader context is the key (Skinner 2002a, p.115).

What Skinner means by 'context' is unequivocal: our understanding of context only needs to be sufficient to allow us to infer what the author was doing in writing what he wrote, thus allowing us to exclude surplus meaning. Skinner admits that doing so may involve a great deal of complexity but normally 'the most crucial element' in the utterance can be readily elucidated (Skinner 2002a, p.114). Skinner explains one possible technique in searching for the context: 'the subject' of the utterances matters and one must 'then turn to the argumentative context of their occurrence to determine how exactly they connect with, or relate to, other utterances concerned with the same subject' (p.114-116).

Critics and Responses

Skinner's theoretical approach has attracted many admirers and adherents as well as critics. First, John Keane accuses Skinner of adopting an 'author-subject' approach, a task involving 'private entities to which no one can gain access' (Aiken 1955) and one that is diametrically opposed to the notion of 'the death of the author'.[36] Skinner considers such an accusation seriously misleading. He believes that his approach does not require the impossible task of 'getting inside the head' of the creator of a text (2002a, p.97). Rather, the approach requires a consideration of the broader context in which a text occurs and of the conventions and interventions (Skinner 2002a, p.vii). Skinner believes that such contention ignores 'the extent to which the intentions embodied in any successful act of communication must, *ex hypothesi*, be publicly legible' (2002, p.97). The meanings of such episodes can be 'intersubjectively understood', and the intentions underlying such performances must be entities with 'an essentially public character' (Valle 2014; Skinner 2002a, p.97).

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[35] What Austin (1980) called a "total speech act situation", p116-120.
[36] The concept is attributed to Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault (Lamb 2004).

Other critics, such as Wimsatt and Beardsley (1976) and Harlan (1989), steer their objections towards Skinner's notion of intentions and believe that intentions are impossible to recover and that the associated contentions find 'such information' irrelevant in establishing the meaning of a text (Wimsatt and Bearsley 1976; Gan 1957). In his response, Skinner considers this argument partially correct. As Skinner convincingly argues, motives are 'outside' a writer's work and such recovery is 'irrelevant' (Skinner 2002a, p.94), while intentions are 'inside' a text and they remain indispensable in understanding the meanings of a text (Skinner 2002a, p.99). As many misconstrue 'motive' and 'intention', Skinner (2002, p.96) pinpoints the cause of this criticism as his clarification of the 'intention to write' [the motive] and the 'intention in writing' [the intention]. As such, the distinction suggests that motives are "factors standing outside their [writers'] work" (Skinner 2002a, p.98) but intentions are not.

A third criticism about Skinner's recovery of intentions holds that Skinner 'fails to recognise that illocutionary intentions may be present in the absence of any corresponding illocutionary acts' so that a speaker 'may perform an illocutionary act in the absence of an appropriate intention', thus producing 'unintended illocutionary acts' (Graham 1988, pp.152-153; Shapiro 1982, p.563; Boucher 1985, p.220). To address this, Skinner denies the "existence" of 'unintended illocutionary acts' (Skinner 2002a, p.109). He thinks that the illocutionary force points to "a resource of language" and the illocutionary act points to the "capacity of agents to exploit it in communication" and is "identified by the intentions" in doing the act (p.110). Due to the nature of divergence and the richness of language, Skinner is aware that "many and perhaps most of our utterances will carry some element of unintended illocutionary force" (p.110), but he argues that there are no such things as 'unintended illocutionary acts' and our concern is with the performance of "illocutionary acts" (p.111).

Other criticisms of Skinner's method target the notion of context, and their arguments are useful for this research because they provide the opportunity for further development and a distinct application of this method. The first objection in this regard is expressed by Stanton (2011), who protested the ambiguity of context and the difficulty of establishing a connection between an author's work and his or her contexts, which can be numerous and indeterminable (Goodhart 2000). Second, since it is possible to pursue multiple aims simultaneously, there is a chance that some aims will remain concealed or that the one

recovered was not the most decisive (Syros 2010). Finally, if the intention of the text has to be found by other texts and speech acts that are intertwined and need to be interpreted, the difference between the intentions may eventually blur and the interpretation will end up being a recursive loop (Valle 2014). All three criticisms are found relevant for research, and to avoid ambiguity and recursiveness on the part of the context, it is more efficient to treat each video analysed in this study as a complete and single utterance where connections between subordinate utterances are internal, it is possible to radically minimise the number of connections and therefore the ambiguity of contextualising each utterance in relation to all others. Further remarks on the reconstruction of context, the method and sources for doing so are discussed in Part Three: Research Design.

PART THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN

This dissertation consists of a threefold analysis of official English-language ISIS videos, based on the evidence of 79 official English-language ISIS videos from 2014-2017. The first analysis provided a quantitative content analysis on the videos' production characteristics and thematic distribution over the course of three years. Employing Skinner's (2002) analytical approach, the second analysis identified and quantified the speech acts used in the same data. The final analysis, based on the previous findings, illustrated the four most prevalent speech acts used in the official English-language audio-visual propaganda apparatus of ISIS by conducting a qualitative analysis of four major ISIS videos using Skinner's (2002) approach. In what follows, the research data are presented, and every stage of the method applied in each analysis is explained.

Research Data

Sampling rationale

Since there has been a substantial quantity of ISIS media production (Winter 2015b; Cottee 2015b; Stern and Berger 2016; Colas 2016; Atwan 2015; Winkler *et al*. 2016) and it might be yeoman's work to completely archive it for study (Zelin 2015), there must be a feasible solution for sampling the data into a manageable corpus (Colas 2016). Through the existing literature, it is concluded that, first, studies have largely focused on the written texts, even though empirical studies on ISIS media output have clearly shown that ISIS relies more on visual propaganda than on written propaganda (Zelin 2015). Second, the corpus might need to vary chronologically in terms of release dates to comprehend the evolution and changing dynamics of ISIS media in response to real-world events (Kunzar 2017). Third, English is the second most commonly used language next to Arabic in ISIS propaganda and is the most commonly used foreign language (Fisher 2015). Finally, in its intentional use of such a worldwide, accessible language, the official English-language video, from the organisation's perspective, represents ISIS's global ambitions and central strategies. This, in turn, sheds light upon ISIS's worldview, how ISIS sees itself, and how ISIS wishes to be seen (Colas 2016). Ultimately, this fourfold rationale that leads to the sampling criteria sharpens data into a manageable size to deliver a more thorough analysis while still remaining quantifiable and

comparable with others' studies of ISIS media production, leading to a more comprehensive, if counter-intuitive, study (*ibid.*).

Sampling criteria

The 79 official English-language videos from ISIS were selected based on the following criteria: 1) timing: the video productions must have been released from April 2014 to July 2017, a time frame that includes the Fall and the Liberation of Mosul (10 June 2014 – 10 July 2017), which symbolises the rise and fall of ISIS; 2) language: the video must either be narrated in English or have subtitles in English; 3) sources [for selecting those that represent official ISIS material]: the video productions must be from official ISIS media centres or from provincial-level centres accredited by official media centres. The criteria were implemented to collect English-narrated/subtitled videos released within the established time period that were produced/recognised by the official media centres at al-Hayat, al-Furqan, and al-I'tisam (Zelin 2015; Barr and Herfroy-Mischler 2017). To ensure that the English-language used in the videos released from provincial media centres was officially authorized by ISIS, as opposed to being a private translating effort from pro-ISIS supporters, the videos must have been promoted by the video series *Selected 10* and *Featured 3*, both of which represent or highlight periodic exaltations of exemplary provincial videos productions by al-Hayat.

Ethical and legal issues

Although viewing and storing ISIS video is an offence under terrorism legislation, academics have the defence of having a reasonable excuse. In 2014, closely following the release of the video showing the beheading of American journalist James Foley, Scotland Yard and the Metropolitan Police Service responded with a warning: 'viewing, downloading or disseminating extremist materials within the UK may constitute an offence under terrorism legislation'. This act sparked concern regarding the ambiguity of the legality of 'viewing' in accordance with criminal law (Robinson 2014; Evans 2014; Green 2014). In 2017, this ambiguity of the interpretation of the law eventually led to a change in Section 58 of the Terrorism Act 2000,[37] clarifying that people who repeatedly view terrorist content online could face a maximum penalty of 15 years of imprisonment (Dassanayake 2017; Travis 2017).

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[37] See the full amendments of Section 58 at https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/11/section/58.

Nevertheless, the defence of having a reasonable excuse is available to academics, journalists, and others who might have a legitimate reason to view such material (United Kingdom: The Terrorism Act 2000; Travis 2017).

No ethical issues were raised throughout the process, and the collection method reinforced the accuracy of the data. First, the main evidence for this research—MP4 files of ISIS videos—was retrieved via online digital collection websites of jihadi materials founded by academic specialists. There was no subscription to pro-ISIS Twitter accounts and no online/offline or any other kind of contact with pro-ISIS activists other than anonymously monitoring Twitter accounts. The entire data set was collected in a manner that ensured the anonymity of the analyst. Second, the authenticity of data was reinforced by comparative scrutiny between different source providers—there was no obvious discrepancy found. The videos were manually verified as meeting the selection criteria. Finally, one principle ethical issue was to ensure that the analyst's acquisition of ISIS videos would not profit the original publishers, ISIS. The analyst therefore declares that there has been neither redistribution/re-dissemination of any ISIS propaganda online/offline nor any tweets from these pro-ISIS accounts being retweeted throughout the process.

Data collection

The data collection took 22 months for two primary reasons. First, the intensive censorship of ISIS propaganda materials, especially the censorship of videos that have been carried out by Internet giants (i.e., YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and Google), made the process very challenging (Colas 2016; Mahood and Rane 2016). Second, the analyst had to manually identify whether the video data met the required criteria. The entire collection process started on 1 October 2015 and ended 1 August 2017. Appendix 1 identifies and summarises the research organisations that support counterterrorism from which the analyst obtained the data. Among the source providers, the most prominent was *jihadology.net*, a clearinghouse for jihadi primary source material. The site was founded by Aaron Y. Zelin, a fellow at The Washington Institute, who claims to have 'retrieved the vast majority of official releases' (Zelin 2015, p.86).

The entire collection had four phases. The first collection ran from October 2015 to December 2015. During the initial attempt at data collection, pro-ISIS twitter accounts were the primary source of information, which was obtained by monitoring active accounts that tweeted ISIS updates. This collection method had clear shortcomings: first, whenever new videos were released, the tweets would provide an online streaming or download link to the data that was usually valid for just a few hours; second, even if the analyst promptly retrieved data, English-language videos were rare, e.g., there were merely 3 English-language videos among the 53 ISIS videos identified at this phase; third, due to the constant removal of pro-ISIS Twitter accounts, none of the accounts remains active at the time of this writing. The initial attempt was a time-consuming and inefficient process.

The second collection period started ran from January to April 2016 and focused on searching online archives and ISIS propaganda-related Arabic websites to obtain video data. Several websites were identified and a technical skill involving the use of using software to capture online streaming videos and download them as local files was learned. The main source provider was *jihadology.net.* Hundreds of ISIS videos from the 'Wilāyat' (provincial) levels used Arabic as the language for the videos, whereas official English-language ISIS videos were primarily produced by the *al-Hayat* and *Al-Furqan* media centres, both of which are part of ISIS's official international media channel (Mnhaaj 2014). At the end of this phase, 21 usable video sources were identified and retrieved.

The third period was from April to September 2016. Due to the data limitations of *jihadology.net[38]*, other online jihadi archives were used, i.e., *Liveleak.com*, *justpaste.it*, and *archive.org*. English-language videos from the provincial level of media centres were found, notably from *Wilayat al-Raqqah*, ISIS's media branch in the 'capital', Raqqa. The *IntelCenter* and *Intelwire*, both academically founded archives of jihadi materials, were also consulted for comparative scrutiny.

During the last period of collection, the analyst archived newly emerging video data up to 13 July 2017, on which date the Iraqi PM declared victory over ISIS in Mosul (Gamal-Gabriel and

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[38] Some data on this platform merely showed a cover image and the title of the video without direct links to the actual video.

Dunlop 2017). *Jihadology.net* provided a very scarce number of videos within this period—only 2 videos were found to be within the scope of the criteria, one released on 27 July 2016 and one on 20 April 2017. Other academic source providers, such as *IntelCenter*, *Intelwire,* and *counterextremism.com*, were revisited, while the website *khilafatimes.wordpress.com* was found to be more complete than its peers such as *heavy.com* and *leaksource.wordpress.com* since it had a unique 'English section' that contained a large number of videos that fit the criteria for this study. Given that the WordPress site occasionally failed to provide a valid access link, the analyst turned to *archive.org*, which locally stores a fair number of primary sources in MP4 format. In total, this study obtained 79 primary pieces of evidence, which, to the analyst's knowledge, constitutes the largest data collection of official English-language ISIS videos among existing studies.

Method Description

This thesis conducts a threefold analysis on research data: the first analysis provided a quantitative study on 79 English-language videos using Braddock and Horgan's (2016) content analysis for understanding terrorism narratives to identify and quantify a surface layer meaning represented through ISIS videos over the course of three years, i.e., the production characteristics and themes. The second analysis aims to explore a relatively latent layer of meanings in ISIS videos by quantitatively using Quentin Skinner's (2002) analytical approach to examine and quantify the prevalence of and changes in the speech acts used in the videos from 2014-2017 based on the same data. The final analysis, based on previous findings from this thesis, exemplified the four most prevalent speech acts used in the official English-language audio-visual propaganda apparatus of ISIS: *threatening*, *condemning*, *inviting*, and *inciting*. The analysis used Quentin Skinner's approach to provide a qualitative analysis of four major official English-language ISIS videos.

First Analysis

The application of the first analysis closely followed the guidelines of Braddock and Horgan's (2016) content analysis to rigorously identity 1) the overt characteristics of the messages 2) the themes intrinsic to terrorist narratives since this is an important initial attempt to reduce the risk for radicalisation (Braddock and Horgan 2016, p.387; Bernardi *et al.* 2012, p.156). The guidelines for understanding terrorist narratives and the further application of the guidelines to this analysis were divided into three stages (Braddock and Horgan 2016, p387-388).

Stage one

Using eight variables, release date, video title, spoken language, media centre, video duration, musical arrangement, violence, and *Nasheed*, the analyst generated the statistical results regarding the production characteristics of the videos. The analyst counted each variable based on the number of video releases the variable applied to. Key definitions of those variables are as follows:

- Musical arrangement – *the video is categorised as 'scored' or 'non-scored' based on whether or not it contains a piece of music with particular instruments or voices.*

- Violence – *the video is categorised as 'violent' or 'non-violent' based on whether or not it contains graphic violence that consists of any clear and uncensored depiction of various violent acts, including killing, severe injury, torture, and death.*

- Duration – *the video is categorised as 'short', 'medium', or 'long' if its duration is less than ten minutes, 10-30 minutes, or more than 30 minutes, respectively.*

- Nasheed – *the video is categorised as 'Nasheed' or 'non-Nasheed' based on whether or not the entire video is a Nasheed clip.*

Additionally, the analyst chronologically coded the videos from the earliest video (V1) to the latest video (V79); the codes were used for any further citations or references to the videos. A detailed table displays the results of this stage as a quantifiable survey of the videos, visualised by Microsoft Excel-generated graphs (see Appendix 3).

Stage two

In this stage, the analyst implemented a thematic analysis to describe higher-level concepts within the video narratives. A preliminary list of codes to identify the themes was generated, based initially on the analyst's perception. The themes were attached to portions of raw narrative data to allow for access and meaningful organisation (Boyatzis 1995). The analyst then devoted particular attention to repetitive topics and natural transitions in the videos.[39] The preliminary list of codes was subsequently refined in accordance with six existing studies investigating the themes of extremist propaganda; the list was revised and altered according to the studies' sets of priori codes (Droogan and Peattie 2016; Pelletier et al. 2016; Zelin 2015; Winter 2015b; Gratrud 2016; Colas 2016). Repetitive and redundant codes were reduced or removed. The list of codes was then subject to an independent coder's review for a reliability test.

Another independent coder, an expert in Islamic terrorism studies, Dr. Simon Cottee, reviewed the themes in the narratives to make the method more reliable. Any disagreements between the coders were resolved (Schreier 2012), and the presence or absence of a theme in a narrative was decided based on the reviews (Braddock and Horgan 2016). A pilot test of each category of the coding scheme, which reinforced an inter-coder reliability level of at least .80, was conducted (Cohen 1960). This resulted in two revisions of the coding instrument, and the list ultimately included 26 codes (see Appendix 2).

The groups of codes created at this stage were a useful set of themes that described the key ideas comprising the narratives of the videos (Braddock and Horgan 2016). The next stage involved quantifying the narrative data to determine which themes were most prevalent.

Stage three

Once these thematic categories were distinguished, the analyst coded the videos to explore the prevalence and vicissitude of the themes. A total of 79 videos were gathered and analysed manually with the aid of Microsoft Excel. First, the total duration of the videos (915 minutes) was divided into one-minute increments, resulting in 915 duration units. The list of codes was

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[39] Ryan and Bernard (2003) observe that 'the more the same concept occurs in a text, the more likely it is a theme' (p.89) and that 'naturally occurring shifts in content may be markers of themes' (p.90).

then applied to the duration units, and the number of times that each theme was invoked—defined as 'segments'—was tallied and documented in a Microsoft Excel table (see Appendix 4 for an example). Consequently, the 79 videos resulted in 799 segments that varied in duration. To simultaneously and completely reflect both frequency and duration in identifying the prevalence of each theme, the analyst tallied the duration (total number of units) contained by all segments belonging to the theme. This tallying was subsequently applied in two directions: 1) for prevalence, the tally counted the total duration of all 799 segments, i.e., 1707 units. Only statistical trends of the themes that were significant at the 0.06 level (approximately equivalent to one hundred units) or more were elaborated. 2) For vicissitude, as Zelin (2015, p94) suggests, there is a 'potential asymmetric nature of ISIS media operation'; therefore, the SKEW function in Microsoft Excel was applied using the same data. This function characterises the degrees of asymmetry of a distribution around its mean. At the end, the analyst had a list of themes and, most importantly, the degree to which each theme was represented, as well as the vicissitude of each theme within the narrative data. These themes represent the central tenets and chronological movements of the ideas being espoused in the narratives (Braddock and Horgan 2016).

The analyst agrees with what the existing scholarship has noted, namely, that in conducting a content analysis on ISIS media, two challenges emerge. First, ISIS's message is hard to understand, especially for those who have a limited knowledge of Islamic theology, as ISIS's rhetoric is saturated in Arabic theological terms, even when English was used in many of its publications (Colas 2016; Kunzar 2017). Second, content analysis is hard to conduct because the group presents an integrated worldview and most of their narratives are non-discrete and overlapping (Colas 2016, p178; Winter 2015b). These challenges require a new approach beyond content analysis, and Skinner's approach—wherein every utterance can be seen as an argumentative move, intertextually related within a broader discourse—was employed in this study. The following analysis used Skinner's method of the 'recovery of intention' quantitatively to retrieve the underlying intentions within the same data.

Second Analysis

To understand which speech acts were performed by ISIS and how they changed chronologically, the second analysis utilised a Skinnerian analytic approach to examine the video data. Both verbal and non-verbal acts in the videos were analysed through a quantitative lens. Although a quantitative lens has not been used in this field previously, it fits well with the ISIS media texts because not only has speech act theory been suggested as a useful lens for understanding extremist rhetorical pedagogy (Cottee 2016; Salazar 2017; Schaukowitch 2018; Dowling 1989) but also what Skinner (2002) delineated applies to both linguistic and non-linguistic actions. This means that non-verbal actions performed in a video can also be included in the analysis, not to mention that a purely text-based analysis of ISIS video has value of its own.[40] This analysis consists of three stages. The first stage explained this study's implementation of the Skinnerian theory-based 'recovery of intention' mechanism. The second carried out a refining procedure and a reliability test of the preliminary coding scheme, and the final step involved coding and quantifying data from a total of 79 videos. Each of the stages is thoroughly described below.

Stage One

The analyst first established a preliminary group of speech act codes based on Skinner's recovery of intention [speech act] mechanism, illustrated in the diagram below [see Figure 3. 1]. Two determinants were given particular attention: the locutionary meaning and the context (2002a, p.114); the former elucidated the meanings and provided the conditions for possible illocutionary acts (p.114), whereas the latter singled out the most crucial meanings (*ibid*., p.114-115). As Figure 3.1 shows, ISIS's verbal/non-verbal acts performed in the video were put into their linguistic, ideological/theological, political, social, and historical contexts, and the occasion of each act was identified. The primary definitions of [context], drawn from the existing literature, were as follows:

1.   Linguistic context – the context of other utterances that are conversationally related to the act and are readily identifiable.

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[40] See Macnair and Frank's (2017) study for an example.

2.   Ideological/theological context – background knowledge related to ISIS's version of Islam (McCants 2015; Cottee 2016; Cottee 2017b; Wood 2015; Aly and Striegher 2012; Hamid 2014; Hassan 2016).

3.   Political context – a practical context accounting for the geopolitical situation in the region, including ISIS's interactions with other jihadi groups as well as the interventions of U.S. coalitions (Stern and Berger 2016; Weiss and Hassan 2015; Atwan 2015; Gerges 2016; Cockburn 2015).

4.   Social context – an examination of ISIS's social issues and conventions (Stern and Berger 2016; Weiss and Hassan 2015; Atwan 2015; Abdel-Samad 2016).

5.   Historical context – an investigation related to the group's history and its previous leaders (Stern and Berger 2016; Weiss and Hassan 2015; Atwan 2015; Warrick 2016).

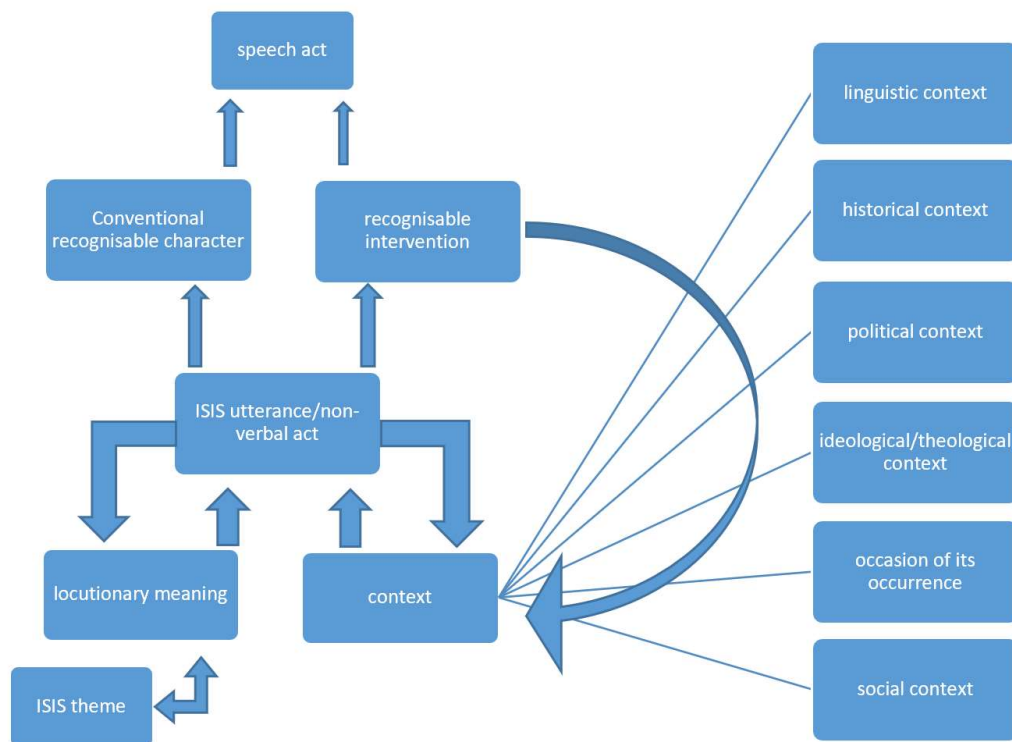*Figure 3. 1 The Skinnerian 'recovery of intention' mechanism, based on Quentin Skinner's Vision of Politics: Volume One (2002).*

Following the investigation of context, two acts of communication were identified; these acts are defined as having "a conventionally recognizable character" or, more broadly, as "recognizable interventions" (Skinner 2002a, p.115). The first type leads straight to the

speech act, while the second might involve a re-examination in a broader and wider contextual sense, as seen the intertextual moves of certain arguments and as identified precisely in nature of the intervention (Skinner 2002a, p.115).

Stage Two

The above process created a preliminary group of speech act codes that were subject to refinement, review, and testing at this stage. The preliminary list of codes was refined, revised, and altered in accordance with the set of codes and semantic vocabulary of English speech acts used in existing scholarship (Skinner 1996; Searle 2008; Wierzbicka 1987). The same pilot test of the coding scheme was conducted for each category to avoid subjectivity. Any contradictions between the two coders were neutralised or resolved by revisiting the narratives from which the disagreements emerged. Inter-coder reliability reached the level of at least .80 (Cohen 1960). Eventually, the coding instrument contained 15 codes (see Appendix 5). Following the groups of codes that contained definitions and criteria regarding the semantic meanings of each speech act, the acts' implications in the videos were identified, refined, reviewed, and tested; a useful set of speech acts that described the key illocutions that made up the narratives of the videos were then produced (Braddock and Horgan 2016). The next stage involved quantifying the narrative data to determine which speech acts were most prevalent and how they changed over time.

Stage Three

Following the distinctions of these categories, there should be a useful set of codes that represent the central (and individual) speech acts in this group's use of language. The third stage then goes further to restructure these 15 speech act codes that fall under a broader meaningful organisation defined by John Searle (2008), who created an established and commonly used classification system in which all speech acts, including those identified by the founder of speech act theory J. L. Austin (1911-1960), can be organised and categorised (Ballmer and Brennstuhl 2013; Muller 2016; Vanderveken and Kubo 2002; Verschueren 1983; Urmson 1960; Skinner 2002a),[41] i.e., 'we tell people how things are' [*assertive*], 'we try to get

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[41] Quentin Skinner, whose linguistic stance and methodological hermeneutic approach greatly belong to a lineage of J. L. Austin, also agrees with John Searle's stance on expanding Austin's analysis of illocutionary acts at this regard. See the book *Visions of Politics: Regarding Method* (Skinner 2002a, p.106).

them to do things' [*directive*], 'we commit ourselves to doing things' [*commissive*], 'we express our feelings and attitudes' [*expressive*], 'we bring about changes through our utterances' [*declaration*] (Searle 1985, p.29). The driving rationale for presenting a common, higher-rank categorisation lay with the aim of facilitating also the universal and broader inferences of ISIS language and its possibility of addressing overall intrinsic functionalities about its propaganda apparatus (Braddock and Horgan 2016).

Following the reorganisation whereby the 15 individual codes of speech acts were categorised into five overarching higher-order concepts of speech act classes: *assertive*, *expressive*, *directive*, *commissive*, *declaration* (Searle 2008), ultimately, the analyst arrived at a list of speech acts and their higher classes to represent the prevalence of central tenets and chronological changes being espoused in the narratives. A total of 79 videos were accumulated and analysed manually with the aid of Microsoft Excel (See Appendix 6). The results are presented in statistical tables, column charts, and line graphs.

Third Analysis

Following the previous empirical analysis of 79 official English-language ISIS videos and employing Quentin Skinner's (2002) analytical method to explore and quantify the prevalence of and changes in the speech acts used in videos from 2014-2017, the findings suggested that four speech acts remained statistically prevalent and chronologically consistent over the course of the three years, i.e., *threatening*, *condemning*, *inviting*, and *inciting*. Although a macro-account of the speech acts used in the videos highlights the demography and diversity of the political arguments associated with ISIS's ultimate semantic intentions and the series of changes, a more nuanced understanding of the ISIS reasoning devices to capture the complexity of the ISIS messages remains to be developed.

Based on Quentin Skinner's theory-based approach, the analyst provided a qualitative analysis of four major official English-language ISIS videos, i.e., *A Message to America* (2014), *Lend Me Your Ears* (2014), *Eid Greeting From the Land of the Caliphate* (2014), and *There Is No Life Without Jihad* (2014). These videos were major releases for ISIS and attracted massive global media attention. The first video filming the beheading of US journalist James Foley largely shaped American public opinion and caused a wave of international condemnations that ultimately led to an escalation of the American engagement in the wars in Syria and Iraq (Boydstun *et al.* 2014; Tinnes 2015; Mccalmont 2014), while the second video drew much scholastic attention, as it shed light on ISIS's viewpoints regarding global issues (Tinnes 2015; Foy 2015; Cantey 2017). The third video featured a warm welcome from foreign fighters to show ISIS's 'gentle' side (Fields 2014; Vinograd 2014; Rose 2014, p.3), whereas the final video, which was the result of ISIS's radical appeals from young fighters emigrating from the West, was widely covered by Western mainstream media (Siddique 2014; Becker 2014; Cook 2014; Mackey 2017; Malcolm 2018).

Respectively, those videos exemplified the four most prevalent speech acts used in the official English-language audio-visual propaganda apparatus of ISIS: *threatening*, *condemning*, *inviting*, and *inciting*. The third analysis, which combined the previous analyses of this thesis, qualitatively provided an inclusive analysis of four videos began with the production characteristics and a thematic analysis and eventually examined the use of language through the lens of Quentin Skinner's hermeneutic theory of interpretation. By placing the videos in

the wider political and ideological contexts from which they emerged or to which they responded, this third analysis showed what these videos were actually saying and doing according to the Skinnerian concept of the 'underlying intention' in making the videos [speech acts]; the analysis also exposed how a content- or theme-focused analysis would remain partial and incomplete.

CHAPTER FOUR: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF OFFICIAL ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ISIS VIDEOS FROM 2014-2017

INTRODUCTION

'We are in a battle, and more than half of this battle is in the battlefield of the media'. These were the words used by al-Qaeda Central head Ayman al-Zawahiri to admonish Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of an affiliate now known as ISIS (Stern and Berger 2016, p.103). Terrorist groups have employed an extensive range of communicative strategies to promote their objectives, one of the most pervasive of which involves propagandisation (Weimann 2006; Corman, Trethewey and Goodall 2008; Braddock and Horgan 2016). Rhetoric and propaganda apparatus espoused by terrorist groups might facilitate damage more than physical violence (Braddock and Horgan 2016). Arguably, an unneglectable factor in the growth of ISIS has been its ability to recruit fighters globally, and a key role that its 'slick' propaganda might have been played throughout this process (Cottee 2015b; Weiss and Hassan 2016; Ingram 2016; Pelletier *et al.* 2016; Whiteside 2016; Winter 2015b). Following a critical loss of Mosul, there has been concerns that the group could turn to a territory-less virtual hub to continue inspiring attacks worldwide in the foreseeable future, and this virtual 'caliphate' may depend on its propaganda more than ever before (Chulov 2019; Phippen 2017; Votel *et al.* 2017; al-Lami 2019; Kuznar 2017).

There is a growing body of literature on ISIS propaganda (Winter 2017a; Winter 2017b; Winter 2015a; Winter 2015c; Winter 2015b; Winter and Bach-Lombardo 2016; Fernandez 2015; Zelin 2015; Greene 2015; Farwell 2014; Mahood and Rane 2016; Pelletier *et al.* 2016), and much of the published scholarship focuses on its written texts (Ingram 2016a, 2016b; Heck 2017; Spencer 2017; Cantey 2017; al-Dayel and Anfinson 2017; Wilbur 2017; Wignell *et al.* 2016, 2017; Novenario 2016; Colas 2016; Winkler *et al* 2016; O'Halloran *et al.* 2016). However, a growing corpus of research has accentuated the central role of visual materials in ISIS propaganda (Winkler at el. 2016). Though they differ in terms of their content, their context,

and their audience's capacity to process the messages (Lang 2000), visual materials are easier to process than textual material (Pfau *et al.* 2008). They act as 'pegs' for larger narratives (Barbieri and Klausen 2012) and serve as framing 'cues' to activate pre-existing attitudes (Griffin 2004). Nevertheless, studies analysing ISIS videos remain scarce (Barr and Herfroy-Mischler 2017; Auchter 2017; Tinnes 2015; Winter 2015a; Akil 2016; Allendorfer and Herring 2015), and the literature still lacks an exhaustive study of the English video output of ISIS.

To bridge this gap, this study provides a content analysis of 79 English-language ISIS propaganda videos to enhance the understanding of this content, which aligns with the group's goals and media modus operandi and has the potential to recruit followers on a global level. This study uses content analysis because it is part of 'a systematic effort to apply automated methodologies to identify, harvest, classify, analyse, and visualise extremist groups' video artefacts usage' (Salem *et al.* 2008, p.606). By the end of the paper, each of the following questions will be answered:

- RQ1: What are the production characteristics and types of English-language videos produced by ISIS?

- RQ2: Which of the themes intrinsic to its narratives feature most prominently in ISIS English-language videos, and is there a difference between these videos and other ISIS media productions?

- RQ3: What worldview of ISIS ideology is represented and reflected through the core narratives in the videos?

- RQ4: What are the chronological vicissitudes of the core narratives of the videos from 2014 to 2017?

This chapter presents the findings of an original content analysis of official English-language ISIS videos from 2014-2017. It consists of two subsections. It will first visually present empirical results of the 79 videos' production features and themes intrinsic to their narratives, which relate to the modus operandi of ISIS media and the ideological representations of ISIS propaganda, using Microsoft Excel tables and graphs. Then, the discussion will review the main findings, explain unexpected results, and compare the results with those of other research. Finally, the conclusion concisely summarises the main findings, demonstrates the

study's limitations and provides recommendations for further research. The study makes two significant contributions to terrorism research. First, it is essential in devising more robust and nuanced counternarratives and enhancing the understanding of ISIS propaganda. Second, it tests a novel method for extracting rich thematic data from visual sources that can be applied to facilitate a broader analysis of other jihadist propaganda vehicles.

PART ONE: FINDINGS

Production Characteristics

The April 2014-June 2017 period was divided into 13 three-month increments, and the number of releases is displayed in Figure 4. 1. This line graph shows that the most productive period of releases was October-December 2014, when 16 videos were released; this comprised more than one-fifth of the entire dataset (20.25%). The second most productive periods were July-Sept 2014 and Jan-March 2015, where 13 videos were released. The least productive period was January-March 2017, where no video was identified. From April-June 2014 to April-June 2015, ISIS released the largest number of videos. The release pattern was a wave that started with 8 videos, culminated at 16 videos, and eventually decreased to 6 videos. From April-June 2015 to April-June 2017, the number was relatively stable (with 3 videos on average every three months), whereas it declined significantly from 2017 onwards (January-March and April-June 2017).
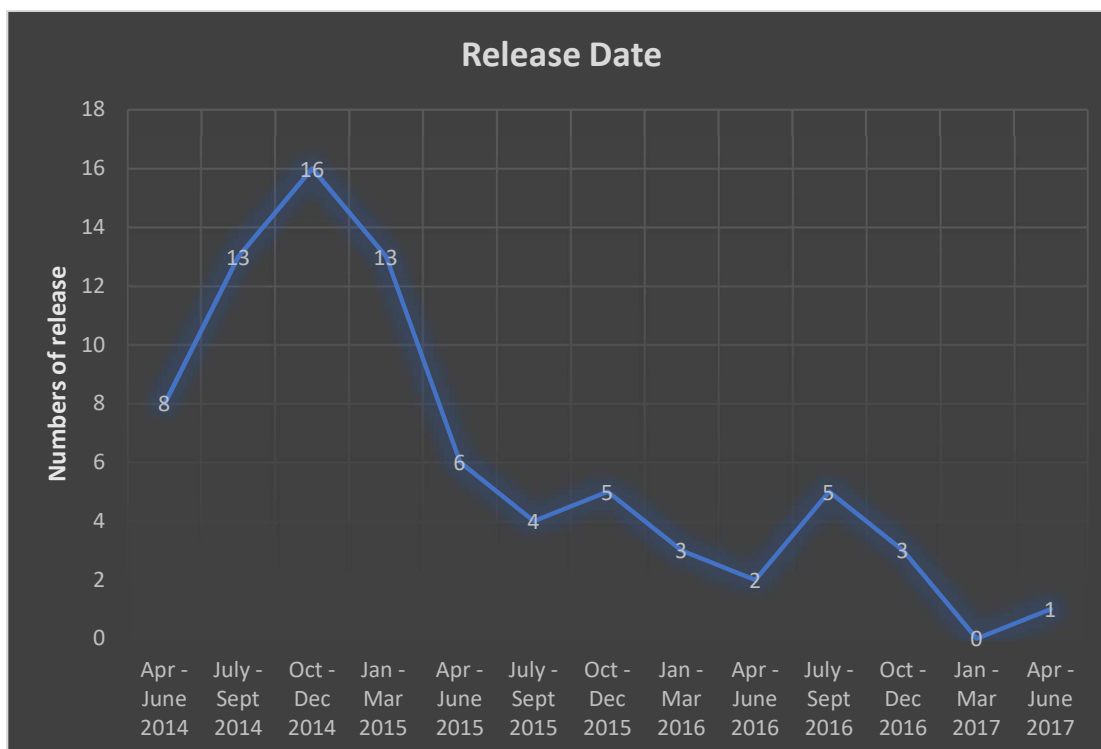
Figure 4. 1 The overall chronological movement of 79 ISIS English-language videos released from April 2014 to July 2017

Figure 4. 2 displays the statistical landscape of the language spoken in the videos. The vast majority of the videos were narrated in English (50.63%) or Arabic (34.18%). French (5.06%), Russian (3.80%), and Turkish (2.53%) were also used moderately. French-narrated videos were mostly 'scored' (75%) and issued by the al-Hayat media centre, and they were evenly distributed between the 'violent' and 'non-violent' categorisations. Russian-narrated videos were all 'scored', all 'short', and all from the al-Hayat media centre; they entailed both 'Nasheed' and 'non-Nasheed' and both 'violent' and 'non-violent'. Turkish-narrated videos were all 'scored' and all from the al-Hayat media centre. Furthermore, 'Indonesian', 'Kazakh', and 'N/A' (no narrative found in the video) each accounted for 1.27%. Overall, nearly half of the videos (49.37%) were narrated in a language other than English and used English subtitles.
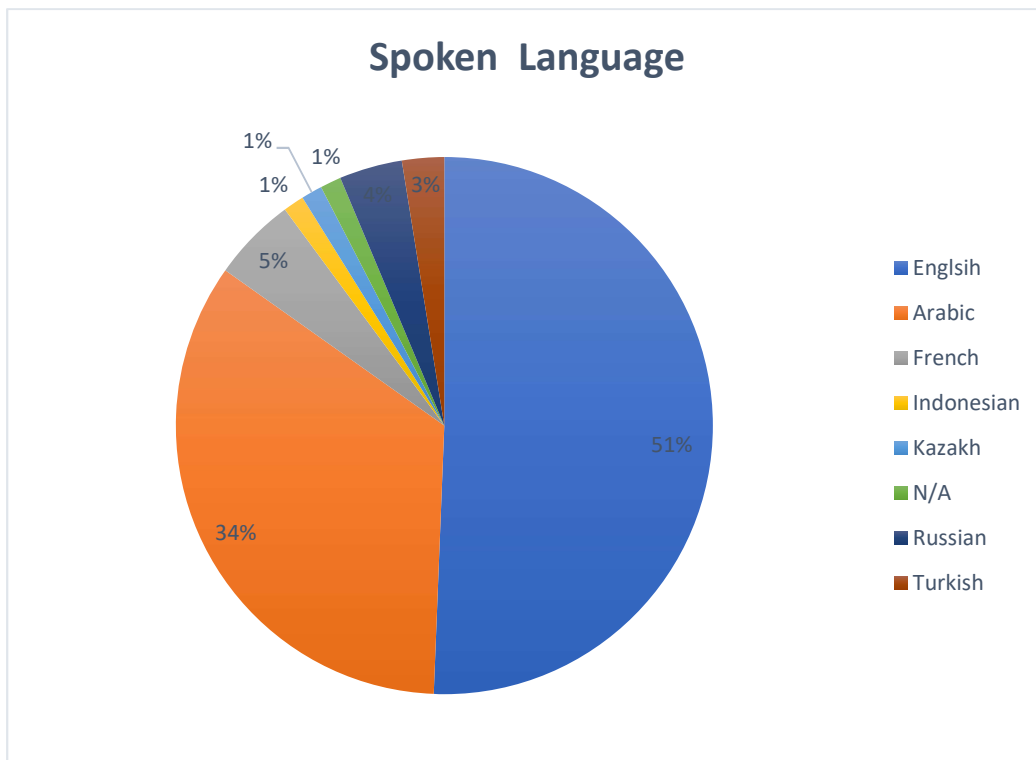
Figure 4. 2 Language spoken in the 79 ISIS English-language videos

Figure 4. 3 shows the language of the video subtitles. Similar to the spoken language, English (46.84%) and Arabic (12.66%) constituted the majority of the subtitle language. The remaining videos were either 'multi-language' (7.59%) or 'non-subtitled' videos (32.91%). Furthermore, the multi-language videos were all narrated in non-English, all 'scored', and all produced by

the al-Hayat media centre, whereas 'non-subtitled' videos were all English-narrated, mostly 'non-scored' and short, and produced from all types of media centres.
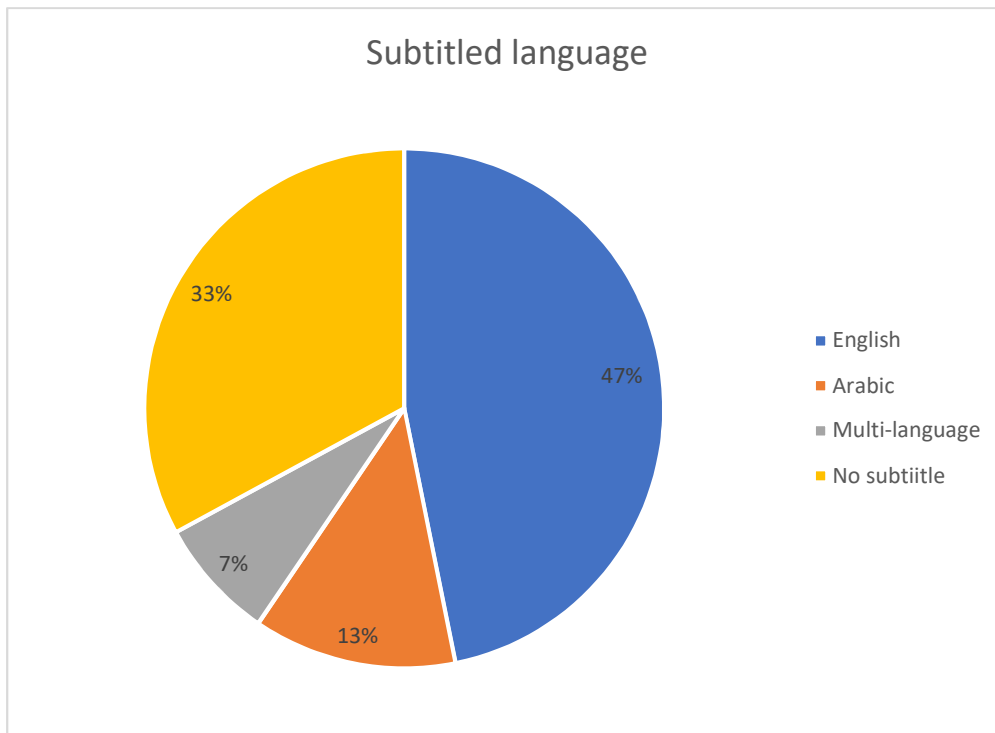
Figure 4. 3 Subtitle language in the 79 ISIS English-language videos

Figure 4. 4 shows the statistical composition of the different media centres producing the videos. Al-Hayat media centre accounted for the most English videos (49.37%), nearly half of the overall number of videos. The media centre's productions were characterised by a large diversity and capacity in terms of the videos' languages, types (violence, Nasheed, and scores), and duration. All Nasheed videos were produced by this centre. [42] It produced an even proportion of 'non-violent' and 'violent' videos (51.28% and 48.72%, respectively), and with the exception of V40 and V47, most of its videos were 'scored' (89.47%). Following Al-Hayat was Al-Furqan media centres, which contributed the second largest number of videos (34.18%). It did not produce Nasheed videos. Its videos were either English-narrated (66.67%) or Arabic-narrated (33.33%). A large number of its videos were 'non-scored' (18 'non-scored' vs 9 'scored'), and it produced an even number of 'violent' (55.56%) and 'non-violent' (44.44%) videos. In contrast to these two centres, al-I'tisam had very limited production during the

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[42] V4, V6, V37, V51, V54, V56, V57, V63, V69, V71, V79

2014-2017 period, accounting for merely 2.53% of all videos. It remained inactive from 2014 onwards. Its videos were in the same language form: English-narrated with Arabic subtitles. They were 'non-scored', 'non-violent', and 'short' videos. Though they varied in duration, the contents were invariably one jihadist urging the others to perform Jihad and Hijrah (V26; V36).
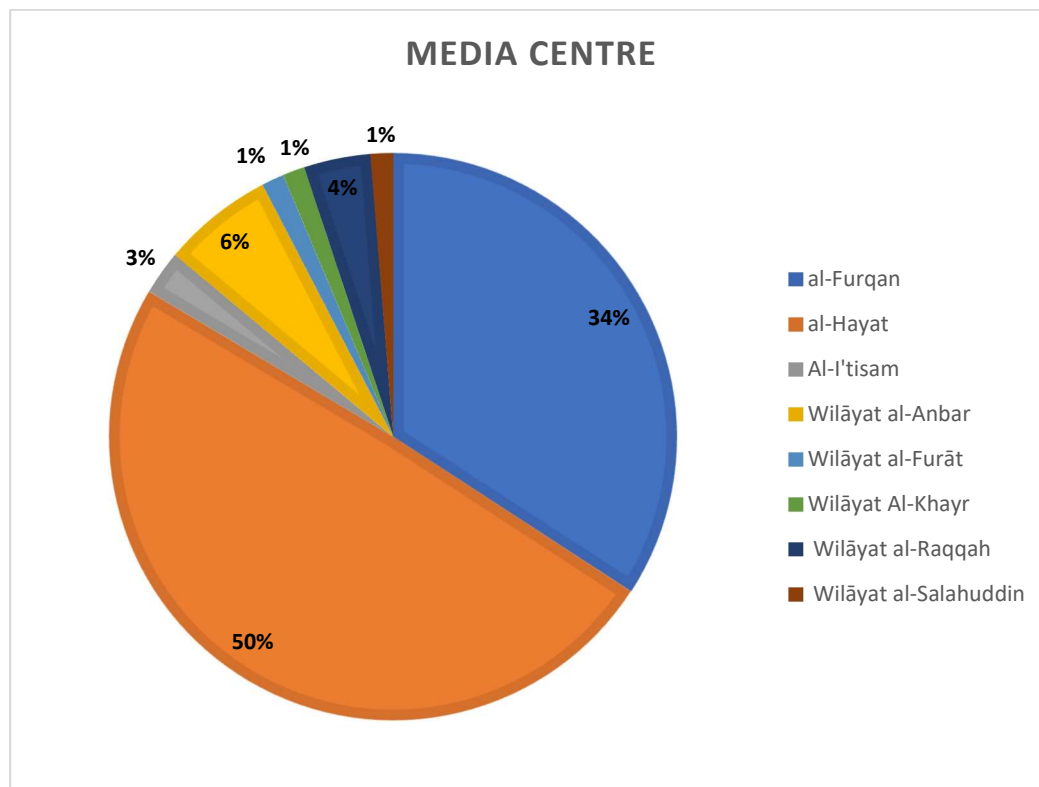
Figure 4. 4 The statistical composition of media centres producing ISIS English-language videos

The provincial media centres, including Wilāyat al-Salahuddin (1.27%), Wilāyat al-Raqqah (3.80%), Wilāyat al-Anbar (6.33%), Wilāyat al-Furāt (1.27%), Wilāyat Al-Khayr (1.27%), and Wilāyat al-Raqqah (3.80%), together accounted for 13.92% of all videos. The results reveal four patterns. First, in contrast to official media centres such as al-Hayat, al-Furqan, and al-I'tisam, which produced most of their English-language videos in 2014 and 2015 (91.18%), provincial-level media centres started to actively release such videos at the end of 2015 and released most of them (72.73%) from 2016 onwards. Second, comparing the period before 2016 and the period from 2016 onwards, provincial-level video productions increased rapidly (from 4.62% to 57.14%), whereas those of media centres declined significantly (from 95.38% to 42.86%). Third, one provincial-level media centre contributed a 'long' video (V78) in 2016;

the other 4 'long' videos were either al-Hayat or al-Furqan media productions released before 2015 (V2, V13, V19, V60). Finally, the provincial-level 'non-scored' (18.18%) videos were all 'non-violent', whereas most 'scored' videos were 'violent', except one (V62).

Figure 4. 5 describes the videos based on their musical arrangement. Among the English-language videos, 49 out of 79 (62.03%) were 'scored'. 'Scored' videos were narrated in many languages. Most of them were from Al-Hayat media centre, which accounted for three times the number of 'scored' videos of al-Furqan and other centres combined. The majority (33 out of 49) of the 'scored 'videos were 'violent'. In contrast, 37.97% of the videos were 'non-scored'. The vast majority (26 out of 30) of them were narrated in English. The largest number of 'non-scored' videos were by Al-Furqan media centre, which accounted for twice the number produced by al-Hayat and four times that by Al-I'tisam and provincial media centres combined. 'Non-scored' videos were of either short or medium lengths.
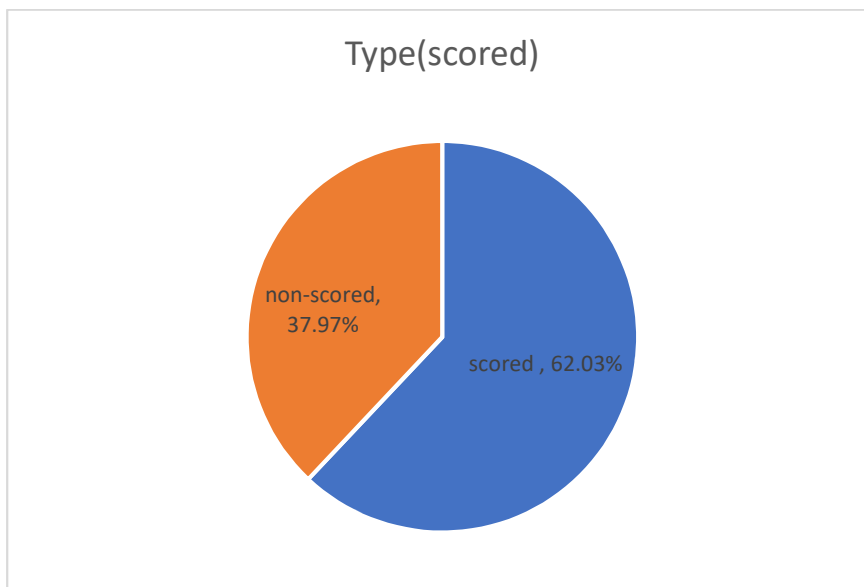
Figure 4. 5 The statistical composition of 'scored' versus 'non-scored' ISIS English-language videos

Figure 4. 6 shows that the 'violent' and 'non-violent' videos were approximately similar in number. The 42 'violent' videos accounted for 53.16% and the 37 'non-violent' videos 46.84% of the total. 'Non-violent' videos were characterised by greater diversity in the language used than 'violent' videos. The majority of 'non-violent' videos were 'short' (72.97%), whereas

'violent' videos were evenly distributed between the 'medium' and 'short' categorisations. 'Non-violent' videos contained a larger number of 'non-scored' videos than 'scored' videos (21 vs 16 out of 37), while nearly 80% of 'violent' videos were 'scored' (33 out of 42).
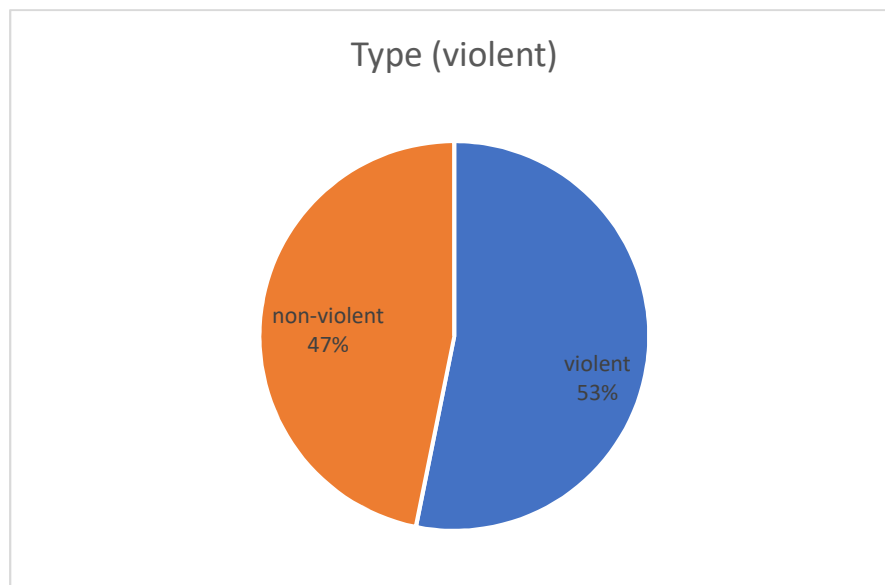
Figure 4. 6 The statistical composition of 'violent' versus 'non-violent' ISIS English-language videos

Figure 4. 7 indicates the statistical distribution of the duration of the videos, i.e., 'short', 'medium', and 'long'. The most common type of video was 'short' videos, accounting for 60.76% of the total. Al-Hayat created the largest number of short videos (25 out of 48), followed by al-Furqan (17 out of 48). Similar proportions of them were 'scored' (22) and 'non-scored' (26); they were also equally 'violent' (21) and 'non-violent' (27)). All 11 Nasheed video clips were 'short'. The second most common duration was 'medium', accounting for 26 videos. Al-Hayat produced the largest number of 'medium' videos (12 out of 26), whereas al-Furqan and provincial media centres produced a similar number (8 and 6 videos, respectively). Most of the 'medium' videos were 'scored' (22 out of 26) and 'violent' (17 out of 26). Finally, videos with a 'long' duration comprised 6.33% of the total. All such videos were 'scored', and with the exception of one video in English (V60), they were primarily Arabic-narrated. Before 2016, Al-Furqan and al-Hayat media centres each produced 2 'long' videos, whereas the latest one produced at the end of 2016 was released from a provincial media channel, al-Raqqah (v78). The type was mostly 'violent' (4 out of 5), except one video that was narrated in English (V60).
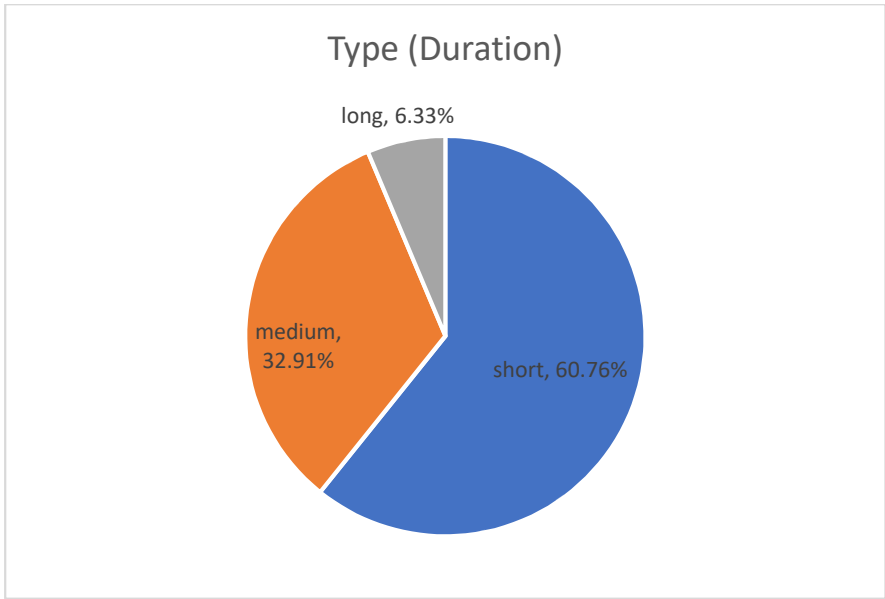
Figure 4. 7 The statistical composition of the duration of ISIS English-language videos

Figure 4. 8 illustrates the statistics related to whether the video included Nasheed. The Nasheed videos represented merely 13.92% of the total, with 11 releases. All of them were 'short', most less than three minutes. They showed the lyrics in footage instead of subtitles and were full of repeated visual and verbal content.
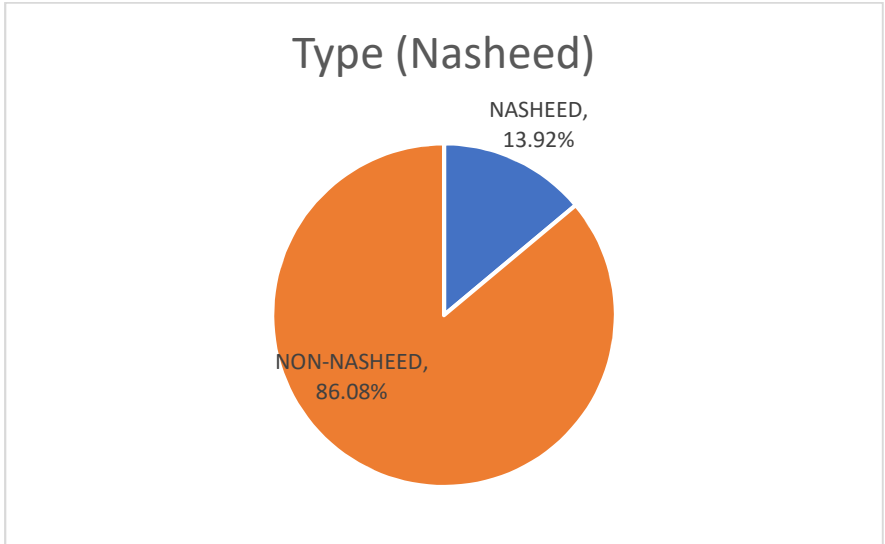
Figure 4. 8 The statistical composition of Nasheed in the ISIS English-language videos

Thematic Results

Table 4. 1 illuminates the overall statistical composition of the higher-level categories, i.e., narratives, which were the consolidation of 26 individual themes in ISIS English-language videos. They were categorised as enemy, religious, and emotive narratives. The enemy narrative consisted of 9 themes: COM (combat), WM (Western malevolence), CC (captives and confession), EXE (execution), ROA (rejections of antagonists), WF (Western failure and weakness), WCWE (West colluding with its enemies), TA (terror attack), and VP (vice and punishment). The religious narrative comprised 10 themes: SG (Sharia and governance), JIHAD (jihad), SFQS (support from Quran and Sunnah), HIJ (Hijrah), OTG (obedience to God), CS (caliphate and statehood), SFS (support from scholars), BA (Bay'ah), AP (apocalypse and prophecy), and ELT (expanding territory and Dawah). The emotive narrative included 7 themes: HW (happiness and wellbeing), SV (strength and victory), EM (exemplary models), MM (martyrs and martyrdoms), MS (Muslim suffering), RH (restoring honour), and HUM (humiliation). A detailed description of those individual themes can be found in Appendix 2.

Table 4. 1 Statistical composition of the narratives identified in ISIS English-language videos, which were consolidations of 26 individual themes. See Appendix 2 for detailed descriptions of each theme.

religious narrative										sum
SG	Jihad	SFQS	HIJ	OTG	CS	SFS	BA	AP	ELT	
159	109	107	71	68	53	27	22	18	15	**649**
9.31%	6.39%	6.27%	4.16%	3.98%	3.10%	1.58%	1.29%	1.05%	0.88%	**38.02%**
emotive narrative										
HW	SV	EM	MM	MS	RH	HUM				
98	85	65	42	35	21	15				**361**
5.74%	4.98%	3.81%	2.46%	2.05%	1.23%	0.88%				**21.15%**
enemy narrative										
COM	CC	WM	Exe	ROA	WF	WCWE	TA	VP		
154	124	104	76	75	72	46	26	20		**697**
9.02%	7.26%	6.09%	4.45%	4.39%	4.22%	2.69%	1.52%	1.17%		**40.83%**

The most significant narrative was about enemies of ISIS, which comprised 40.83% of the overall English-language videos (see also Figure 4. 9). First, the most prominent theme of this narrative was to show that ISIS was engaging a war (COM 9.02%). The theme that depicted ISIS captives confessing their 'sins' (V40; V15; V16; V17; V46) closely followed (CC 7.26%). Most importantly, themes regarding the West were overwhelming; these included depicting the West as aggressive and oppressive (WM 6.09%), describing Western military or economic failures (WF 4.22%), and showing that all Western nations are united and allied with regional powers in the Middle East (WCWE 2.69%). The themes regarding the terror attacks (TA 1.52%) and punishments of the domestic people (VP 1.17%) were, however, insignificant.
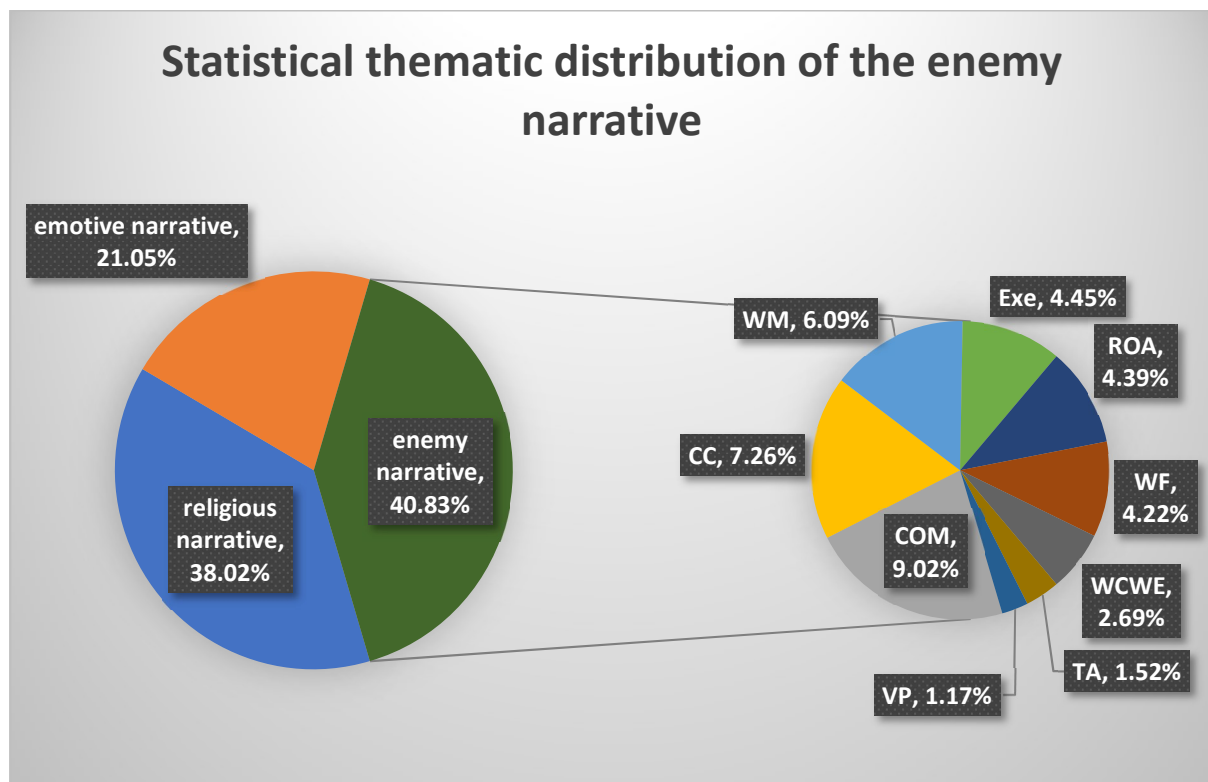
Figure 4. 9 Statistical thematic distribution of the enemy narrative in ISIS English-language videos

As Figure 4. 10 indicates, the religious narrative closely followed the enemy narrative as the second-most prevalent type of narrative in the videos. The themes that related to Sharia and governmental facilities constituted the largest piece of this narrative (SG 9.31%); this was followed by global appeal for jihad and heroic depictions of jihadists (JIHAD 6.39%), direct quotations from primary theological references (Quran and Sunnah) (SFQS 6.27%), and calls

for emigrations to ISIS (Hijrah 4.16%). In contrast, Bay'ah (allegiance) to the leader al-Baghdadi (BA 1.29%) and apocalypse (1.05%) were insignificantly presented.
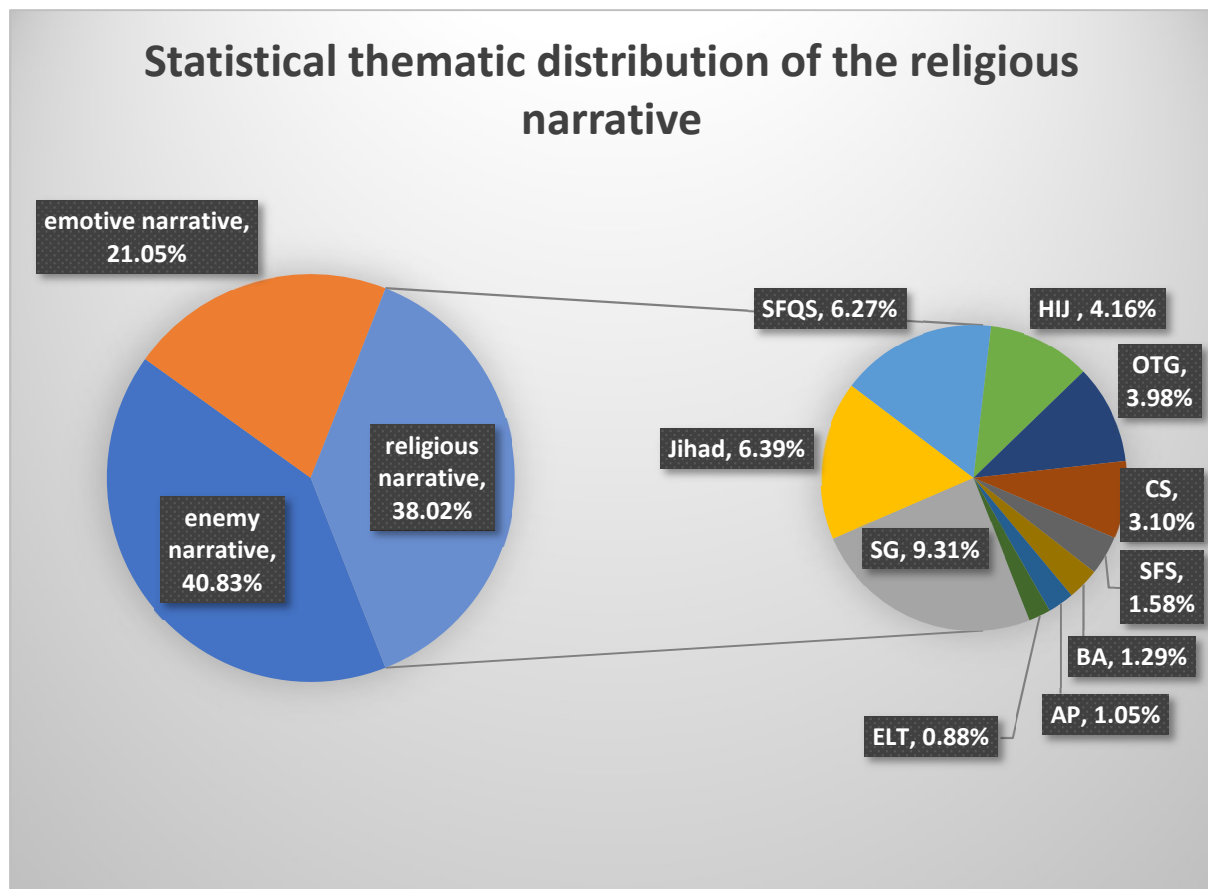
Figure 4. 10 Statistical thematic distribution of the religious narrative in ISIS English-language videos

The least prevalent narrative was the emotive one, accounting for a mere 21.15% of the total (see Figure 4. 11). The largest portion of emotional content was related to happiness about living inside IS territory (HW 5.74%), followed by manifestation of their victory and powers (4.98%), admiration for those who become fighters or martyrs for ISIS (EM 3.81%; MM 2.46%), and demonstrations of Muslims suffering (MS 2.05%). Conversely, the restoration of Islam's honour (RH 1.23%) and the feeling of being humiliated (HUM 0.88%) were scarcely shown.
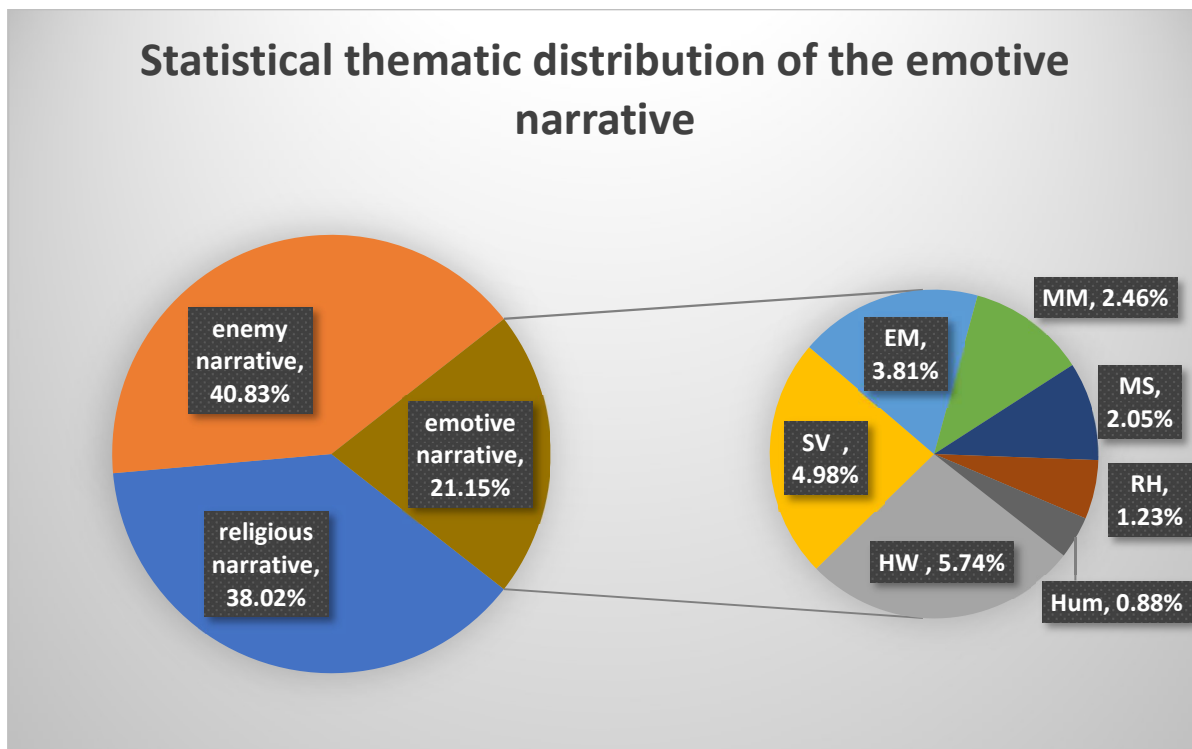
Figure 4. 11 Statistical thematic distribution of the emotive narrative in ISIS English-language videos

Following these categorisations, the themes were analysed individually to identify the most prevalent ones (see Figure 4. 12). The initial results of this analysis demonstrated that SG (9.31%) was the most prevalent theme, followed by COM (9.02%), CC (7.26%), JIHAD (6.39%), SFQS (6.27%), WM (6.09%), HW (5.74%), SV (4.98%), Exe (4.45%), ROA (4.39%), WF (4.22%), HIJ (4.16%), OTG (3.98%), EM (3.81%), CS (3.10%), WCWE (2.69%), MM (2.46%), MS (2.05%), SFS (1.58%), TA (1.52%), BA (1.29%), RH (1.23%), VP (1.17%), AP (1.05%), ELT (0.88%), and HUM (0.88%). Highlighted in yellow are the themes with a statistical level of significance at 0.06 or above, i.e., SG (9.31%), COM (9.02%), CC (7.26%), JIHAD (6.39%), SFQS (6.27%), and WM (6.09%).
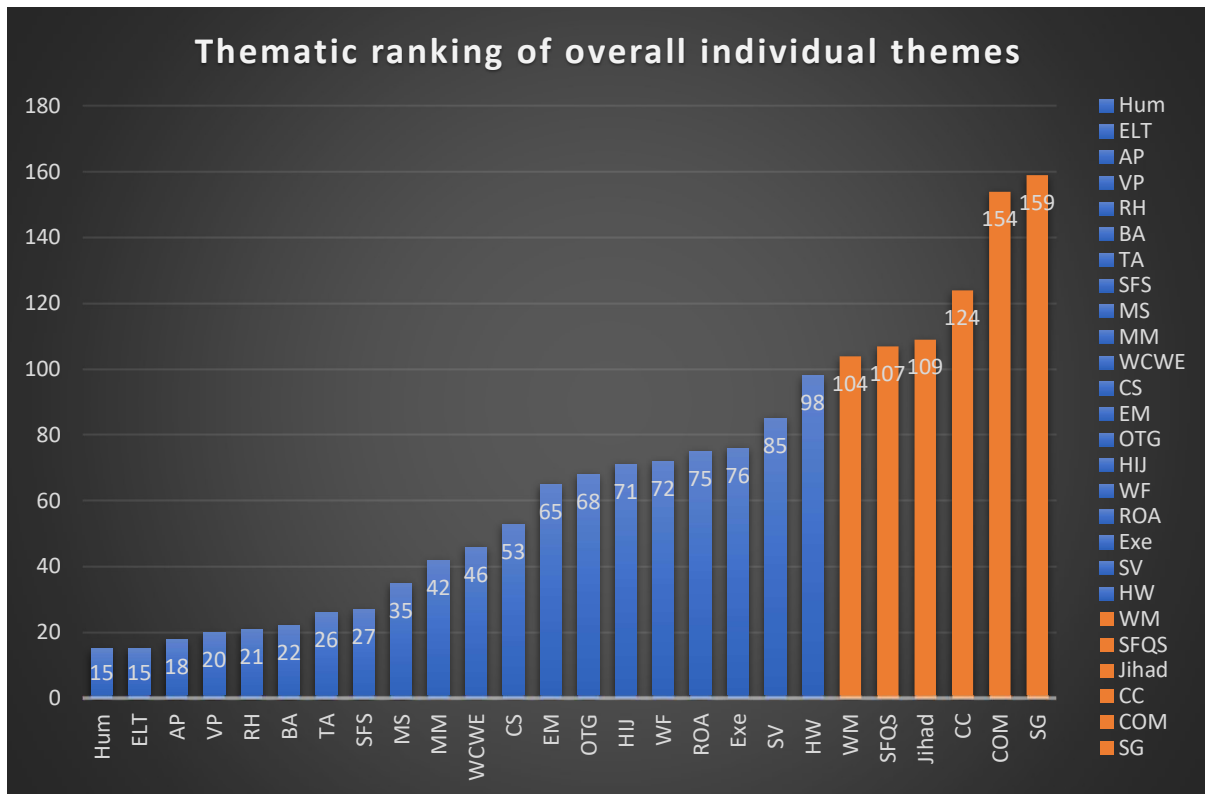
Figure 4. 12 Thematic rankings of the prevalence of 26 individual themes according to the total duration of the segments in 79 English-language videos

The correlations between the theme and time illustrated whether or not the IS narrative had changed from 2014 to 2017 and what trends might extend into the future (see Figure 4. 13). The results show that 6 out of the 26 themes – VP, TA, AP, SFS, COM, and OTG – exhibited a statistically significant shift over time; these themes are highlighted in yellow. [43] Three (33.33%) of the nine enemy themes, three (30%) of the ten religious themes, and zero of the seven emotive themes demonstrated a significant change over time. The emotive narrative was largely unchanged, and Jihad was the most stable theme in the videos. This result also precisely reflects the line graphs individually generated for 26 themes using the same data (see Appendixes 5 and 6 for example). In the following, the themes that shift most significantly over time and the most stable themes are isolated for further demonstration.

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[43] These highly unstable themes are identified and highlighted by the Microsoft Excel function 'formatting top 10%' among the result of the skewness of the distribution of 26 themes in the data set.
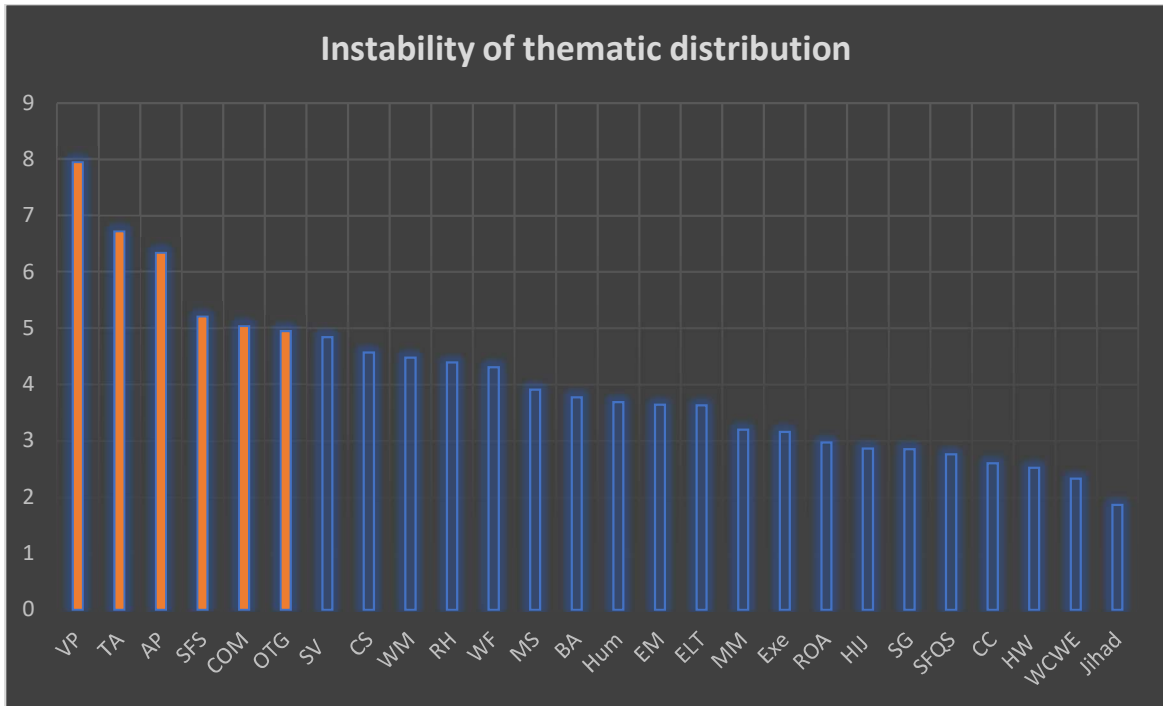
Figure 4. 13 The skewness of the distribution of the 26 themes in the ISIS English-language videos. From left to right, the figure shows the ranking of the themes from the highest level of instability to the lowest

The detailed line graphs indicate the vicissitudes of the most unstable themes: VP, TA, AP, COM, and OTG (see Appendix 7). First, all six themes were highly asymmetric and mostly not highly recurrent. Second, each of the six themes shows different patterns: Although VP appeared only four times in total and two times were minimal or light occurrences (scaled to one basic unit) (V19; V76), the culmination of its appearance was surprisingly high (V2). TA had almost zero occurrences prior to June 2015 (V55), but after that date, it appeared regularly; it culminated in January 2016, in conjunction with other two eminent points in V71 and V76, released on 5 July and 26 November 2016, respectively. AP mainly occurred before January 2015, the first half of the overall chronological range, and peaked in October 2014 before becoming inactive after June 2016. SFS contained only two prominent points (V2; V52) and was deactivated after August 2015. COM was the only one that belonged to one of the most recurring themes and occurred unstably, including two climactic and eminent points that both occurred in 2014 and lasted for approximately 40 minutes (V2; V19); this changed the entire statistical landscape of the theme. OTG signified, instead of individual culmination, a periodic culmination from May 2015 to July 2016.

In contrast, the six most stable themes – JIHAD, WCWE, HW, CC, SFQS, and SG – all displayed an opposite pattern to the unstable themes. They were all relatively symmetric and stable, and most importantly, they were mostly highly recurrent themes (see Appendix 8).

PART TWO: DISCUSSION

The analysis produced empirical findings regarding the overt characteristics of ISIS media operation as well as the thematic prevalence of and shift in ISIS English-language video productions from 2014 to 2017. Each of these findings is discussed as follows.

Overt Characteristics

Regarding the overt characteristics of English-language ISIS videos, the main findings in response to RQ1 are as follows:

- ISIS's English-language videos broadly coincide or align with the situations and real events that ISIS faced on the ground from 2014 to 2017.

- Though ISIS media productions overwhelmingly use Arabic and English, they have shown considerable capacity and flexibility in using many other languages, primarily in accordance with the targeted audiences.

- There are significant distinctions among the three ISIS official media centres according to their productions, while the provincial media centres indicate a clear decentralised tendency or shift in English-language video releases.

- Slightly more than half of ISIS English-language videos contain at least one Nasheed, which may lead to a higher possibility that they contain graphic or violent content.

- Nearly half of ISIS's English-language videos contain no graphically violent content.

First, ISIS's English-language videos broadly coincide with the situations and significant events that ISIS faced on the ground from 2014 to 2017. From the results, it is clear that ISIS released the largest number of videos in the first year (April 2014-2015), especially from July 2014 to March 2015; during this time, ISIS was rapidly expanding in terms of its territory and influence. Certain events, including the capture of Mosul (Chulov 2014), declaration the caliphate happened (Tran and Weaver 2014), and many Western hostages, such as James Foley, Steven Sotloff, David Haines, Alan Henning, and Peter Kassig, were all beheaded around the same time (Orr 2014; Dearden 2014, 2015; Boffey and Jalabi 2015; Malik 2014). Similarly, the results show that the number of releases on average decreased by half in the second year (April

2015-2016), and the fewest were released in the third year (April 2016-June 2017), particularly from October 2016 onwards. During the second year, the expansion and growth of ISIS started to cease – some territories were lost and senior leaders killed (Yuhas *et al.* 2015; Coles 2015; Burman 2015; Rasheed and Chmaytelli 2015). From April 2016, ISIS faced increasingly tougher and harder situations – more senior leaders were killed, and more territory was lost (Solomon 2016; Kalin 2016; Usborne 2016; Ryan and Deyoung 2016; Burke 2017), especially around October 2016. Around this time, the Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi announced the start of the mission to retake Mosul, and some people in charge of ISIS media departments, such as spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani and his successor Wael Adel Salman, former Minister of Information, were killed (Kalin 2016; Usborne 2016; Ryan and Deyoung 2016). Therefore, the chronological graph showing the number of releases of English-language videos generally match ISIS-related events occurring at that time.

Second, though it overwhelmingly uses Arabic and English language, ISIS media production has shown a considerable capacity and flexibility in using many other languages, primarily in accordance with its target audiences. This finding indicates that ISIS used multiple languages, predominantly Arabic and English but also French, Russian and Turkish, which supports observations from many other scholars in the field (Stern and Berger 2016; Berger and Morgan 2015; Winter 2015b; Zelin 2015; Fisher 2015; O'Halloran *et al.* 2016). The finding also suggests that the official use of the different spoken languages depends on the primary target audiences of the video. Many videos directly referenced the primary target audiences with their narrative or subtitles; V12, V31 and V71, V29, and V79 were spoken in Indonesian, French, Russian, and Turkish, respectively, and they directly addressed people speaking the same language. As English is a global language, ISIS used English publications to target English-speaking audiences on a global level (Winter 2015b; O'Halloran *et al*. 2016; Colas 2016), including Muslims living in the West, potential recruits, and Western policymakers (Wilbur 2017; Colas 2016; Winter 2015b). Therefore, the finding suggests that the language in which the video is narrated is chosen to target audiences that speak that language.

Third, though al-Hayat, al-Furqan, and I'tisam are the three official arms of ISIS propaganda (Zelin 2015; Barr and Herfroy-Mischler 2017), the video productions released from these media centres differed from one another. Speculations regarding their different

functionalities could be made based on the meanings of their names. First, al-Hayat media centre's productions were characterised by a large diversity and capacity, whereas videos from al-Furqan media centre were more specific. Al-Hayat released the largest number of videos, whereas Al-Furqan had the second largest. Al-Hayat's productions used many languages in addition to English and Arabic, such as French, Russian, Turkish, Indonesian, and Kazakh, while Al-Furqan produced only English or Arabic-narrated videos. Al-Hayat videos were mostly 'scored', whereas al-Furqan videos were mostly 'non-scored'. Every 'Nasheed' video was produced by al-Hayat, as al-Furqan produced no such videos. These results, which portray a divergence between two official centres, coincide with the meaning of *al-Hayat* and *al-Furqan*. The former means 'life' (Kamiar 2006), while the latter means the 'criterion' that refers to the Quran as a decisive factor between good and evil (Stacey 2016). Many videos produced by al-Hayat media focused on normal life (V7; V49; V53), whereas Al-Furqan released beheading videos, delivered messages to the West ('evil') (V15; V16; V17; V22; V30) and promoted what it believed to be 'good' (V1; V3).

Surprisingly, the findings revealed that both al-Hayat and al-Furqan produced an even distribution of 'violent' and 'non-violent' videos. The reason could be that ISIS portrayed violent jihad as part of normal life (V6; V10; V19; V47; V51; V56), and certain videos aiming to influence Western policymakers – such as the *Lend Me Your Ears* series (V18; V20; V21; V23; V25; V27; V34), most of the *Message to Japan* series (V41; V43; V44), and *Message to Egypt* (V59) – contained only pure statements.

Al-I'tisam media centre, in contrast, rarely produced English videos from 2014 to 2017. It released fewer videos than provincial-level media centres Wilāyat al-Raqqah and al-Anbar. The media centre was created in 2013, but it rarely created new productions from 2014 onwards (Zelin 2015). Its productions were similar to one another (V26; V36). Its invariable content, with one jihadist urging others to join and fight for ISIS, echoes the meaning of the words *Al-I'tisam*, meaning 'devotion to the Sunnah' (the practice of the Prophet) (Uraler 2010). It is possible that although al-I'tisam media centre was an official propaganda apparatus, it might have retreated from ISIS starting in 2014.

The provincial media centres, including Wilāyat al-Salahuddin (1.27%), Wilāyat al-Raqqah (3.80%), Wilāyat al-Anbar (6.33%), Wilāyat al-Furāt (1.27%), Wilāyat Al-Khayr (1.27%), and Wilāyat al-Raqqah (3.80%), indicated a very clear decentralised tendency of ISIS video productions, as supported by three empirical findings. First, in contrast to official media centres such as al-Hayat, al-Furqan, and Al-I'tisam, which produced 91.18% of their English-language videos in 2014 and 2015, provincial-level media centres started to actively release videos at the end of 2015 and released 72.73% of the videos from 2016 onwards. Second, comparing the period before 2016 and the period from 2016 onwards, provincial-level video productions increased rapidly (from 4.62% to 57.14%), whereas those of official media centres declined significantly (from 95.38% to 42.86%). Lastly, one provincial-level media centre produced an English-language feature film in 2016 (V78). Before that, such videos were only produced by either al-Hayat or al-Furqan media centres. These findings support those of Zelin (2015) and Fisher (2015), who find that the general media content and the online dissemination of ISIS media operations from 2013 to 2015 are decentralised. The findings also show that the decentralisation of ISIS media strategy continued and that this trend was not only applied to the English-language videos, but additionally to technical capability of filming featured movie with high-definition and sophisticated narratives (V78).

Fourth, marginally more than half of ISIS English-language videos contained at least one Nasheed of which those may lead to a higher possibility to contain 'graphic or violent content'. Gråtrud (2016) correctly observes that Nasheed is used extensively in ISIS videos, and most videos contain at least one Nasheed. The findings show that although the most common duration was shorter than 10 minutes, more than half (62.03%) of the English videos were 'scored'. In addition, the musical arrangement and violence of a video were interconnected – 'violent' videos were very likely to be 'scored', while 'non-violent' videos could possibly be 'non-scored'. The finding indicates that nearly 80% of 'violent' videos were 'scored' (33 out of 42), and most 'non-violent' videos were 'non-scored' (21 out of 37). This connection was more obvious in videos from provincial-level media offices. 'Non-scored' videos of provincial-level of media centres were all 'non-violent', while the 'scored' videos were – except V62 – all 'violent'. It could be that ISIS propagandists prefer to incorporate music in videos with violent content due to the music's varying impact and resonance but certain consistent characteristics (Berg 2017; Giles *et al.* 2009; Corte and Edwards 2008). Using Gråtrud's (2016)

example of one ISIS Nasheed theme, war and brutality, to explain this, the Nasheed aimed to threaten enemies and encourage the fight of the existential battle.

Finally, the ratio of 'violent' and 'non-violent' videos was evenly distributed. On one hand, it purports that official ISIS English-language videos might have a wider goal than ISIS *Nasheed* and other jihadi groups' video productions that shows violence and brutality much more extensively according to Gråtrud's (2016) and Salem, *et al.* (2008), since this study finds that half of the videos did not contain any graphic or violent content at all. On the other hand, graphically violent footage that distribute over half of the videos show an important fact – that brutality and violence in official English-language video of ISIS apparently play a role more than merely 'a red herring' (Winter 2015b, p.4) or simply a tool to 'draw attention' (Tinnes 2015, p.78). Even though only focusing on ISIS brutality would greatly derail our understanding of group's overall message and its appeals (Winter 2015b; Tinnes 2015), to achieve this overall prevalence of this facet, there must be a more convincing and sophisticated underlying intentionality.

Thematic Findings

The thematic findings of the ISIS English-language videos are highlighted as follows in response to RQ2 to RQ4:

- Within the scope of ISIS propaganda, the extent to which ISIS emphasises certain themes is distinctive from that of other media releases.

- Two most important narratives for ISIS propagandists are enemy and religious narratives, which reflect a binary worldview of ISIS ideology. ISIS represents the 'good', whereas those who oppose ISIS are its enemies and the 'evil' who deny the world of Allah.

- The ratio of the religious narrative in ISIS English-language videos elucidates one of the hottest debates regarding ISIS's Islamic nature (Cottee 2016; Hasan 2015; Reuter 2015; Wood 2015) by supporting and reinforcing the arguments that religious artefacts of ISIS are important and cannot be neglected if the narrative and underlying ideologies are to be understood (Cottee 2016; Pelletier et. Al 2016; Kunzar 2017).

• The most fundamental themes promoted by ISIS remain consistent over time, whereas the least recurrent themes are more dynamic and might shift significantly in response to a series of real-world events that ISIS faced on the ground.

First, the themes identified in this study corroborate those of other studies of ISIS propaganda (Zelin 2015; Winter 2015b; Gratrud 2016; Colas 2016; Kunzar 2017). In summary, ISIS ideologues use theological language to justify that it is on a divine mission to set the world right. This mission can be accomplished only through violent jihad, and only the ISIS worldview is tolerable; anyone who stands in their way is the 'evil' that is doomed to fail. Additionally, the findings show that emotive language was moderately used in order to appeal to and recruit more recruits (Kunzar 2017). These thematic elements are presented in other jihadist propaganda (Aly *et al*. 2016; Gendron 2016 Salem, Reid and Chen 2008; Abrahms, Beauchamp and Mroszczyk 2016; Halverson *et al*. 2011; Rogan 2010), including the Taliban (Johnson & Waheed 2011), Al-Qaeda (Wright and Bachmann 2015; Cohen *et al*. 2016) and its affiliates AQIM (Torres-Soriano 2011, 2016) and AQAP (Droogan and Peattie 2016), although the extent to which ISIS emphasises certain themes is unique (Kunzar 2017).

The findings from this study do not only support Kunzar's point that albeit to different extents, thematic elements of ISIS propaganda were also contained in other jihadi propaganda, but also suggest that the extent to which ISIS emphasises certain themes is distinctive from that of other media productions. Despite conveying a coherent message in general, themes in ISIS magazines (Colas 2016), leaders' speeches and public statements (Kunzar 2017), and Nasheeds (Gratrud 2016)[44] are emphasised by ISIS in English-language videos to different extents. In *Dabiq*, the ISIS English magazine, the religious narrative accounts for the largest portion of content, closely followed by the enemy narrative,[45] whereas the emotive narrative appears to be unimportant (Colas 2016). For the leaders' speeches, however, the use of emotion-provoking themes is the most prominent in ISIS core narratives, and these themes are more prevalent than religious themes, while the enemy narrative is half as prevalent as

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[44] Gratrud (2016) clarifies that many themes are missing in ISIS Nasheed*s* in comparison to ISIS propaganda in general, though it mostly conveys the same message.
[45] Colas (2016) divides the enemy narrative into 'interaction with the West', 'military updates', and 'inciting attacks against the West'.

the religious narrative (Kunzar 2017). In the videos, the findings show that the enemy narrative accounted for the largest portion of content. This was closely followed by the religious narrative, while the emotive narrative was nearly half as prevalent as the other narratives. Gratrud's (2016) argument may provide a reasonable explanation for this. He notes that the effectiveness of ISIS Nasheed is likely attributed to its emphasis on limited number of themes that have broad appeal for Muslims, and this appears to be applicable not only for Nasheed but also for other ISIS media productions. Therefore, though different ISIS media productions mostly convey propaganda content in a consistent way, there is diversity in the extent to which ISIS emphasises certain narratives; this may be driven by motives for effectiveness and efficiency.

Second, the two most important narratives for ISIS propagandists were enemy and religious narratives, which reflected a binary worldview of ISIS and were given a degree of legitimacy, enhanced by the experiences of Muslims and the history of Islam (Mahood and Rana 2016, p.15; Gerges 2016, p.93). An interesting scene is featured in the video *Structure of the Caliphate* (2016), in which ISIS employs a sharp contract in the use of cinematic techniques corresponding to themselves and the enemies. The shot depicts a close-up of an imam (the worship leader of a mosque) who, in a slow-motion, is turning his face that looks perceptibly at the mujahedeen and the Western opponents under a different backlighting technique. It causes completely antithetic viewing effects; the imam gives an affable and courteous side-face smile to those children and ISIS fighters where the lighting is at its brightest, while this smile gradually vanishes as he turns his face pointing to the cinema – where the lighting co-ordinately transforms to the darkest – that the face becomes antagonistic and inimical, as the next scene followed with a flash-forward of the Western troops and aircrafts (V72). This deliberate adaptation of a contract cinematic technique respectively for the 'self' and the 'enemy' in a given scene highlights the binary antithesis of ISIS's underlying ideology of worldview in viewing regarding themselves and the West.

On one hand, ISIS is the 'good' who tries to obey God by implementation of Sharia (Islamic law), performance of Jihad, encouragement of Hijrah, and establishment of the Caliphate, and are guided by what they call 'prophetic methodology' (V13), their understanding of the Quran and Sunnah. ISIS jihadists were described as 'lion of the caliphate', 'brother of Islam', and

'warriors in upholding the rules of God' (V6; V7; V13; V32; V78). In the pre-war mobilization speech before ISIS's attack on the city of Samarra, known as the beginning of the Northern Iraq offensive (4-25 June 2014), that led to the seizure of Mosul and the soon declared establishment of the caliphate (Al-salhy and Arango 2014; Morris and Sly 2014; Taylor 2014; Hassan 2014). An ISIS commander said,

'You will enter the city of Samarra by Allah's permission (…) oh brothers, you are not defeated by the number of your enemy, nor by the strength of their weapons, nor do you gain victory by these causes. Rather, you gain victory by obeying Allah. What forsakes you in front of the enemy is your sins, my brothers (…) You will meet the enemies of Allah with your truthfulness and good deeds for Allah. This is stronger against Allah's enemies than a thousand canons [the next scene films the assault and the fleeing Iraqi troops].[46]

In contrast, those who oppose ISIS are the 'evil' who deny Allah; their 'evil stems from their 'disbelief' (Cantey 2017; Gratrud 2016; Mahood and Rana 2016). The main 'enemy' is the West and Muslim apostates (*ibid.*). Western nations are labelled 'crusaders' (V55; V48; V70; Mahood and Rana 2016) and 'infidel' invaders (Mahood and Rana 2016). As the ISIS fighter claims, after beheading 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians in Libya (Ochab 2019), *'today, we are on the south of Rome on the land of Islam, Libya, sending another message – oh crusaders, safety for you will only be wishes especially when you are fighting us all together. Therefore, we will fight you altogether* (V48, 2014) (Zaimov 2015; Hoffman 2015; Durie 2015). Another utterance for this end in the video *Flames of Wars* (2014) featuring 43rd U.S. President George W. Bush's speech, 'either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists', (V19, 2014). These utterances reinforce the rhetoric of the war between believers and unbelievers and sustain the narrative of the polarisation in perpetuating ISIS's us-versus-them mentality (Tinnes 2015; Al-Dayel and Anfinson 2018; Cantey 2017; Gratrud 2016; Mahood and Rana 2016).

The historical and political grievances that were exacerbated to harness feelings of the experiences of Western Muslims (Mahood and Rana 2016). ISIS exploits the prejudice and discrimination already experienced by some Muslims and confirms the cause to be the West's

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[46] This is to coincide the Quran verse *Surah Ali 'Imran*, 'they will not harm you except for [some] annoyance. And if they fight you, they will show you their backs; then they will not be aided' [3:111].

deep-rooted hatred of Islam (Mahood and Rana 2016). Although the results of this study show that this Western narrative was more masterful than the other enemy of ISIS, i.e., Muslim apostates, who were also considered by ISIS to be hypocrites and heretics of Islam, through Takfir [Ex-communication], ISIS has proven itself 'willing to modify religious and political doctrines that get in its way' (Colas 2016, p.12; McCants 2015, pp.154-155). By labelling Muslims as such, ISIS attempts to undermine their authority to criticise, and it is alluring for vulnerable Muslims who are unable to differentiate between Islamism and Islam (Mahood and Rana 2016).

Third, the empirical findings regarding the ratio of religious narrative in ISIS English-language videos (see Figure 4. 10) elucidate the hot debate regarding whether ISIS is a religiously-motivated group (Cottee 2016; Hasan 2015; Reuter 2015; Wood 2015). First, it was empirically found that the religious narrative was emphasised to a great extent not only by the videos but also in many other ISIS media and propaganda productions (Zelin 2015; Winter 2015b; Gratrud 2016; Colas 2016; Kunzar 2017). Moreover, the concepts of Sharia and violent jihad identified from the ISIS English videos were among the most recurrent individual themes (see Figure 4. 12). Finally, and most importantly, ISIS relied more extensively on primary Islamic theological references, Quran and Sunnah (primarily Hadith, a collection of the words and deeds of the prophet Mohammed) than on quotations from Islamic scholars when making arguments or justifying their deeds (see SFQS and SFS in Figure 4. 12). In Islam, the Quran and Sunnah are the primary theological references, while prominent Islamic scholars are secondary (Makdisi 1985; Mutahhari 2014). This reveals ISIS's effort to seek legitimation in the Islamic world globally as being religiously correct. Therefore, the findings from this study support the notion that religious artefacts of ISIS are important and cannot be neglected if the narrative and underlying ideologies are to be understood (Cottee 2016; Pelletier et. Al 2016; Kunzar 2017).

Fourth, existing scholarship has indicated that both AQAP and ISIS have undergone major thematic shifts to respond to a series of real-world events, but they have maintained a consistent thematic structure at a broader level (Pelletier *et al*. 2016; Droogan and Peattie

2016; Kuznar 2017). [47] The findings from this study demonstrate the same pattern in the ISIS English-language videos. The findings further suggest that the most primary and fundamental themes promoted by ISIS mostly seem to maintain stability and consistency over time, whereas the least recurrent themes are more dynamic and might shift significantly in response to a series of real-world events that ISIS faced on the ground.

The findings show that the themes that significantly shifted over time were mostly among the least recurring themes (see Figures 4. 12 and 4. 13). They broadly coincided with real-world events (see Appendix 7). For example, TA [Terror Attack] was active in a later period, while AP [Apocalyptic Prophecy] was active primarily in the early period due to the different series of real events that ISIS faced.

On one hand, TA had nearly zero occurrences before June 2015, and its culmination (see Appendix 7) was in January 2016, where ISIS depicted 7 perpetrators as heroes who carried out the terror attack in Paris on 13 November 2015 and caused the deaths of 137 people (V66; Foster 2017). Many deadly terror attacks by ISIS in the West were carried out in 2015, and in comparison to one year prior, the scales and the causalities caused were unparalleled. The other two eminent points in TA appeared in July and November 2016. The former was in response to a French lone wolf of ISIS, Iarossi Abballa, who was known as the perpetrator of the 2016 Magnanville stabbing on 13 June 2016, and the latter was in response to the terror attacks in Homberg in Germany, Orlando in the U.S., and Russia (V71; V76; Chrisafis and Willsher 2016). The AP mainly occurred before January 2015; there was no further manifestation in the videos after June 2016. This could be, in reality, connected to the Syrian town Dabiq, where it is believed that a 'final battle' will occur between Muslims and 'Romans' before the end of time. ISIS captured the town Dabiq in 2014 but eventually lost it in 2016 (Withnall 2016). [48]

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[47] Droogan and Peattie (2016) and Pelletier *et al*. (2016) find this in the English publication *Inspire,* and Kuznar (2017) find the same pattern in ISIS leaders' speeches.

[48] ISIS promoted doomsday in many of its videos in 2014 (V1; V2; V13; V19; V24; V30; V36; McCants 2014; Danin 2014). As an early message to America by ISIS leader al-Baghdadi, 'as for the near future, you will be forced into a direct confrontation with Allah's permission, despite your reluctance. And the sons of Islam have prepared themselves for this day, so wait and see' (V19, 2014). This end-of-world prophecy reached its peak later the year when ISIS released the video, *Wait, we are also waiting* (2014), filming foreign fighters stay inside *Dabiq* pointing their fingers towards the West, 'you gather and unite to fight Islam. come, we are waiting for you' (Fraser 2014; Malas 2014).

Conversely, the most recurrent themes that were designed to spread fundamental principles, such as violent jihad and Islamic law, and to implement the primary objectives of ISIS, such as hostage negotiations, were mostly consistent (see Appendix 8; Figure 4. 12). However, an exceptional case was the theme COM, which was one of the most recurrent themes but very unstable. Its two eminent points were so overwhelmingly enduring and lasting that the overall statistical stability of the theme was affected (V2; V19). Nevertheless, in general, the themes that significantly shifted over time matched real-world events, and they mostly were among the least recurrent themes in the videos, whereas the most recurrent themes in the fundamental ideologies of ISIS maintained a chronological consistency.

Finally, as Zelin (2015) suggests, there is a potential asymmetric nature of ISIS media operations, which could be a deliberate attempt to alter the perceptions of what ISIS was confronting on the ground. The results of this study show that the skewness of all themes was not 0, and certain themes that exhibited a statistically significant shift coincided with real events. This finding statistically supported this asymmetry and intentionality broadly rather than on a day-to-day basis.

CONCLUSION

From a historical perspective, ISIS is certainly not the first fearsome extremist group that is able to recruit foreign fighters in support of its cause or to inspire lone wolves globally. Nevertheless, the group has spawned an unneglectable and high level of response from the international community. There are undoubtedly many factors leading to this attention, and the unprecedented provocations and recruitment success of ISIS propaganda are very likely a key factor (Cottee 2015b; Winkler *et al*. 2016; Pelletier *et al.* 2016).

This chapter has empirically examined the content of 79 ISIS English-language videos released from 2014 to 2017 and provided an explanatory analysis to create a comprehensive understanding of what ISIS English-language videos are and what ISIS's worldview is, as represented through the videos. This content analysis examined the production features, thematic prevalence, and chronological vicissitudes of videos over three years. Five conclusions are drawn. First, ISIS has generated a complex media operating system with considerable capability and flexibility to cope with various circumstances and respond to certain arguments with which the group is confronted through solid and high-definition video propaganda. Second, ISIS English-language propaganda videos have created a comprehensive brand of narratives comprising many non-discrete themes (Winter 2015b) that span theological, rhetorical (especially with regard to enemies), and emotional artefacts (Kunzar 2017). Albeit to a different extent, its thematic elements, on a broader level, have echoed the other releases from various jihadist groups and other types of ISIS media. Third, the two most important narratives – the enemy and religious narratives, which accounted for the vast majority of video content – reflect a binary worldview: ISIS is the 'good' who completely follows religious doctrines, whereas others are the 'evil' who deny Allah and oppressively cause Muslims' suffering. Third, the prevalence of the religious narrative shows that the religious artefact of ISIS is important if the narrative and underlying ideologies are to be understood (Cottee 2016; Pelletier et. Al 2016; Kunzar 2017). This finding contributes to the hot debate regarding the religious nature of ISIS (Cottee 2016; Hasan 2015; Reuter 2015; Wood 2015). Finally, this study suggests that the most recurrent themes have also maintained a chronological consistency. Thus, the highlighted individual themes in terms of prevalence

could be worth in-depth interpretations and analysis in further studies, as those themes are crucial for constructing an effective counternarrative.

This study is merely an early step, and it contains some limitations that further studies might be able to overcome. First, although the dataset of this study contains the largest scale of ISIS English-language videos so far, an obvious limitation stems from the difficulty in collecting all ISIS English-language videos due to resource constraints and the fluid circumstance of ISIS. Second, this study does not account for the ways in which potential audiences of ISIS English videos might digest the content. Although this content analysis allowed us to understand what themes a visual text by ISIS contains, it did not measure how strongly a given theme might resonate with audiences. Some research in this domain is already underway, and more work would further improve the understanding (Cottee 2017a; Cottee and Cunliffe 2018). Third, some researchers have suggested that the effectiveness of ISIS narratives depends on not only what the narrative contains but also the style in which the content is presented. It is a function to which its content is vividly expressed (Nisbettt and Ross 1980; O' Keefe 1997, 1998; Cantey 2017). Further studies could provide another perspective by, for instance, examining cinemograph or filmic language. Fourth, the releases of the videos were chronologically distributed without an enduring range of continuity, as they all occurred individually in a specific time slot. Though inevitable, this might affect the preciseness of the results in terms of the function of the chronological related-measurements in this study. Finally, and most importantly, systematic, theory-based guidelines for the interpretation of ISIS propaganda and its use of language as a means to achieve certain objectives through words and deeds are absent from this study and the literature (Braddock and Horgan 2016). Further research could offer an interpretation of ISIS English videos to understand the meanings beyond locution (Skinner 2002a).

Nevertheless, this study offers an understanding of the nature of ISIS narratives, and this method of analysis is also applicable to other extremists' visual texts. Admittedly, understanding the manner in which ISIS composes its propaganda and articulates its deliberate messages in order to achieve its strategic objectives is an important first step (Winter 2015b; Pelletier *et al.* 2016; Braddock and Horgan 2016; Stern and Berger 2016). A failure to accomplish this, as a part of constituting a comprehensive counter-narrative, could

leave ISIS to freely use its narrative, frame the nature of its respective conflicts, and appeal to audiences without confronting major challenges, thereby increasing the risk of drawing potential audiences to support ISIS or even 'join the ranks' (V12).

CHAPTER FIVE: EXPLORING SPEECH ACTS IN OFFICIAL ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ISIS VIDEOS FROM 2014-2017

INTRODUCTION

'*Obama, did you prepare enough weapons for your soldiers or not?*' (V8, 14:12-14:25)

This is a question raised by a jihadist man on a border police patrol between Iraq and Syria in the concluding scene of an official ISIS English-language video, entitled *The End of Sykes-Picot* (2014). His utterance seems ambiguous, and many interpretations are arguably possible. He could be stating, for instance, a confident threat, a simple question, or an amusing irony; but rather than embracing conjecture, we need to understand his utterance precisely (Richards 2015; Salazar 2017; Schaukowitch 2018).

The above utterance is, by its very nature, linguistically accountable. The French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre once said that 'words are loaded pistols'. Words espoused by extremist groups are capable of causing damage beyond physical violence. 'Slick' propaganda videos have played a crucial role in ISIS's capacity to negotiate with enemies and to lure supporters, both of which have been essential to the growth of the group's influence. Every utterance belongs to a much larger propaganda operation, and this sophisticated media campaign incorporates the use of well-produced propaganda, videos, and magazines on an unparalleled scale (Macnair and Richard 2018; Houck et al. 2017; Mahood and Rane 2016). Inadequate knowledge of ISIS's rhetorical and propagandistic capabilities and intentions could severely reduce the efficacy of counter-strategies (Richards 2015). Accordingly, in seeking to better understand those capabilities and intentions, speech act theory is a good place to begin (Schaukowitch 2018).

Taking the example cited at the beginning, the jihadist man at a border police patrol says he is 'asking a question to Obama': '*did you prepare enough weapons for your soldiers or not?*'

(14:12-14:25). The locutionary meaning of the utterance demonstrates an enquiry about the American soldier's arsenal. The utterance itself contains a possible expression of empathy towards U.S. troops – though it is, in fact, the opposite, which is why one needs to examine ISIS's political context. Situating the video within the context of its occurrence reveals that it was released on 29 June 2014. An American-led intervention in Iraq had started on 15 June 2014, ordered by President Barack Obama (Garamone 2014). This context narrows the scope of the illocutionary acts. It is necessary to look more closely at the linguistic context of the utterance: a man standing in front of a police patrol (made by the U.S.) says, *'To the people in the West: just keep giving and we'll take them all…the weapons from those who cooperate with Americans have been with us now, for free…'*. Therefore, based on the political and linguistic contexts of its occurrence, this utterance is found to be ironic; the video fundamentally *ridicules* American military intervention in Iraq.

There is a growing corpus of literature trying to analysing ISIS propaganda text, and many studies are fixated at a content- or theme-focused analysis (Cantey 2017; Zelin 2015; Barr and Herfroy-Mischler 2017; Wilbur 2017; Kuznar 2017; Mahood and Rane 2016; Gråtrud 2016; Allendorfer and Herring 2015; Winkler *et al.* 2016; Colas 2016; Al-Rawi 2016; Novenario 2016; Winter 2018). By examining various sources of content, these studies have all made solid contributions to the field; they have shown us what ISIS propaganda looks and sounds like, how it works rhetorically, and what its prevalent themes are. However, studies specifically analysing ISIS language remain scarce (Macnair and Frank 2018; Windsor 2018), and the literature still lacks a comprehensive study of a relatively latent, illocutionary dimension of ISIS's English-language output. This domain is not only indispensable in understanding any act of communication and its underlying meanings (Skinner 2002a) but also recognised as imperative to our knowledge of extremist propaganda and counter-propaganda apparatuses (Braddock and Horgan 2016; Cottee 2016; Salazar 2017; Schaukowitch 2018).

To bridge this gap, this chapter provides an exploratory, evidence-based analysis of the speech acts of 79 official ISIS English-language propaganda videos over the course of three years. It examines the prevalence of and changes in the group's speech acts through a Skinnerian lens. This chapter differs from the detailed analysis of each video (as later conducted in Chapter Six) by enabling us to grasp the larger picture as well as the fluid

movement and dynamic change over time. When applied to a group, this understanding enables us to 'identify its most pressing priorities and determines how it wants to be understood' by its supporters as well as its adversaries (Winter 2017b, p1). This chapter ultimately answers the following questions:

- RQ1: What is ISIS saying/doing in its official English-language videos?

- RQ2: Which classes of speech acts are most commonly performed by ISIS in the videos?

- RQ3: Which of the speech acts are featured most prominently in the videos?

- RQ4: How do the speech acts change chronologically from 2014 to 2017?

This chapter presents the findings of a speech act analysis of official English-language ISIS videos from 2014-2017. It is divided into two parts. The first presents the results of this research visually – using tables and graphs created in Microsoft Excel – in relation to the prevalence and vicissitudes of the speech acts. The second part discusses the results and concludes by presenting the new insights this study has contributed to our understanding of ISIS's use of language, the limitations of this study and suggestions for future research.

The significance of this research is threefold. Most obviously, it bridges a gap in existing scholarship by exploring an illocutionary level of meaning in ISIS language that provides new original insights in this domain. Second, it tests the viability of a novel method that highlights the complexity and originality of ISIS's political arguments by coherently associating those arguments with their ultimate linguistic intentions. This study therefore draws connections between ISIS videos and the political situation that the group faces, and it shines a vivid light on the worldview of ISIS ideology. In this way, the meanings of the videos may be more thoroughly understood, and scholarly analysis focused on the surface dimension of ISIS media outputs might start to include multiple important layers of meaning in its interpretation (Silva and Crilley 2017). Thirdly, this study explores the series of changes that serve to map the major events, challenges, or imperatives that ISIS has faced from the zenith of its power to the critical loss of Mosul and thus offers a window onto the events happening on the ground and ISIS's response to them. This exploration generates insights into the group and how it thinks, which might eventually aid counter-propaganda in the future (Winter 2015b; Schmitt 2014).

PART ONE: RESULTS

Prevalence

To understand the speech acts performed in the videos, individual speech acts and their corresponding higher classifications of speech acts were examined. Table 5.1 shows the overall distribution of five types of speech act and fifteen subordinate individual speech acts. *Assertive* included six speech acts, i.e., *boasting, rebutting, claiming, ridiculing, informing*, and *justifying. Directive* comprised five speech-acts: *threatening* (D) [49] , *inviting, inciting, commanding*, and *forbidding. Expressive* entailed two speech acts: *praising* and *condemning. Commissive* and *declaration* were statistically insignificant. The former consisted of one speech act, *threatening* (C), whereas the latter contained two speech acts, *pronouncing* and *declaring.* This study found that *directive* (50.63%), *expressive* (24.05%), and *assertive* (16.46%) were the most common types of speech acts performed in ISIS's English-language videos. A detailed table presenting the [definitions] and [criteria] of each speech act can be found in Appendix 5.

Table 5. 1 Statistical compositions of the overall classification of speech acts incorporating 15 individual speech acts identified in ISIS English-language videos.

Speech act	number of videos	percentage
Assertive	**13**	**16.46%**
Boasting	5	6.33%
Rebutting	4	5.06%
Claiming	1	1.27%
Ridiculing	1	1.27%
Informing	1	1.27%
Justifying	1	1.27%
Directive	**40**	**50.63%**
Threatening (D)	16	20.25%
Inviting	11	13.92%
Inciting	8	10.13%
Commanding	3	3.80%
Forbidding	2	2.53%
Expressive	**19**	**24.05%**
Condemning	15	18.99%
Praising	4	5.06%

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[49] The *threatening* category is analysed individually, but the speech act can be *directive* or *commissive* based upon whether either it seeks action-provoking outcomes from addressees or expresses the speaker's stance of commitment.

Commissive	5	6.33%
Threatening (C)	5	6.33%
Declaration	**2**	**2.53%**
Pronouncing	1	1.27%
Declaring	1	1.27%

Figure 5.1 magnifies the distribution of each component of the *directive type of* speech act (50.63%) in official ISIS English-language videos. This type of speech act has a distinctive characteristic in that it invariably aims to drive the addressee to do things as requested (Searle 2008). The *directive* type was definitively the most prominent speech act type in the videos, accounting for marginally more than half. *Threatening* (D) speech acts were the largest component, accounting for 20%, followed by *inviting* (14%) and *inciting* (10%), which encouraged viewers to perform *Hijrah* (emigration) and violent *jihad*. However, concepts from Muslim transcripts commanding what is right (4%) and forbidding what is wrong (3%) were illustrated insignificantly. In the *directive* type, speech acts aimed at ISIS's enemies (20%) and those targeting ISIS sympathisers (24%) were distributed relatively evenly.
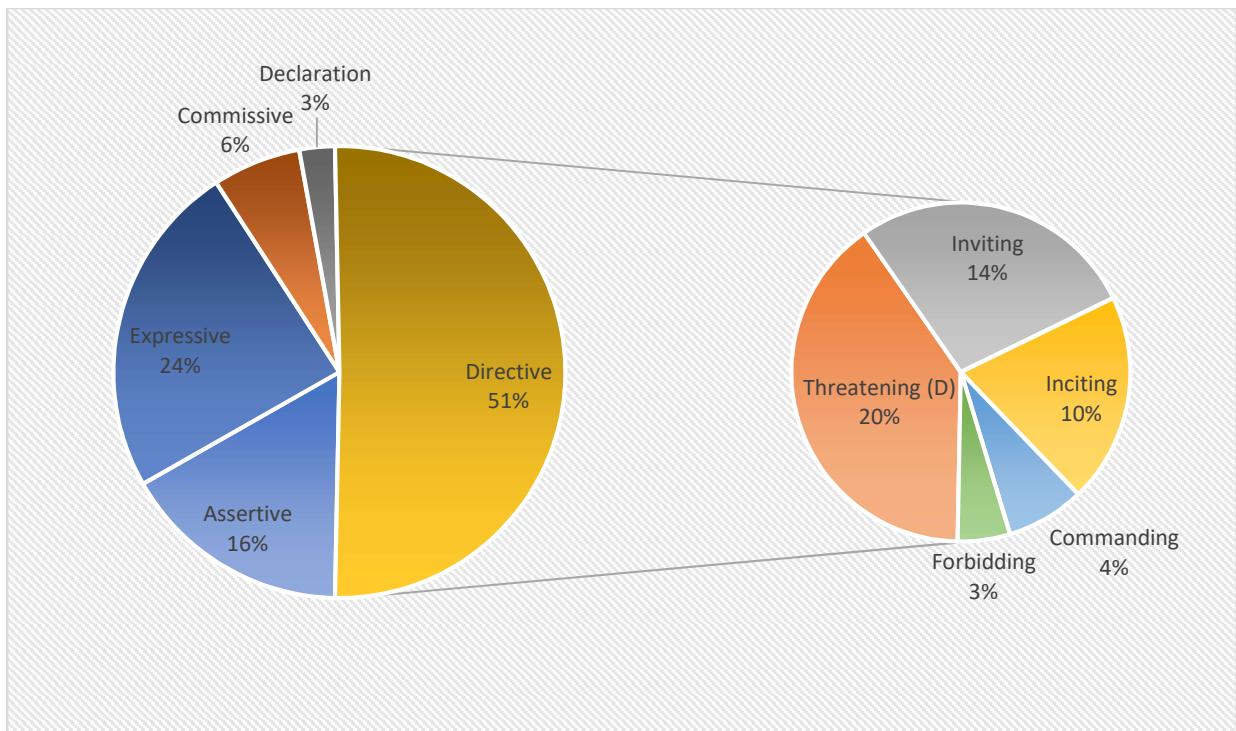
Figure 5. 1 Distribution of the directive class of speech acts in ISIS English-language videos.

The *expressive* type (24.05%) is the second-most prevalent speech act type in the videos, even though it is only half as dominant as the *directive* type. Figure 5.2 shows the distribution of

each component of the *expressive* type of speech act. This class expresses the feelings and attitudes of the speaker (Searle 2008). The primary component (*condemning)* condemns enemies (18.99%), and it is significantly larger than the second component, *praising* (of jihadists, martyrs, emigrates as well as the spirit of their deeds) (5.06%).
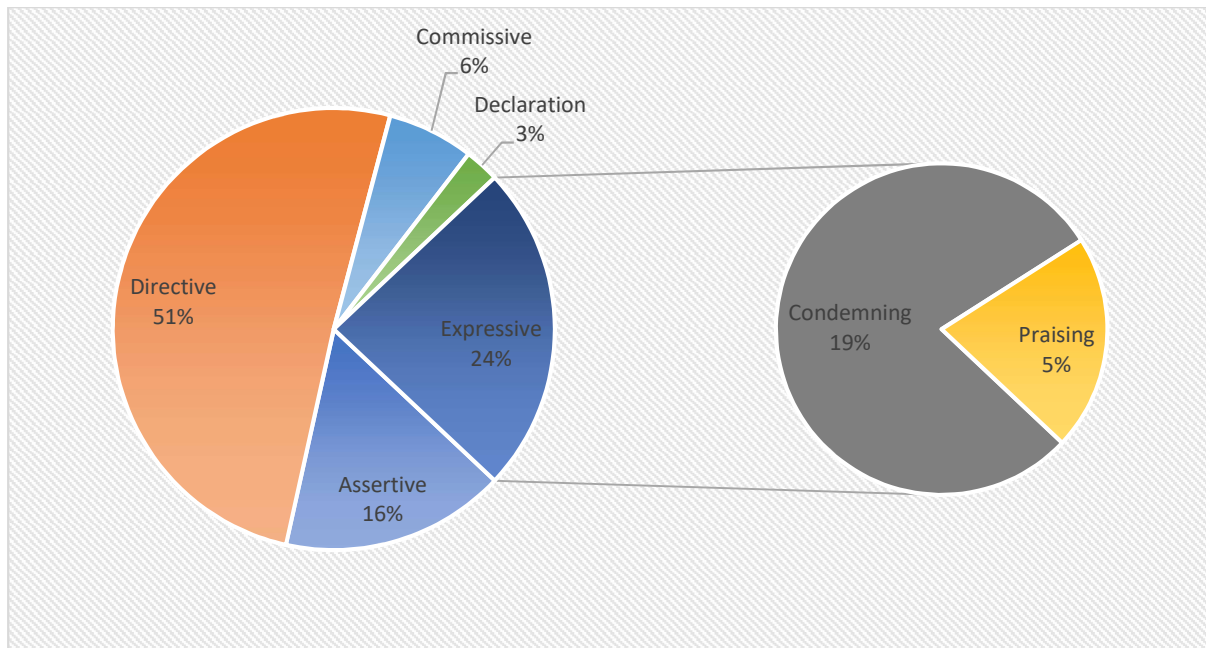
Figure 5. 2 Distribution of the expressive class of speech acts in ISIS English-language videos.

Assertive (16.46%) followed as the third recurring speech act type, even though it included the largest number of individual speech acts, as Figure 5.3 shows. This type of speech act is meant to tell people how things are (Searle 2008). *Boasting* (6.33%), regarding strengths, military advancement, and life conditions, was the most significant speech act of this type, followed by *rebutting* (5.06%), which entailed counter-arguments made by ISIS regarding its legitimacy, the establishment of a caliphate, and other ongoing debates about what ISIS promotes and believes. The other categories, each of which accounted for 1.27%, included *claiming*, *ridiculing*, *informing*, and *justifying;* however, these are statistically inconsequential.
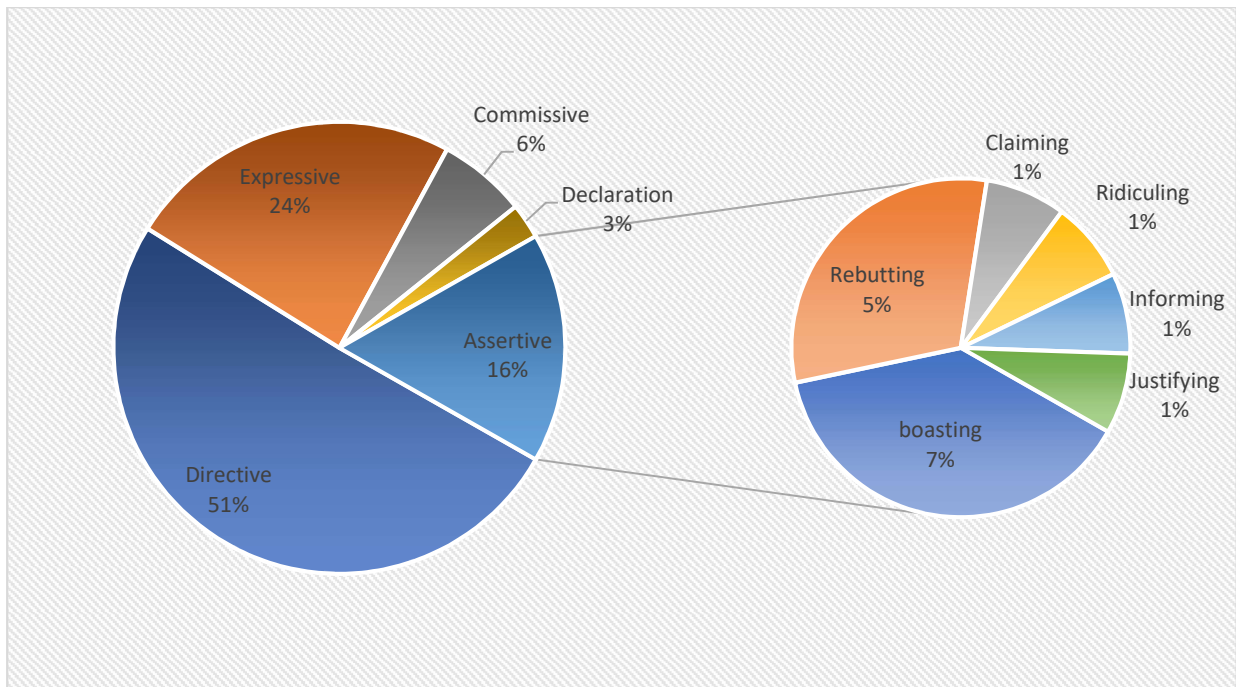
Figure 5. 3 Distribution of the assertive class of speech acts in ISIS English-language videos.

Following this categorisation, the speech acts were quantified individually to analyse those that recurred most often. Figure 5.4 illustrates the results of the overall prevalence of fifteen speech acts performed in ISIS official English-language videos. The results indicate that *threatening* (26.58%) was the most prevalent type, followed by *condemning* (18.99%), *inviting* (13.92%), *inciting* (10.13%), *boasting* (6.33%), *rebutting* (5.06%), *praising* (5.06%), *commanding* (3.80%) and *forbidding* (2.53%). The least prevalent types were *ridiculing*, *claiming*, *justifying*, *informing*, *declaring*, and *pronouncing*, each of which accounted for only 1.27%. Highlighted in red are the speech acts with a statistical level of significance of 0.1 or higher, i.e., *threatening* (26.58%), *condemning* (18.99%), *inviting* (13.92%), and *inciting* (10.13%). The first two types of speech acts addressed the West through political manoeuvres and negotiations, with threats and condemnations at their core. The latter two targeted supportive Muslims as a decisive means of ISIS recruitment and growth, with the goal of benefitting ISIS's state-building and war-waging process.
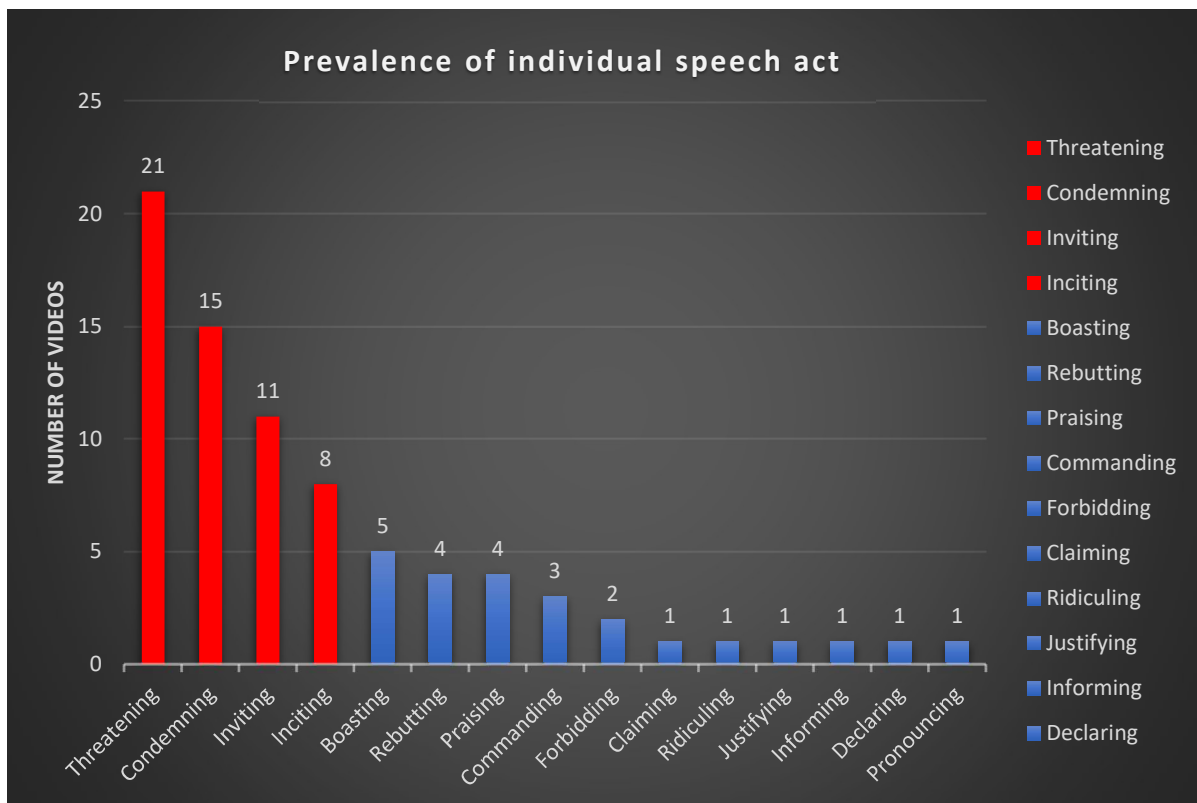
Figure 5. 4 Ranking of the prevalence of 15 types of speech acts in ISIS English-language videos, decreasing from left to right.

Changes

Following the identification of the prevalence of speech acts in official ISIS English-language videos, this study further examines the changes in the speech acts from 2014 to 2017.

Figure 5. 5 demonstrates the changes in the five speech act classes in official ISIS English-language videos. First, it becomes obvious – even from even a cursory glance at the results – that the *directive* type of speech act decreased in prevalence from 25.32% in 2014 to 3.80% in 2016 (see Figure 5. 5). The *directive* type was the most prominent in 2014, such that it alone accounted for a quarter of the entire dataset (25.32%). The trend continued the following year (21.52%). However, from the year 2016, releases of such videos declined significantly, from 21.52% to 3.80%, making them less than half as prominent as *expressive* videos and equivalent in prominence to *assertive* videos at the time. Second, *expressive* was the only type that showed an increase in 2016, from 5.06% to 7.59%. Furthermore, *assertive* illustrated a steady decrease over time from 2014 (7.59%) to 2017 (3.80%). Finally, the results showed

that there was no *commissive* video type prior to 2015, whereas no videos of the *declaration* type were released from 2015 onwards.
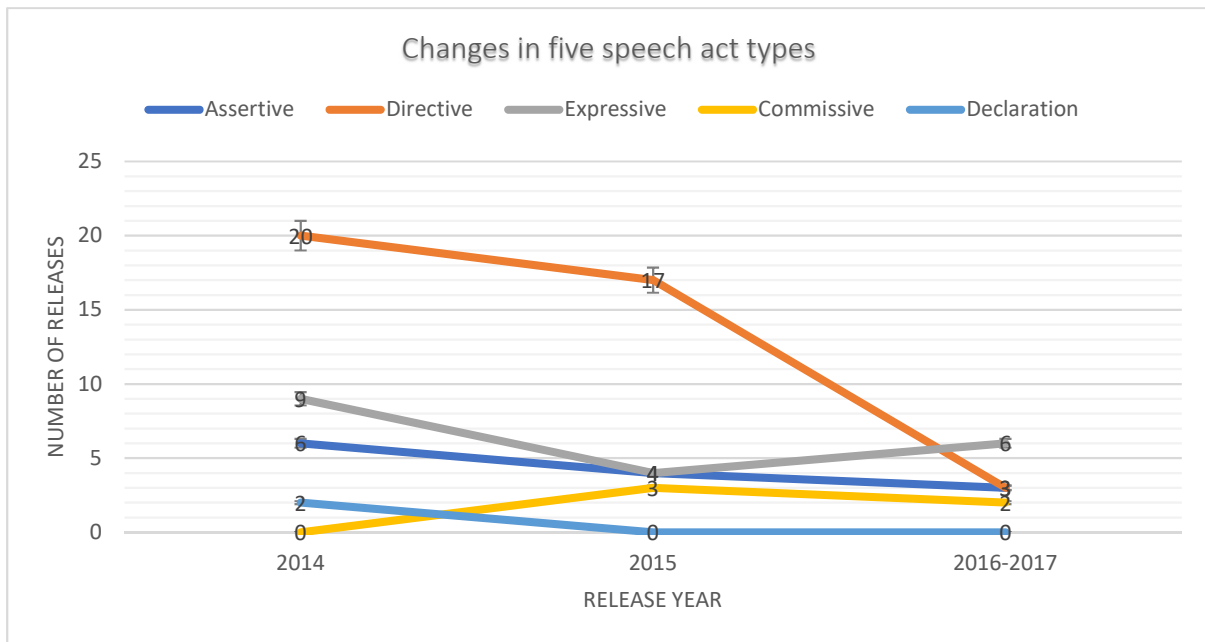
Figure 5. 5 Changes in the five classes of speech acts in ISIS English-language videos from 2014 to 2017.

The changes in the prominence of different types of individual speech acts in official ISIS English-language videos from 2014 to 2017 provide information on trends that might extend into the future (see Figure 5. 6). First and foremost, certain types of speech acts – such as *threatening*, *condemning*, *inviting*, *boasting, rebutting*, and *praising* – appeared consistently over the time. These types of speech acts can be divided into two groups: the first includes statistically dominant speech acts – *threatening*, *condemning*, and *inviting* – that were not only prevalent but also used consistently over time. Although *threatening* peaked in 2015 (15.19%), it generally remained stable in the share of releases it accounted for (6.33% in 2014 and 5.06% in 2016-17). *Condemning* declined from 8.86% in 2014 to 6.33% in 2016-17. Although they declined (1.27%) from 2015 onwards, *inviting* releases were consistent at 6.33% for two successive years. The second group includes speech acts that appeared regularly but were insignificant, i.e., *boasting, rebutting*, and *praising*. *Boasting* accounted for 3.80% of releases in 2014 but declined by more than half in 2015 and subsequently remained at 1.27% in 2016-2017. *Praising* and *rebutting* were consistent, accounting for nearly 2% of annual

releases, on average, from 2014 to 2017. *Forbidding* remained constant at 1% annually over the three years. Conversely, many speech acts were limited to a one-year range, i.e., *commanding, claiming, ridiculing, justifying, pronouncing*, and *declaring*; this applies to *informing* and *claiming,* which occurred minimally in 2016 and 2015, respectively, while most releases of this type were in 2014. Finally, it is worth noting that the majority of all speech acts – 9 out of 15 – peaked in 2014, i.e., *condemning, inciting, boasting, praising, commanding, ridiculing, justifying, pronouncing*, and *declaring*.
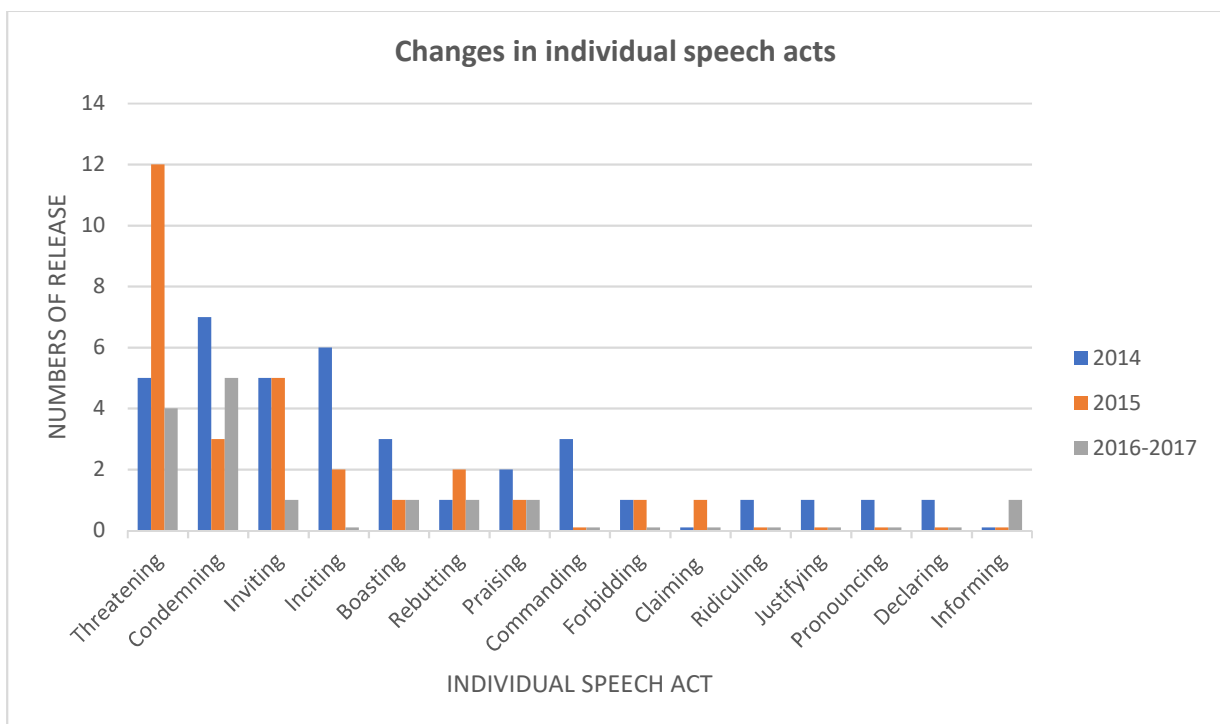
Figure 5. 6 Changes in 15 individual speech acts in ISIS English-language videos from 2014 to 2017.

An analysis based on one-year increments instead of individual speech acts provides another perspective on the changes discussed above that might imply a large, fluid picture of the overall evolution of speech acts used in the videos (see Figure 5.7). In 2014, the most prominent types of speech acts were *condemning*, *inciting*, *threatening*, and *inviting*, followed by *boasting, commanding*, and *praising*. However, in 2015, *threatening* experienced a rapid increase and became the most recurring type, followed by *inviting*, *condemning*, *inciting* and *rebutting*. In 2016-17, with an overall drop in the release numbers of the video, only *condemning* and *threatening* continued to recur often, while the rest of the types occurred

only minimally. Two types of speech acts – *inviting* and *forbidding* – remained equal in both 2014 and 2015, while both diminished in 2016-17.
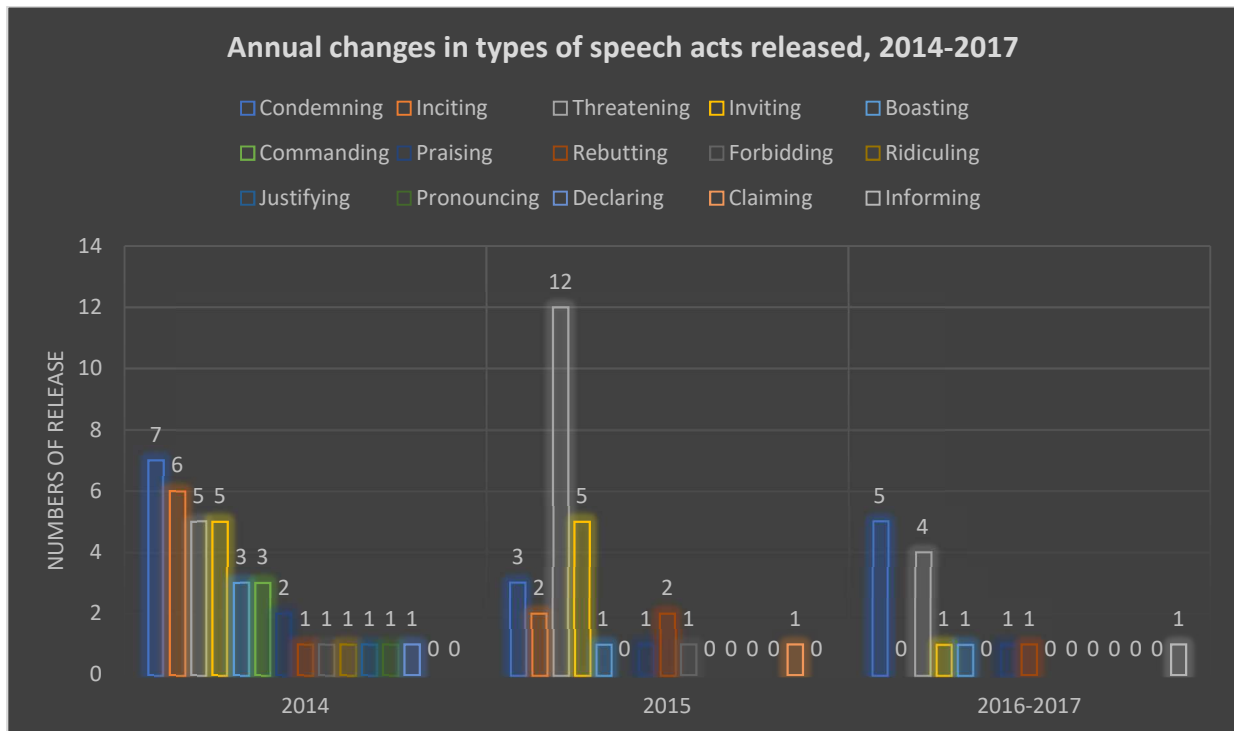
Figure 5. 7 Annual ranking of 15 types of speech acts in ISIS English-language videos from 2014 to 2017.

In summary, based on the above investigation of the prevalence of and changes in different types of speech acts, the most conclusive results are threefold. First, the *directive* (50.63%), *expressive* (24.05%), and *assertive* (16.46%) types were very significant and accounted for the vast majority (91%) of the acts analysed. Second, four types of speech acts – *threatening* (26.58%), *condemning* (18.99%), *inviting* (13.92%), and *inciting* (10.13%) – were the most prevalent types of individual speech acts: out of 15 types, these 4 accounted for approximately seventy percent of the entire analytical data set. Third, six types of speech acts – *threatening*, *condemning*, *inviting*, *boasting, rebutting*, and *praising* – remained consistent over time, whereas seven types – *claiming*, *ridiculing*, *informing*, *justifying*, *commanding*, *pronouncing*, and *declaring* – were very fluid over time. In the following section, this study will discuss each of the findings by illustrating what they reveal about ISIS's use of language and how they contribute to existing knowledge in the field.

PART TWO: DISCUSSION

Using ISIS English-language video productions from 2014 to 2017, this analysis has produced empirical findings regarding the prevalence of and changes in ISIS speech acts. Based primarily on the three most important results presented in the previous section, this analysis suggests nine primary contentions for discussion. In what follows, each contention is highlighted and discussed.

- The *directive* is definitively the most prominent type of speech act in official ISIS English-language videos, which underscores that the most vital intention of ISIS has invariably been demanding addressees 'to do things' (Searle 1985, p.29).

- The prevalence of and changes in the *expressive* type of speech act reflect a shift in ISIS's use of language and emphasize the overall negative nature of the group's language.

- The third most prevalent speech act type is a*ssertive*, indicating that much of ISIS's propaganda has the pragmatic purpose – as a response tool – of addressing fluid issues faced on the ground.

- Findings from the latent level of ISIS language further support the contention that the main function of the English-language videos is to engage with external rather than internal addressees.

- The purpose of ISIS's official English-language propaganda is more than simply recruitment; rather, it is a diplomatic tool used to negotiate with the west.

- Within the scope of ISIS's recruitment propaganda, the group's state-building project is a higher priority than its war-waging process; this prioritization is intrinsic to the group's intentions in its use of language.

- The prevalence of the different types of speech acts in ISIS English-language videos empirically reinforces the group's binary worldview – i.e., an 'us' versus 'them' mentality.

- To different extents, the speech acts that are most statistically prevalent are used consistently, whereas the speech acts that are relatively insignificant are used inconsistently over time.

- The changes in the types of speech acts used in the videos indicate a strong association with real-world events.

Directive – A Fundamental Intention

The most prominent speech act type in official ISIS English-language videos is definitely the *directive* type, although it declined suddenly starting in 2016 (see Figures 5.2 and 5.6). The most substantial intention of ISIS is to encourage the addressees to do something (Searle 2008). This finding indicates that more than half of ISIS's language uses the type of illocutionary force that aims to actively instigate the addressee to align with ISIS's demands. There could be a conventional link between this intention of mobilisation by ISIS and certain pre-existing viewpoints of the addressees. In this sense, Winter (2015) might be correct to note that an overall functionality of ISIS propaganda might be to 'catalyse' the radicalisation process and to 'concentrate' certain previously held viewpoints of the addressees.

Additionally, speech acts in the *directive* class address both the enemies and supporters of ISIS (see Figure 5.2). On the one hand, ISIS seeks reactions by threatening the West and its allies; it does so using a conditional form of language, making reference to future undesirable consequences in order to achieve a pre-determined strategic advantage for the group, notably executions and terror attacks (V30; V46; V48; V63; V66). On the other hand, ISIS addresses its supporters in a twofold manner: first, the group invites the addressee to come to the so-called caliphate.[50] During this ambitious process of differentiating itself from al-Qaeda (Novenario 2016), ISIS uses numerous methods, e.g., illustration of resource abundance (V10; V14), the promise of a sudden change and a guarantee regarding lifetime/afterlife (V5; V53; V62), emphasis on theological obligations (V29; V49), and arguments to legitimise the caliphate (V12; V49). Second, the group tries to implant an idea in the mind of the addressee, i.e., the urgency and necessity of doing what has been requested (Wierzbicka 1997). Although such an idea is not the creation of ISIS (Sedgwick 2012; Warraq 2017), the group is largely responsible for depicting and exploiting a situation in which Muslim women and children are suffering and *ummah* (the Muslim community) is under great

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[50] The Finn jihadist Abu Shuayb as-Somali said, 'I'm calling on all the Muslims living in the West (…) to make hijrah [emigration] with your families to the land of khilafah (…) if you get killed, you will enter Jannah and Allah will take care of the ones you have left behind' (V14, 2014).

threat.[51] This situation logically leads to a 'final solution' – violent *jihad*, or waging holy war against enemies (V7; V26; V55).

Expressive – A Negative Nature

In the videos, the *expressive* is the second-most significant speech act class found in ISIS language. The illocutionary point of this type of speech act is to express the speaker's psychological state regarding the state of affairs specified in the propositional content (Searle 2008). Unlike the other speech act classes, this one is distinctive for being the only type that increased from 2016 onwards (see Figures 5.3 and 5.6), which is interesting given the overall decline of the ISIS propaganda apparatus at the time (Winter 2018) and the increasingly challenging situation that ISIS was facing (Solomon 2016; Usborne 2016; Ryan and Deyoung 2016; Burke 2017). This finding signifies a possible shift in ISIS's use of language – from a logical request of all addressees to an emotive condemnation targeting only enemies (V67; 69; 73; 74; 77).

Most importantly, although it fits with practices of expression in Islam, the *expressive* class of speech acts amplifies a negative feature of ISIS language (see Figure 5.3). In Islam, one practises certain manners of one's expression and speech through two concepts: *hisbah* and *naseehah* (Siddiq 2010). The former encapsulates the obligation to promote 'good' against 'evil', whereas the latter imbues such practice with sincerity and impartiality (*ibid.*). The intrinsic polarisation of the primary components of the *expressive* class echoes this concept (see Figure 5.3). However, the *condemning* (of enemies) type of speech act is three times more common than the second component, *praising* (of jihadists, martyrs, and emigrates). Although 'praise' was one of the most positively valued words used in the videos, it was overshadowed by the most negatively valued words, used to underpin the 'feelings of dread, violence, and antagonism' that invariably occur in ISIS narratives (Winter 2018; Macnair and

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[51] The Australian jihadist Abu Yahya ash Shami said, 'Our sisters in Fallujah, day after day they give birth to deformed babies. Look at the disgrace that ummah has gone through, look and wake up, to understand why this is happening' (V7, 2014). Furthermore, the British fighter Abu Dujana al-Hindi said, 'You know your brothers are on the frontlines facing the bullets, the bombs, and everything that the enemies of Allah have, while you're sitting in comfort'. He continued, 'Their corpses [Muslim women and children] will be shown to you, and Allah will ask where you were (…) you will not be able to respond' (V7, 2014).

Frank 2018, p.11) and thus illustrate antipathy. This finding is consistent with Macnair and Frank (2018), who prove that the language used by ISIS videos is more negative than the language used in other media outputs and establishes the negative nature of ISIS's overall language through its sentiment value.

Assertive – A Pragmatic Tool

Assertive (16.46%), the third-most recurring speech act class, includes the largest number of different individual speech acts and functions as a response tool (see Figure 5. 4). This function resembles the purpose of the *assertive* class, which is to lead the speaker to commit to the truth of the expressed proposition (Searle 2008). The results indicate that the majority of acts in this class (4 out of 6) are fluid speech acts (Figure 5. 7), i.e., *claiming*, *ridiculing*, *informing*, and *justifying*. Similarly, just as *ridiculing* (V8) was used to address the American-led intervention in Iraq that began on 15 June 2014 (Garamone 2014; see Appendix 5), these acts occur only once, and each act responds to a specific event (V13; V58; V8; V72).

Primary Addressees - External vs. Domestic

The findings of this study demonstrate that ISIS's English-language videos primarily target external rather than domestic audiences. These findings are consistent with Colas (2016), who proposes three main target audiences of ISIS's official English-language propaganda, i.e., English-speaking Muslims, Western policymakers, and half-integrated members of ISIS, while further arguing that the most important addressees have been Western policymakers, followed by English-speaking Muslims and half-integrated ISIS members. The third group has been addressed relatively negligibly in the videos. Western policymakers and English-speaking Muslims have been targeted more obviously, with nearly half of the messages directed at Westerners (36 out of 79, 47%) and a quarter at English-speaking Muslims (19 out of 79, 24%).

Statistically, *commanding* (4%) and *forbidding* (3%) speech acts, which reflect the inherent morality at the heart of Muslim scholarship, known as *'al-amr bi-l-ma'ruf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar'* (commanding right and forbidding wrong), remain relatively scarce (Cook 2010). Although ISIS domestic propaganda may differ, this finding might signify the lower interest of ISIS by regulating the practices of unmigrated Muslims, at least through its global media campaign. This not only highlights a communication divergence from al-Qaeda (Houck *et al.* 2017) but also reflects ISIS's strategic priority for targeting different audiences in different manners.

Propagandistic Purpose - Negotiating vs. Recruitment Tools

Although both types are used extensively, hostile messages from ISIS towards Westerners are approximately twice as frequent as courteous messages aimed at the group's potential mujahideen and emigrants (48% vs. 24%; see Figure 5.7). This fact may indicate the extent to which ISIS's English propaganda has been either a negotiating or a recruitment tool. Given the scale of the Western-oriented language used by ISIS, it would be an oversimplification to suggest that young Muslims living in the West are the group's only primary target (Mahood and Rane 2016).

ISIS's recruitment propaganda reveals ideological manipulations of extreme interpretations of Islam (Mahood and Rane 2016; El-Badawy *et al.* 2015; V6; V14; V49; V55). This is important in understanding how capable ISIS is of utilising Islamism (Perry and Long 2016; Mahood and Rane 2016; Winter 2015b; Whiteside 2016), how ISIS's language takes advantage of this extreme version in approaching theological concepts and teachings to support the group's religious legitimacy (Milton 2016; Mahood and Rane 2016; Pelletier *et al.* 2016; V7; V12; V14), and in understanding how the group reinforces perceptions of its legitimacy and sustains recruits (Ingram 2016; Mahood and Rane 2016; V55). However, ISIS's propaganda has goals beyond simply recruiting (Colas 2016; Pelletier *et al* 2016; Ingram 2015). One feature that cannot be ignored is the propaganda's pragmatic and diplomatic functionality in negotiating with the West (Cantey 2017; Colas 2016; Foy 2015; V41-45).

This negotiating function is mainly accomplished through threats and condemnations. The negotiating aspect of *threatening* speech acts is exemplified by the series *A Message to Japan* (2015), in which Jihadi John first asks for ransom for two Japanese hostages, Kenji Goto and Haruna Yukawa (V41), followed by a shift to a request for hostage exchange (V42-44). Although this negotiation ends as a failure, leading to the terrible death of both hostages (V45), it still marks ISIS's intention and willingness to engage in negotiation manoeuvres. *C*ondemning, on the other hand, is largely conveyed through the series *Lend Me Your Ears* (2014), which is presented by John Cantlie, a British journalist captured by ISIS (Cantey 2017; V18;20;21;23;25;27;34). Existing scholarship has already robustly demonstrated concerns regarding how ISIS rhetoric in hostage negotiations utilises condemnations of Western policy to delegitimise Western governments and to push forward changes in policy through provocation and leverage of the Western public (Foy 2015; V18;20;21;23;25;27;34).

Strategic Priority - State-building Project vs. War-waging Process

This study finds that in ISIS's language, the encouragement of immigration (13.92%) was marginally more significant than the incitement of violent jihad (10.13%). The former relies on utterances that demonstrate – through courtesy and amiability – an explicit invitation to emigrate (V5; 10; 12; 14), while the latter tries to catalyse massive holy war-waging responses by exposing an urgent necessity and the situation of being under threat (V11). This finding is consistent with the existing scholarship arguing that the state-building project is ISIS's priority (Al-Dayela and Anfinsonb 2017, Mahood and Rane 2016, Phillips 2016; Cantey 2017 Novenario 2016). State-building is important for ISIS because, first, it creates a 'brand' and maintains a self-sustaining virtuous loop (Phillips 2016). The existing discourse in the West around ISIS's statehood was utilised by the group itself to project itself as an alternative to existing nation states (Al-Dayela and Anfinsonb 2017). More importantly, state-building provides ISIS with the authority that it possesses its own version of justification and implementation, further fuelling the persecution and excommunication of those who disagree (Mahood and Rane 2016). However, given the setbacks to its territorial domination, it has been increasingly exhausting for the group to maintain its momentum, such that there

has been a massive (80%) decline in *inviting* speech acts since 2016, compared with the previous year [see Figure 5.7].

A Binary Worldview – Us vs. Them

Analysis of the prevalence of individual speech acts reveals the binary worldview of ISIS, an 'us' versus 'them' mentality. This finding is reinforced by four results. The first shows that the ratio of the *directives* indicates an equal distribution of speech acts for both types of addressees (see Figure 5.2). Second, the results pinpoint the emotively polarised manner – either condemning or praising – of the *expressive* class (see Figure 5.3). The third result illustrates that, among the four most significant types of speech acts, the former half addresses the enemies of ISIS, while the latter half appeals to its potential supporters. Although Western mainstream media largely employ a black-and-white terminology for ISIS – such as 'savages', 'vicious', or 'barbarians' – that might result in a limited understanding of the sophistication of the ISIS media operation (Tinnes 2015), many scholars have found that ISIS does adopt such a mentality in its narratives (Richards 2017; Mahood and Rane 2016; Wignell *et al*. 2017; Heck 2017). The final result is ISIS's linguistic tropes used in the direct address for 'us' and 'them' as a figurative or idiomatic expression. The findings from this study empirically support this observation while additionally revealing that such a binary worldview not only exists at the surface level of ISIS media but also has its roots in their use of language at a much deeper, latent level.

ISIS constantly uses these metaphorically and theologically positive terms for itself and uses terms that have negative connotations for others. ISIS frequently employs the word 'lion cubs' for its children and young fighters (V19). Similarly, in addition to other commonly used words such as 'mujahideen' (V1; V4; V10; V47; V75) and 'brothers' (V6; V12; V24; V56; V78),[52] ISIS calls those jihadists who died in battle 'shahid' [martyrs] and Muslim inhabitants living under its rule 'salaf', a term that refers to the first three generations of Muslims following Prophet

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[52] 'Oh brothers, are you pleased with being humiliated, oppressed, and ruled by the *tawaghit* [tyrants]? Where is your anger when the *taghut* [tyrant] mocks Allah and his messenger?' (V12, 2014).

Muhammad and his companions (Lacey 2009). On the other hand, the West is labelled as 'crusaders' (V2; V46, V55; V48; V70) and 'kuffar' [disbelievers] (V11; V12; V32; V40; V64). With regard to its allies and nations that join the coalitions, their political leaders are 'tawaghit' [tyrants] (V5; V12; V14; V58; V74) and their troops and soldiers are 'sahwat' [a Sunni who fights on behalf of disbelievers] (V13; V33; V52) and 'rafidah' [Shia Muslim] (V2, V12, V13, V74).[53] This deliberate application of black-and-white terms legitimises and supports ISIS's binary worldview (Tinnes 2015; V19; Al-Dayel and Anfinson 2018; Gratrud 2016; Mahood and Rana 2016). By repeatedly drawing on positive tropes of itself, ISIS is described as the 'good' who obeys God and defends the Muslim world, whereas the West and its allies are the 'evil' who deny Allah and oppress the Islamic world (V55; V48). In the video example *And No Respite* (2015), ISIS compares itself to the Western coalitions, these [the Western] '*secular states built on man-made laws, whose soldiers fight for the interests of government legislators, liars, fornicators, corporations for the freedoms of Satan*' [the US president George W. Bush and Bill Clinton appear on screen when the narrator mentions 'liars' and 'fornicators']. It continues that, however, '*we are man, honour with Islam, who climb its peak to perform jihad, answering the call to unite under one flag. This is the source of our glory. Our obedience to our lord*' (V64, 2015).

The examples of ISIS denouncing its enemies while elevating itself are numerous (V2; V8; V19; V46; V60; V64; V70). The 'good' versus 'evil' fabricated by ISIS helps to create a rhetorical and political consensus – that there is an 'us' and 'them'. By making distinctions in the presentation of its enemies and itself, it suggests an awareness of the formation of the group's strategically self-presented identity (Goffman 1959). The sociologist Erving Goffman, in his classic dramaturgy, illuminates a function of the paradigm of symbolic interactionism through a theatrical metaphor (Goffman 1959; Appelrouth and Edles 2011) that sheds light on how the creation of a role/identity is a process by which the individual/group presents an idealised self-image (Goffman 1959, p.22; Cottee 2015a) and how its validation may be paralleled by the devaluation of others (Furedi 2019). This is in line with the outlook of jihadist

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[53] As the jihadist explains ISIS's notion of its adversary's enterprise in *Join the Ranks* (2014), for instance, the 'Islamic State is fighting the *rafidah* and the *kuffer* and that it is fighting the *sahwat* (…) supported by both Arab and non-Arab *tawaghit*. Behind them are the Jews and America (…)' (V12, 2014).

identity. Arguably, this might also explain why there have been so many video examples featuring of these foreign fighters burning or tearing apart their passports as if celebrating ceremonial events (V2; V31; V33) due to the perception of this act as a vivid ritual and symbolic denial of their previous Western identity and a presentation of the integrity of the jihadist identity (Malik 2014; Morris and Taylor 2014; Furedi 2019).

Changes - Consistency vs. Fluidity

The overall picture of the evolution of speech acts used by ISIS in the videos is as follows. In 2014, with the dramatic rise of the group, the speech acts used by ISIS were abundantly diverse and relatively even in distribution, and the largest numbers of speech acts occurred (13 out of 15) (See Figure 5.8). The speech acts of *condemning* the Westerners and *inciting* violent jihad occurred most often, with *threatening* the opponents and *inviting* potential emigrates closely following. Furthermore, *boasting* about the military strength and capacity of the group and *commanding* good deeds from the Muslim community were notably prominent. In 2015, after the battlefield turning point 'Battle of Kobani' occurred on the ground and with the increased military intervention of a US-led coalition in the region (Albayrak *et al.* 2014; Zaman 2015; Arango 2017), the use of the *threatening* class of speech acts showed a drastic rise that greatly eclipsed the others (except those that occurred minimally). *Threatening* was as prevalent as the rest combined, i.e., *inviting*, *condemning*, *inciting*, and *rebutting*. In 2016-2017, when ISIS encountered crucial defeat and loss and struggled to maintain its past momentum, the group maintained its position of blaming and frightening its rivals [*condemning* and *threatening* remained prevalent], whereas *inviting* and *inciting* were significantly reduced.

Existing scholarship shows that although extremist groups have undergone certain thematic shifts to respond to a series of real-world events, they have generally maintained a consistent thematic structure at a broader level (Pelletier et al. 2016; Droogan and Peattie 2016; Kuznar 2017), and the results on an illocutionary level indicate an analogous pattern in ISIS English-language videos (see Figure 5. 7). Further, this study finds that the majority of speech acts that are performed most pervasively have maintained a relatively high degree of stability over

time, whereas insignificant speech acts are more inconsistent and appear to be linked to particular real-world events.

On the one hand, the most recurrent speech acts are also chronologically consistent. Even from a cursory glance at [Figure 5. 7], the asymmetric nature of the changes in ISIS speech acts can be observed. The first half of the data, from *threatening* to *praising*, indicates that to a certain degree, these speech acts mostly occurred throughout the past three years. The most prevalent speech acts – *threatening*, *condemning*, and *inviting* – which account for nearly sixty percent of the videos, show stability over time. Second, *boasting, rebutting*, and *praising* speech acts, which are designed, respectively, to exaggerate the group's strength, make counter-arguments, and glorify the fighters, also occur consistently over time.

On the other hand, the findings demonstrate that the fluid speech acts are also statistically insignificant, as shown in the latter half of [Figure 5. 7], from *commanding* to *informing*, which were not used consecutively for longer than a year. Those speech acts that command Muslims to do what is believed to be right, ridicule American policy and military operations, justify the persecution of residents, pronounce the legitimacy of ISIS, and declare the Islamic state all occur at the beginning of the period under consideration. *Claiming* acts, which insist the caliphate will be sustaining and expanding, and *informing* acts, which introduce the established administrative structure and political system with confidence and pride, both emerged more recently.

Finally, it is worth noting that these changes in the videos are highly associated with and influenced by what was happening on the ground. The supporting results are twofold. First, most of the speech acts culminate in 2014 (see Figure 5. 8), unlike the all-inclusive ISIS propaganda that is at its zenith in 2015, as argued by Winter (2018). This study finds that nine out of fifteen speech acts are at their peak in 2014, whereas merely three culminate in 2015. In reality, ISIS was rapidly expanding in terms of its territory and influence in 2014, and many of the major the ISIS-linked events, including the capture of Mosul (Chulov 2014), declaration of the caliphate (Tran and Weaver 2014), breakdown of the geopolitical border (V12), and claimed implementations of Islamic law (V1; 3) happened during that time. The second result leads to the same conclusion: *inviting* and *inciting* massively declined in 2016-17, while

condemning increased during that time (see Figure 5. 7), causing the most recent collapse of the most significant class of speech acts (*directive*), as well as the sudden rise of the second-most prevalent class of speech acts (*expressive*) around that time (see Figure 5. 6). The reason for this, as precisely noted by Winter (2018, p.117), is that of the 'defiant pseudo-state struggling to maintain past momentum'.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has empirically explored the use of language in 79 official ISIS English-language videos from 2014 to 2017 and created an explanatory analysis to reveal what ISIS's use of language generally included at the illocutionary level and how it changed over time. This study analyses and quantifies the prevalence of and changes in ISIS speech acts over three years, as represented by videos. The conclusions are threefold. First, in a broad sense, ISIS's use of language is primarily centred on the *directive* speech act class, followed by the *expressive* and *assertive* classes. A nuanced examination of the *directive* class reveals that the elicitation of responses and reactions has been the most fundamental intention, whereas the *expressive* class underscores the overall negative nature in ISIS's use of language. By contrast, the *assertive* class is characterised by a more pragmatic purpose and might act as an official response instrument to address real-world events. Second, the prevalence of ISIS speech acts analytically reinforces the group's binary worldview – an 'us' versus 'them' mentality. Three intrinsic characteristics of the videos prevail, i.e., targeting an exterior rather than interior audience, pursuing diplomatic rather than recruitment efforts, and prioritising the state-building project rather than the war-waging process, as represented through the use of language. Last, the statistically prevalent speech acts remain mostly consistent, while the insignificant speech acts are unstable over time, and these changes in the speech acts in the videos are strongly associated with what has been happening on the ground.

This study is merely a starting point in the use of speech acts to understand extremist propaganda. Some limitations can be highlighted, and they require further effort. First, although one utterance might be able to contain more than one speech act at a time (Skinner 2007; Searle 2008), this study needed to single out the most prevalent act from each video for further analysis of overall ISIS official English-language videos, as it would be an enormous task to archive and quantify every single utterance and recover all intentions given the scale of the entire analytical data set of this research. Second, because the group presents 'an integrated worldview', and most of its narratives are non-discrete and overlapping (Colas 2016, p178; Winter 2015b), the generated coding instrument for speech acts has to manually

specify, curtail, and narrow some Islamic concepts such as *jihad*[54] and *al-amr bi-l-ma'ruf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar'*[55], which can be broader than the [criteria] included in the scope of this study. Furthermore, the analysis of changes combines video productions from 2016 and 2017 to create a corpus comparable to that of 2014 and 2015 [see Figure 5.8], following a massive decline in the scale of the propaganda apparatus from 2016 onwards (Winter 2018). Furthermore, although this analysis allowed us to understand which speech acts the videos contain, it did not consider how strongly the given utterances might resonate with audiences. As the role of the reader in the meaning-generating process is no less critical (Lamb 2004; Norris 1987; Abrams 1991; Burns 2011), some research in this domain is already underway and more studies would further improve our understanding in the field (Cottee and Cunliffe 2018). Finally, the method used by this chapter might not be orthodox Skinnerian analysis but rather a quantitative version of it to grasp a broader and dynamic picture of ISIS's use of language at the illocutionary level. Although this study is an innovative attempt, it would be worthwhile to introduce to this field more theories and methods with the potential to explain, understand, and predict extremist propaganda (Wilbur 2017).

Nonetheless, this study has explored how the language expressed by ISIS extremists varies over time and employed an approach that enables us to engage with both the linguistic and the visual components of ISIS's media production – a challenging task that has been exposed but has not been addressed by existing scholarship (Schaukowitch 2018; Salazar 2017; Macnair and Frank 2018). In addition to the novelty of the research method, the findings of this study contribute to a growing corpus of literature that seeks to understand ISIS propaganda by analysing a relatively latent layer of meaning that might imply a set of possible counter-narrative endeavours. Ultimately, militaristic measures that neglect the power of language are very likely to fail in efforts to eradicate Islamic extremism (Bernarrdi *et al.* 2010; Simon-Vandenbergen 2008; Macnair and Frank 2018) due to the nature of counter-narratives that inherently require a precisely targeted and carefully tailored linguistic reaction (Aly *et al.* 2017; Al-Dayel and Anfinsonb 2017).

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[54] The concept of jihad is confined to only violent jihad.
[55] Arguably, a set of core values highlighted by ISIS, such as tawhid [unity], manhaj [truth-seeking], hijrah [migration], jihad [holy war], and jama'ah [community], could be an act of commanding right and forbidding wrong in a broader sense (Heck 2017; Wignell, *et al.* 2017)

CHAPTER SIX: A QUALITATIVE ACCOUNT OF SPEECH ACTS USED IN OFFICIAL ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ISIS VIDEOS

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation, thus far, has examined ISIS videos through a mainly quantitative lens. The previous chapter provided an empirical analysis of 79 official English-language ISIS videos and employed Quentin Skinner's (2002) analytical method to explore and quantify the prevalence of and changes in the speech acts used in videos from 2014-2017. The findings indicate that four speech acts remain statistically prevalent and chronologically consistent over the course of the three years: *threatening*, *condemning*, *inviting*, and *inciting*. Although a macro-account of the speech acts used in the videos highlights the overall picture and the diversity of the political arguments associated with ISIS's semantic intentions and the series of changes over the time, a more detailed account of what these argumentative moves are in its video remains to be given.

There is a growing body of scholarship on ISIS propaganda that typically focuses on the surface level of meanings and implements a content- or theme-focused analysis (Cantey 2017; Zelin 2015; Barr and Herfroy-Mischler 2017; Wilbur 2017; Kuznar 2017; Gråtrud 2016; Allendorfer and Herring 2015; Winkler *et al.* 2016; Colas 2016; Al-Rawi 2016; Novenario 2016; Winter 2018). Although many studies note the importance of ISIS video material and the role that it plays in the overall propaganda apparatus of ISIS (Hatton and Nielsen 2015; Fromson and Simon 2015; Richards 2016; Farwell 2014; Foy 2015; Mahood and Rane), in-depth studies analysing the videos remain relatively scarce (Barr and Herfroy-Mischler 2017; Auchter 2017; Tinnes 2015; Winter 2015a; Akil 2016; Allendorfer and Herring 2015), and the literature still lacks a nuanced micro/qualitative-account seeking the semantic intention of ISIS's English-language video output (Winter 2015b; Perry and Long 2016; Tinnes 2015).

Based on Quentin Skinner's theory-based approach, in what follows, I provide a qualitative analysis of four major official English-language ISIS videos: *A Message to America* (2014), *Lend Me Your Ears* (2014), *Eid Greeting From the Land of the Caliphate* (2014), and *There Is No Life Without Jihad* (2014). These videos were major releases for ISIS and attracted massive global media attention. The first video, in which US journalist James Foley was beheaded, sparked enormous shock and elicited many official responses from Western government institutions (Friis 2015). The release of this video positively affected American public opinion in support of US military operations against ISIS and was instrumental in forming a wave of international condemnation that eventually led to an escalation of American engagement in the wars in Syria and Iraq (Boydstun *et al.* 2014; Tinnes 2015; Mccalmont 2014). The second video received less coverage but drew scholarly attention, as it vividly shed light on ISIS views of multiple real-world events, especially from a hostage negotiation standpoint (Tinnes 2015; Foy 2015; Cantey 2017). The third video featured a warm welcome from foreign fighters who had emigrated from ten countries across three continents to show ISIS's 'gentle' side, 'like a jihadi travel show', as described by the *Guardian* (Fields 2014; Vinograd 2014; Rose 2014, p.3). The final video, although the earliest among the four, shocked the Western mainstream media due to radical appeals from British and Australian fighters (Siddique 2014; Becker 2014; Cook 2014; Mackey 2017; Malcolm 2018).

Together, the videos exemplify the four most prevalent speech acts used in official English-speaking ISIS audio-visual propaganda apparatus, as detailed previously in this dissertation: *threatening*, *condemning*, *inviting*, and *inciting*, respectively. This chapter contains four video analyses, and each one is examined in three steps. It begins with the production features and a thematic analysis of each video, following the established methodological approach used earlier in this dissertation, and then further considers these videos through the lens of Quentin Skinner's hermeneutic theory of interpretation. By placing the videos into the wider political and ideological contexts from which they emerged or to which they responded, this study shows what these videos were actually *doing* as well as saying according to the Skinnerian concept of underlying intentionality. In doing so, this study emphasizes how an account that focuses only or exclusively on content- or theme, and which does not go on to address intentionality and context, will remain partial and incomplete. Regarding the four videos, this chapter addresses the following two questions:

- RQ1: what statements and actions are contained in these videos, and what do they mean in a literal or textual sense?

- RQ2: what are the core (and non-trivial) speech acts performed in the videos?

The significance of this analysis is threefold. First and foremost, it bridges a gap in existing scholarship on the semantic understanding of ISIS's media output by offering a comprehensive analysis of ISIS English-language videos that entails the production characteristics, thematic distribution, and use of language aligning with the group's intervention in the political and ideological consciousness of global English speakers (Silva and Crilley 2017). Second, it tests the viability of a novel method that enables us to draw relations between these videos and the unfolding political situation that ISIS faced and to observe the available ideological/theological conventions that ISIS consciously utilised. By doing so, it explores how the language expressed by ISIS differs regarding particular real-world events and thus tentatively conjectures insights beyond the ISIS video material. Third and Finally, by providing examples of the most intrinsic priorities of the group's overall linguistic intention, it provides a greater informed basis for the project of countering ISIS social media messages/propaganda (Winter 2017a,b; Winter 2015b; Schmitt 2014).

A MESSAGE TO AMERICA (2014)

The video titled '*A Message to America*' (2014) is arguably one of the most influential propaganda videos that has ever been released in the official media output of ISIS (LoGiurato 2014; Phillips 2014). Regarding this video, many commentators were impressed with its slick and professional quality, but the majority of the Western media emphasised the atrocity and disgusting, barbaric violence carried out on innocent people (Tinnes 2015). However, the media – though unconsciously – played the role of helping to spread ISIS's message by quoting the scripted original speech of American hostage James Foley and the executioner, 'Jihadi John', without a serious understanding of what this group was trying to say or wanted to be seen – some did not even frame the video as propaganda (Tinnes 2015). These unthoughtful acts allowed ISIS global media operations to prevail without confronting major challenges and therefore increased the risk of radicalisation.

Context

Following its full control of Mosul and the subsequent declaration of a caliphate in June 2014, ISIS in general continued to advance in its military capacity and territorial expansion (Curry 2014; Salman 2014; Barnes 2014; Al-Jazeera 2014a). It was capable of storming large military bases and threatening oil production (Barnes 2014; Carter *et al.* 2014; Heuvelen 2014; Arabic 2014; Ynet 2014). Its constant sweep caused a high number of causalities as well as massive destruction of historical heritage in the Middle East (Berwani 2014; Press 2014; Malas 2014; George 2014; Erbil 2014). Earlier in August 2014, ISIS was responsible for the deaths of approximately three hundred Yazidi children by starvation and dehydration and the sexual enslavement of 3000 Yazidi women and girls (Caulderwood 2014; UN Human Rights Council 2017); 30,000-50,000 Yazidis were forced to flee into the mountains without sufficient living supplies (Caulderwood 2014; Al-Jazeera 2014b). ISIS 'committed the crime of genocide against Yazidis through killings, sexual slavery, enslavement, torture, and forcible displacement', according to the UN Human Rights Council (2017, p.2). The US government therefore authorised targeted airstrikes in Iraq as well as humanitarian assistance with airdrops of aid on 7th August (Aina 2014; Penny 2014; BBC 2014). The genocide continued in the middle of the month – ISIS buried many Yazidi women and children alive (Withnall 2014).

International communities and regional institutions both denounced and condemned ISIS for violations against humanitarian law and abuse of religion for justification of violence (Nordland and Copper 2014; Writer 2014; Al-Jazeera 2014c). On 12 August, James Foley's family received an email from ISIS notifying them of his upcoming execution (Ensor 2014). One week later, the video filming his beheading was released. ISIS subsequently released four additional videos of executions of Western hostages: American journalist Steven Sotloff (V16, 5 September 2014), British aid workers David Haines (V17, 13 September 2014) and Alan Henning (V22, 3 October 2014), and the American humanitarian and Muslim convert Peter 'Abdul-Rahman' Kassig (V30, 16 November 2014) (Hatten and Nielsen 2016).

Video Content

The video titled '*A Message to America*' primarily includes five parts: speeches from US President Barack Obama, American hostage James Foley, and ISIS British fighter 'Jihadi John'; the execution of James Foley; and the closing scene with the appearance of another American hostage, Steven Sotloff. The video starts with an outline of the political context and 2 minutes of footage of US President Obama's announcement of the authorisation of an airstrike operation against ISIS. Following a short aerial view of the US airstrike in Iraq, the shot cuts to American journalist James Foley kneeling in a desert landscape, with his head shaved and wearing an orange jumpsuit, a reference to the prisoners' uniforms at the US military detention camp in Guantanamo Bay introduced by Zarqawi, the founder of what became ISIS (Callimachi 2014; Holland and Dziadosz 2014; Tinnes 2015). Standing on Foley's left-hand side, a masked, black-robed ISIS extremist is identified as 'Jihadi John' (real name is Mohammed Emwazi) (Usborne 2016). Foley starts to give his last words – his voice is strong, and he takes several noticeably deep breaths (Hall, Nye and Collman 2014).

'I call on my friends, family, and loved ones to rise up against my real killers, the US government. For what will happen to me is only a result of their complacency and criminality. My message to my beloved parents, save me some dignity, and don't accept some meagre compensation, for my death, from the same people who effectively hit the last nail in my coffin with their recent aerial campaign in Iraq.

I call on my brother John, who is a member of the US Air Force. Think about what you are doing, think about the lives you destroy, including those of your own family. I call on you John, think about who made the decision to bomb Iraq recently and kill those people, whoever they may have been. Think John, who did they really kill? And did they think about me, you, our family when they made that decision?

I died that day John, when your colleagues dropped that bomb on those people they signed my death certificate. I wish I had more time. I wish I could have the hope of freedom seeing my family once again. But that ship has sailed. I guess all in all I wish I wasn't American' (V15, 2014)*.*

His words are followed by 'Jihadi John's' message to US President Obama in fluent London-accented English (Hall, Nye and Collman 2014; Schultz, Short and Rosenbaum 2014).

'This is James Wright Foley, an American citizen of your country. As a government, you have been at the forefront of the aggression towards the Islamic State. You have plotted against us and have gone far out of your way to find reasons to interfere in our affairs. Today, your military air force is attacking us daily in Iraq, your strikes have caused casualties among Muslims.

You're no longer fighting an insurgency, we are an Islamic army, and a state that has been accepted by large number of Muslims worldwide, so effectively, any aggression towards the Islamic State, is aggression towards Muslims from all walks of life who has accepted the Islamic caliphate as their leadership, so any attempt by you Obama to deny the Muslims their rights of living in safety under the Islamic caliphate will result in the bloodshed of your people' (V15, 2014)*.*

Immediately after the speech, the beheading starts. No bloodshed accompanies the beheading, and the video shows the aftermath – Foley's decapitated head is on the top of his corpse. The last scene shows that another American journalist, Steven Sotloff, is held by 'Jihadi John', who claims that Sotloff's life depends upon Obama's next decision.

'[Jihadi John holds Steven Joel Sotloff] The life of this American citizen, Obama, depends on your next decision' (V15, 2014).

Production Characteristics and Thematic Distribution

The video was released on 19 August 2014. The four-minute and forty-second duration fits the news item format structure of Western news media (Tinnes 2015). The spoken language is English, without subtitles. The video is non-scored and contains graphic scenes featuring Foley's decapitalised head on the top of his body. It was produced by *al-Furqan* media foundation. [56] This video consists of three themes (see Figure 6. 1): WM (Western malevolence), CC (captive and confession), and EXE (executions). Of the themes, the most prevalent is WM (56%), which accounts for more than half of the content, followed by CC (33%) and EXE (11%). If the video analysis stops here, it merely underlines that the video prioritizes American aggression and concerns ISIS hostages and executions, whereas the 'doingness' and argumentative moves embodied in ISIS's use of language remains absent.
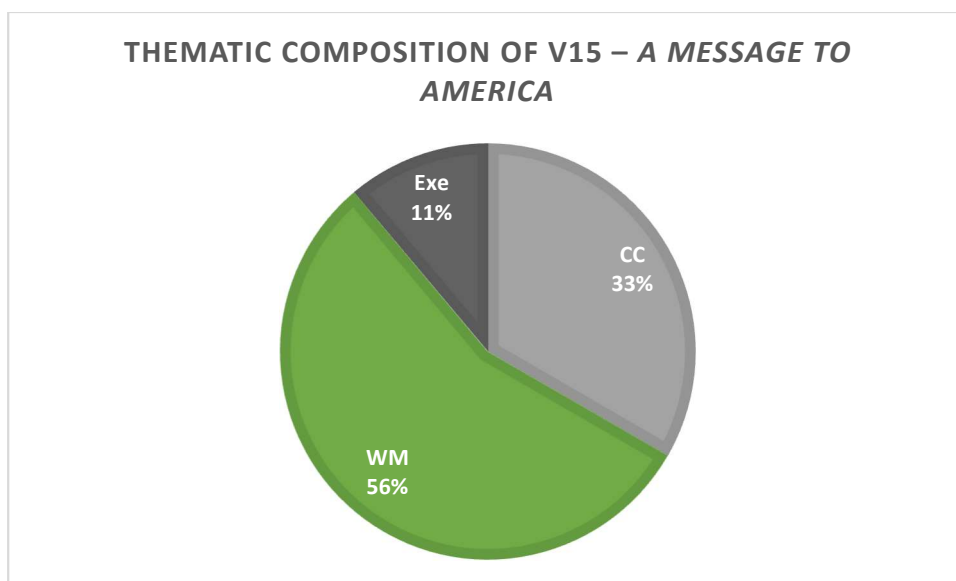
Figure 6. 1 Thematic distribution of an ISIS English-language video, V15 A Message to America.

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[56] al-Hayat, al-Furqan, and I'tisam are the three official arms of ISIS propaganda (Zelin 2015; Barr and Herfroy-Mischler 2017).

Primary Speech Act

'*Obama authorised military operations against the Islamic State, effectively placing America upon a slippery slope towards a new war front against Muslims*' (V15, 2014)

This statement is lettered at the opening of the video and demonstrates a brief political context. This text contains four layers of meanings: first, there are authorised American military operations against ISIS; moreover, instead of referring to America or its general public, ISIS pointedly accuses the US President Barack Obama of taking responsibility for pushing America into a war; additionally, it asserts that aggression against ISIS is equivalent to aggression against the global Muslim community; last, by indicating that America is upon 'a slippery slope', ISIS purports that war is closely approaching rather than completely engaged. Although the text is short in duration, its fourfold layers of meanings intertextually attach every one of the four semantic parts represented. In what follows, this analysis explains how the accentuation of each part helps convey an overall, consistent illocutionary point in this video.

First, the footage showing Obama discussing the authorisation of the targeted airstrikes and an aerial view of this military operation serve to strengthen the authenticity of the airstrikes. The video was released on 19th August 2014, whereas the speech in which President Obama publicly announced his new authorisation of an airstrike against ISIS in Iraq was delivered on 7th August 2014 (Starr, Sciutto and Shoichet 2014). This part of the video conveys the authenticity of the American airstrike operation and presents the video as a direct response.

Second, instead of blaming the US or US general public, ISIS blames President Obama as well as his administration. To understand this, it is essential to explore the linguistic context issued by James Foley.[57] Foley calls his 'loved ones to rise up against the US government', as his death is a consequence of 'their complacency and criminality', and rejects his death compensation from 'the same people who effectively hit the last nail in his coffin'. This is a strong

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[57] It is deeply evident that Foley's statement in the video is made against his will, as it obviously contradicts his final letter to his family in June 2014, surreptitiously delivered by Danish journalist Daniel Ottosen, who was once Foley's cellmate, see McCoy (2014).

condemnation and shows an explicit enmity towards the home country's administrative leadership, articulated by one American citizen addressing the others. Foley then starts the longest part of his speech that speaks to his brother John, a member of the US air force, of being directly responsible for his impending death:

'think about what you are doing... think about who made the decision to bomb Iraq recently... and did they think about me, you, our family when they made that decision... I died that day, John, when your colleagues dropped that bomb on those people, they signed my death certificate' (V15, 2014).

As a result, through utterances of James Foley that convey a *condemning* speech act against the leadership of America, ISIS acquires a fait accompli – the US government is severely condemned by a US citizen whose last words target global English-speaking audiences and call for possible rebellion against the policy.

Furthermore, because the executioner 'Jihadi John' is the sole 'spokesman' on behalf of ISIS in this video, his words and deeds, namely, his verbal statement and his non-verbal action [the subsequent decapitation of James Foley], can be better understood as a 'message' to America[58]. First, 'Jihadi John' identifies James Foley's American citizenship and emphasises that the American airstrike operation 'caused casualties among Muslims'. This is a semantic continuation that frames Foley's execution as retaliation for the recent American airstrikes authorised by President Obama against ISIS. Second, 'Jihadi John' argues that aggression towards ISIS is equivalent to battling against Muslims through his claim of ISIS's authority among Muslims,

'you're no longer fighting an insurgency, we are (…) a state that has been accepted by a large number of Muslims worldwide (…) any aggression towards the Islamic State is an aggression towards Muslims from all walks of life who have accepted the Islamic caliphate as their leadership' (V15, 2014).

He concludes, 'any attempt by you, Obama, to deny the Muslims their rights of living in safety under the Islamic caliphate will result in the bloodshed of your people' (V15, 2014). Rather than an eye-catching deviant spectacular to draw viewers' attention (Tinnes 2015), the

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[58] See video title, 'A message to America'.

subsequent decapitation of James Foley is a consequential illustration, a non-linguistic [non-verbal] action that issues this strong and compelling message yet to see.

Finally, ISIS underlines that the recent airstrike was 'placing America upon a slippery slope' towards a new warfront with Muslims. This layer of the meaning is consistent with the end scene in which 'Jihadi John' holds another American journalist, Steven Sotloff, and claims that 'the life of this American citizen, Obama, depends on your next decision' (V15, 2014). This utterance contains a conditional clause – it suggests if the addressee, Obama, decides to continue airstrike operations against ISIS, the undesirable consequence will then follow – Sotloff's life will not be spared, and a new warfront with 'Muslims' (among whom ISIS claims authority) will be inevitable. Noticeably, the video employs a hybrid combination of execution and the next victim, different from the traditional form of a proof-of-life tape (Tinnes 2015). This innovation not only contributes to psychological warfare but also formulates an essential part of a consecutive narrative leading to *threatening* speech acts.

Other Speech Acts

Another striking semantic facet in this video is the justification and legitimation of the slaughter. Much of its content is *justifying* ISIS savagery as defensive retaliation and reactive vengeance against American military aggression. As stated earlier, ISIS uses US President Obama's speech at the very beginning to form a moral context – a US-led airstrike has been authorised against ISIS, and the revived caliphate is under attack. The video of this speech is then followed by American hostage James Foley's statement, spoken by himself, that his death is completely the fault of the US government, which he called 'my real killers' and that 'what will happen to me is only a result of their [the US government's] complacency and criminality' (V15, 2014). In addition, before the decapitation is carried out, 'Jihadi John' says, 'you have plotted against us and have gone far out of your way to find reasons to interfere in our affairs (…) your military air force is attacking us daily in Iraq; your strikes have caused casualties among Muslims' (V15, 2014). The group's decision to respond further to criticism that they have encountered worldwide shows that ISIS indeed cares about morally justifying

themselves,[59] especially among the Muslim world (Small 2014; Soffer 2014; Scheipers 2010; Press 2014; Banco 2014; Obeidallah 2015).

As sociologist Erving Goffman notes, 'A theatrical performance or a staged confidence requires a thorough scripting of the spoken content' and vast parts of 'expression given off', which have been clearly identified in this analysis (Goffman 1959, p.79). The process of *performance* being expressed through this video as well as its starring performer 'Jihadi John', as Goffman (1959, p.32) put it, is indeed 'dramaturgical', which indicates the intention to control and sustain the impression of the situation that audiences receive (Goffman 1959, p.26-32). If this is the case, this video succeeds in portraying 'Jihadi John's' role or the 'dramatization of his work' (P.41) as a determined ruthless ISIS 'executioner-in-chief' as well as a strong, aggressive, disciplined, and fearsome Islamic jihadist soldier protecting and defending the 'land of Muslims' from the alleged Western military invasion (Verkaik 2016, p.xvi).

'Different routines may employ the same front' that has already been chosen on an established social role (Goffman 1959, p.17). Tracing ISIS beheading videos of Western hostages back to the era of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi [the leader of ISIS's predecessor group] and the decapitation of American hostage Nicholas Berg on 11 May 2004 (Lichtblau 2004), the staged execution in *A Message to America* is identical to those in previous videos, which are all symbolic and ritualistic; they all contain a series of 'routines' [self-identification and confessions of hostages, a legitimising statement of the executioner, and the actual execution] (Goffman 1959, p.27; Perlmutter 2014). 'Several well-established fronts' are chosen; the hostages are beheaded with a knife, and the severed heads are placed on the back or chest; the hostages all wear orange jumpsuits, referring to Guantanamo Bay, which is a vivid iconic symbol of US malevolence (Goffman 1959, p.17; Callimachi 2014; Holland and Dziadosz 2014; Tinnes 2015). In addition, the black clothing of the executioner echoes the concepts of *jihad* [struggle] and links historically to the Prophet's black flag and the medieval Abbasid Caliphate (Tinnes 2015; Brachman and Boudali 2006). All of these elements need to be consciously performed in a particular way, mainly because it is required by 'the tradition of his group or

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[59] ISIS later claimed five reasons for the beheadings, which pro-ISIS online media activists widely spread to justify ISIS's defensive and reactive response to the American invasion; see Small (2014) and Varghese (2014).

social status' (Goffman 1959, p.3), yet this 'coherence among setting, appearance, and manner' represents not only an ideal type but also 'a means of stimulating our attention to and interest in exceptions' (Goffman 1959, p.16).

To foster the impression that their current performance and relationship to their current audience 'have something special and unique' (Goffman 1959, p.31), in addition to featuring a technical HD camera upgrade, the new video contains edited segments of Western political leaders. The most graphic content, which is all evidence of 'dirty work' (Goffman 1959, p.53), is censored to achieve a balance between psychological warfare and audience suitability (Tinnes 2015; Newman 2004). Infused with 'signs which dramatically highlight and portray confirmatory facts that might otherwise remain unapparent or obscure' (Goffman 1959, p.19), the video is filmed outdoors in the desert to illustrate ISIS's full control of the geographic landscape (Tinnes 2015). Most importantly, rather than presenting a sophisticated theological statement spoken in Arabic, this video adopts a clear political narrative articulated in London-accented English for a sharpened reception (Ranstorp and Normark 2015).

Although the practice of beheading is arguably rooted in Middle Eastern culture and history (Taylor 2014), there have been debates concerning the religious legitimation of beheading in Islam, i.e., whether or not the Quran justifies beheading (Longenecker 2014a, b, c; Spencer 2014; Banic 2016; Staff 2016). While a literalist reading of the Quran does offer a justification for savagery (Tiersky 2015), the majority of existing discourse on this matter suggests that it is a result of ISIS's cherry-picking of Quran texts to fulfil their instrumental political agendas and promote radical interpretations of Islamic teachings (Townsend 2018; Allam 2015; Tiersky 2015). Their arguments centre on the Surah Al-Anfal [8:12] and Surah Muhammad [47:4], which both literally mention 'strike the neck', a phrase that 'Jihadi John' frequently used in the beheading videos[60]. Some believe that they these texts potentially provide justification for beheading in wartime, although many agree that they can be interpreted differently (Saloom 2005). ISIS's justification of its brutality does not stop with the Quran. In addition to retaliation for US airstrikes, the atrocities of the Assad regime, stories from early Islamic

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[60] 'Just as your missiles continue to strike our people, our knife will continue to strike the necks of your people' (V16, 2014); 'Obama, you have started your aerial bombardment of Shams (Syria), which keeps on striking our people, so it is only right that we continue to strike the neck of your people' (V22, 2014).

history, and modern Islam's victimisation by European powers are invoked (Engel 2015; Tiersky 2015). As Goffman explains, the performer often fosters the impression that 'they had ideal motives for acquiring the role' and that 'they have ideal qualifications for the role' (Goffman 1959, p.29). These justifications by ISIS might, as Daskin (2016, p.13-14) precisely argues, be a process of 'the enemy creation' whereby 'an external enemy is blamed for everything to hold people together and to make them more susceptible to justify violence. During the process, existing social, economic, and political disgruntlement is utilised'.

We must realise that this video, as well as 'Jihadi John's' activity contained therein, constitute 'a pattern of appropriate conduct, coherent, embellished, and well-articulated' to formalise a 'status' and 'position' in which Muslims are subject to the vast Western malevolence and must be defended and protected by a reliable, strong hand, which is the role that ISIS claims to play (Goffman 1959, p.81). As Goffman (1959, p.3) illustrates, the performer can express himself or herself in a way that will lead audiences 'to act voluntarily in accordance with his [or her] own plan'. This can be achieved only by acting 'in a thoroughly calculating manner' that likely evokes the intended response (Goffman 1959, p.3). Therefore, in this sense, it is important to know the responses that this video aimed to provoke through the well-articulated, self-justified scripts and devastating acts of violence. The response that ISIS aimed to evoke is associated with the group's strategic objectives.

Strategic Objectives

Scholars have argued that beheading videos are used by jihadist groups for a range of strategic objectives, including obtaining ransom payments, discrediting political states, arousing fear in the general public, recruiting violent supporters, or acting as a publicity tool. However, ISIS's objectives in this case are highly contested as the relevant discourse has primarily led in two opposite directions (Friis 2015; Landis 2014; Sly 2014; Read 2014; McCants 2015). On the one hand, most perceivably, ISIS aims to deter Western powers from implementing further military attacks against them. An unspoken corollary to the beheadings is that ISIS has costly responses to those who act against it, which may intimidate adversaries into acquiescence (Maher 2015). At the time, ISIS controlled a wide landscape, had autonomy, and claimed a

caliphate (*ibid.*). Being left alone by global powers benefits this project with stability for expansion in the Middle East.

On the other hand, ISIS seeks to draw all of its enemies into the region to create a total chaos that enables them to act as a defender of Muslims and to eventually bring about the apocalyptic prophecy (McCants 2015a, b). This strategy became clear when Abdul-Rahman (formerly Peter) Kassig became the fifth Western hostage to be beheaded in November 2014. This killing differed from the preceding four videos (Maher 2015). A short speech remarking on his death spoken by 'Jihadi John' noted that the execution was in Dabiq, a town in Syria where the final battle between the armies of Islam and those of 'Rome' was predicted to happen (McCants 2015a). The video quoted Zarqawi's 2004 statement that 'the spark has been lit here in Iraq, and its heat will continue to intensify (…) until it burns the Crusader army in Dabiq' (Simcox and Peritz 2014, p.5). This mentality is also expressed in other highly circulated ISIS videos around the time.[61]

Kassig was labelled the 'first crusader' buried in Dabiq (Maher 2015), which seems to reflect the group's ideological belief in a final confrontation between *haqq* and *batil* (Truth and falsehood).[62] From Zawahiri's letter to Zarqawi in 2005, we know that ISIS has promoted apocalyptic prophecy for years[63] (Simcox and Peritz 2014; McCants 2016). The effectiveness of this strategy was confirmed by a CNN poll that found that the beheading of American and British hostages pushed Western public opinion into a more favourable stance regarding military intervention against ISIS (Friis 2015; Simcox and Peritz 2014). The truth is that we probably cannot know exactly what ISIS truly wanted to achieve, but the recovery of the authentic goal of the 9/11 attack might aid an understanding: it took years to determine that al-Qaeda hoped the US would either entirely withdraw their armies from the Muslim world or commit to an all-out invasion that would drain America's treasury and irritate Muslims, ultimately pushing America to leave Muslim land either way (Friis 2015).[64] It appears that

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[61] See 'The Flame of War' (V19, release on 19 September 2014)
[62] 'The area will play a historical role in the battles leading up to the conquests of Constantinople, then Rome' (Simcox and Peritz 2014, p.5).
[63] 'sow terror in the hearts of the Crusaders and their helper' (Simcox and Peritz 2014, p.4).
[64] It was allegedly recovered from computers in an al-Qaeda office in Kabul

history has repeated itself: in seeking to deter or provoke the US, ISIS might very likely be expecting either complete disengagement or massive aggression (McCants 2015b).

In summary, although built step-by-step, this analysis concludes that the overall illocutionary point of the video is *threatening*. The video begins by visually confirming the authenticity of the US intervention against ISIS and then criticises it through an American citizen to appeal for a rebellion against the policy. Through 'Jihadi John', ISIS accuses this intervention of leading to casualties among Muslims, among whom ISIS claims authority, and therefore demonstrates a calamitous consequence – the decapitation of James Foley. A solution is ultimately presented using a conditional clause – fulfil what is required; otherwise, additional retaliations will come. In doing so, the additional speech acts involved *justifying* and *condemning*. The former justifies ISIS's beheading of Western hostages as vengeance, whereas the latter condemns US airstrikes as military aggression towards Muslim lands and its people. By doing so, ISIS aims to either deter America from engaging in further military operations or drag it into a total war in the Middle East.

LEND ME YOUR EARS series (2014)

The video series *Lend Me Your Ears* represents an effort to convey sophisticated pro-ISIS arguments intervening in the Western dominant accent of ISIS discourse. Unlike an immediate intimidation that threatens Western politicians and the general public, this series more subtly attempts to shape public opinion of the group's viewpoints. Through the words and conventions of a captured Western media insider, British journalist John Cantlie, ISIS perceivably manages to add a layer of credibility in their argumentative moves (Callimachi 2014). Cantlie, who was captured by ISIS along with American journalist James Foley in November 2012 after working freelance and reporting on the front lines in multiple countries, might disagree with his statements on behalf of ISIS, which align with the group's political agenda (Foy 2015; Tinnes 2015). Although a few scholarly studies have used the video series to understand ISIS's strategies and views on hostage negotiation (Tinnes 2015; Foy 2015), comprehensive analyses regarding its underlying meaning remain scarce (Ingram 2014; Cantey 2017; Colas 2016; Mabon 2016; Saltman and Winter 2014; Phillips 2016; Tinnes 2015; Foy 2015). Following an interrogation of the production characteristics, thematic distribution, and use of language of the video series, this part bridges this gap by providing a thorough analysis of the series.

Context

From September to November 2014, although hampered by the US-led coalition, ISIS continued to maintain its past momentum. It was marching towards Baghdad, the Iraqi capital, and launched intensive and enormous suicide attacks in the city (Karadsheh 2014; Staff 2014; Smith-Spark *et al.* 2014; Duell 2014). More than 10,000 fighters were dispatched to capture Baghdad, and they ended up 15 miles away the city's airport (Smith-Spark *et al.* 2014). ISIS was growing in influence and taking power from al-Qaeda among the global jihadi movement: a group of jihadi fighters from Jabhat al-Nusra, also known as al-Qaeda in Syria, joined ISIS (Lamothe 2014); the Yemeni leaders of AQAP (al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula) claimed to support ISIS (Winter 2014); a number of Algerian commanders of AQIM (al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb) shifted their allegiance from al-Qaeda to ISIS and created Jund al-Khilāfah, which later became the Algerian province of ISIS (Zelin 2014), and al-Baghdadi also claimed

the caliph of the Islamic Caliphate of Derna established In Berna, Libya (Hufflington 2014). One of the ISIS senior leaders, Abu Mohammad al-Adnani, released a speech demanding that Muslims kill non-Muslims (Bayoumy 2014), while a group of influential Muslim scholars published an open letter to Baghdadi rebutting what they saw as his illegitimate interpretation of the Quran (Johnston 2014). At the time, 15,000 foreign fighters had joined ISIS in Iraq and Syria (Ackerman 2014; Foster 2014; Ross 2014).

Meanwhile, US-led airstrikes that implemented several attacks on ISIS strategic targets were gradually changing the situations confronted by ISIS (Reuters 2014). Compared to the airstrike in August 2014, the US military intervention escalated. On 10 September 2014, President Obama announced a coalition against ISIS following the beheading of Foley and Sotloff (Cohen 2014). On 23 September, US-led allied geopolitical aerial operations began in Syria (Cooper and Schmitt 2014). Afterwards, nearly a hundred airstrikes were launched in Syria and Iraq (Reuters 2014; Buchnan 2014; Chulov *et al.* 2014; Lamothe 2014). In Iraq, America doubled its ground-stationed troops (Sherlock 2014). Many Western countries provided military support (Sherlock 2014; Chelsea *et al.* 2014). This American-led coalition destroyed several strategic targets of ISIS, such as provincial-level command centres, heavy weapons and large troop units; some fighting positions were shifted in the battlefield as a result (Ali 2014; Kenny 2014; Fox 2015). In response, ISIS representatives attended a formal meeting with other jihadi groups to discuss possible solutions (Martin 2014).

In addition, at this time, ISIS initiated the battle of Kobani, a border town in northern Syria near the Turkish border. This defining battle, which reflected ISIS border ambitions, shed light on an ongoing media war. For ISIS, the battle in Kobani symbolised the group's public image of inevitability and invincibility, whereas for America, it was a test of its foreign policy (Arango 2017). This battle started in the middle of September and eventually ended with a decisive victory by the coalition-allied Kurdish forces (Albayrak *et al.* 2014; Zaman 2015). Interestingly, during the siege, an ISIS video was released with footage of the British journalist hostage John Cantlie inside the city of Kobani. Cantlie claimed that the city was mostly under ISIS control (Quinn 2014; Shoichet 2014), and Western media rapidly discredited the video as propaganda in which reality was partial and twisted (Mosendz 2014; Groll 2014). As such, the battle of Kobani was described as a 'publicity war' (Arango 2017 p.1).

Production Characteristics and Thematic Distribution

The entire series of *Lend Me Your Ears* was released during this period. In addition to an introductory trailer, it contains six episodes. The introduction trailer was released on 18 September 2014, while episode six was released on 21 November 2014. These episodes were released at weekly intervals. The video series are in English without subtitles and were produced by *al-Furqan* media centre. The total duration of the series is forty-four minutes and fifty-two seconds, with approximately six minutes per episode. Although Cantlie acknowledges that he is under duress[65], the videos contain no footage of physical violence. The videos are non-scored, identical to a news show, presenting a selection of different media sources quoted in the formulation of a pro-ISIS argumentation (Tinnes 2015; Farrell 2017; Thussu 1997). Though clad in an orange jumpsuit, John Cantlie appears to be a news anchor sitting at a desk against a black background with his hands unchained.

Eight themes are identifiable in this video (see Figure 6. 2): CC (captive and confession), WF (Western failure and weakness), WM (Western malevolence), SV (strength and victory), ROA (rejections of antagonists), WCWE (West colluding with its enemies), MS (Muslim suffering), and SG (Sharia and governance). The thematic distribution shows that CC (56%), WF (16%), WM (13%), and SV (7%) account for the vast majority of the video, whereas ROA (2%), WCWE (2%), MS (1%), and SG (1%) are statistically inconsequential. This distribution illustrates that this video series centrally features a captive and his confession, demonstrating Western failure and malevolence on one hand, while highlighting ISIS's strength and capacity on the other.

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[65] *'Now, I know what you're thinking. You're thinking: 'He's only doing this because he's a prisoner; he's got a gun at his head and he's being forced to do this', right? Well, it's true. I am a prisoner (...) (Ep. Intro, released 18/09/2014).*

THEMATIC COMPOSITION – *LEND ME YOUR EARS SERIES (EP. INTRO-SIX)*

- WCWE 2%
- MS 1%
- SG 1%
- WF 16%
- ROA 2%
- SV 7%
- CC 56%
- WM 13%
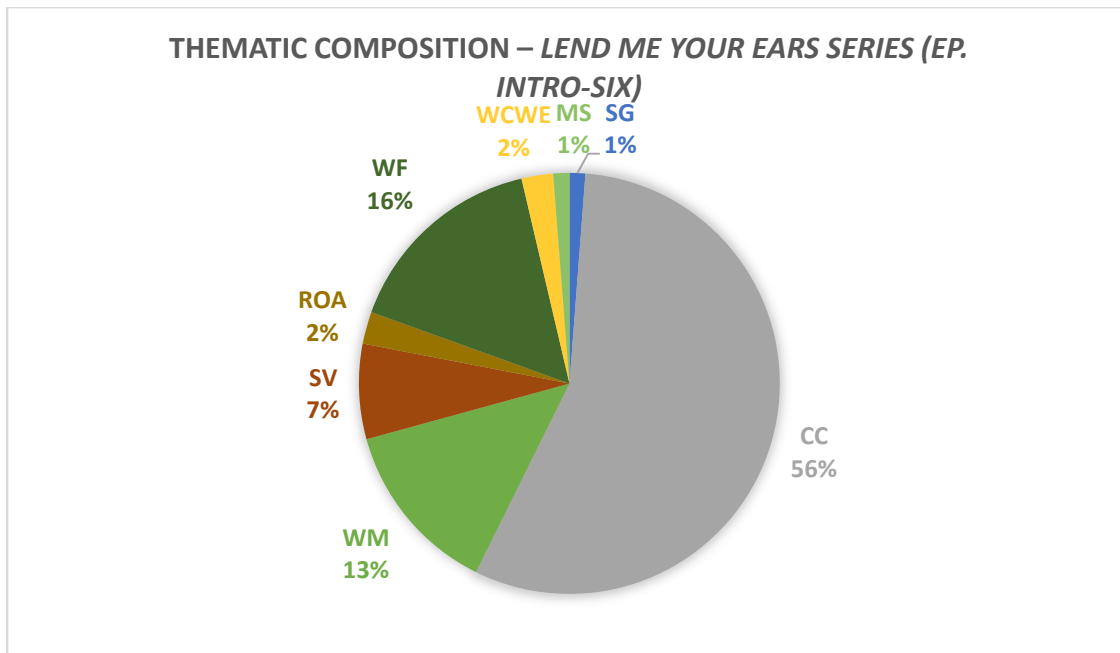
Figure 6. 2 Thematic distribution of an ISIS English-language video series, Lend Me Your Ears.

The Use of Language

A close examination of Cantlie's use of language reveals three discourses, i.e., Western media distortion and manipulation of truth, America's engagement in an 'unwinnable' war with ISIS, and the American and British governments' non-negotiation policy. The introduction trailer outlines the objectives of the series; episodes one to four reveal the Western media distortion and claim that American intervention against ISIS is futile, whereas the last two episodes evaluate the American and British governments' non-negotiation policy and how it affects the fate of their citizens. In what follows, these three discourses are presented with John Cantlie's original verbal texts to eventually conclude a consistent underlying intention [speech act] performed throughout – the *condemning* class of speech acts. It linguistically focuses on asserting the wickedness of human actions and the people performing these actions (Wierzbicka 1997). In doing so, this study also asserts that the arguments regarding perceived Western media distortions and the doomed failure of the American military intervention also include the performance of speech acts of *rebutting* and *boasting*. The former rebuts reports on ISIS in the Western media to rebalance global anti-ISIS rhetoric, whereas the latter boasts of the group's military capacity to show how airstrikes will cost 'trillions for nothing' (Ep. 2,

release 29/09/2014). The semantic definitions of the speech acts are as follows[66] (Wierzbicka 1997):

- *Rebutting - It involves, above all, saying that something that has been said is untruthful while showing that something else has to be true and that anyone has to accept it as true. Rebutting expects disbelief but aims to eradicate the very possibility of it. Therefore, to rebut is to argue against an argument or view already put forward* (p.134-135).

- *Boasting - It involves saying good things about oneself with the purpose of impressing other people. The feeling sought from the addressee is not necessarily a 'good feeling' such as admiration but may be a 'bad feeling' such as envy. Regardless, the speaker wants to cause the addressee to feel something towards him* (p.203).

The first component in the use of language expressed by Cantlie is an interpretation of media distortion and its manipulation of truth. Based on self-identification with the Western media industry, Cantlie outlines the following:

I'm going to show you the truth behind the systems and motivation of the Islamic State and how the Western media – the very organisation I used to work for – can twist and manipulate that truth for the public back home. There are two sides to every story – think you're getting the whole picture' (Ep intro, release 18/09/2014).

Violent extremists are dependent on mainstream media but often condemn it for taking the stances of its adversaries (Thussu 1997). Cantlie presents 'a cunningly symbiotic relationship' between Western governments and the media industry to highlight the untruthful, manipulative nature of Western news outlets (Ep. 4, released on 16/10/2014).

At the time, much of the coverage on ISIS tended to use words such as 'vicious', 'barbarian', 'savage', and 'disgusting' to categorise ISIS and its instrumental violence (Chulov 2014; Tran and Weaver 2014; Kingsley 2014). The group was accused of misinterpreting the Quran,

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[66] Skinner did not explicitly define the speech act verbs of either '*rebutting'* or '*boasting'*, but he did mention two similar performative verbs, '*arguing'* and '*elevating',* respectively, in his books *Visions of Politics: Regarding Method (Volume 1)* (2002) and *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (1997), where he mentioned *elevating/depreciating* in his discussion of rhetorical techniques of redescription (1997, p.141). In addition, when discussing the precise nature of the intervention in use of language, he said, 'To argue is always to argue for or against a certain assumption or point of view or course of action' (Skinner 2002a, p.115), which formed the very basis of the Skinnerian theoretical approach to interpretation. Since Skinner's definitions of these two specific performative verbs were arguably either too broad or implicit, Wierzbicka's (1997) dictionary of speech act verbs were therefore employed.

violating Islamic law, and carrying out mass slaughters of ethnic minorities (Smith 2015; Winsor 2014; Writer 2014). The majority of countries and international institutions worldwide officially labelled ISIS as a terrorist organisation, and a broad range of Islamic religious leaders and establishments criticised the group for its brutality, extremism, and distortion of religion (Hasan 2015). US President Obama, who authorised airstrikes against ISIS, also subsequently denounced ISIS as non-Islamic and killing innocents and Muslims (Killough 2014; Blake 2014; Miller 2014).

Nonetheless, these actions were considered Western anti-ISIS propaganda, as Cantlie calmly explains to his English-speaking audience in the West, 'A pity insult does not do harm to the most powerful jihadist movement seen in recent history' (Ep.1, released on 23/09/2014); Cantlie further denies the genocide of ethnic minorities and clarifies that ISIS killed only Shia Muslims (Ep. 2, release 29/09/2014).[67] In response to the airstrike, Cantlie continues, 'Since when has America cared about the fate of a minority in Muslim lands?' Regarding religion, Cantlie says people who accuse ISIS of abuse of Sharia are merely fabricating these allegations as 'a good story' (Ep.4, released on 16/10/2014).

Moreover, the second component of Cantlie's discourse is to note the futility of American intervention. Cantlie begins, 'We'll see how the Western governments are hastily marching towards all-out war in Iraq and Syria without paying any heed to the lessons of the recent past' (Ep.1, released on 23/09/2014). In saying this, Cantlie adopts two demonstrations. First, he offers the example of previous US military operations in Iraq to prove America's incapability of military intervention. Cantlie argues, 'While the full might of the American war machine couldn't destroy the Islamic State in Iraq before, now the state is far stronger than ever it was; what is this latest ill-advised foray really supposed to achieve' (Ep.1, released on 23/09/2014). Words and phrases such as 'under-construction army' and 'underperforming' are repeatedly used to describe American troops (Ep. 2, release 29/09/2014). Second, ISIS is represented as a strong, unstoppable force: 'current estimates of 15,000 troops needed to fight the Islamic State are laughably low. The state has more Mujahideen than this, and this is not some undisciplined outfit with a few Kalashnikovs' (Ep.1, released on 23/09/2014).

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[67] ISIS denies Shia as Muslims and call them 'Rafidah'[rejectors].

The last discourse expressed by Cantlie is centred on criticism of the American and British stance refusing negotiation. After repeated emphasis on the presenter's experience as a hostage, this part achieves a relatively high degree of complexity and substantiality in four facets. The first facet highlights the governments' negligence concerning their citizens. Cantlie's self-identification in each episode repeats this: 'I'm John Cantlie, a British citizen abandoned by my government'. The governments' negligence is supported by quotations of emails sent by the families of American hostages to seek government help, who receive either 'absolutely nothing' or worse – threats of persecution, explains Cantlie (Ep. 5, released 25/10/2014).[68] Cantlie thus concludes, 'The mujahideen told us our governments didn't care about us, and we didn't believe them … but it was all true' (Ep. 5, released 25/10/2014). Moreover, the second facet explains that Cantlie's fate differs from that of other European hostages because the US and Britain adhere to a no-ransom stance. Cantlie says, 'Only the British and American prisoners were left behind; after months of negotiations, they saw 16 other citizens from 6 European countries go home' (Ep. 5, released 25/10/2014).

The third facet of Cantlie's discussion on the non-negotiation policy points to the hypocrisy of governments and politicians. Cantlie proves that a deal was negotiated in the case of American Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl, who was in a prisoner exchange for five Taliban members held at Guantanamo Bay. Cantlie rebuts that 'he was one man, we were six (...) yes Bergdahl was a soldier (…) we are not big people, and we are not special … but we are no more or less important than everyone else who went home' (Ep. 6, released 21/11/2014). Speaking about American and British politicians, Cantlie complains:

It became clear to me that we're just being used by our politicians. Obama and Cameron act all shocked and appalled each time one of us is killed, but they've known this was coming for months, months! They've known our six names, who was holding us, and the consequences of not negotiating for over a year, so for them to act all surprised and shocked each time one of us is executed is a massive lie to the public and our families (Ep. 6, released 21/11/2014).

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[68] Diane, the mother of American hostage James Foley, was confronted with criminal charges by the US National Security Council for trying to raise ransom (Mosendz 2014).

The final facet concerning the non-negotiation policy is the criticism that the governments' arrogance places their citizens into a more vulnerable situation in a costly way. This point was exemplified by a failed US military operation to rescue Western hostages in July 2014. It was authorised by US President Barack Obama when the location of the hostages [e.g., James Foley and John Cantlie] was believed to be found, but it ended in failure because the hostages had been previously moved (Steele 2014). 'It took weeks of rehearsals and must have cost tens of millions to perform', Cantlie accentuates; 'why would you put all those lives in danger when you could have peacefully negotiated like everyone else? Why is a military option always the first option for our countries (…) [it is] often far more dangerous and costlier than negotiating in the first place' (Ep. 6, released 21/11/2014).

To summarise, the above discourses expressed in the video series *Lend Me Your Ears* by John Cantlie are centred on the assertion of the deficiency of the media industry, Western intervention, and the non-negotiation stance and therefore consistently represent speech acts of the *condemning*. Meanwhile, in condemning Western media for fabricating news, which involves speech acts of *rebutting,* ISIS tries to rebut reports on them in Western media that they consider to be untruthful. In addition, speech acts of *boasting* are entailed in their criticisms of Western military interventions on Muslim land. ISIS attempts to boast about its military strength to show that the Coalition will eventually fail. Because Cantlie's role as a news anchor and news analyst fit into a format common in Western news culture, the locutionary meanings of Cantlie's utterances are clearly contextualised and articulated. This clear contextualisation facilitates the retrieval of speech acts in the intertextual context, and the performance of this class of speech acts underlines the group's threefold strategic objectives: to rebalance Western discourses on ISIS, leverage Western public against military intervention, and discredit Western governments. First, the condemnation of Western media delivered by a proficient Western media journalist conveys trustworthiness and therefore produces a counterbalance to Western news reporting and anti-ISIS rhetoric (Tinnes 2015; Ingram 2014). Second, because the series' chronological occurrence echoes American military actions against ISIS [much of the content also presents direct references to these actions], criticism over such intervention seeks to sow discontent among the Western public to prevent such actions from continuing (Dan 2014; Nicks 2014; Carter, Cohen and Starr 2014; Morrios and DeYoung 2014). Finally, a condemnation of the non-negotiation policy undermines the

credibility of Western governments before their citizens and enhances the Western reception of ISIS as a *de facto* state (Foy 2016; Colas 2017).

EID GREETING FROM THE LAND OF THE CALIPHATE (2014)

In celebration of *Eid al-Fitr* in 2014*,* an important Islamic festival that marks the end of Ramadan and the first day of the new month of Shawwal (Fields 2014; Howard 2014), a video titled *'Eid Greeting From the Land of the Caliphate' was* released (2014, V14). Its carefully orchestrated scenes show men bearing weapons and children holding toy guns in Raqqa, a Syrian city claimed by ISIS to be the capital of the new self-declared caliphate (Howard 2014; Fields 2014; Taylor 2014; Lister 2016). The video is atmospheric and euphoric (Guttry, Capone and Paulussen 2016; Bröckerhoff 2014; Fields 2014; Jan Cronje 2014; Rose 2014; Bröckerhoff 2014; Fields 2014; Guttry, Capone and Paulussen 2016; Harmon and Bowdish 2018; Slovo 2016; Ogun 2015). This analysis first examines the context in which the video occurred, which is followed by an analysis of its production features, thematic distribution, and use of language. It highlights the speech acts of *inviting* that are semantically carried by this video, which fundamentally invites the addressees to come to a place where the speaker will be the host (Wierzbicka 1997), and argues that in doing so, also includes speech acts of *rebutting* regarding the dominant portrait in Western media of ISIS-conquered territory.

Context

A week before the declaration of the caliphate on 29 June 2014, ISIS seemed to conduct concentrated firepower on public service facilities to capture them, i.e., border crossings, oil refineries, and airports (Raddatz 2014; Newsdesk 2014; Chelsea *et al.* 2014; Heuvelen 2014; Barnes 2014). The fall of Mosul granted ISIS more control over such facilities as well as a great strategic location at a crossroad between Syria and Iraq to further threaten oil production (Colleen 2014; Chulov 2014). In July, ISIS captured the largest oilfield in Syria (Hawramy and Harding 2014). Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi globally called Muslims to unite under his leadership and march towards 'Rome' (McElroy 2014; McElroy 2014). While ISIS was stepping up its statehood project, the English language 'Think Again, Turn Away' counter-ISIS campaign launched a YouTube channel and posted a video titled 'Welcome to ISIS Land' (2014) on 23 July, which depicts graphic images of ISIS atrocities committed against Muslims and the mass destruction in ISIS-controlled territory (Fernandez 2015; Katz 2014). Although criticised for its quality, the video was globally viral in terms of viewings (Fernandez 2015).

Production Characteristics and Thematic Distribution

The *Eid Greeting* video was released on 2 August 2014. Given the festival period in the 2014 Islamic calendar, the video was filmed on approximately 28-29 July – one month following the declaration of the caliphate (Tran and Weaver 2014; Taylor 2014). The language primarily spoken is English. English subtitles are presented whenever other languages are spoken. The video was produced by the *al-Hayat* media centre and scored by a *Nasheed* entitled '*The Sharia of Our Lord is Light*' (2014). In its twenty-one minutes and fifty-three seconds of duration, no violent footage occurs.

Thematically, the vast majority of the content of this video concerns the depiction of a happy life in the caliphate, *Hijrah* (immigration), and *Sharia* (Islamic law) (see Figure 6. 3). There are twelve themes identifiable in total, i.e., HW (happiness and well-being), CS (caliphate and statehood), HIJ (Hijrah), SG (Sharia and governance), JIHAD (jihad), HUM (humiliation), SFQS (support from Quran and Sunnah), SV (strength and victory), RH (restoring honours), BA (Bay'ah), ELT (expanding large territory and Dawah), and ROA (rejection of antagonist). The thematic distribution indicates that four themes are most prominently featured, i.e., HW (22%), CS (20%), HIJ (15%), and SG (12%). The rest of the themes are statically nonsignificant – each account for less than 10%. As such, the video's content most prominently represents a joyful life under the caliphate and verbally calls people to emigrate. The themes emphasised in this video centrally focus on emigrating to enjoy life rather than to fight to the death.
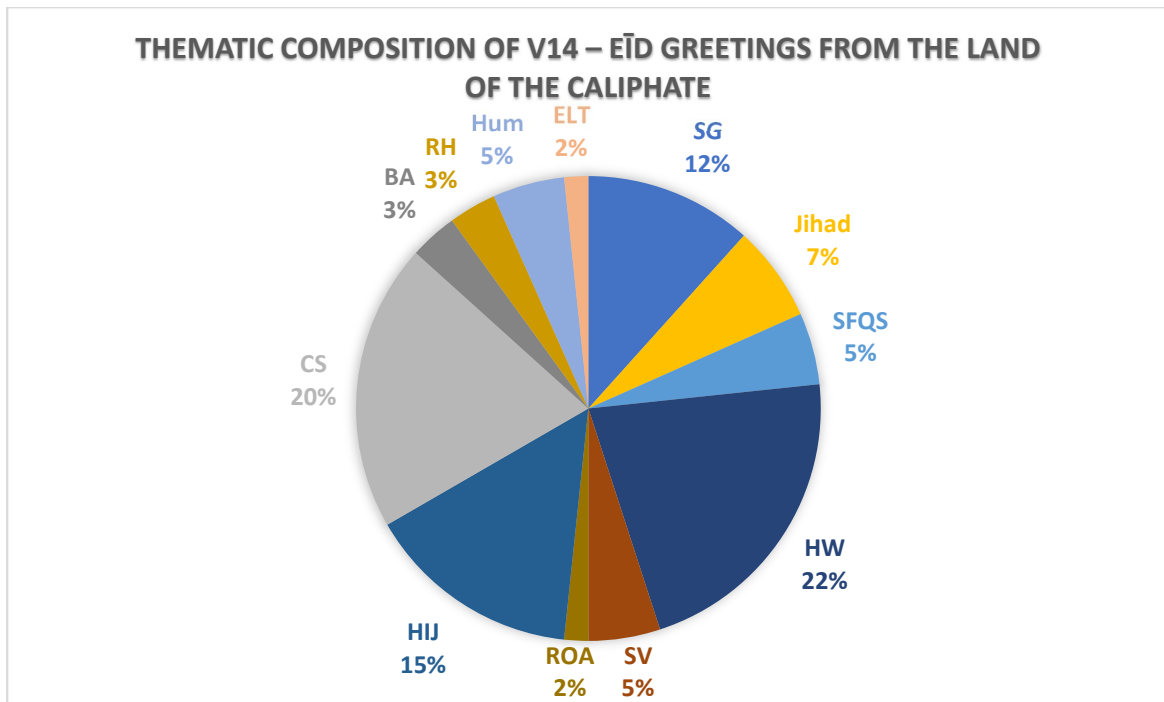
Figure 6. 3 Thematic distribution of an ISIS English-language video, V14 – EĪd Greetings From the Land of the Caliphate.

The Use of Language

The video begins with a sermon given at a mosque that pledges allegiance to the leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and swears loyalty and worship to the caliphate. It is followed by people's smiling faces scored by a *Nasheed* [hymn] '*The Sharia of Our Lord is Light*' (2014). This hymn has a benign tone and is generally presented to highlight the peace, security, and ideal life under ISIS's rule and to showcase the public services offered (Al-Tamimi 2014). At the end of the *Nasheed*, an ISIS fighter teaches a group of children to swear loyalty to the caliphate. Consecutive interviews of eight ISIS foreign fighters from different countries follow to express the fighters' and their families' gratitude, happiness, and pleasure with life in the caliphate. Between the interviews, there are two transitional scenes featuring children involved in a distribution of toys and playing on carousels. The video ends with the text '*I Wish You Were Here*' presented over the faces of delighted children (V14, 2014). A detailed structure of the content and its duration are presented in Table 2 in the Appendix.

The opening scene of the video primarily affirms the establishment of the caliphate. It depicts the allegiance pledged to the state as well as to 'Caliph Baghdadi' through a sermon at a mosque in Raqqa. The preacher affirms the declaration of the caliphate and claims that it is the 'greatest event of contemporary history' (V14, 2014). He then praises ISIS's military advance at the time (Prothero, Allam and Staff 2014). Furthermore, he claims that Sharia is fully implemented and quotes *Surah Al-A'raf* [7:137] and *An-Nur* [24:55] in the Quran to legitimise ISIS's deeds as fully 'prophetic' [following the Prophet's deeds]. The video ends with a *Bay'ah* [pledge of allegiance] to the leader Abu Bakr Baghdadi.

Following the sermon given at the mosque, this video presents eight foreigner fighters from different countries illustrating their satisfaction after *hijrah*. All of their statements are distinctly simple and clear. This simplicity of language can be seen through the utterances of the first fighter, Abu Abdullah al-Habashi, a British Ethiopian born Christian who later converts to Islam (Malik *et al.* 2015; Dodd 2014; Sanchez and Turner 2016).
Today is a very beautiful day (…) it's a good atmosphere (…) you can really feel the Eid here in the land of khilāfah [caliphate]. I don't think there's anything better than living in the land of khilāfah … you're not living under oppression, not living under kufr [non-believers], you live under Quran and you live under Sunnah [the way of the prophet] (V14, 2014).

The subsequent interviews repeatedly emphasise emigration. The fighter Abu Shuaib al-Somali from Finland, the son of a former Somali presidential candidate (Sabahi 2014), says, 'We can live with blessings here and you should come to the Islamic state (…) to make *hijrah* with your families' (V14, 2014). Similarly, a Tunisian fighter Abdul Haleem al-Tunsi hopes to invite his 'brothers everywhere' and 'encourage them to do *hijrah*', consistently with a Moroccan fighter Abdullah al-Magharibi, who calls his family to perform *hijrah* after him (V14, 2014). An American fighter Abu Abdunahman al-Trinidadi says that the caliphate is so much a 'dream world' that 'you have to be here to understand' and the Belgian Abu Haniyah affirms that he never felt like a Muslim before *hijrah* (V14, 2014). Abu Shuaib al-Afriki from South Africa eventually calls for one united *ummah* [Muslim community] under ISIS.

Most notably, children are featured very prominently as a deliberate strategy (Bloom and Horgan 2015). The children are gathered to play ecstatically with their 'families' on carousels

and receive toys distributed by ISIS fighters. More than half of the interviewed fighters are holding a joyful toddler when they express their satisfaction with emigrating with their family. Children's smiling faces cover the lettered ending '*I wish you were here*'. This contented illustration of the land targets people who might consider making *hijrah* with their entire family (Lister 2016; Cronje 2014).

It worth pointing out that this use of children featured by ISIS is opposite to the use of children 'often performing acts of appalling depravity' as 'a deliberate attempt to provoke disgust' (Winter 2016b, p.4). This might be because this video occurs at an early stage. In fact, the children of ISIS (officially named 'ashbal' or 'lion cubs'), from toddlers to teenagers, feature in a large portion of the violent propaganda of ISIS, playing the roles of executioners, soldiers, suicide bombers, proselytisers and preachers, and are depicted as inheritors of the ISIS *jihad* (Bloom and Horgan 2015; Winter 2016b; V32; V40; V78). Following a curriculum of indoctrination to gradual socialisation, ISIS routinely presents children's exposure to videotaped executions (Bloom and Horgan 2015; Winter 2016b; Horgan *et al*. 2016). Although a few children were provided with toys and candy in exchange for their attendance, a much larger number of them were trained to be (de)sensitised and to demonstrate loyalty and commitment to ISIS (Bloom and Horgan 2015; Horgan *et al*. 2016; Bloom and Horgan 2016).[69] ISIS builds its future army by isolating these children from values incompatible with violence and Islamist ideology, which reflects a concept that sociologist Erving Goffman referred to as a 'total institution', which 'has more or less monopoly control of its members' everyday life' (Anderson 2016; Clegg *et al*. 2016, p.266; Goffman 1991, p.151). Following the military defeat of ISIS, these children's return causes many security concerns and problems – their rehabilitation is hard, and the ideology they have absorbed makes them vulnerable to exposure to ISIS propaganda (Dearden 2015; Lamb and Camp 2018; Ensor 2018; Mackie 2018).

This video also demonstrates vividly ISIS's claim to statehood. The transition to this trajectory began with the operation in June to capture the second-largest city in Iraq, Mosul, and display its military capacity (Siegel 2014). This operation succeeded, and a revived caliphate was

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[69] See the interview with a 10-year-old American boy 'Yusuf', who filmed an ISIS propaganda video to send a threatening message to US President Donald Trump titled *The Fertile Nation 4* (2017) and who describes his experience of being forced to film the video against his will (Lemmon 2018; Dearden 2017).

declared in the conquered territory (Shany and Cohen 2014). Although it became a *de facto* state based on the enrolled population, infrastructure projects, and established educational curricula (Wellen 2014), it was widely perceived as controlling a war zone full of death and slaughter (Pasternack 2014; Chulov 2018; Bloom 2014; McElroy 2014; Fisk 2014). ISIS's rule in the land involved the infliction of severe harm to ordinary people under its implementation of Islamic law, including decapitation, amputation, rape, abduction, and crucifixion (Glenn and Nada 2014; Donnellan 2016). The most brutal footage of the actions were collected and became the raw material for the counter-propaganda video 'Welcome to ISIS Land' (released on 23 July 2014), part of an effort of the 'Think Again, Turn Away' campaign run at that time by the US State Department (Fernandez 2015; Miller and Higham 2015). This counter-ISIS propaganda video was propelled into the mainstream media and became the most-viewed production made by the campaign (*ibid.*). The video tries to prevent potential supporters of ISIS from travelling to the land by intimidating them with images of ISIS brutality (Fernandez 2015; Miller and Higham 2015; Tomlinson 2015). Although criticised (Katz 2014; Fisher 2015), many ISIS supporters apparently felt offended (Miller and Higham 2015).[70] In what is hardly seen as a coincidence, the *Eid Greeting* was released within 10 days of the posting of this counter-propaganda video online, depicting a beloved land full of joy and pleasure. The *Eid Greeting* video might not be a direct response to this US-made video, but it presents a straightforward rebuttal of the core notion expressed by the US-made video, wherein ISIS strongholds are depicted as unsafe warzones rife with slaughter, by featuring the opposite depictions.

In sum, this video employs plain, simplified language to encourage people to emigrate to the newly established caliphate. No complex theological or conceptual utterance is issued, and no sophisticated argument is made. Drawing upon an exhibition of an important Islamic festival celebrated within ISIS territory, this video fundamentally performs the speech act of *inviting* primarily for the following three reasons. First, this video was presented close to the self-declaration of a caliphate by ISIS. Second, the thematic distribution overwhelmingly emphasises the themes of caliphate, *hijrah,* and the thrilled life experience. Finally, based on their distinct language aspects, the three large semantic components of this video, i.e., the

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[70] The 'ISIS Land' was forcibly posted twice due to its removal in response to massive complaints from ISIS supporters (Fernandez 2015).

affirmation of the establishment of caliphate, the interviews with the eight foreigners who emigrated from different parts of the world, and the ecstatic children, form a clear invitation to emigrate. It is worth noting that, to rebut the depictions of ISIS-conquered land in Western media, ISIS might have filmed orchestrated scenes to show its 'capital' as a safe and secure place.

THERE IS NO LIFE WITHOUT JIHAD (2014)

The release of the video titled *There Is No Life Without Jihad* (2014) was covered by the Western mainstream media due to its inclusion of testimonies from young British and Australian men who had voluntarily left their families and emigrated to fight for ISIS in Syria (Damaj 2017; Siddique 2014; Becker 2014; Cook 2014; Mackey 2014; Malcolm 2018). The media describes the video as a recruitment effort by ISIS to attract potential jihadists around the globe (Siddique 2014; Becker 2014; Cook 2014). Much of the video entails argumentative moves and ideological interventions, and yet an in-depth study of them remains lacking (Fernandez 2015; Farwell 2014; Awan 2017). The analysis below decodes and unmasks the video as the speakers' performance of the speech act of *inciting* in their attempts to implant in the addressee's mind an irresistible 'must'. Speech acts of *inciting* differ from *inviting* as represented in the previous analysis – the addressees of *inviting* are those of any gender and any profession who do not need to necessarily or compulsorily fight at the frontline and who are invariably encouraged by *hijrah* [emigration], whereas *inciting* is restricted to potential male jihadi soldiers and only promotes violent jihad.

Context

In general, the video was released at a time when ISIS was at the zenith of its power and seemed unstoppable (Beauchamp 2014; Kingsley 2014; Ap 2014). In early June 2014, ISIS initiated the attack on Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq, seizing the city within a few days (Chulov 2014). Other large cities in Iraq such as Fallujah and Tikrit in Iraq were also occupied, with the ultimate goal of conquering Baghdad, the Iraqi capital (Fl 2014; al-Qaisi 2014; al-Salhy and Arango 2014; Al-Jazeera 2014; Salman 2014). The military personnel of ISIS were bolstered by the assimilation of a number of Sunni groups (Neriah 2014). ISIS held various government facilities (Fl 2014; Bihar 2014; Al-Jazeera 2014), and many imams who challenged ISIS ideology were persecuted and murdered, including Muhammad al-Mansuri, the imam of the Grand Mosque Mosul where ISIS leader al-Baghdadi soon declared a caliphate (Avenue 2014; Kohrah 2014; MV Media 2014). In this context of rapid expansion of territory, ISIS released the video '*Without Jihad*' (2014).

Production Characteristics and Thematic Distribution

The video was released on 19 June 2014, a crucial time for ISIS – it was nine days after the fall of Mosul and ten days prior to the declaration of the caliphate (Chulov 2014; Tran and Weaver 2014). The primary language spoken in this video is English, with subtitles in multiple languages. It is a production of the *al-Hayat* media centre, lasts thirteen minutes and twenty-six seconds, and primarily consists of five ISIS fighters as presenters giving speeches.

Nine themes are identifiable in this video (see Figure 6. 4): EM (exemplary models), JIHAD (jihad), HIJ (Hijrah), MM (martyrs and martyrdom), SG (Sharia and governance), CS (caliphate and statehood), HUM (humiliation), HW (happiness and wellbeing), and SFQS (support from Quran and Sunnah). The thematic results of the video indicate that EM (34%) and JIHAD (24%) are the most prevalent themes that together account for more than half of the video, followed by the moderately important themes of HIJ (10%), MM (10%), CS (7%), and SG (7%). The occurrence of the themes HUM, HW, and SFQS are statistically nonsignificant, each contributing only 2%. Even a brief glance at the thematic distribution shows that the vast majority of the video's content focuses on exemplary jihadists, *jihad*, and martyrs.
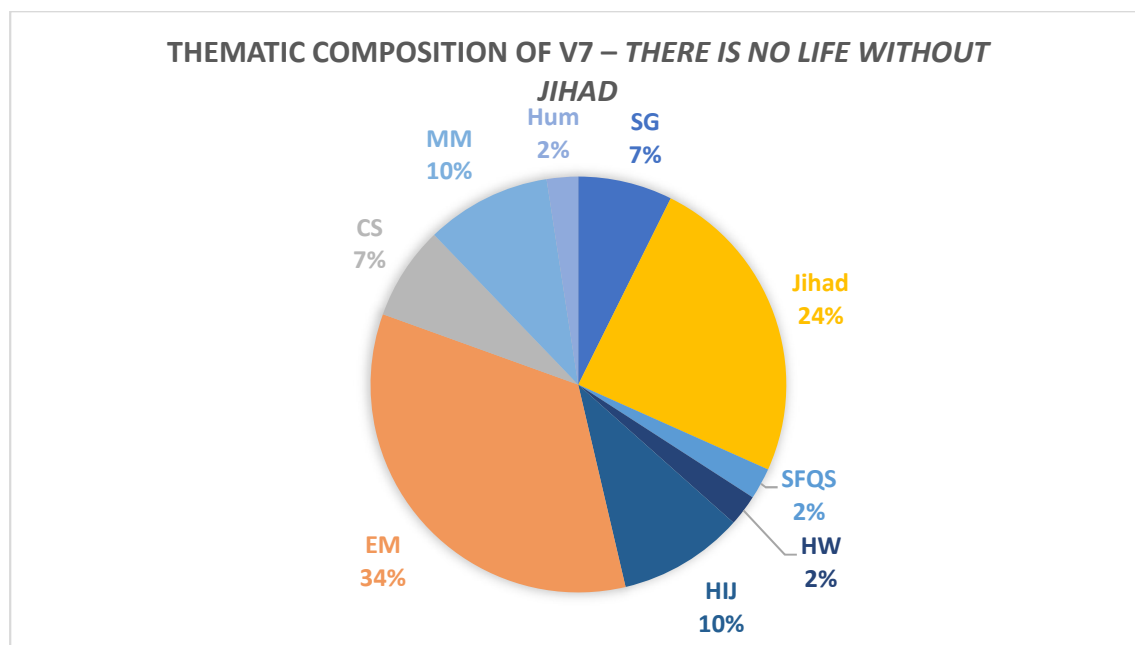
Figure 6. 4 Thematic distribution of an ISIS English-language video, V7 There Is No Life Without Jihad.

The Use of Language

The video consists of seven components: the opening and ending scenes and parts narrated by five Western jihadis. The video starts with a verse from the Quran [Surat al-Anfel 8:24] – a verse that frequently appears in ISIS videos featuring violent jihad (V6; V7; V11). The first speaker is a British fighter who self-identifies as Abu Muthanna al-Yemeni, followed by another British fighter, Abu Bara al Hindi, who focuses on emotive feelings. The next two Australian fighters, Abu Yahya ash Shami and Abu Nour al Iraqi, each give relatively concise speeches, whereas British fighter Abu Dujana al-Hindi, the last speaker, issues a considerably long but deep-focused speech about one's afterlife. A detailed structure of the primary utterances and duration is shown in Table 3 in the Appendix.

The opening speech is made by British jihadist Abu Muthanna al-Yemeni, a 20-year-old medical student from Cardiff (Siddique 2014), and his speech contains four successive discourses. His first discourse is an argument based on his interpretation of a verse in the Quran that violent jihad is what grants one a meaningful life. He reads, 'O you who have believed, answer the call of Allah and his message when he calls you to what gives your life. What gives your life is jihad' (V7, 2014). This verse is from Surah Al-Anfal [8:24] (the Spoils of War) – the same Surah presented in the opening scene – and was revealed in 2 A.H. in Islamic calendars closely following the Battle of Badr, the first battle between Islam and Kufr (non-believers). By adding 'what gives your life is jihad', Abu Muthanna links the performance of violent *jihad* and the answer to the call from God. Based on the Quran, the primary theological basis in Islam, this opening utterance accredits life with a legitimised purpose, *jihad*.

Abu Muthanna goes on to claim that Syria is the best land in which to perform violent jihad. Following an explicit demonstration of the 'internationality' and abundance of the foreign fighters who support ISIS, Abu Muthanna refers to Sunan Abu Dawud, one of the Kutub al-Sittah (six authenticated collections of hadith), much of the content of which states that the land of al-Sham (greater Syria) is the best land, a place where 'the angels of Allah rest their wings' and towards which 'the light' shines (Alaikum 2013, p.2; Hamza 2011, p.1). There will

be 'three armies' in Sham, Yemen, and Iraq, and al-Sham is the best[71] (Sunan Abi Dawud 2483) (Alaikum 2013). Abu Muthanna, who considers himself to belong to the armies in al-Sham, proudly claims,

'You need to look to the hadith of Prophet Muhammad. He says the land of Sham is the best of lands, Allah has made the land of the Sham the best, and he chooses the best of people to come here (…) this is the biggest evidence that they [mujahedeen] are upon the Prophetic methodology' (V7, 2014).

Therefore, through legitimising the performance of violent jihad in Syria from authenticated hadith, the second-most important theological reference in Islam, Abu Muthanna lures potential jihadists to come to the 'best' land to fight.

The third part of Abu Muthanna's speech involves an explanation of the meaning of 'fight until Allah's words are the highest', which is associated with the nature of jihad. This phrase is more than a slogan, as it is a recognisable Islamic convention that 'only the one who fights to make Allah's word the highest is fighting jihad' (Reported in Sahih Muslim, No. 79) (Green 2017). Abu Muthanna explains that instead of 'putting flags over the building', jihad entails two parts: to implement the Sharia and to fight until there is no *fitnah* (rebellion). He says,

'A lot of people think it's just to put this flag over their building. It's not like that. It is implementing the law of Sharia and (…) to fight until there is no fitnah (…) You see no one else doing so' (V7, 2014).

On one hand, he points out that ISIS is in a state where the Sharia is implemented. This can be a powerful lure given that a caliph is required to implement Sharia and that many foreign fighters want to 'live under true Sharia' (Wood 2015, p.12). On the other hand, because the fitnah is, according to his definition, 'to be a shirk' (someone practising idolatry or polytheism) (V7, 2014), the second task is to eradicate shirk in the newly occupied territory. By illustrating

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[71] When choosing one of the three, the Prophet said, 'It's al-Sham', as 'it is the best of Allah's lands. Allah will look after the land and its people' (Sunan Abi Dawud 2483)

the importance of establishing an Islamic state to implement Sharia and meanwhile eradicating shirk that exists within the 'state', Abu Muthanna shows ISIS's view of true jihad.

Last, Abu Muthanna concludes by sending his message to his Sheikh, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, leader of ISIS. He says,

'To our sheikh, I want to let you know that the hope of this ummah (Muslim community) is in your neck [he said this three times]. We hope in the caliphate. It is imminent, whether it is by us or those after us. Don't fear the blame of the blamers and be firm and do not change at all (…) we are your sharp arrows and throw us to your enemies wherever they are. And we will return to the borders that go all the way to al-Andalus [Muslim Iberia]' (V7, 2014).

On the surface, his message appears to be an expression of loyalty and allegiance, but its three traits reaffirm the political agenda regarding the establishment of the caliphate and a wish for the restoration of the glorious past. First, placing the utterance in its linguistic context, he mentions earlier that 'nothing has gathered us [jihadists] except fighting to make Allah's words the highest' (V7, 2014). Doing so implies the need to 'implement Sharia and to 'fight until there is no *fitnah*' – both require a legitimate territory (V7, 2014). As such, Abu Muthanna repeatedly expresses that the hope of Muslims is held by al-Baghdadi because they [mujahedeen] 'hope in the caliphate' (V7, 2014). Second, due to broad condemnation from the Muslim community and the 'heavy responsibility' (Mandhai 2014; Memri 2014, p.1), Muthanna hopes that the leader al-Baghdadi can be 'firm', 'not change', and 'not fear blamers'. Finally, he exposes an ambitious wish for this caliphate: to return the borders all the way to al-Andalus (known as Muslim Iberia), which used to be a province of the Ummayyad Caliphate in the medieval age, believed to be a golden age of Islam.

The second jihadi speaker, Abu Bara al-Hindi, is more oriented towards his personal experience and emotive feelings regarding his path to jihad. His personal experience is about spontaneity and reciprocation. Abu Bara starts by encouraging others to read the Quran themselves rather than hearing about it from others to determine whether or not it is time to perform jihad. He explains his experience back in the UK: 'When I read the Quran, I used to feel like monastic' because 'I was not doing anything and this [becoming an ISIS jihadist in

Syria]' is what 'really makes everything clear to me' (V7, 2014). He further urges others to 'make a move' because this Dunya [this life] is 'only a test' to let Allah know how much one will sacrifice, e.g., 'the fat job, the big car, the family'. He ends with a certainty: 'definitely, if you sacrifice something for Allah, Allah will give you 700 times more than this' (V7, 2014).

Regarding emotions, Abu Bara al-Hindi expresses feelings of depression and harassment associated with living in the West and his life in Aberdeen, a northern Scottish city in the UK (Gall, 2014). 'My brothers, living in the West, I know how you feel; in the heart, you feel depressed', he said. His speech utilises some of the most typical, alluring narratives employed by ISIS, namely, describing the historical experience of Islam; listing historical and political grievances; and harnessing the feelings of victimisation, isolation, and discrimination experienced by vulnerable Muslims living in the West (Mahood and Rana 2016). Abu Bara aims to generate feelings of stigmatisation and to convey among stigmatised groups that the transformation from a Western Muslim to a jihadist fighter is not a deviant activity (Lakhani 2013; Casey 2017; Goffman 1963; Hartshorne and Persson 2015). By remarking such emotive affections, Abu Bara eventually proposes a 'solution': 'the cure for the depression is *jihad* (…)' (V7, 2014).

Australian jihadist Abu Yahya's narrative identifies with the suffering and sacrifice of Muslim people and emphasizes the concepts of humiliation rather than Islamic tradition. He begins by saying, 'All my brothers in Australia, I don't see myself better than any of you' as a demonstration of humbleness, even though he most likely believes the opposite because closely following the previous utterance, he says, 'Allah has carried me and brought me to this country' (V7, 2014). Given the linguistic context of the video, it is a natural sequence of (and linguistically consistent with) the idea that Allah 'chooses the best people to come here' presented by the first speaker, Abu Muthanna.

The primary point that Abu Yahya leads to is the Palestine issue, a long-existing historical and political grievance perceived by the Arab world. 'Palestine has gone a long time ago. It's been taken. It's been pounded, the Jews have taken it' (V7, 2014), he said, referring to the Nakba (1948 Palestinian exodus) and Israel's settlement in both Gaza and the West Bank (supposedly Israel-occupied Palestinian territory) (Hudson 1969; Elgindy 2012). Although this Australian

jihadist does not discuss any specific grievance, with great emotion on the face, he obviously feels oppressed on behalf of other Muslims (Flannery 2015). He continues, 'our sisters in Fallujah, day after day, they give birth to deformed babies' (V7, 2014). The conflicts in the city of Fallujah, an ancient Iraqi city on the Euphrates River near Baghdad, were often religious (Helms 2012; Mockaitis 2013). Fallujah used to be the centre of Jewish scholarship and home to many Jewish religious academics prior to the growing rivalry between Islam and Judaism (Helms 2012). There is a conspiracy concerning Jewish religious influence in Fallujah (Khashana 2004). Given that ISIS took control of the city five months before the video and previous linguistic context clearly demonstrates that the shirk has been eradicated within ISIS-occupied territory (Anthony 2014; Rowen and McNiff 2017), Abu Yahya shows what ISIS has accomplished and how it has obliquely contributed to the broader conflict between Arabs and Jews. In the end, he urges others to join their rank: 'the flag has been raised, honour is coming back, and caliphate has been established' (V7, 2014).

The final speech is made by British jihadist Abu Dujana al-Hindi, whose primary addressees are those 'brothers who stay behind'. Most apparently, by drawing largely upon the hadith, he attempts to eliminate every major 'excuse' for 'not coming to jihad' (Fernandez 2015), i.e., wealth, family, or fear of death. He argues, 'asks yourself what prevents you (…) if it is your wealth (…) your wealth won't be able to delay your death' and 'it will not make any use of your real home, the grave (…) knowing that if it's your family, your wife, these people whom you claim to love, if you really love them', he speaks with confidence, 'then martyrdom is what you do for them' (V7, 2014). This refers to a myth that martyrs are privileged to bring seventy of his relatives to paradise (Euben and Zaman 2009).[72] When talking about death, 'death will reach you anyway', he says, 'but it will be more painful for you than those shuhada (the martyrs)' (V7, 2014), another idea rooted in hadith.[73]

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[72] The Prophet said, 'the best of the martyrs is those who do not turn their faces away from the battle until they are killed. They are in the high level of *Jannah* (narrated by Ahmad). 'A martyr's privileges are guaranteed by Allah…his intercession on behalf of seventy of his relatives will be accepted' (narrated by Ahmad al-Tirmidhi) (Euben and Zaman 2009)

[73] 'A martyr will not feel the pain of death except how you feel when you are pinched' (Sahih al-Jami' al-Saghir) (Euben and Zaman 2009).

Abu Dujana's most fundamental viewpoint is *al-qiyamah* (resurrection) and *akhirah* (afterlife), which are important Muslim eschatological beliefs (Shafi 2004). Death in Islam is not the end, but rather a transferal point to eternal life in a superior world (Baddarni 2010).[74] Following the role of *al-qiyamah* to the judgement of the deeds of an individual in this life (dunya), one will be allowed to enter Jahannam (hell) or Jannah (paradise) that both contain many layers and involve different afterlife experiences (Al-Jilani 2010).[75] Based on hadith, Abu Dujana continues his appeal:

'Know that you will be resurrected in your al-qiyamah the way you lived your life (…) think about your meeting with Allah, when the death is close, you will have to answer the al-qiyamah for staying behind (…) You can be here in this golden time fighting for the sake of Allah, or you can be on the side-lines commentating in the land of kufr [non-believers]. It's your choice' (V7, 2014).

Although there can be various ways to enter the Jannah (paradise) in Islam, including al-Firdaus [the highest level of paradise] (Bava 2013; Ishola 2017; Basiony 2016), Abu Dujana seems to deliberately limit this process to *jihad* (struggle) or *shuhada* (martyrs), although this ISIS view was not Abu Dujana's initiative.[76]

The video concludes with slow-motion shots of the men smiling, with Abu Muthanna al-Yemeni picking something out of Abu Bara al-Hindi's beard. Taking the video's demonstration of the internationality and the abundance of foreign fighters into consideration, this ending scene echoes the Quran, 'all believers are indeed brothers' (verse 49:10).

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[74] 'Do not say that those who are killed for the sake of God are dead; they are alive, though you do not realise it', Surah Al-Baqarah [2: 154].

[75] As the Prophet said, 'for those who strive in His cause, Allah has prepared a hundred degrees in Paradise; The difference between two degrees is as the distance between heaven and earth (*Sahih al-Jami' al-Saghir*) (Euben and Zaman 2009).

[76] In Nasheed videos *Let's Go for Jihad* (2014, V6) and *The Path of Jihad* (2015, V56), lyrics repeatedly express such view of ISIS:
The promise of Allah is written
The highest paradise is for the shuhada (V6)
Also,
I asked about the paths to Paradise
It was said there is no path shorter than that of jihad (V56)

This analysis has scrutinised the production features, thematic distribution, and use of language in *There Is No Life Without Jihad* (2014) to provide an explanatory interrogation of the ISIS rhetorical device at illocution. The video consistently appeals for *jihad*, and the speech acts used most prominently are *inciting*. By portraying jihad as the meaning of life, a cure for depression, and a theological obligation, the utterances fundamentally highlight a necessity and urgency in the performance of violent *jihad*.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined four major English-speaking videos produced by the official ISIS propaganda apparatus to exemplify the four most dominant speech acts through a lens of Skinnerian hermeneutic theory of interpretation. This is a sequential analysis of the previous quantitative macro-account of ISIS's use of language. This chapter analysed the speech acts of *threatening*, *condemning*, *inviting*, and *inciting*, as represented by the videos titled, '*A Message to America*' (2014), '*Lend Me Your Ears*' (2014), '*Eid Greeting From the Land of Caliphate*' (2014), and '*There Is No Life Without Jihad*' (2014). The conclusions are threefold. First, the sophistication and complexity of ISIS's message – responding to global political discourse and available ideological conventions – is demonstrated in ISIS's argumentative moves. Although its effectiveness in terms of propaganda remains empirically unmeasurable, the group's dedicated propagandistic efforts do add a level of complexity to the war against ISIS (Friis 2015).

Second, ISIS videos contain acts of communication identifiable as both 'conventionally recognisable characters' and 'recognisable interventions', as defined by Skinner (2002, p.115). This purports that ISIS's messages contain arguments, just as Fernandez (2015) correctly notes. The speech acts of ISIS used in the former type are retrievable through an interrogation of the immediate linguistic context of the utterances, while the latter type requires a more thorough intertextual investigation of the broader context to reveal the arguments supporting a certain view or course of action. These thoughtful argumentations reflect the group's core ideological beliefs, strategic moves, and worldview, and it is therefore important that we are able to recover what these arguments were.

Finally, the four most fundamental underlying intentions of ISIS's use of language are associated with ISIS's worldview, a binary 'us' versus 'them' mentality. The former 'us' includes active ISIS jihadists, 'lone wolves', emigrants, and other potential supporters, whereas the latter 'them' entails the US and its allies, geopolitical powers, Shia Muslims, and opponent Sunni Muslims and other jihadi groups. The speech acts of *inviting* and *inciting* address the former, whereas *threatening* and *condemning* are frequently used for the latter. As represented by four well-known representations, on the one hand, ISIS threatens the US

and its allies if they refuse to end military intervention and condemns the Western political agenda by portraying the hostages as victims of their home countries' foreign policy. On the other hand, it invites supporters around the globe to emigrate to the declared caliphate and incites the activation of potential jihadists. This might seem obvious, but in the process of recovery of the ultimate 'doingness', the complexity of ISIS videos constructed through sophisticated augments and radicalised ideology has been thoroughly manifested.

However, this chapter has limitations that further scholarly efforts might be able to overcome. First, it is an attempt to provide a micro-account of ISIS propaganda. Due to the limitation of the breadth of the specific framing and reasoning devices selected, this study cannot grasp an understanding of the speech acts used in the videos in an all-inclusive manner that the previous macro-account of analysis would provide desirable supplementary understandings. Furthermore, in context-seeking process for the uptake of illocutionary acts [or what Skinner called illocutionary intentions] in ISIS language, there could be a few more of contextual information yet to be gathered and grouped, although this examination of the relevant contexts would remain sufficient in terms of the extent to which the illocutionary acts were able to be identified.

Nevertheless, as suggested by Salem at al. (2008), the absence of consideration of 'the socio-political' and 'cultural environmental context' would have 'created serious gaps that could have derailed our analysis' (p.621). By borrowing a method that enables us to explore beyond a superficial content- or theme-focused analysis of extremist messaging, this chapter reaches a 'level of meaning-making in situated contexts' and builds 'contact with statement-making agents' that participate in wider social movements (O'Halloran et al. 2016, p.3; Skinner 2002a, p.85; Jones and Norris 2005, pp.110–122). Additionally, this chapter explores ISIS language in response to particular ideological conventions and certain real-world events. In doing so, this study provides an understanding of these utterances by 'identifying the precise nature of the intervention constituted by the act of uttering them' and can therefore tentatively conjecture insights on ISIS 'going beyond the data' (Leeuwen and Jewitt 2000, p.26). It forces us to consider the video not in terms of discrete themes but as speech acts or performances that either make arguments or do something through rhetoric – invariably informative in understanding terrorism. Finally, instead of quantifying the frequency of occurrence of the

frames implemented, as achieved in a previous study by the analyst, this qualitative micro-account estimates the prominence of the speech acts used in ISIS language according to the density of ISIS reasoning devices with nuances. Based on this archetypal analysis, it is worthwhile to consider more extremist videos in the investigation.

CHAPTER: CONCLUSION

Based on 79 official English-language ISIS videos, this study adopted Braddock and Horgan's (2016) content analysis and Quintin Skinner's (2002) hermeneutic approach to interpretation to provide a comprehensive understanding of the ISIS propaganda apparatus and its primary underlying semantic intentionality by quantifying the prevalence of overt production characteristics, thematic distribution, and the use of language at the illocutionary level and how thee changed over time. Using the same methodological approach previously established, this study then offered a qualitative analysis of four major releases to highlight the nuances regarding the sophistication and argumentation in the ISIS message. These conclusions are listed below and discussed in turn:

• ISIS has generated a highly sophisticated media operation system that is capable of dealing with circumstances that the group has faced on the ground to respond to group-related real-world events. Using high-definition videos produced by multi-functional official media wings and decentralised provincial media branches, ISIS has achieved a great deal of capacity and flexibility in its overall media infrastructure.

• Official ISIS English-language videos consist of various themes that span theological, rhetorical, and emotional artefacts. Though distributed to different degrees, the thematic elements of the official ISIS English-language videos coincide with other types of ISIS media outlets (Kunzar 2017; Winter 2015b). These most prevalent themes generally maintain a chronological consistency, and the theological elements of ISIS propaganda are indispensable if our goal is to understand the group's narrative and underlying ideologies (Cottee 2016; Pelletier at. Al 2016; Kunzar 2017; Hassan 2015; Reuter 2015; Wood 2015).

• ISIS demonstrates an overall binary worldview, an 'us' versus 'them' mentality, which is represented both thematically and semantically.

• ISIS's use of language primarily involves illocutionary acts that aim to actively instigate the addressees [both enemies and supporters] to align with ISIS's demands, and the performance of speech acts additionally highlights three intrinsic characteristics of ISIS's language, i.e., targeting an exterior rather than interior audience, pursuing diplomatic rather than recruitment efforts, and prioritising state-building over waging war.

MEDIA INFRASTRUCTURE AND OPERATION

ISIS has created a sophisticated media infrastructure in its production of high-definition videos. The proficiency, flexibility, and intricateness of the ISIS propaganda apparatus are reflected through, yet not limited to, the group's capacity to respond to real-world events, its capacity to use foreign languages relevant to the targeted audiences, the diverse functionalities of its media centres, and the variability in the content of its messages.

First, ISIS English-language videos are found to have chronological correlations with a series of real-world events relating to the group. By reviewing three years of data, it becomes clear that the number of English videos released by ISIS arguably acts as a parameter of the group's rise and fall, whereas the fluid changes of the group's thematic distribution indicate a shift in the group's attention from one to another ISIS-related event that the group wants to stress in its official responses or on which it wants to express an official stance. On the one hand, the results show that ISIS released the largest number of videos in the first year (April 2014-2015), while the number decreased by half in the second year (April 2015-2016), and the fewest videos were released in the third year (April 2016-June 2017), particularly from October 2016 onwards. This change in the number of videos released reflects the situation ISIS faced in Iraq and Syria (Chulov 2014; Boffey and Jalabi 2015; Malik 2014; Yuhas *et al.* 2015; Coles 2015; Burman 2015; Rasheed and Chmaytelli 2015; Usborne 2016; Ryan and Deyoung 2016; Burke 2017), especially coinciding with the events of October 2016 when the Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi announced the start of the mission to retake Mosul, leading to a sharp drop in ISIS's global media operations (Kalin 2016; Usborne 2016; Ryan and Deyoung 2016). On the other hand, the change in the thematic distribution of the videos is consciously linked to specific ISIS-related events. Examples can be found by examining how consistently the theme Terror Attacks [TA] appears in relation to occurrences of large terror attacks in the West from 2015 onwards, and a parallel relationship is also prominent between the theme Apocalyptic Prophecy [AP] and the ISIS's control/loss of the Syrian town 'Dabiq', where the 'final battle' is prophesied to occur.

Second, regarding language, although ISIS media productions overwhelmingly use Arabic and English, they have demonstrated their capacity and flexibility by using many other languages

depending on the targeted audiences. The finding shows that ISIS has adopted multiple languages, as many other scholars recognised (Stern and Berger 2016; Berger and Morgan 2015; Winter 2015b; Zelin 2015; Fisher 2015; O'Halloran *et al.* 2016), and the language in which the video is narrated (rather than subtitled) is chosen based on the languages spoken by the target audiences (V12; V31; V71; V29; V79).

Third, ISIS official media centres do not all function in the same manner, and provincial media branches play increasingly significant roles from 2014-2017. Although Al-Hayat, Al-Furqan, and Al-I'tisam are the three official arms of the ISIS propaganda operation (Zelin 2015; Barr and Herfroy-Mischler 2017), the video productions released from these media centres differ from one another. The al-Hayat media centre releases the largest number of videos that are mostly 'scored' and employs many languages in addition to English and Arabic. The Al-Furqan media centre produces only English or Arabic-narrated videos that are mostly 'non-scored' and does not release Nasheed video clips. Most importantly, much of the content from al-Hayat is focused on normal life (V7; V49; V53), whereas Al-Furqan has released beheading videos, delivered messages to the West ('evil') (V15; V16; V17; V22; V30) and promoted what it believed to be 'good' (V1; V3). The last official media centre, Al-I'tisam, was created in 2013 and is much more inactive in comparison to its peers (Zelin 2015). This centre rarely produced English videos from 2014 to 2017, and its productions were invariably alike (V26; V36). Finally, by comparing the quantity, quality, and variety of the releases among the official ISIS media centres and provincial ISIS media centres, a very clear decentralised tendency is found. This finding supports Zelin (2015) and Fisher (2015), who find a decentralised trend in ISIS media operations from 2013 to 2015. However, our finding shows that the trend continued from 2015 onwards and includes not only to the production of English-language videos but also the release number, the technical and financial capability, and message sophistication in the provincial-level of media centres (V78).

Moreover, more than half of the ISIS English-language videos contain at least one *Nasheed,* which may lead to a higher possibility of the video containing graphic or violent content. Gråtrud (2016) correctly explains that *Nasheed* is extensively used in ISIS videos and that most videos contain at least one *Nasheed*. The findings show that more than half (62.03%) of the English videos were 'scored', which is also correlated to the violence present in the videos:

'Violent' videos were very likely to be 'scored', while 'non-violent' videos could possibly be 'non-scored'. The finding indicates that nearly 80% of 'violent' videos were 'scored' (33 out of 42), and most 'non-violent' videos were 'non-scored' (21 out of 37), which might be a consequence of the consistent impact and resonance of music (Berg 2017; Giles *et al.* 2009; Corte and Edwards 2008; Gråtrud's 2016).

Finally, the violent and non-violent content was quite evenly distributed in the English-language videos over the course of the three years. On one hand, near half of the videos did not contain any graphic or violent content (46.84%). This finding contrasts with Gråtrud's (2016) and Salem *et al.'s* (2008) findings on ISIS *Nasheed* and other extremist groups' videos that extensively showed violence and brutality. On the other hand, this prevalence of violent scenes – which included over half of the videos (53.16%) – seemingly plays a larger role than just 'a red herring' (Winter 2015b, p.4) or 'only a medium to draw the target audience's attention' (Tinnes 2015, p.78), although merely focusing on the brutality of ISIS would indeed derail our understanding of the group and its appeal (Winter 2015b; Tinnes 2015).

THEMATIC DISTRIBUTION

The themes identified in the ISIS English-language videos are comprehensive and numerous, with a total of 26 thematic elements, and the extent to which ISIS emphasises certain themes is distinctive from that of other media productions. The findings from this study show that, in ISIS English-language videos at a broader thematic level, themes relating to ISIS's adversaries account for the largest portion of the content (40.83%), closely followed by those that are associated with Islam (38.02%), whereas emotive themes are found fewest in the videos (21.15%). Combining this finding with that of existing studies regarding the prevalence of themes in ISIS English-language magazines (Colas 2016), public speeches (Kunzar 2017), and *Nasheeds* (Gratrud 2016), ISIS media productions generally convey a consistent thematic structure in their propaganda, despite a diversity in the extent to which certain themes or narratives are emphasised to achieve a greater appeal.

At a specific thematic level, themes about *sharia* are featured most prominently. This result provides evidence for the debate regarding whether ISIS is a religiously-motivated group at its core (Cottee 2016; Hasan 2015; Reuter 2015; Wood 2015). The findings regarding the ISIS videos remain consistent with those of existing studies analysing religious narratives in other ISIS media productions, which are prominent (Zelin 2015; Winter 2015b; Gratrud 2016; Colas 2016; Kunzar 2017). More importantly, consistent with Droogan and Peattie (2016), Pelletier *et al.* (2016), and Kuznar (2017), this study proves that the core themes [e.g., *SG (Sharia and Governance)* and *Jihad*] of ISIS remain relatively stable and consistent over time, although, overall, ISIS propaganda has undergone certain thematic changes in accordance with a series of real-world events. Finally, the findings from this study indicate that ISIS tends to rely more on quotes from the Quran and Sunnah (primarily Hadith) than Islamic scholars when making arguments or justifying its actions. Given the prioritisation of theological references in Islamic tradition (Makdisi 1985; Mutahhari 2014), this finding reveals an ISIS devotion to seek theological correctness and legitimation among the global Islamic community.

BINARY WORLDVIEW

ISIS English-language video propaganda reveals a binary worldview of ISIS ideology: an 'us' versus 'them', 'good' versus 'evil' mentality. This finding is empirically supported by four results. First, two of the most significant narratives thematically concern 'enemies' and 'religion', which, at their core, represent rhetoric regarding the evilness of disbelievers and the goodness of believers. Second, at the illocutionary level, among the four speech acts that are used most prevalently in the videos, the first two address the enemies of ISIS, whereas the latter two address potential supporters. Additionally, the ratio of the *directive* class, which was found to be the most dominant overall speech act type, shows an equal distribution of addressing Westerners and Muslim supporters (see Figure 5. 2). Finally, ISIS mainly employs emotively polarised language at the illocutionary level, either *condemning* or *praising* (see Figure 5. 3). Although the binary worldview of the ISIS mentality has initially been suggested by previous scholarship (Richards 2017; Mahood and Rane 2016; Wignell *et al.* 2017; Heck 2017), this study has additionally underscored that such a mentality not only exists at the

surface level of ISIS media but also is rooted in the group's use of language at the illocutionary level.

The legitimacy of this binary worldview is reinforced by the history of Islam as well as the experiences of Muslims living in the West (Mahood and Rana 2016). ISIS depicts itself as being on side of the 'good', commanding correct practices, i.e., the implementation of *Sharia*, performance of *jihad*, and establishment the *caliphate*. In contrast, ISIS claims those who oppose it are 'evil'; their 'wrong-doingness' stemming from their 'disbelief', which is exacerbated by the historical and political grievances in the Muslim world and the exploitation of Muslims (Cantey 2017; Gratrud 2016; Mahood and Rana 2016). Additionally, Western deep-rooted discrimination and prejudices against Islam and the mainstream media's use of black-and-white terminology are rhetorically utilised by ISIS to sustain the polarisation in perpetuating the us-versus-them mentality (Tinnes 2015; Mahood and Rana 2016). Labelling Muslim rebellions 'apostates' showcases ISIS's willingness 'to modify religious and political doctrines that get in its way' (Colas 2016, p.12; McCants 2015, pp.154-155), undermining existing Islamic authorities and conflating Islamism with Islam (Mahood and Rana 2016).

USE OF LANGUAGE

Despite a sudden decline from 2016 (see Figures 5. 2 and 5. 6), the most prominent class of speech acts in official ISIS English-language videos is *directive*. This class was developed by John Searle (2008) who develops an established and commonly used (and Skinnerian agreed) classification for all speech acts (Ballmer and Brennstuhl 2013; Muller 2016; Vanderveken and Kubo 2002; Verschueren 1983; Skinner 2002a). This class of speech acts always aims to convince the addressee 'to do something' (p.355). *Directive* classes of speech acts were employed most dominantly in the videos (50.63%) compared to classes expressing the [speaker's] psychological state (*Expressive,* 24.05%) or stating the truth (*Assertive*, 16.46%). This finding indicates that ISIS's use of language mostly contains the type of illocutionary act that aims to actively instigate the addressees to align with ISIS' demands. This finding supplements Winter's (2015) argument regarding the function of ISIS propaganda – which is

to catalyse radicalisation and to concentrate certain previously held viewpoints of the target audiences.

The four most prevalent speech acts performed in ISIS English-language videos were *threatening* (26.58%), *condemning* (18.99%), *inviting* (13.92%) and *inciting* (10.13%). These four out of the fifteen speech acts account for nearly 70% of all the speech acts, while other acts remain statically marginal in the group's overall use of language. A close investigation of the four speech acts reveals that, first, this type of ISIS video is designed to target external rather than internal addressees. According to Colas (2016), the three primary audiences of ISIS English-language propaganda are English-speaking Muslims, Western policymakers, and half-integrated members of ISIS. This study finds that these videos often target the former two, with nearly half of the messages aimed at Westerners (45.57%) and a quarter at English-speaking Muslims (24.05%). The former two comprise the US and its allies, large geopolitical powers, Shia Muslims, and other opponents, whereas the latter two include potential ISIS jihadists, 'lone wolves', emigrants, and other supporters.

Second, since ISIS's linguistic intention concerning its Western enemies is approximately twice as prevalent and its linguistic intentions with regard to the group's potential mujahideen and emigrants (45.57% versus 24.05%), it might inform whether, overall, ISIS English-language propaganda videos function more like tools of negotiation or tools of recruitment. Existing scholarship already explains that ISIS recruitment propaganda is important to understand how ISIS utilises Islamism (Perry and Long 2016; Mahood and Rane 2016; Winter 2015b; Whiteside 2016), how it prevails by utilising an extreme version of theological teachings to support its religious legitimacy (Milton 2016; Mahood and Rane 2016; Pelletier *et al.* 2016; V7; V12; V14), and how the group reinforces perceptions of such legitimacy to sustain recruitment (Ingram 2016; Mahood and Rane 2016; V55). However, this propaganda has proven that it has broader goals other than simply recruiting (Colas 2016; Pelletier *et al.* 2016; Ingram 2015); for instance, it has a diplomatic function in negotiations (Cantey 2017; Colas 2016; Foy 2015; V41-45; V18;20;21;23;25;27;34). This function is a substantial facet of the videos, and Foy (2015) correctly underlines that it aids our understanding of how ISIS delegitimises and advances changes in Western foreign policy.

Third, ISIS might focus more on state-building than on waging war, as the encouragement of immigration is slightly more significant than the incitement of violent *jihad*.[77] This result empirically proves the finding of many existing studies that state-building is ISIS's priority (Al-Dayela and Anfinsonb 2017, Mahood and Rane 2016, Phillips 2016; Cantey 2017 Novenario 2016). Statehood is considered crucial for ISIS because it helps to maintain a self-sustaining virtuous loop (Phillips 2016; Al-Dayela and Anfinsonb 2017), and it establishes authority that enables ISIS to implement its own version of justifications, legitimising persecution and the ex-communication of rebels in any form (Mahood and Rane 2016). After increasingly encountering setbacks to its territorial sovereignty, there has been an apparent decline in *inviting* speech acts in 2014-2017 [see Figure 5. 7] such that the past momentum of ISIS has become hard to maintain (Winter 2018).

IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNTER-NARRATIVES

Although empirical findings remain largely inconsistent regarding whether exposure to a narrative can positively alter recipients' perceptions (Bae 2008; Lee 2002; Mulligan and Habel 2011; Braddock 2012; Hong and Park 2012; Peracchio and Meyers-Levy 1997; Toor 2016), in the context of racialisation, focusing on the formation of counter-narratives is perhaps one of the most utilised and feasible methods of countering violent extremism (CVE) (Shackle 2015; Fink and Sugg 2015; Horgan 2014; Jackson *et al.* 2011). Leaving ISIS messages to their own devices – known as the 'Let Them Rot' strategy – has proven futile and simply leads to the spread of propaganda without major challenges and an increase in the risk of radicalisation (Braddock and Horgan 2016; Watts 2015, p.156; Bouzis 2015 p.885; Lister 2015; Aldis and Herd 2006, pp.143-159). Nonetheless, with the aid of counter-narratives,[78] the objectives associated with CVE might be accomplished in the media war, a war that might already account for more than 'half' of conflicts (Cottee 2015b; Braddock and Horgan 2016).

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[77] The former relies on utterances that demonstrate – through courtesy and amiability – an explicit invitation to emigrate (V5; 10; 12; 14), while the latter appears to catalyse massive holy war-waging mobilisations by exposing an urgent necessity and the situation of being under threat (V11).

[78] Braddock and Horgan (2016, p.386) define these as 'narratives comprised of content that challenges the themes intrinsic to terrorist narratives' in order to discourage support for terrorism.

Western governments use a dual approach to deal with ISIS propaganda, i.e., censorship and counter-narratives (Katz 2014; Gearan 2014; Schmitt 2015). On one hand, subject to criticism that this violates freedom of speech, ISIS propaganda content has constantly been removed from online venues or prevented from being published online (Berger 2014; Greenberg 2015; Sweney 2015; Ball 2014; Callan 2017; Eckholm 2015). On the other, simultaneously, counter-ISIS narratives have been developed and distributed in various ways – including through online media campaigns to delegitimise or denounce ISIS (Jones and Smith 2014; Robinson 2014). Western governments' CVE projects, e.g., Prevent (UK), Diminish (US), or Resilience (Australia), share a common focus primarily through the promotion of democratic values (Aly 2013). However, these approaches have been criticised as 'struggl[ing]', 'embarrassing', and 'far from winning' (Winter and Bach-Lombardo 2016, p.7; Rich 2018, p.145; Katz 2014, p.1). Due to the lack of a coherent 'overarching strategy' (Shackle 2015, p.2; Beauchamp 2015, p.1) and 'inadequate knowledge' of ISIS's rhetorical and propagandistic 'capabilities and intention' (Richards 2016, p.205), it is difficult to deliver 'an equally powerful counter-narrative' (Patrikarakos 2017, p.1). As the sophistication of ISIS's message has not been fully understood, many scholars in this field believe that more in-depth understandings of ISIS's core message could be crucial for the creation of a compelling counter-narrative (Phillips 2017; Swayne 2016; Patrikarakos 2017; Beauchamp 2015; Speckhard *et al.*, 2018; Kalvik 2018).

With the aim of devising robust and nuanced counter-narratives, this study offers a comprehensive analysis of ISIS propaganda videos and contributes to counter-narrative development in two ways. First, this study identifies ISIS's core, and most consistent, messages. Based on the findings, this study proposes that, for instance, counter-narratives must focus more on ISIS messages allowing radical reinterpretations of *sharia* and the group's inability to meet the standards of governance (Fink and Sugg 2018). Second, this study might help inform and develop an overarching counter-narrative strategy (Shackle 2015; Beauchamp 2015). By going beyond the thematic motifs of ISIS videos to further identify and explain the most fundamental priorities of the group's semantic intentions and by exploring how the language expressed by ISIS changes over a three-year period from the zenith of its power to its crucial fall, it sheds a vivid light upon the group's worldview and ideology, including how the group thinks, how it presents itself, and how it wants to be seen. Together,

this knowledge offers a better-informed basis for developing counter-ISIS narratives and strategies (Winter 2017b; Winter 2015b; Schmitt 2014).

LIMITATIONS, SUGGESTIONS, AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE

This study is a starting point for providing a comprehensive understanding of the ISIS English-language propaganda apparatus, which entails some limitations that further scholars might be able to overcome. First, the most obvious limitation of this study is the difficulty of archiving all the ISIS official English-language videos due to the high degree of subject sensitivity and resource constraints; however, the study contains the largest number of official English-language ISIS videos of any study yet performed. Moreover, this study does not account for the ways in which potential audiences might digest the content of the videos. Although this study allowed us to understand the production characteristics, thematic distribution, and speech acts in the videos, and perhaps how the group sees itself or how it wishes to be seen, it did not measure how strongly an utterance or a theme might resonate with audiences. Since the role of a reader in the meaning-generating process is arguably no less critical (Lamb 2004; Norris 1987; Abrams 1991; Burns 2011), studies on audience perception of ISIS propaganda would be able to offer supplemental insights (Cottee 2017a; Cottee and Cunliffe 2018). Third, in addition to themes or narratives, some in this domain might suggest that the effectiveness of ISIS propaganda could rely on the style in which the content is vividly presented (Nisbettt and Ross 1980; O' Keefe 1997, 1998; Cantey 2017). Further studies could provide another perspective by, for example, examining cinemographs or semiotics based on scenes/images in the videos (Winkler *et al.* 2016).

In addition, through a quantitative analysis of speech acts in the videos, this study has identified the most prevalent of all the speech acts performed in each video, even though the analyst is fully aware that one utterance might be able to contain more than one speech act at a time (Skinner 2007; Searle 2008). Given the scale of the analytical dataset, it would be very difficult for the analyst to manually recover all the underlying intentions of every single utterance and qualify them. Furthermore, to better understand the diversity, complexity, and breadth of ISIS's reasoning devices, the coding instruments of this study must specify a list of

occasions and criteria that narrow and curtail the Islamic concepts within these categories, e.g., *jihad*, though such concepts might arguably entail broader meanings than the scope defined by the instruments.[79] Finally, as Skinner (2002) acknowledges, there will never be "anything resembling the attainment of a final, self-evident or indubitable set of truths about any text or other utterance whatsoever" for the hermeneutic enterprise (Skinner 2002a, p.121). While this study offers a feasible inference to understand ISIS messages using Skinnerian ascriptions of intentionality, further studies might find it lucrative to use other methodological approaches applicable to ISIS propaganda that go beyond thematic analysis.

Nevertheless, this study offers the first comprehensive understanding of ISIS English-language videos based on the largest existing dataset of primary sources. The study explores the overt characteristics, thematic distribution, and language expressed by ISIS as presented through video data and how these vary over time in relation to real-world events and the circumstances that the group encountered on the ground. Many findings of this study contribute to a growing corpus of literature that seeks to understand jihadi extremist propaganda, which might eventually aid in developing a set of possible counter-narratives. At a thematic level, the study attempts to provide a comprehensive understanding of the group's agenda-setting regarding the composition and construction of its propaganda to expand our knowledge of the group's overall media strategy and infrastructure, as other studies have done (Winter 2015b; Fernandez 2015; Zelin 2015; Mahood and Rane 2016; Pelletier *et al.* 2016; Novenario 2016; Colas 2016), though only a few studies have simultaneously approached this subject from a fluid perspective (Kuznar 2017).

By quantifying the prevalence of the frames implemented by ISIS, the prevalence of speech acts used in ISIS language, and how these changed chronologically corresponding to real-world events and by qualitatively examining the nuances of these dimensions, this study describes the overall complexity of ISIS's argumentations and portrays the breadth and density of ISIS's rhetorical and reasoning apparatus aligned with its strategic objectives. A failure to accomplish this could cause ISIS's elaborate manoeuvres in ideological intervention

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[79] The concept of jihad is confined to violent jihad.

and interference to prevail and may increase the risk of the group attracting those who are vulnerable.

Finally, militaristic approaches that neglect the power of language are very likely to fail in the complete eradication of Islamist roots (Bernarrdi *et al.* 2010; Simon-Vandenbergen 2008; Macnair and Frank 2018). By employing a novel method that enables us to see ISIS language as strings of moves in response to particular ideological conventions and certain real-world events and to identify the 'precise nature' of the interventions that are part of wider social movements, this study is able to tentatively suggest insights that go beyond a superficial content- or theme-focused analysis of extremist messaging (O'Halloran *et al.* 2016, p.3; Skinner 2002a, p.85; Jones and Norris 2005, pp.110–122), which the majority of the existing literature is fixated upon. This study helps in the development of counter-narratives that inherently require precisely tailored semantic reactions (Aly *et al.* 2017; Al-Dayel and Anfinsonb 2017). Otherwise, the absence of the consideration of 'the socio-political' and 'cultural environmental contexts' would significantly derail our analysis (Salem *et al.* 2008, p.621). Based on this example applicable to other extremists' propaganda vehicles, it is worth analysing more jihadi extremist propaganda.

APPENDIX

Collections of ISIS videos		
Organisations	videos	URLs
Jihadology (Editor, Aaron Y. Zelin)	58	http://jihadology.net/
SITE Institute (Director, R. Katz)	2	https://news.siteintelgroup.com/
IntelCenter (Director, B. Venzke)	4	https://www.intelcenter.com/
Intelwire.com (Editor, J. M. Berger)	7	http://www.intelwire.com/
Counter Extremism Project	3	https://www.counterextremism.com/
Wordpress.com	1	https://khilafatimes.wordpress.com/hmc-en/
Archive.org	3	https://archive.org/
Justpaste.it	1	https://justpaste.it/
total	79	

Appendix 1 Sources of data collection

Abbr.	Theme	Definition
AP	APOCALYPSE & PROPHECY	Eschatological references to the end times, 'The Last Day', or a religiously motivated belief that the world is on its final day.
BA	BAY'AH & ALLEGIANCE	Pledges of allegiance between the group and other jihadist groups, whether actual or proposed. Additionally, requests and commands that individuals pledge allegiance to the group.
HIJ	HIJRAH (Emigration)	Jihadis emigrating to join the locale of the group to fight, reside, or support the group in a non-military capacity. Urge emigration to the Islamic State.
EM	EXEMPLARY MODELS	A jihadi figure in a non-martyrdom operation portrayed as worthy of emulation or praiseworthy.
ELT	EXPANDING LOCAL TERRITORY	The capture of territory, actual or proposed. The expansion of territory for the purpose of establishing a caliphate and spreading the ideology, including Dawah.
HW	HAPPINESS & WELLBEING	Any invocation of the emotion of happiness, including instances where the group claims it can instil such states and instances where the group speaks of its governance subjects or members attaining such states. This involves referring not only to civilians but also to the brotherhood of jihadi or their closeness to one another.
CC	CAPTIVES & CONFESSION	Includes any reference to captives held or wanted by the group.
HUM	HUMILIATION OF MUSLIMS	Muslims living in Arab countries feeling excluded from economic, social, and political life. The feeling of humiliation is also relevant for some Muslim youths living in the West, who suffer from discrimination and feel excluded from society. Second- and third-generation Muslim immigrants often feel a double sense of non-belonging.
MM	MARTYR & MARTYRDOM	The concept of martyrdom, the desirability of death, or the purported glory bestowed on those who die fighting for Islam. Also includes references to members of the group who are said to have achieved the status of martyr or 'martyrdom, which additionally refers to the concept of Jannah (paradise).
OTG	OBEDIENCE TO GOD	Appeals for Tawheed (indivisible oneness concept of monotheism in Islam) or God to grant a request and instances where the group invokes or claims to portray the will of God and command that individuals (Muslim or non-Muslims) must obey God (conversion included). Claims that the group itself is obeying God.
ROA	REJECTION OF ANTAGONISTS	Descriptions of non-Muslim groups, parties, and countries as illegitimate, deviant, or incapable. The assertion that the group is superior to or in conflict with others. TAKFIR (EXCOMMUNICATION) includes any claim that an individual or group has apostatised from Islam and claims to be non-Muslim as a result, such as sahwat (essentially implying the worst of the worst: a Sunni who fights against his brothers on behalf of 'the West', Shi'a, and a 'un-Islamic' nation-state project) and rafidah (rejecters, generally referring to Shia Muslims, given by Sunni, especially Salafis), etc.

RH	RESTORING HONOUR	The concept of honour and the notion that this should be (or is being) restored to Muslims, local populations, or the group itself. In addition, any nation that embraces Islam is honourable.
SV	STRENGTH & VICTORIES	The purported organisational, ideological, and operational strengths of the group. Battlefield and operational victories, including attacks against civilian targets.
SG	SHARIA & GOVERNANCE	It focuses on ISIS's ability to govern in accordance with Islamic law and how its rule is providing safety and peace for its subjects. It includes the group's implementation of Sharia or establishment of services utilities in local areas, including Hisba, prayer, media, financial systems, and education & training systems, including classes and camps devoted to the theoretical and practical skills of physical and military training, etc.
SFQS	SUPPORT FROM QURAN & SUNNAH	Where the Quran and Hadith (the Sunnah) are directly or indirectly used in support of an argument or claim.
SFS	SUPPORT FROM SCHOLARS	The authority of an Islamic scholar (past or present) used to support a claim or argument.
WCWE	WEST COLLUDING WITH ITS ENEMIES	The West is colluding with its enemies in a political, financial, or military sense, including China, Russia, Japan, Israeli, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and other jihadists, etc.
WM	WESTERN MALEVOLENCE	Western countries behave in a malicious, oppressive, aggressive, colonialist, or generally malevolent manner against Muslims (global injustice) in regard to politics, economy, and military. It usually expresses hatred towards the West. Additionally, particular occasions of Western governments' or politicians' malevolence towards the general public is also taken into account.
WF	WESTERN WEAKNESS OR FAILURE	The West has failed or exhibited weakness. The perceived weakness of Western economies and an impending collapse of Western civilisation, Western failures on the battlefield, the weakness of Western troops, and failures to prevent jihadist operations. Does not include perceived moral weakness.
MS	MUSLIM SUFFERING	Footage of the aftermath of the coalition, showing images of dead or dying disembodied ordinary Muslim children or women or corpses
COM	COMBAT	Regular depictions of parades, featuring artillery guns, tanks and armoured vehicle footage of frontline fighting, delivered almost in real time by the roving war reporters from the battlefield (non-martyrdom operations). Combat focuses on physical conflict.
JIHAD	JIHAD	The portrayal of jihad or mujahedeen (jihadists), which may be portrayed as the solution to the problems facing the ummah or the protector who fearlessly carries out retaliation for innocent Muslims. It is focused more on the ideological and theological references to Jihad than physical combat.
CS	CALIPHATE & STATEHOOD	ISIS employs this theme to portray itself as the legitimate leader and protector of the ummah. It includes the establishment of the Islamic State and the removal of man-made borders in the Middle East and all references to the ISIS-declared caliphate or historical caliphate.

EXE	EXECUTION	Footage of the beheading and execution of captives. It refers more to staged executions than to executions or killings within combat.
VP	VICE & PUNISHMENTS	Footage of ISIS carrying out criminal justice over local officers, civilians, and others who disobey.
TA	TERROR ATTACK	Footage of the planning, proposal, and implementation of a terror attack.

Appendix 2 Thematic categories – the final list for the coding instrument

	release date	title	video spoken type	video sub-type	media centre	duration	Type (Nasheed)	Type (scored)	Type (violent)	Type (duration)
V1	6-Apr-2014	But Who Is Better Than God In Judgement	Arabic	English	al-Furqan	0:12:35	NON-NASHEED	scored	violent	medium
V2	17-May-2014	Clanging of the Swords, Part 4	Arabic	English	al-Furqan	1:02:22	NON-NASHEED	scored	violent	long
V3	28-May-2014	The Best Ummah	Arabic	English	al-Furqan	0:14:50	NON-NASHEED	scored	violent	medium
V4	2-Jun-2014	Oh Soldiers of Truth Go Forth	Arabic	English	al-Hayat	0:02:32	NASHEED	scored	violent	short
V5	4-Jun-2014	Mujatweets Episode #2-8 (4 June- 24 July 2014)	N/A	English	al-Hayat	0:08:00	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	non-violent	short
V6	15-Jun-2014	Let's Go For Jihād	Arabic	English	al-Hayat	0:05:26	NASHEED	scored	violent	short
V7	19-Jun-2014	There Is No Life Without Jihad	English	N/A	al-Hayat	0:13:26	NON-NASHEED	scored	non-violent	medium
V8	29-Jun-2014	The End of Sykes-Picot	English	N/A	al-Hayat	0:15:04	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	non-violent	medium
V9	5-Jul-2014	Sermon and Friday Prayer in the Great Mosque in the City of Mosul	Arabic	English	al-Furqan	0:21:06	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	non-violent	medium
V10	12-Jul-2014	The Chosen Few of Different Lands	English	N/A	al-Hayat	0:11:08	NON-NASHEED	scored	violent	medium
V11	16-Jul-2014	Those Who Were Truthful With God	Arabic	English	al-Hayat	0:08:05	NON-NASHEED	scored	non-violent	short
V12	22-Jul-2014	Join the Ranks	Indonesian	English	al-Hayat	0:08:27	NON-NASHEED	scored	non-violent	short
V13	28-Jul-2014	Upon the Prophetic Methodology	Arabic	English	al-Furqan	0:36:07	NON-NASHEED	scored	violent	long
V14	2-Aug-2014	Īd Greetings From the Land Of the Caliphate	English	English	al-Hayat	0:20:53	NON-NASHEED	scored	violent	medium
V15	19-Aug-2014	A Message To America	English	N/A	al-Furqan	0:04:40	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	violent	short
V16	2-Sep-2014	A second message to America	English	N/A	al-Furqan	0:02:46	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	violent	short
V17	13-Sep-2014	A Message to the Allies of America	English	N/A	al-Furqan	0:02:27	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	violent	short
V18	18-Sep-2014	Lend Me Your Ears – Introduction	English	N/A	al-Furqan	0:03:20	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	non-violent	short
V19	19-Sep-2014	The Flames of War	Arabic	English	al-Hayat	0:55:14	NON-NASHEED	scored	violent	long
V20	23-Sep-2014	Lend Me Your Ears – Episode 1	English	N/A	al-Furqan	0:05:55	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	non-violent	short
V21	26-Sep-2014	Lend Me Your Ears – Episode 2	English	N/A	al-Furqan	0:05:34	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	non-violent	short
V22	4-Oct-2014	Another Message to America and Its Allies	English	N/A	al-Furqan	0:01:11	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	violent	short

V23	12-Oct-2014	Lend Me Your Ears – Episode 3	English	N/A	al-Furqan	0:06:53	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	non-violent	short
V24	15-Oct-2014	Wait. We are also waiting	English	English	al-Hayat	0:09:14	NON-NASHEED	scored	non-violent	short
V25	16-Oct-2014	Lend Me Your Ears – Episode 4	English	N/A	al-Furqan	0:07:48	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	non-violent	short
V26	20-Oct-2014	Message of the Mujahid (4)	English	Arabic	Al-I'tisam	0:01:43	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	non-violent	short
V27	25-Oct-2014	Lend Me Your Ears – Episode 5	English	N/A	al-Furqan	0:06:30	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	non-violent	short
V28	27-Oct-2014	Inside Ayn al-Islam - (Kobane)	English	Arabic	al-Hayat	0:05:32	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	non-violent	short
V29	2-Nov-2014	A Message from Brother, Abu Muhammad al-Rousi	Russian	English/Arabic	al-Hayat	0:06:10	NON-NASHEED	scored	non-violent	short
V30	17-Nov-2014	Although disbelievers dislike it	Arabic	English	al-Furqan	0:15:53	NON-NASHEED	scored	violent	medium
V31	19-Nov-2014	What Are You Waiting For?	French	Arabic/English	al-Hayat	0:07:10	NON-NASHEED	scored	non-violent	short
V32	21-Nov-2014	Race Towards Good	Kazakh	Arabic//English/Russian	al-Hayat	0:14:58	NON-NASHEED	scored	non-violent	medium
V33	21-Nov-2014	Turkey and the Fire of Nationalism	Turkish	English	al-Hayat	0:17:25	NON-NASHEED	scored	non-violent	medium
V34	21-Nov-2014	Lend Me Your Ears – Episode 6	English	N/A	al-Furqan	0:08:52	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	non-violent	short
V35	28-Nov-2014	A Visit to al-Mosul	Russian	Arabic/English	al-Hayat	0:06:25	NON-NASHEED	scored	non-violent	short
V36	7-Dec-2014	Message of the Mujahid (5)	English	Arabic	Al-I'tisam	0:06:13	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	non-violent	short
V37	10-Dec-2014	Our State Is Victorious	Arabic	English	al-Hayat	0:05:03	NASHEED	scored	non-violent	short
V38	4-Jan-2015	From Inside al-Mosul	English	Arabic	al-Hayat	0:08:15	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	non-violent	short
V39	6-Jan-2015	A Message from Brother 'Abd Allah Moldovi	Arabic	English	al-Hayat	0:13:11	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	non-violent	medium
V40	13-Jan-2015	Uncovering An Enemy Within	Arabic	English	al-Hayat	0:07:38	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	violent	short
V41	19-Jan-2015	A message to the government and people of Japan	English	N/A	al-Furqan	0:01:40	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	non-violent	short
V42	24-Jan-2015	Slaughtering a Japanese Captive and Appeal of Second To His Family and Government	English	N/A	al-Furqan	0:02:52	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	violent	short
V43	27-Jan-2015	The Second and Last Message From the Captive Kenji Goto	English	N/A	al-Furqan	0:01:50	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	non-violent	short

V44	28-Jan-2015	Final Deadline for the Jordanian Government To Release Sājidah al-Rīshawī Before Sunset Thursday	English	N/A	al-Furqan	0:00:30	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	non-violent	short
V45	31-Jan-2015	A message to the government of Japan	English	N/A	al-Furqan	0:01:07	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	violent	short
V46	3-Feb-2015	Healing of the Believers' Chest	Arabic	English	al-Furqan	0:22:34	NON-NASHEED	scored	violent	medium
V47	9-Feb-2015	From Inside Ḥalab	English	Arabic	al-Hayat	0:12:01	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	violent	medium
V48	15-Feb-2015	A Message Signed With Blood To the Nation of the Cross	English	Arabic	al-Hayat	0:05:02	NON-NASHEED	scored	violent	short
V49	7-Mar-2015	Story From the Land of Life – Abu Suhaib al-Faransi	French	Arabic/English	al-Hayat	0:15:44	NON-NASHEED	scored	non-violent	medium
V50	10-Mar-2015	And Wretched Is That Which They Purchased	Arabic	English	al-Furqan	0:13:27	NON-NASHEED	scored	violent	medium
V51	14-Apr-2015	For the Sake of God	English	English	al-Hayat	0:02:59	NASHEED	scored	violent	short
V52	19-Apr-2015	Until there came to them clear evidence	Arabic	English	al-Furqan	0:29:11	NON-NASHEED	scored	violent	medium
V53	21-Apr-2015	Stories From the Land of the livings Abū Khālid al-Kambūdī	English	Arabic	al-Hayat	0:12:35	NON-NASHEED	scored	non-violent	medium
V54	18-May-2015	Extend Your Hand To Pledge Allegiance	Arabic	English	al-Hayat	0:04:06	NASHEED	scored	non-violent	short
V55	4-Jun-2015	Honor is in Jihād: A Message to the People of Balkans	English	English	al-Hayat	0:22:04	NON-NASHEED	scored	violent	medium
V56	24-Jun-2015	The Path of Jihād	Arabic	English	al-Hayat	0:05:55	NASHEED	scored	violent	short
V57	7-Jul-2015	Come, My Friend	Arabic	English	al-Hayat	0:03:53	NASHEED	scored	violent	short
V58	4-Aug-2015	The One Body – Steadfastness Messages to Our Brothers in al-Anbar and al-Fallujah	Arabic	English	Wilāyat al-Salahuddin	0:12:43	NON-NASHEED	scored	violent	medium
V59	6-Aug-2015	A message to the government of Egypt Sinai Province Media Office	English	Arabic	al-Furqan	0:01:15	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	non-violent	short
V60	29-Aug-2015	The Rise of the Caliphate and the Return of the Gold Dinar	English	Arabic	al-Hayat	0:54:58	NON-NASHEED	scored	non-violent	long
V61	11-Oct-2015	The Dark Rise of Banknotes and the Return of the Gold Dinar	English	N/A	al-Hayat	0:05:25	NON-NASHEED	scored	non-violent	short
V62	5-Nov-2015	Those Who Have Believed and Emigrated	English	Arabic	Wilāyat al-Raqqah	0:11:20	NON-NASHEED	scored	non-violent	medium
V63	12-Nov-2015	Soon, Very Soon	Russian	English	al-Hayat	0:04:57	NASHEED	scored	violent	short

V64	24-Nov-2015	and no respite	English	N/A	al-Hayat	0:04:14	NON-NASHEED	scored	violent	short
V65	4-Dec-2015	And Kill them wherever you find them	Arabic	English	Wilāyat al-Anbar	0:22:40	NON-NASHEED	scored	violent	medium
V66	24-Jan-2016	Kill Them Wherever You Find Them	Arabic	English	al-Hayat	0:17:39	NON-NASHEED	scored	violent	medium
V67	19-Mar-2016	John Cantlie Talks About the American Airstrikes on Media Kiosks in Mosul City	English	N/A	Wilāyat al-Anbar	0:03:36	NON-NASHEED	scored	violent	short
V68	24-Mar-2016	With their Blood, They Advised (2) – Abu Farouq al-Ansari	Arabic	English	Wilāyat al-Anbar	0:12:32	NON-NASHEED	scored	violent	medium
V69	29-Apr-2016	Blood for Blood	Arabic	English	al-Hayat	0:03:40	NASHEED	scored	violent	short
V70	30-May-2016	The Religion of Unbelief is One	English	N/A	al-Hayat	0:03:14	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	violent	short
V71	5-Jul-2016	My Revenge	French	Arabic/English	al-Hayat	0:04:32	NASHEED	scored	violent	short
V72	6-Jul-2016	The Structure of the Caliphate	English	N/A	al-Furqan	0:14:58	NON-NASHEED	scored	violent	medium
V73	12-Jul-2016	John Cantlie Speaking about the US bombing Mosul University and Popular Areas in the City	English	N/A	Wilāyat al-Anbar	0:03:12	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	non-violent	short
V74	27-Jul-2016	And God Will Be Sufficient For You Against Them	Arabic	English	Wilāyat al-Furāt	0:18:59	NON-NASHEED	scored	violent	medium
V75	12-Sep-2016	The Making of Illusions	Arabic	English	Wilāyat Al-Khayr	0:12:35	NON-NASHEED	scored	violent	medium
V76	26-Nov-2016	You Must Fight Them Oh Muwahid	French	English	Wilāyat al-Raqqah	0:07:06	NON-NASHEED	scored	violent	short
V77	7-Dec-2016	John Cantlie Talks About Bombing the Bridges, Cutting Water and Electricity from Mosul City	English	N/A	Wilāyat al-Anbar	0:08:56	NON-NASHEED	non-scored	non-violent	short
V78	29-Dec-2016	My Father Told Me	Arabic	English	Wilāyat al-Raqqah	0:33:42	NON-NASHEED	scored	violent	long
V79	20-Apr-2017	The Islamic State Has Been Established	Turkish	English	al-Hayat	0:04:23	NASHEED	scored	violent	short

Appendix 3 MS Excel table that exhibits all general information of 79 English -language videos

v13(36:07)	COM	SV	VP	Exe	TA	CC	Jihad	MS	MM	Hum	SG	HW	HIJ	EM	BA	RH	ROA	AP	ELT	OTG	CS	WF	WCWE	WM	SFQS	SFS
00:00:00																										
00:01:00		1301																								
00:02:00																	1302									
00:03:00												1303			1304											
00:04:00																										
00:05:00							1305									1306										
00:06:00																										
00:07:00									1307																	
00:08:00																										
00:09:00	1308																								1309	
00:10:00		1310																								
00:11:00																										
00:12:00												1311														
00:13:00																1312										
00:14:00																	1313									
00:15:00																										1314
00:16:00																										
00:17:00	1315																									
00:18:00													1316												1317	
00:19:00																										
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00:28:00																										
00:29:00																										
00:30:00	1325																									
00:31:00																									1327	
00:32:00		1326														1328										
00:33:00																										
00:34:00																										
00:35:00				1329														1330								
00:36:00																										
Sum(minute)	10	7		2			2		4			7	2		3	3	8	1							6	2

Appendix 4 Microsoft Excel generated an analytical table for tallying 'segments' and 'total duration of segments'. The example table of V13 is representative of the other 78 tables for the rest of the videos. X and Y in the table represent the duration of the videos and the themes. Merged cells with a number assigned visually represent every segment and its duration. Through the number, the actual content of the videos is able to be retrieved through a separate document created by the analyst, called 'extraction of segments', for the sake of further interpretation of utterances.

SPEECH ACTS	DEFINITION	CRITERIA
COMMANDING	The person who commands wants the addressee to do something and expects to cause him to do it. It is present oriented. The speaker is based on assumption that he or she was conveying a positive judgment about something with a specific addressee in mind. In doing so, one expects to influence this addressee's attitude and behaviour.	Content, visually or verbally, refers to a Muslim obligation of commanding 'right' in Islamic scripture, e.g. eschatological end of time, 'the Last Day' and the instructive deeds and mental preparations prior to its happening. It also refers to the educational system and military training camps.
INCITING	It is an attempt to get the addressee to do something, as well as to implant in the addressee's mind the idea of another such irresistible 'must'. The speaker is trying to achieve the goal partly by trying to convey to the addressee his own sense of urgency. He sees himself as someone who tries to impose his own superior understanding of the situation. Because it involves a sense of urgency, the speaker usually wants the addressee to respond, and to respond now.	Content, visually or verbally, refers to the urgent necessity to perform violent jihad. It usually aims to affect addressee by conveying a relatively unpleasant sense of urgency by illustrating a situation of being under great threats and malevolence that cause pain and suffer
INVITING	One can invite someone to come to a place where the speaker will be the host. Directive	Content, visually or verbally, refers to the explicit encouragement of emigration, and any necessary detached methods such as emotive appeals, material and lifetime guarantee, or theological obligation and righteousness that lead to this end, as well as any other way to support the group in a non-military manner
REBUTTING	It involves, above all, saying something that has been said is untruthful, meanwhile showing something else has to be true and anyone that they have to accept it as true. This expects disbelief but aims to eradicate the very possibility of it. Therefore, it is to argue against an argument or view already put forward.	Content, visually or verbally, refers to the western media's distortions. Certain Arguments that are considered to be crucial for ISIS. E.g. the legibility of caliphate and obligations of Muslims due to the establishment of a caliphate (V39), concepts to reinforce 'us' (the group) versus 'them' (the adversary) mentality

FORBIDDING	The person who forbids someone to do something assumes that the addressee wants or may want to do it, and tries to prevent him from doing it by his or her speech act. The speaker may be appealing to the addressee's sense of right and wrong, to the awareness that it would be 'bad' if the addressee did what the speaker wants him or her not to do. Forbidding something expects to instil some fear in the addressee, a fear which would help to prevent him from disobeying.	Forbidding 'wrong', the other side as commanding 'right' in Islamic scripture, refers to descriptions of non-Muslim groups, parties, and countries as illegitimate, deviant, or incapable, the assertion that the group is superior to or in conflict with others. Any claim that an individual or group as 'apostate' or 'kufr' who either have apostatised from Islam and claims to be non-Muslim as a result, such as *sahwat*, *rafidah,* or other non-believers, nationalists, and secularists, etc.
RIDICULING	To make fun of a person or a group of people in a high degree, usually more effective, deadlier than mocking because the speaker intends the act to be damaging and insulting. *Ridiculing* suggests contempt rather than hatred and belittles the target person and strips him of the good opinion that he has of himself as well as that he would like other people to have.	Content, visually or verbally, refers to the 'failures' of the west and the decisions made by prominent western politicians
CONDEMNING	It focuses on asserting 'badness' of human actions, and of the people who have performed those actions. In asserting that the actions in question are bad, we present this judgment not as a matter of personal opinion but as a blunt assertion. In *condemning*, we presume a position of authority or of public importance, which implies tremendous confidence in one's moral judgment and a conviction that this confidence is well founded.	Content, visually or verbally, refers to the western aggression, oppression, and malevolence against Muslim, especially the women and children in the artefact of politics, economy, and military, as well as the injustice of ordinary western civilian due to the 'selfish' politicians' interests. e.g. John Cantles series
THREATENING	Typically, the utterances interpreted as threats refer to a future action by the speaker which is regarded as bad for the addressee often with a conditional clause. In threatening, and not in warning, the speaker uses a reference to future bad consequences as a means of achieving something from the addressee. it can be *directive* or *commissive*, which depends upon whether the utterance is more orientated towards getting the addressee to do things, or on illustrating the speaker's commitment to do things in the future. This study uses *Threatening* (D) and *Threatening* (C) to make distinction.	Content, visually or verbally, acts as a great deterrence with the specific addressee. Apply to occasions in which ISIS was asking for ransom, or any other benefits in exchange for hostages, otherwise threatening with beheading, as well as imminent more terror attacks. It usually emerges with a conditional clause and sends warnings to the addressee. It is *directive* if ISIS more explicitly speaks to the audience to respond and react rather than merely demonstrate the group's commitment and determination, otherwise it is *commissive*

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PRAISING	*praising*, requires a positive judgment. To *praise* is to express approbation. It therefore presupposes that the thing praised is good.	Expressing firstly, appreciations to the Islamic State and the greatness and meaningfulness of it to Muslim (V37), and secondly admirations to the fighters and martyrs of the State and their family, for their spirit and consistent performance in violent jihad, affirming and granting them with honourable positions inside the Islamic state
BOASTING	It involves saying good things about oneself, with the purpose of impressing other people. The feeling sought in the addressee is not necessarily a 'good feeling' such as admiration, but also a 'bad feeling' such as envy. The speaker, however, in any case, wants to cause the addressee to feel something towards him.	Content, visually or verbally, refers to the organisational, weaponry, and operational strengths of the group, showing the battlefield and operational victories as well as general public's psychological satisfaction with the wealth and life conditions.
JUSTIFYING	The need for justifying an action arises when this action has caused a situation which may be thought of as bad, even though the speaker does not necessarily deny or admit so. The speaker aims to defend the causer of the situation. One justifies an action which may have led to truly bad consequences and which nonetheless is not regarded by the speaker as an offence of any kind.	Content, visually or verbally, refers to the clarification and justice of what the outside world knows as the group's violence, atrocity, and brutality. E.g. mass executions, destruction of historical heritage, and persecution of locals, who were accused of violating the law, etc.
INFORMING	It is at first a fairly straightforward act, concerned exclusively with causing the addressee to know something. First, it carries an implication of effectiveness: it aims to leave no room for doubts. Second, it (in contrast to *tell*) suggests that the message conveyed concerns an established fact. It suggests also that it is accurate, exact, and reliable. Message concerning loose, ill-defined thoughts is unlikely to be reported by means of *inform*. *Informing* implies that the speaker not only wants to the addressee to know but also thinks that the addressee should know due to the importance of the message.	Introducing information or knowledge about the established caliphate with a great detail confidently, such as the caliphate's administrative structure, the entire political system.

CLAIMING	It puts forward, confidently, a controversial view. It is a very forceful act because the speaker, who expects opposition, shows himself ready to fight that opposition and confident that he can defeat it. The impression of *claim* is more antagonistic than *affirm*, because of the fact that it seems to make greater demands on other people. And in many cases, the speaker thinks he can achieve it because he is right. Assertive	Content, visually or verbally, refers to the establishment and expansion of the caliphate, insisting the remaining strength and military advance especially on which the group has encountered setbacks.
DECLARING	To make known publicly, explicitly, and usually in a formal manner. It can be used performatively. The speech act itself create a new situation, over or above the knowledge it gives. In declaring something the speaker is always exercising some power or at least sees himself in that light. It is, therefore, typically used with reference to utterances made by official persons. It has one extra component: after saying it, in this way, people will have to do some things because of that.	Content, visually or verbally, refers to the prominent figures among the group's hierarchy who made crucial official statements in certain important events. e.g. ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared a caliphate and self-appointed himself as the caliph.
PRONOUNCING	Involves saying something about a given entity, doing it in an authoritative way, as if determining the correct way for this entity to be viewed, and implying serious consequences for this entity.	Content, visually or verbally, refers to the complete installation, absolute superiority, and uncompromised implementation of Islamic law and other administrative advantages, e.g. currency.

Appendix 5 the final list for the coding instrument. The [DEFINATION] of speech act was retrieved from linguist Anna Wierzbicka's English Speech Act Verbs: A Semantic Dictionary (1987), Michael Cook's Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought (2010), and Quentin Skinner's Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes (1996), while the [CRITERIA] was derived video content aid with thematic analysis of ISIS English-language videos.

|	RELEASE DATE	TITLE	SPEECH ACT	CLASSCIFICATION
V1	6-Apr-2014	But Who Is Better Than God In Judgement	Pronouncing	Declaration
V2	17-May-2014	Clanging of the Swords, Part 4	Boasting	Assertive
V3	28-May-2014	The Best Ummah	Commanding	Directive
V4	2-Jun-2014	Oh Soldiers of Truth Go Forth	Praising	Expressive
V5	4-Jun-2014	Mujatweets Episode #2-8 (4 June- 24 July 2014)	Inviting	Directive
V6	15-Jun-2014	Let's Go For Jihād	Inciting	Directive
V7	19-Jun-2014	There Is No Life Without Jihad	Inciting	Directive
V8	29-Jun-2014	The End of Sykes-Picot	Ridiculing	Assertive
V9	5-Jul-2014	Sermon and Friday Prayer in the Great Mosque in the City of Mosul	Declaring	Declaration
V10	12-Jul-2014	The Chosen Few of Different Lands	Inviting	Directive
V11	16-Jul-2014	Those Who Were Truthful With God	Inciting	Directive
V12	22-Jul-2014	Join the Ranks	Inviting	Directive
V13	28-Jul-2014	Upon the Prophetic Methodology	Justifying	Assertive
V14	2-Aug-2014	Īd Greetings From the Land Of the Caliphate	Inviting	Directive
V15	19-Aug-2014	A Message To America	Threatening	Directive
V16	2-Sep-2014	A second message to America	Threatening	Directive
V17	13-Sep-2014	A Message to the Allies of America	Threatening	Directive
V18	18-Sep-2014	Lend Me Your Ears – Introduction	Condemning	Expressive
V19	19-Sep-2014	The Flames of War	Boasting	Assertive
V20	23-Sep-2014	Lend Me Your Ears – Episode 1	Condemning	Expressive
V21	26-Sep-2014	Lend Me Your Ears – Episode 2	Condemning	Expressive
V22	4-Oct-2014	Another Message to America and Its Allies	Threatening	Directive
V23	12-Oct-2014	Lend Me Your Ears – Episode 3	Condemning	Expressive
V24	15-Oct-2014	Wait. We are also waiting	Commanding	Directive
V25	16-Oct-2014	Lend Me Your Ears – Episode 4	Condemning	Expressive
V26	20-Oct-2014	Message of the Mujahid (4)	Inciting	Directive
V27	25-Oct-2014	Lend Me Your Ears – Episode 5	Condemning	Expressive
V28	27-Oct-2014	Inside Ayn al-Islam - (Kobane)	Rebutting	Assertive
V29	2-Nov-2014	A Message from Brother, Abu Muhammad al-Rousi	Inviting	Directive
V30	17-Nov-2014	Although disbelievers dislike it	Threatening	Directive
V31	19-Nov-2014	What Are You Waiting For?	Inciting	Directive
V32	21-Nov-2014	Race Towards Good	Commanding	Directive
V33	21-Nov-2014	Turkey and the Fire of Nationalism	Forbidding	Directive
V34	21-Nov-2014	Lend Me Your Ears – Episode 6	Condemning	Expressive
V35	28-Nov-2014	A Visit to al-Mosul	Boasting	Assertive
V36	7-Dec-2014	Message of the Mujahid (5)	Inciting	Directive
V37	10-Dec-2014	Our State Is Victorious	Praising	Expressive
V38	4-Jan-2015	From Inside al-Mosul	Rebutting	Assertive
V39	6-Jan-2015	A Message from Brother 'Abd Allah Moldovi	Rebutting	Assertive
V40	13-Jan-2015	Uncovering An Enemy Within	Threatening	Directive
V41	19-Jan-2015	A message to the government and people of Japan	Threatening	Commissive
V42	24-Jan-2015	Slaughtering a Japanese Captive and Appeal of Second To His Family and Government	Threatening	Directive
V43	27-Jan-2015	The Second and Last Message From the Captive Kenji Goto	Threatening	Directive

V44	28-Jan-2015	Final Deadline for the Jordanian Government To Release Sājidah al-Rīshawī Before Sunset Thursday	Threatening	Directive
V45	31-Jan-2015	A message to the government of Japan	Threatening	Directive
V46	3-Feb-2015	Healing of the Believers' Chest	Threatening	Directive
V47	9-Feb-2015	From Inside Ḥalab	Condemning	Expressive
V48	15-Feb-2015	A Message Signed With Blood To the Nation of the Cross	Threatening	Commissive
V49	7-Mar-2015	Story From the Land of Life – Abu Suhaib al-Faransi	Inviting	Directive
V50	10-Mar-2015	And Wretched Is That Which They Purchased	Threatening	Directive
V51	14-Apr-2015	For the Sake of God	Praising	Expressive
V52	19-Apr-2015	Until there came to them clear evidence	Forbidding	Directive
V53	21-Apr-2015	Stories From the Land of the livings Abū Khālid al-Kambūdī	Inviting	Directive
V54	18-May-2015	Extend Your Hand To Pledge Allegiance	Inviting	Directive
V55	4-Jun-2015	Honor is in Jihād: A Message to the People of Balkans	Inciting	Directive
V56	24-Jun-2015	The Path of Jihād	Inciting	Directive
V57	7-Jul-2015	Come, My Friend	Inviting	Directive
V58	4-Aug-2015	The One Body – Steadfastness Messages to Our Brothers in al-Anbar and al-Fallujah	Claiming	Assertive
V59	6-Aug-2015	A message to the government of Egypt Sinai Province Media Office	Threatening	Directive
V60	29-Aug-2015	The Rise of the Caliphate and the Return of the Gold Dinar	Condemning	Expressive
V61	11-Oct-2015	The Dark Rise of Banknotes and the Return of the Gold Dinar	Condemning	Expressive
V62	5-Nov-2015	Those Who Have Believed and Emigrated	Inviting	Directive
V63	12-Nov-2015	Soon, Very Soon	Threatening	Commissive
V64	24-Nov-2015	and no respite	Boasting	Assertive
V65	4-Dec-2015	And Kill them wherever you find them	Threatening	Directive
V66	24-Jan-2016	Kill Them Wherever You Find Them	Threatening	Commissive
V67	19-Mar-2016	John Cantlie Talks About the American Airstrikes on Media Kiosks in Mosul City	Condemning	Expressive
V68	24-Mar-2016	With their Blood, They Advised (2) – Abu Farouq al-Ansari	Boasting	Assertive
V69	29-Apr-2016	Blood for Blood	Condemning	Expressive
V70	30-May-2016	The Religion of Unbelief is One	Rebutting	Assertive
V71	5-Jul-2016	My Revenge	Threatening	Commissive
V72	6-Jul-2016	The Structure of the Caliphate	Informing	Assertive
V73	12-Jul-2016	John Cantlie Speaking about the US bombing Mosul Univeristy and Popular Areas in the City	Condemning	Expressive
V74	27-Jul-2016	And God Will Be Sufficient For You Against Them	Condemning	Expressive
V75	12-Sep-2016	The Making of Illusions	Threatening	Directive
V76	26-Nov-2016	You Must Fight Them Oh Muwahid	Threatening	Directive
V77	7-Dec-2016	John Cantlie Talks About Bombing the Bridges, Cutting Water and Electricity from Mosul City	Condemning	Expressive
V78	29-Dec-2016	My Father Told Me	Praising	Expressive
V79	20-Apr-2017	The Islamic State Has Been Established	Inviting	Directive

Appendix 6 Microsoft Excel table that exhibits code, release date, title, speech act, and classification of 79 English -language videos.
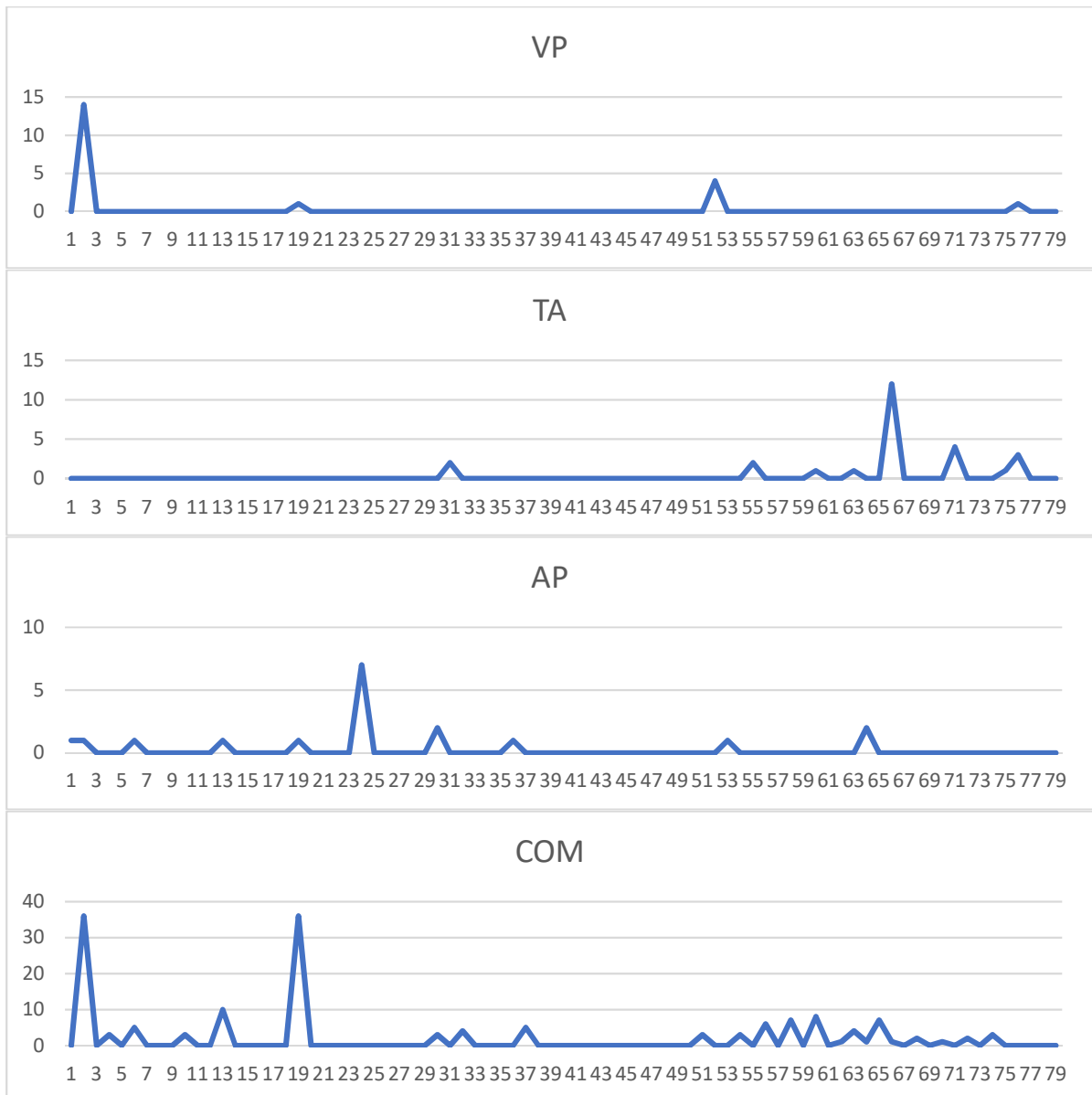
Appendix 7 Detailed line graphs of the six themes that shift significantly over time. X is video codes that reflect and represent the time,[80] while the Y is the duration (total minutes) for which they have occurred and lasted.

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[80] The time/date is reflected through date of release of the video trackable by their codes. For example, 1 and 79 represent '6 April 2014' and '20 April 2017' respectively.
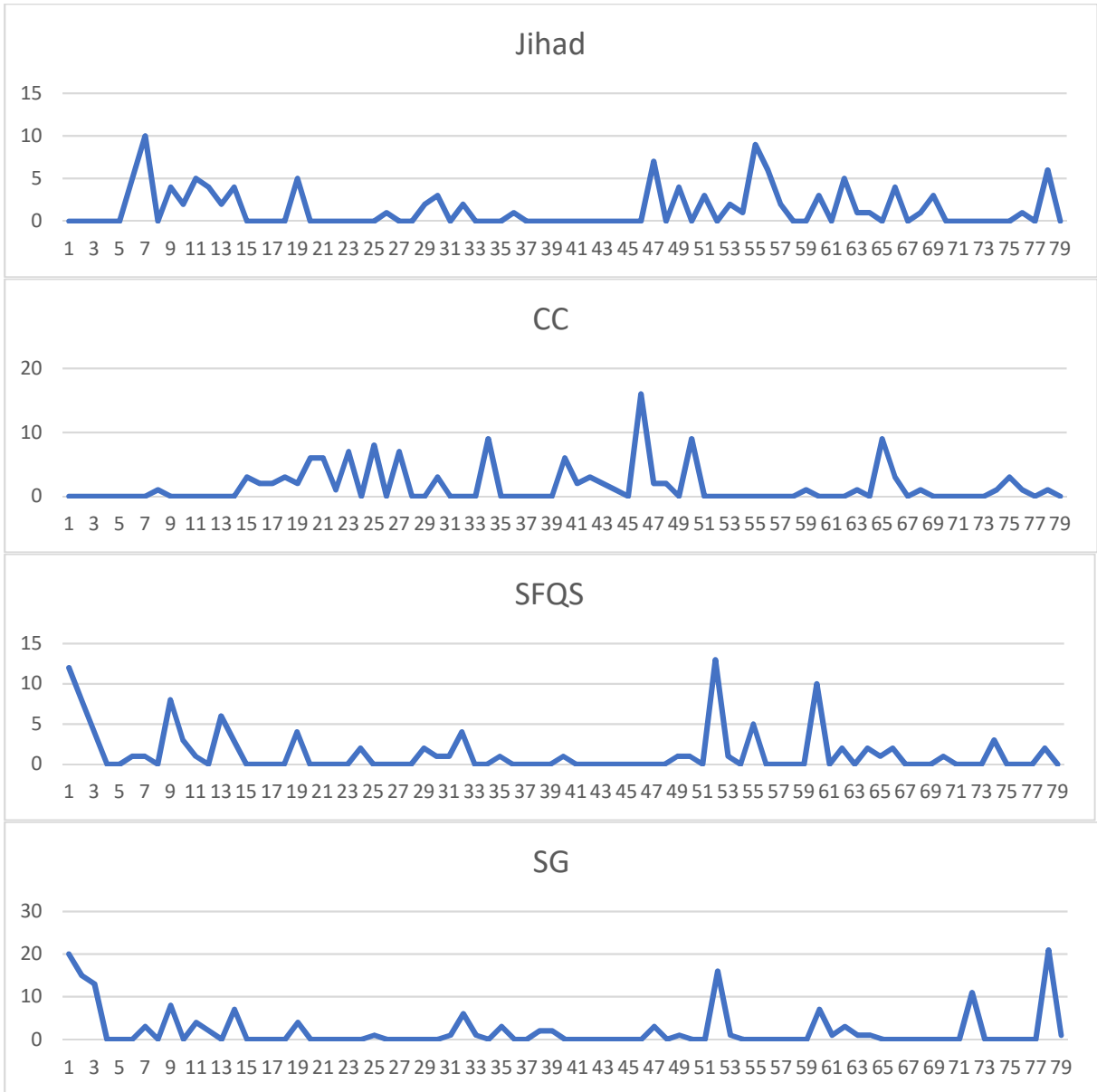
Appendix 8 Detailed line graphs of the six themes that maintain a consistent presence over time.

Table 1: Content, primary utterance/scene, and duration in V15 *A Message to America* (2014).

Content	Primary utterance/scene	Duration
Opening scene	1. Opening demonstration of the status quo 2. President Obama's speech 3. Airstrike operation in Iraq	00:00 - 01:50
James Foley	4. The 'real killer' is the US government	01:51 - 02:11
	5. A message to his parents	02:12 - 02:28
	6. A message to his brother John	02:29 - 03:04
	7. Direct consequential effect between his death and airstrike	03:05 - 03:25
Jihadi John	8. American intervention	03:26 - 03:50
	9. Airstrike 'results in the bloodshed of your people'	03:51 - 04:18
Execution of James Foley	10. Beheading	04:19 – 04:33
Ending scene	11. Threatening with the life of Steven Sotloff	04:34 – 04:40

Table 2: Content, primary utterance/scene, and duration in V14 – *Eīd Greetings From the Land of the Caliphate* (2014).

Content	Primary utterance/scene	Duration
Opening scene:	Men in a mosque in Raqqa rising to their feet	**00:00 - 04:25**
Nasheed	'By it [Sharia] we live without humiliation A life of peace and security'	**04:26 – 05:50**
The 'youth of the future'	Swear worship of god	**05:51 – 06:17**
Abu Abdullah al-Habashi from Britain	'It's good atmosphere, good living here'	**06:80 - 07:39**
Abu Shuayb as-Somali from Finland	Bright future of caliphate	**07:40 - 08:52**
Abdul Haleem al-Tunsi from Tunisia	The 'dead' enter Jannah while the 'living' live in caliphate	**08:42 – 10:27**
Abu Gandal al-Yemeni from Indonesia	Perform hijrah with families (visual focus)	**10:28 – 11:48**
'Hand out toys' scored with the Nasheed	Hijrah An-Nisa: 100	**11:49 – 13:19**
Abdullah al-Magharibi from Morocco	'Hijrah is obligatory upon every Muslim'	**13:20 – 14:05**
Abu Haniyah al-Belgiki from Belgium	'Never feel like a Muslim before now'	**14:06- 14:37**
'Children in play land' scored with the Nasheed	Happy children play on a large jungle gym, ride with their fathers on carousels, car scooters, a small railroad.	**14:38 – 15:12**
Abu Abdunahman al-Trinidadi from the US	Blessings to the caliphate	**15:13 – 16:46**
Abu Shuaib al-Afriki from South-Africa	With toddlers in his arms	**16:47 – 18:07**
Men singing	Various singers sing praises to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi	**18:08 – 20:40**
Ending scene	'I wish you were here' pasted over laughing children's faces	**20:41 – 20:52**

Table 3: Content, primary utterance, and duration in V7 *There Is No Life Without Jihad* (2014).

Content	Primary utterance	Duration
Opening scene	1. Surah Al-Anfal [8:24] & Martyrs	00:00 - 01:11
Speaker 1: Abu Muthanna al-Yemeni	2. 'What gives you life is jihad'	01:12 - 01:50
	3. Al-sham is the best land	01:51 - 02:18
	4. 'Fight until Allah's word is highest'	02:19 - 03:08
	5. Messages to al-Baghdadi	03:09 - 04:04
Speaker 2: Abu Bara al-Hindi	6. Read Quran	04:05 - 04:50
	7. This life is a 'test'	04:51 - 05:22
	8. Feeling of depression	05:23 - 06:09
Speaker 3: Abu Yahya ash Shami	9. Palestine & Jews	06:10 - 07:34
Speaker 4: Abu Nour al-Iraqi	10. 'Two types of people'	07:35 - 08:41
Speaker 5: Abu Dujana al-Hindi	11. Al-Qiyamah (resurrection) to Jannah (paradise)	08:42 - 09:36
	12. 'Things that prevent you from coming to jihad'	09:37 - 11:23
	13. 'Allah is with us'	11:24 - 12:56
Ending scene	14. Slow-motion shots of the men smiling	12:57 - 13:26

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