

لا إله إلا الله

محمد رسول الله



Understanding "Islamic State" Narratives Through Analysing Their Online Media Output

Dr. Nico Prucha

ICSR, King's College London



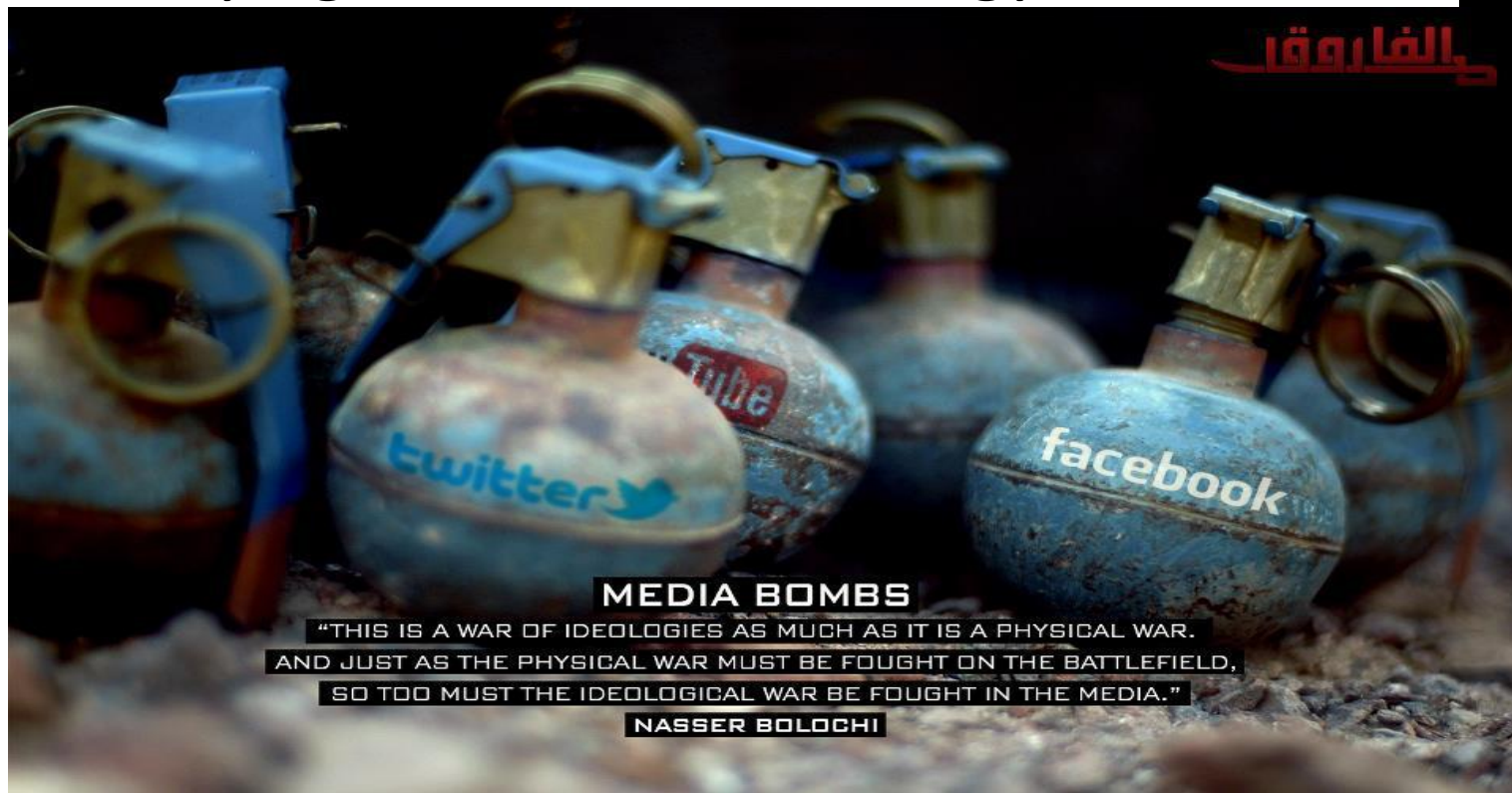
NETWORK OF EXCELLENCE FOR
RESEARCH IN VIOLENT ONLINE
POLITICAL EXTREMISM



This project has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement no. 312827

www.voxpol.eu

Studying narratives / theology



ogy

ralized

- Addressing the
- Aesthetic visual element &
- textual content
- "In war, the moral is to the material as three is to one." (Napoleon)



- “the form in which the significant symbols are embodied to reach the public may be spoken, written, pictorial, or musical, and the number of stimulus carriers is indefinite. If the propagandist identifies himself imaginatively with the lives of the subjects in a particular situation, he is able to explore several channels of approach.” (Lasswell, 1927)

Visual Culture



- **Videos are the most important mouthpiece to show the manifestation and realization of jihadist creed ('aqida) and methodology (manhaj) for which they claim to live and die.** The video discourse allows a constantly repetition and showcasing of doctrines that disparage non-believers and sanction the collective punishment of “apostates” (murtadd) and Muslim “hypocrites” (munafiq).
- **This theological led discourse can be defined as “discursive guidance.”** By the constant repetition of extremist laden theological interpretation (texts) and its practical implementation (videos), **jihadi media consumers and participants are guided into a specific notion that serves as the fundament to become active and potentially commit attacks.**



Visual Literacy



- ideological / theological elements are embedded in videos that capitalize on the aesthetics of martyrdom and frame military operations by Mujahidin in general as legitimate acts sanctioned by divine scripture.
- use of macro-/micro codes; degree of initialization
- structural order / chaos of everyday life (Lohlker, 2012)



- Reduced latency – media output after events / strategic blackouts
- In-/ post-battle reports and assessment
- 'White' vs 'black' bodies
- GoPro First person perspective (combat executions)
- Application of ideology; theological pieces thereof (fiqh, manhaj, 'aqida)



- Seniority vs practicality;
- Innovative, coherent,
- consequent & prof. media use
- with high levels of output
- quantity and quality
- stages of consolidation of territory and intergretation/reversion of Arab Sunni Muslims
- Battlefield reporting monopoly (Charlie Winter, 2015)



The Videos of the “Islamic State”



الدولة
الإسلامية

Official wakalat

(Saudi-Arabia
presence),

ولايات الدولة الإسلامية
في كل من العراق والشام



INCREASE OVER TIME

Courtesy of Dr. Ali Fisher



<http://voxpath.eu/pictures-matter-the-v>

ISIS VIDEO PRODUCTION



نوافذ على ارض الملاحم



- August 2013 – March 2014
- published by mu'assasat al-i'tisam
- new sub-organ of al-Furqan and reference to
واعتصموا بحبل الله جميعا (3:103)
- 50 videos; dedicated series



Nodes, Swarmcast & Netwar



- Decentralized communication
- nodes on Social Media
- Official Media Ministry of ISIS
- Shift from Accounts to dedicated # on Twitter
- Cross platform dissemination (all channels)
- Linked to / referred by high value accounts



نوافذ على أرض الملاحم (31)

جديد: #مؤسسة_الاعتصام نوافذ على أرض الملاحم 31 (#غزوة_الفتح)

<https://vimeo.com/80503754>

نوافذ على أرض الملاحم 31 تغطية لجانب من معركةالفتح

... <https://www.mediafire.com/?7lawyc82j68t8r2>



لإله إلا الله
رسول الله
محمد

مؤسسة الاعتصام
@e3tasimo

69 TWEETS | 1 FOLLOWING | 22,174 FOLLOWERS

Followed by قلم موحد, ابو الحسن الشهري, Abu Siqr Al Shabwani and 100+ others.

Tweets

 @e3tasimo مؤسسة الاعتصام 27 Nov
نوافذ على أرض الملاحم 31
تغطية لجانب من معركةالفتح
[mediafire.com/?7lawyc82j68t8r2...](https://www.mediafire.com/?7lawyc82j68t8r2)
رابط آخر
[vimeo.com/80503754/download1...](https://vimeo.com/80503754/download1)
#الدولة_الإسلامية_في_العراق_والشام

Expand | Reply | Retweet | Favorite | More



<http://bit.ly/1sxDP3w>

wa3tasimu

Top Narratives

- bay'a - incl. Kurdish fighters
- tribal elders
- Local appreciation of rule of law
- testimonials of suicide bomber (istishhadiyyin)
- informal learning and education under monopoly of truth
- da'wa camps
- distributing aid in earlier videos of series (al-fajr time)



- sermons (khutba), incitement talks (tahridiyya) on battlefield or secured environment
- combat & on site executions
- PKK and Kurds as enemies/combat footage
- defenders of ahl al-Sunna wa-l jama'a
- (re-) building infrastructure
- sectarianism (*harb ta'ifi*) w/in Syria/Iraq dynamic

- interviews of freed prisoners
- anti-drug campaigns (incl. tobacco)
- administering punishment
- anti-shirk missions
- jihadi cinemas / "media points"
- public service & 're-instating' Islam (teaching kids prayer & wudu' rituals); manifesting rel.
- cleansing of territory (al-Anbar) & consolidation
- towards end of series *sahwat* enemies and
- fights with other Islamist factions

Two main slogans in action



- “the foundation of religion is a book leading the right way and a sword assisting” (qawam al-din kitab yahdi wa-sayf yansur) attributed to Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328), the famous Hanbali scholar, which is often used by Jihadis to legitimize their fight.” (Lohlker, 2013)
- "fierce towards the disbelievers, passionate among them" (48:29)





This project has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement no. 312827

www.voxpol.eu

Dynamics of Syria and Iraq



- “protect Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. For soldiers are in al-Sham. Soldiers are in Yemen, in Iraq with the focus right now set on the territory of al-Sham: plenty of brigades, many battalions, all of them are waging war, bearing arms, but who is on the path righteousness (*haqq*)? Who is he who will support God, His religion, by his deeds?”
- Listen to your prophet: “Soldiers in al-Sham, soldiers in Yemen, and soldiers in Iraq.”
- Therefore, the victorious group (*al-ta’ifat al-mansura*) is the one fighting in Yemen and in Iraq.
- Who fights in Iraq? The youth (shabab), the mujahidin who carry the creed (*‘aqida*) of *al-wala’ wa-l bara’*. Who fights in Yemen? He, who has been dispatched by Qatar, by Saudi Arabia, by America?
- No.
- It is he who fights and is steadfast for this religion, he, who fights for the sake of “there is no God but God.”



Inclusive statehood

- Visual & inclusive environment
- presenting involvement with ISIS as a divine obligation
- Online publication part of missionary work
- showcasing ideal Muslims re-enacting prophethood
- legitimate war in Iraq (Safavid) & Syria (Asad/Alawite etc.)
- Depiction of mujahid as humanitarian first, then fighter
- Modern Mujahid follows divine guidelines for war and peace as set by redundant - but coherent - interpretation of scripture



Foreign Fighters



- Videos portray foreign fighter from both Western and Arab countries as part of an effort to present global jihadism as a universally applicable identity.
- Mainly Arab FF, few non-Arabs
- Local impact
- positive reception by population



Abu 'Abdallah al-Kosovi (Kosovo)



- Advice (*nasiha*) to audience to join ISIS
- True Islamic statehood in making (*wilayat*)
- Support of *musta'daifin*
- Drunken by victories – cleansing Syria
- Rhetorically boosted by Arabic *tilawa* enforcement
- Personal account of *karamat*
- “*how can we be overpowered, when we see al-janna looking into the barrels the guns of our enemies?*”
- Syria and Iraq as a serious frontier of re-establishing Caliphate, with transregional focus





Abu Usama al-Almani (Germany)

- Convert from Dinslaken, converted 4 years prior
- Calls on German Muslims to acknowledge the “true meaning of life”
- Motivated by apparent injustice in Syria – implementation of *shari’a* as ultimate goal
- Equates Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi with Prophet Muhammad
- Suffering for the collective, altruistic cause
- Can a Muslim man in Germany be happy?
- Four legal wives instead of sinning girlfriends





- “The West has to understand that the cause of the contemporary jihad is one bound by religion. This is the primary cause before it is a cause of human nature to repel the aggressors.
- this jihad is of divine essence, death on God's path is the highest of all intentions.”



- “we indeed have the obligation to bring the fight into the abodes of disbelief by using their very own citizens; to spread fear and agony among their own rows.”
- al-Sultan Sinjar





MIDDLE EAST

ISIS Is Winning the Social Media War, U.S. Concludes

By MARK MAZZETTI and MICHAEL R. GORDON JUNE 12, 2015

- ISIS has “effectively “trumped” the efforts of some of the world’s richest and most advanced technological nations.”
- “the group is far more nimble in spreading its message than the U.S. is in blunting it.”
- “Mr. Kerry has said that the effort to “start drying up this pool” of potential volunteers” may be even more important than military efforts.”
- [ISIS is Winning the Online Jihad Against the West, The Daily Beast, October 1, 2014](#) (Fisher & Prucha)



- ICSR Report on the series forthcoming





Many thanks!

Nico.prucha@univie.ac.at



روض الجنان(احتياط)
@rr162mm

Follow

دولتي الغالية
اعزك الله وايدك بنصر من عنده

Reply Retweet Favorite More



Editor:
H.E. Kyai Haji Abdurrahman Wahid

THE ILLUSION OF AN
ISLAMIC STATE

Prologue & Preface:
Prof. Dr. Ahmad Syafii Maarif
C. Holland Taylor

Epilogue:
KH. A. Mustofa Bisri



This project has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement no. 312827