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# NEW IMAGINARIES OF WAR:

# HOW HAMAS AND THE ISLAMIC STATE ADVANCE THEIR POLITICAL OBJECTIVES ON A VIRTUAL BATTLEFIELD

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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# ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that Hamas and the Islamic State, two non-state armed groups located in the Middle East, each carefully calibrate their own war-fighting activities with their communications approaches in order to achieve their respective political objectives. Drawing on scholarship focusing on non-state armed groups and political communication, as well as other secondary sources such as specialist journalism, the thesis critically analyses online communications material distributed by Hamas and the Islamic State through official and affiliated websites, digital publications, YouTube clips, tweets, and other social media platforms. While there is a striking degree of conformity between the sophisticated, comprehensive, and disciplined communications approaches used by these two groups, the thesis argues that key differences during especially intense periods of conflict — specifically, between June and October 2014 — reflect the divergent ways in which Hamas endorses, and the Islamic State disrupts, the prevailing world order as each pursues their own cause. It also notes that much of the recent scholarship highlighting the use of social media by non-state armed groups overestimates the impact of the virtual world on the actions of their followers in particular and attempts to influence the hearts and minds of a global audience more broadly.

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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| EU | European Union |
| IDF | Israeli Defense Force |
| IS | Islamic State |
| ISIL | Islamic State in Iraq and Levant |
| MEMRI | Middle East Media Research Institute |
| MENA | Middle East and North Africa |
| NSAGs | Non-state armed groups |
| PA | Palestinian Authority |
| PKK | Kurdistan Workers Party |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation |
| UNGA | United Nations General Assembly |
| UNWRA | United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East |
| US | United States of America |

# GLOSSARY OF ARABIC TERMS

| | |
|---|---|
| *Ahlul-halli-wa'l-'aqd* | people of authority |
| *Al-dawla al Islamiyya fi Iraq* | Islamic State in Iraq |
| *Aqidah* | creed |
| *Baqiya wa tatamadad* | remaining and expanding |
| *Bay'ah* | transaction or traditional contract |
| *Dawla* | state or dynasty |
| *Dhimmi* | protected person |
| *Din wa dawla* | an all-embracing governance system |
| *Fahish'ah* | fornication or adultery |
| *Fard 'Ayn* | individual duty |
| *Hajj* | pilgrimage |
| *Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya* | The Islamic Resistance Movement |
| *Hijrah* | migration |
| *Hudud* | punishments mandated by Allah |
| *Intifada* | uprising against oppression |
| *Istishhadiyyin* | suicide bombers |
| *Jama'a* | congregation or congregational prayer |
| *Jama'at al-Tawhid w'al-Jihad* | The Group of God's Unity and *Jihad* |
| *Jihad* | holy war |
| *Jizya* | tax |
| *Khalif* | caliph |
| *Khilafah* | caliphate |
| *Kuffar* | unbeliever |
| *Kufr* | denial of truth |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Majlis ash-Shoura* | Shura Council |
| *Manhaj* | path |
| *Muhajadeen* | one engaged in *jihad* |
| *Muqawama* | resistance through constant combat |
| *Nasheed* | vocal music |
| *Qu'ud* | abandonment of jihad |
| *Rafidah* | rejectionists/refusers |
| *Safawi* | pejorative term for Shi'ah Muslims |
| *Sahwa* | awakening |
| *Salafi* | adherents to 'true' Sunni Islam |
| *Salah* | prayer |
| *Sawm* | fasting |
| *Shahada* | bearing witness to Allah |
| *Shahid* | martyrdom |
| *Shari'ah* | legal system of Islam |
| *Shirk* | idolatry |
| *Shura* | consultation |
| *Taghut* | cross the limits/idolatry |
| *Takfir* | excommunication |
| *Tamkin* | consolidation |
| *Tawhid* | oneness of God |
| *Ummah* | community of true believers |
| *Usrat* | small organisational cells |
| *Waqf* | inalienable charitable endowment |
| *Wilayat* | province |
| *Zakat/Zakah* | alms-giving as a religious obligation |