



KADIR HAS UNIVERSITY
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**FROM PIXELS TO PERCEPTIONS: DECODING THE
NARRATIVE AND EMOTIONAL POWER OF DAESH'S
IMAGEFARE**

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IMAGEFARE**

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APPROVAL

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In addition, I acknowledge that any claim of irregularity that may arise in relation to this work will result in a disciplinary action in accordance with the university legislation.

Şeyma Nur Genç

17/10/2023



To my family...

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FROM PIXELS TO PERCEPTIONS: DECODING THE NARRATIVE AND EMOTIONAL POWER OF DAESH'S IMAGEFARE

ABSTRACT

Images are the weapons of today's conflicts since image warfare is the main battlefield of contemporary wars. Using images as a war strategy has been embraced mainly by actors whose traditional physical military capabilities are insufficient. Daesh is one of the most significant political actors that regards the weaponization of images as a crucial component of its overall war strategy. This research focuses on the use of narrative and emotional elements in Daesh's visual propaganda. The images from the English-language magazines *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, which are crucial to Daesh's propaganda, were selected as the object of analysis. The main goal is to identify the most recurring themes, emotions, and the relationship between the two in terms of usage intensity. For this, the themes and emotions in each image are coded. As a result, the most recurring themes and emotions in the images used in *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* magazines and the relationship between the intensity of the two elements were revealed.

Keywords: Daesh, Terrorism, Image war, Visual propaganda, Emotions

PİKSELLERDEN ALGIYA: DAEŞ'İN İMAJ SAVAŞININ ANLATISAL VE DUYGUSAL GÜCÜNÜ ÇÖZMEK

ÖZET

Günümüz savaşlarının ana cephesi imaj savaşları, silahları ise görüntülerdir. Görüntüleri bir savaş stratejisi olarak kullanmak, en çok da fiziksel askeri kapasitesi yetersiz olan aktörler tarafından benimsenmiştir. Daeş görüntüleri silah olarak kullanmayı genel savaş stratejisinin önemli bir bileşeni olarak gören önemli siyasi aktörlerden biridir. Bu araştırma, Daeş'in görsel propagandasında anlatısal ve duygusal unsurların kullanımına odaklanmaktadır. Daeş'in propaganda sisteminde merkezi öneme sahip olan *Dabiq* ve *Rumiyah* dergilerinde yer alan görüntüler analiz birimi olarak seçilmiştir. Araştırmanın temel amacı, söz konusu görüntülerdeki kullanım yoğunluğu açısından en çok tekrar eden temaları, duyguları ve ikisi arasındaki ilişkiyi tespit etmektir. Bunun için her görseldeki temalar ve duygular kodlanmıştır. Sonuç olarak *Dabiq* ve *Rumiyah* dergilerinde kullanılan görsellerde en çok tekrar eden temalar, duygular ve iki unsurun kullanım yoğunluğu arasındaki ilişki ortaya koyulmuştur.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Daeş, Terörizm, İmaj savaşları, Görsel propaganda, Duygu

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CTC	Combating Terrorism Center
IS	Islamic State
US	the United States
WWI	World War I



1. INTRODUCTION

Terrorism is a theater and played for its spectacle, as Jenkins unveiled in 1974. However, a novel characteristic emerges whereby the performance is carried out by images alongside to military confrontation. The fact that technological advancements have made political actors independent of media outlets and editors resulted in issues as the inability to regulate the dissemination of information. As such, this situation has turned information into a weapon in the hands of everyone, regardless of its form. The fact that today's communication language is visual has led to the weaponization of images. This new characteristic of war, image warfare, is welcomed especially by terrorist organizations disadvantaged in terms of military capacity against states. Not surprisingly, Daesh, depicted as a propaganda machine in the literature, qualifies as the most outstanding example of this phenomenon.

The emergence of Daesh, a Salafi jihadist terrorist organization, can be traced to the establishment of "Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad," founded by Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi in Afghanistan. However, power vacuums in the region's countries led by the occupation of Iraq after 9/11 allowed the organization to emerge as an active actor. As the organization gained ground within the country, it took the name Al-Qaeda in Iraq. The group was famous for suicide attacks against the US forces and triggering conflict between Shias and Sunnis in Iraq (Yarchi 2019, 56). After the death of Al-Zarqawi in 2006 by a US airstrike, the organization was named "Islamic State in Iraq" by Abu Ayyub Al-Masri, the organization's new leader. However, the group consolidated its dominance through the territories it had taken, taking advantage of the void in power led by the Syrian civil war. The organization changed its name to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria in 2013. However, the most striking development was the organization's announcement of the establishment of the caliphate after taking over the regions in northern Iraq in 2014. Thus, by fulfilling the promise of Allah, the group positioned itself in a different place from all jihadist organizations and changed its name to Islamic State (IS) under the leadership of Al-Baghdadi (Yarchi 2019, 56).

Alongside the military confrontation, Daesh invests in the battlefield in the communication realm to reach as broad an audience as possible from the earliest stages of the organization. Information warfare, which started with an audio tape of Zarqawi in 2004, released by the information department, continued with a series of execution videos released in the same year (Whiteside 2016, 7). As Daesh gained strength, its capacity in the media battlefield also increased considerably. Daesh did not differ from other terrorist groups in valuing the fight over perceptions. However, its effort far exceeded its predecessors in quality and quantity. The organization, which has had a media department since its early days, has worked as a media organization with its social media channels, magazines published in different languages, video productions, weekly photo reports, etc. The most striking media output in its complex propaganda system is visuals. With the development of technology, the primary language of our time has been visuality. Thus, Daesh has built its media strategy according to the reality of its time. It has effectively utilized images' narrative and emotional power in this primary field of combat, image warfare.

Terrorism is already a communicative process by essence, but what kind of transformations has the changed language of this communication led to? How much of the visual narratives did Daesh imitate from its ancestors, and how much innovation did it bring while using this visual language? Did it prioritize conveying the message or emotion in the images it used? Do these messages and emotions differ based on the target audience? Is there a correlation between these narrative and emotional elements used in visuals? What kind of relationship is there, if any? This thesis will investigate the relationship between narrative and emotional components in Daesh's visual propaganda. Even if it loses its dominance on the field, Daesh's visual strategy seems worth examining, as it puts forth unprecedented visual propaganda. Besides, with the acceptance that the main battlefield is image warfare, this extensive visual propaganda sets an example for other terrorist organizations. For this reason, the thesis provides both retrospective and future-focused analysis.

It is vital to note the following to state the questions of this study more clearly. The study mainly explores how Daesh employs visuals in its propaganda to fight image warfare. The main messages, metaphors, symbols, and emotions in using visuals will be

investigated. Which narratives and emotions are most frequently used as weapons will be examined. Then, the relationship between the use of the narrative and the emotional elements of the visuals will be revealed. These questions will be investigated through the visuals in English magazines, *Dabiq and Rumiyah*, one of the most central outputs of Daesh's complex propaganda. To sum up, the central research question of the thesis is: What is the relationship between the narrative and emotional power Daesh employs to succeed in image warfare?

Searching for the answers to the questions will contribute to different parts of the literature. Visual security studies is a relatively recent literature. The quantity of these studies is even lower when the topic is restricted to terrorism. There are theoretical studies explaining the use of visuality in terrorism research and providing historical examples. Yet very few studies systematically focus on specific propaganda within a solid theoretical framework. Thus, the literature gap does not match the realities of our age. This deficiency is primarily due to the approach within the literature that images cannot be considered a subject of analysis on their own.

In contrast, the other part of the literature accepts images as a unit of analysis and asserts that the number of these analyzes should be increased. This thesis relies closer on the second approach within the literature. However, regarding visual images as the unit of analysis, this thesis does not exclude provided subtitles with images. In addition, few studies on reading and analyzing emotions in visuals exist. This situation has been studied in a limited way within the scope of terrorism, as stated in the literature review part of the thesis.

Accordingly, this research mainly aims to contribute to the "visual security studies" and "emotions in international relations" sections of the literature. In addition, due to the case selection in the research, thesis also aimed to contribute to the field of "jihadist visual communication". As mentioned above, we choose Daesh as a case study to examine this topic since it has recently presented the most comprehensive and all-encompassing visual propaganda ever. Furthermore, although Daesh has lost power on the field, its media propaganda continues social media. However, for the analysis in this study, visuals in two English magazines, namely *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, which can be considered one of the most

successful outputs of Daesh's propaganda, were chosen. These images will be examined in relation to the image warfare concept, which was introduced to the literature by Roger (2010). In its simplest form, image warfare refers to using visual images instead of conventional military weaponry and the conduct of battles over images. Roger argues that the development of technological devices such as the internet and smartphones, thus the change in communication systems, has resulted in a revolutionary change in the nature of conflicts as the transformation of mobilization of images to the weaponization of images. For this reason, image warfare as a concept has a very enabling role in placing Daesh's visual propaganda in a context. In this thesis, the concept of image warfare is determined to investigate Daesh's unique visual propaganda to highlight the significance of the images to Daesh's maintenance against great state powers.

The primary power Daesh refers to in its relative propaganda is the power of visuals to convey a message and emotion in a fast, easy, and striking way. To analyze the use of narrative and emotional elements in Daesh's visual propaganda, the study's unit of analysis is determined as the visual images in the magazines of *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*. Fifteen issues of *Dabiq* magazine were published by Daesh's media wing, Al-Hayat, between July 2014 and July 2016. *Dabiq* is the name of a village in northern Syria, and the reason why it is chosen as the name of the magazine is a so-called hadith that an army coming out of *Dabiq* will start a war against the Romans. Thus, it bases its legitimization on religious references. Since the magazine's publication date range coincides with Daesh's heydays, it is rich in visual content. With the seizure of *Dabiq* by Turkish military forces in 2016, the magazine was replaced by another, *Rumiyah*. *Rumiyah* also takes its legalization from a religious reference. In another hadith, it is claimed that the Prophet Muhammad heralds that the Muslims would conquer Constantinople and Rome. Thirteen issues of the journal were published from September 2016 to September 2017. According to the field's reality, *Rumiyah* magazine is not as rich in visual content as *Dabiq*. In addition to utilizing less imagery overall, publications also frequently reused visuals. However, it has an essential place in the visual propaganda of Daesh.

Semiotic analysis has been chosen as a method for analyzing visuals in terms of the message it aims to convey. In basic terms, semiotic analysis refers to decoding icons and symbols that represent a narrative, which means broader the image by separating the

layers of the image. In short, it is a way of looking deeper into the elements that shape the audience's perception. The framework offered by the Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) (2006) will be used to implement this analysis. The report comprises 5 primary, 22 secondary, up to 100 tertiary motifs. This study is the most comprehensive one that gives jihadist visual motifs with cultural references. For this reason, it is selected as a framework to measure the narrative power of images. Images will take a value of 1 or 0 according to the presence of symbols and themes specified in this framework.

Parrott's classification of emotions (2001) will be taken as a framework to measure the emotional intensity of the images. In his classification, Parrott presents six primary emotions, three positive and three negative. In this study, 26 secondary and 136 tertiary emotions are identified and raised in a tree structure. Primary emotions are chosen as the foundation for this research because it would be challenging to identify secondary and tertiary emotions, which would produce subjective outcomes. In this framework provided by Parrott, images will be categorized as 1 or 0 values based on the existence of emotions. Thus, a mathematical value will be obtained to compare the emotional density of the images. Finally, the values for each image will be compared to observe the relationship between its narrative and emotional intensity.

This thesis consists of five chapters. After this introductory part, Chapter 2 provides a literature review with the historical background of the study. First, the history of the relationship between visuality and politics has been explained with studies from the literature. Then, the changing character of the war and the emergence of the concept of image warfare are discussed. After the relationship between terrorism and image warfare is given, Daesh's visual propaganda and studies on the subject are explicitly discussed. For the purpose of the study, this section explains the narrative and emotional vectors of an image. Also, it clarifies how Daesh use them to appeal to both in-group and out-group audiences.

In Chapter 3, first, the study methodology is given place. The frameworks employed to analyze the images' narrative and emotional strength are explained in detail. The visuals within the study's scope and exempted from the study are indicated with their reasons. The role of subtitles and context while the coding process is given place. Additionally,

the steps in comparing narrative and emotional components are explained in detail. The results obtained after the applied methodology and the analysis of these results are given in Chapter 4. Thus, this section will present and discuss the symbol and emotion distributions used in *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*. After determining the percentage of the images that have been effectively weaponized in both respects, a qualitative analysis will be made on a selected portion. Finally, in the last chapter the results, arguments and limitations of the study will be summarized.

In brief, this thesis attempts to reveal the correlation between the narrative and emotional components of images in the official magazines of Daesh, namely *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, by employing a two-stage coding method and a qualitative semiotic method. As a result of this research, the messages and emotions Daesh prioritizes the most and their interaction with one another will be revealed.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter covers the theoretical framework and the body of literature that serve as the study's foundation. For this purpose, it first demonstrates the relationship between politics and visuality, then the development of the image warfare concept, and finally, its connection to terrorism, particularly Daesh.

2.1 Politics and Visuality

“Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak. However, there is also another sense in which seeing comes before words. It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world...” Such was John Berger's statement made in 1972. Accordingly, a vision we use as the primary sense to perceive events is also at the core of understanding political events. Messaris and Abraham argue that viewers generally tend to believe in what they see by overlooking the artificial structure of images (2001, 216). Thus, visuals are regarded as a more reliable source of information than verbal or textual. Because viewing experience and image allow us to witness events of our time and the past (Bleiker 2018, 2), in that regard, visuals become more effective in shaping the perceptions of the viewers about political events. Corrigan-Brown argues that one of the crucial features of the image is that it can legitimize and delegitimize different political actors, thus can change the course of politics (2012, 133). In other words, images and politics have a dual relationship in that images reflect and affect political events.

Furthermore, beyond legitimizing or delegitimizing an event, images mobilize people in line with the shaped perception. In this case, the power of images to trigger emotions plays an enabling role. Accordingly, Bleiker argues that images work by provoking the viewer's emotions, which words cannot convey (2015, 876). Thus, it provides interactive communication by making people emotionally part of the event. For instance, Iyer and Oldmeadow claim that “sympathy” prompts people to help the disadvantaged people within the case (2006, 638). By giving the reactions to images from Abu Ghraib, O'loughlin reveals that images presenting personalized stories trigger empathy that the

spectator matches themselves with the person suffering (2011, 87). So, images can make people take action.

For this reason, political actors have always used images as propaganda tools to provoke different emotions. Yet, it became more advanced with mass media technology since it provided an opportunity to reach larger populations. Roger points out that the arms race began before the Second World War, as did the art race (2010, 41-42). For instance, Gautam illustrates (2012) how similarly Britain and Germany used visual imagery in war posters primarily to create the image of the enemy. Furthermore, Ryan (2012) demonstrates how the Navy and Coast Guard have successfully convinced women in the US to serve their country untraditionally via the female recruitment posters presenting it as patriotism. Also, in the involvement period in Vietnam, the US systematically used Marine Corps recruiting posters with prevailing masculine military imagery to encourage enlistments. In response to the decline in recruitment, they also released the Ask a Marine series, indicating pride in the nation and the corps (Sax 2004, 55). However, Hammond (2007) argues that propaganda had an important but secondary role in the war (cited by Roger 2010, 41).

From a different perspective, Baker argues that posters were the primary medium in which national identity was represented in a pictorial form during World War I (1990, 24). The US and Britain used many war posters as visual rhetoric describing national identities as patriotic national self and others' enemy (25). In other words, posters served as a constructing tool for collective identities during WWI and hence had a significant role in the nation-building process in print media. As James claims, "posters nationalized, mobilized and modernized civilian populations" (2009, 2). Therefore, posters can be considered visual outputs of print capitalism, which Anderson claims to play an essential role in constructing today's nation-state (1983) even though he is criticized for ignoring the function of visual culture in creating modern nation-state imagery (Mi 2005, 327).

Although printed media served as propaganda and identity-constructing tools mainly used by the states, technological developments led to the liberation of images. Television, which is in everyone's home, has made it challenging to suppress image circulation (Dauphinee 2018, p. 31). In the age of television, Rusi asserts that control of images,

which is crucial to the exercise of power, is now more in the hands of independent media actors than state decision-makers (1988, 38). In other words, technological developments have removed the power of controlling images from the state's monopoly. This power shift caused America to lose the Vietnam War, which was the first to be televised, by shaping the perceptions of the masses while making them witness the war (Mandelbaum 1982, 157).

Furthermore, the development of 24-hour real-time news has changed the nature of media dominated by the state and pluralized choices for audiences, primarily by establishing non-Western channels such as Al-Jazeera (Roger 2013, 12). However, it was still a hierarchical media model dominated by a few media actors, and there was a gap between the producer and the receiver of the content. Nevertheless, by the 21st century, media has lost its centralized and hierarchical structure with the spread of technological developments. Roger describes this change as a shift from the mass-media systems, central propaganda, to rhizomatic-media systems, which precludes the controllability of images (5). The division between sender and receiver has disappeared with digital media, and the global media landscape has become multipolar (Kaempf 2018, 99). Also, the direction of the messages became uncertain either. In other words, there is no clear-cut definition of either sender or receiver in the digital age. Briefly, media globalization led to “multi-vocal, multi-directional and multi-layered media flows” reaching the masses (Thussu 2007, cited by Thussu 2012, 437). Furthermore, the prevalence of technological advances has brought visuality to the fore as a language in the digital age.

In particular, digitalization and introducing smart devices led to the visualization of societies and advanced means of producing an image in the realm of visuality. W. J. T. Mitchell coined this change a “visual turn” or “pictorial turn” (1986). He paid attention to the role of visuality by arguing that the problem of the twenty-first century is the “problem of the image” since we live in a society of spectacle and a global culture of images (2018, 230). In other words, although visuality is generally dismissed as poor practice, it is the language of contemporary popular culture since we are circulated with digital screens like computers, telephones, and televisions today (138). Accordingly, interest in visual culture increases within international relations as the number of academic publications rise, showing the significance of the “aesthetic turn” in

international relations (Roger 2010, 20). Thus, studying visibility within international relations provides comprehensive sources of theorization on the roots, outcomes, and dynamics of warfare (Kirkpatrick 2017, 14) as the comprehensive framework it offers to other topics within international relations. Thus, the study of visibility is becoming a primary component of international relations' core subject, security.

In that regard, Roger links the rhizomatic character of media to the weaponization of images since once an image is released, it is not easy to control or delete it. Furthermore, content production is now possible from anywhere at any time (2013, 17). Thus, the shift to rhizomatic media systems has taken the power of the image and propaganda away from the state and the dominant media actors. Currently, the power of an image is in everyone's hands and is almost impossible to be checked. Especially with the rise of the Internet and smartphones, each political actor can use images as weapons, as Yarchi claims, without depending on journalists or editors (2019, 54). This enables different actors to find a place in the field of international security. In other words, individuals and groups are essential; at least, the states are in international communication. Thus, liberation of images via technological advancements have led to severe changes in the field of international security.

2.2 The Changing Nature of Wars: Image War

I have given the four principal features of the visual images above: shaping people's perspectives, (de)legitimizing political events, triggering emotions, and mobilizing people. Given these, it is clear that images can either create security or challenge it. Considering the progressive nature of this power in the digitized world, it is evident that international relations must respond to these radical changes. Accordingly, an emerging trend within "security studies" literature claims that studying visibility is necessary for security studies (Williams 2003; Bleiker and Kay 2007; Andersen and Vuori 2018) since we now live in a "visual age" (Kaempf 2018, 99) particularly, "the age of images" (Williams 2003). In that regard, Visual Security Studies is emerging as a multidisciplinary subfield of (critical) Security Studies (Anderson and Vuori 2018, 1). Accordingly, Swimelar argues that the discipline is especially after 9/11, international

security scholars have been analyzing the role of visibility within international relations “through media spectacle, contested visual representations, or visual securitization” visibility is studied in three different ways within security studies: “visibility as modality,” in which visuals serve as a representation of security, “as practice,” visibility creates or challenges the security, “as method” a way of investigating security (2018, 179). In fact, all of these concepts are intricately linked. Visibility as a modality refers to employing visual elements to communicate the security situation, whereas visibility as a practice refers to using visuals directly as tools to generate or threaten security, and the visibility as a method is the analysis of security situations through visuals. At this stage, one can claim that the concept of “visibility as practice” is very strongly tied to the concept of the “image war”. To elaborate, the use of images as a weapon actually forms the basis of image war, a notion coined by Roger (2010), referring to utilization of images as weapons instead of physical traditional weapons. However, as attempted in this study, analyzing visuals used in the image war refers to employing visibility as a method. Accordingly, in this study the practice of Daesh image war through an analysis of images used in their publications namely, *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* will be investigated.

In the first place, technological developments play a critical role in the growing importance of visibility in international security studies. Since, they both ensured the uncontrolled spread of images regardless of time and place and revolutionized the nature of the conflict. Accordingly, Roger terms this radical change in the nature of conflicts as “image warfare” (2010). He argues that technological developments have transformed the “mobilization of images” into the “weaponization of images” through the rhizomatic nature of communication systems. In other words, although images were mobilized in mass media times, they were still under control. However, especially with the spread of the internet and smartphones, images have gone out of the control of the top-down media mechanism and turned into a weapon at everyone's disposal. Roger claims that this has caused a shift from “techno-war” to “image warfare” in which images became much more powerful than bullets and bombs that can become weapons, as in 9/11 (131). Thus, today's conflicts are image wars, in which actors fight over perceptions using visuals as a weapon instead of traditional military means. In other words, today's wars are fought and won not only with the superiority of technological military power, but through visual

power embedded in images (Swimelar 2018, 179). To elaborate, the power of visual images that lie in their ability to communicate a narrative simplistically and evoke emotional responses in the audience makes them an effective weapon in today's fight over perceptions wars. Thus, narrative and emotional power enables visual images to influence audience perceptions and behavior in a desired manner. As a result, the uncontrollability of visual images, which have the power to shape people's perceptions and bring people into action, turns them into a weapon.

According to Yarchi, two other developments changed the character of conflicts: the shift towards asymmetric conflicts, states fighting non-state actors, and the extensive media coverage that conflicts receive (2019, 55). Accordingly, Ayalon et al. (2016) argue that media coverage creates “reverse asymmetry” in these conflicts in favor of non-state actors. In other words, media coverage has the effect of reversing the course of the conflict. Since today’s conflicts are the battles of ideas along with arms, as Rabasa (2011) indicates (cited by Yarchi 2019, 55). Accordingly, “image” is the key to the justification of ideas and beliefs within our age's communication realm. Thus, the “image war” is the main battleground of today’s conflicts, even though they are fought on many fronts, such as “military, diplomatic, media, and legal” (55).

In short, images are the primary weapons in contemporary warfare in which political actors fight over them (Michalski and Gow 2008, 1) to promote and justify their ideas and actions. Therefore, the role of images has become primary in contemporary conflicts instead of being secondary as a propaganda tool in the 20th century. Accordingly, political actors employ the power of images to succeed in today’s conflicts. Especially, non-state actors, who do not have as much power as states in the field, resort to the images’ power. In particular, terrorist organizations, whose main concern is to convey the message and legitimize their ideas, take advantage of the change in the characteristics of conflicts by using images as a strategic tool to achieve their political goals.

2.3 The Message, Propaganda, and Terrorism

Terrorism contains a communicative process in its nature. Terrorist organizations aim to make their political goals and voices heard and underline grievances. Ronald Crelinsten (1987) argues that “insurgent terrorism is a form of communication and symbolic way of shouting ‘look at me!’ or ‘listen to me!’” (cited by Archetti 2013, 35). Thus, a message is one of the core components of terrorism in almost every definition. Schmid and Gaaf (1982) indicate that “without communication, there can be no terrorism” (cited by Matusitz 2013, 37). Hence, communication plays a critical role at various stages for terrorist groups as an organization. Correspondingly, Mahmood, and Jetter claim that unless information flows from a terrorist organization to the target audience, it fails to accomplish the primary purposes of terrorism: conveying a message, spreading fear, and recruiting followers (2020, 128). Thus, terrorist organizations fulfill their primary objectives and ensure their continuity through communication.

Furthermore, communication is crucial for terrorist groups to establish their organizational identity since “identities are formed in communication situations” (White 2008; cited by Archetti 2013, 63). Accordingly, organizational identity forms a cognitive and emotional foundation for people to build meaningful associations with the organization” (Hatch & Schulz 2000, 16). To put it differently, communication is vital in the case of establishing the organizational identity of terrorist groups to create a meaningful relationship with the organization. Besides, White (2008) claims that “identity becomes a point of reference from which information can be processed, evaluated” (cited by Archetti 2013, 68). In other words, constructed identities play a central role in how people interpret and respond to an event when they encounter it. Thus, the organizational identity constructed via communication draws the framework of people’s perceptions within the group. In sum, the power of shaping people’s perceptions via constructed identities makes communication tools effective propaganda instruments for terrorist groups.

Two primary forms of communication by terrorist organizations are violence and propaganda. Accordingly, terrorist acts have always carried particular messages to

achieve political goals by spreading fear to the public and their opponents. In that regard, the relationship between the message and terrorism is regarded as “propaganda of the deed” by the 19th-century anarchists and, more recently, as a theatre by Brian Jenkins (Tugwell 1986, 5). Terrorist organizations plan their activities so that the message is most striking and reaches as many audiences as possible. Herein, the media play a crucial role. Terrorist groups, to publicize their activities, benefit from various media outlets. Even before the emergence of mass media, propaganda of deeds had a significant place on the agenda of terrorist groups via several means. In this regard, Nacos points out that terrorists used to strike in crowded places before the print media and spread their activities by word of mouth (2006, 1). Later, they used print media tools to disseminate their activities with the spread of print media. More recently, we have an amplification of the deed presented via globalized electronic media (O’Shaughnessy and Baines 2009, 228).

On the other hand, propaganda by other means is as old as propaganda by deed, despite the tendency in the literature to explain the connection between terrorism and communication over the use of violence. It is critically crucial for terrorist organizations to promote their motives and objectives. Accordingly, Johann Most was one of the 19th-century German leading anarchists underlining the importance of propaganda by word for terrorist organizations. Most argue that it is essential for the world to hear their purpose and position by directly hearing them out themselves and encouraging fellow radicals to do so (Nacos 2016, 52). In other words, Most underlined the importance of telling the organization’s story regarding the legitimacy of their causes. From the 19th century, radical anarchist movements influenced by Most to the 20th-century anarchists in Italy, the Weather Underground in America, the Red Brigades in Italy, the Baader-Meinhof group, and the Red Army Faction (RAF) in Germany attached great importance to propaganda by word (59). Hence, terrorist organizations have always aimed to shape their audiences’ perceptions, emotions, and behaviors through their messages by strategically using written, verbal, and visual narratives. In this direction, a terrorist organization created its alternative media by using brochures, newspapers, posters, and flyers and asked its followers to spread them to as many people as possible (52- 60). The propaganda part of communication is mainly carried out through alternative media since terrorists’ messages mediated by traditional media are checked, edited, and censored most

of the time. Besides, terrorist organizations benefited traditional media by making their propaganda more accessible through mainstream media of their time. Primarily, through electronic media, such as radio, television, and the internet, they found the chance to promote their propaganda to a broader audience at once. One of the leading actors, Osama bin Laden, asked Western journalists to interview him to disseminate his messages to friends and foes (Nacos 2016, 62). Accordingly, bin Laden tapes, hostage execution videos, and suicide video wills are aired by Al- Jazeera (Roger 2010, 14).

In other respects, terrorism has always been a newsworthy story. Therefore, it has always found a place in the media. Accordingly, the relationship between terrorism and the media is regarded as a symbiotic relationship (Camphuijsen and Vissers 2012; Pfeiffer 2012; Elshimi 2018). To explain, just as terrorists provide an engaging story for the media, the media also serves terrorists' purposes by publicizing their deeds and messages. In that regard, Thatcher argued that the media provides terrorist organizations with the "oxygen of publicity" (Lopez 2016, 65) thus suggesting not paying attention to any terrorist activities (Camphuijsen and Vissers 2012, 14). However, the media did not apply such an approach. Barnhurst explains this with the ongoing competition in the media system (20). Media outlets compete over covering the news first to attract a large audience as much as possible (Glüpker, cited by Camphuijsen and Vissers 2012, p. 20). Accordingly, Laqueur claims that terrorism and the media are best friends (1976, 104) while Schmid describes this relationship as a co-partnership (1989, 553). However, Grasz argues that although traditional media transmits the messages of terrorist organizations, whether the message is portrayed sympathetically or not depends on the media. (2021, 5). In other words, although journalists delivered the messages of terrorist organizations, they had the power to supervise, edit, and censor them. Hence, the messages are not always conveyed precisely in the sense that the terrorist groups intended. For this reason, the propaganda part of communication is mainly used through alternative media since terrorists' messages mediated by traditional media are checked, edited, and censored most of the time.

Nevertheless, as the Internet is becoming the primary means of communication, terrorist groups have had the opportunity to deliver their messages to the masses at a low cost,

without the boundaries of time and space. In other words, the ways and capacities of terrorists to communicate with their intended audiences have changed over time. This opportunity strengthens the hands of terrorist groups against states in today's conflicts, where the media has determined the main battlefield. The unfiltered, timeless, and spaceless way that everyone can spread its messages to the targeted audience makes the fight over images the main front of the conflict. Although all narratives, written and verbal, are employed in these image wars, it is especially significant to focus on the visual side since we live in a visual age.

2.4 Image War and Terrorism

Since today's conflicts are a battle of ideas in which actors compete for their image, it is crucial to convey the actors' messages to as many people as possible without mediators. As indicated above, although terrorist organizations have always had alternative media to disseminate their messages as they wish to, the number of people they could reach with their means was small. Thus, to make their voices heard on a larger scale, they were still dependent on traditional media, namely journalists and editors. However, ICT (information and communication technologies) allows terrorists to express themselves to the masses as they wish at a meager cost, from anywhere and anytime. Besides, Ganor argues that the absence of a legal commitment creates a reverse asymmetry for non-state actors (cited by Ayalon et al. 2016, 10). Thus, terrorist organizations, which are not bound by international law, promote their ideologies through opportunities provided by the new media in a more effective and unchecked way.

Images primarily take audiences' attention more than texts (Macdonald and Lorenzo-Dus 2021, 367). Thus, it draws the audience into the content. In addition to living in a visual age, visual contents are used effectively by terrorist organizations as visual information is more accessible to process and more memorable than verbal contents alone, referred to as "picture superiority effect" (367). Furthermore, visual images facilitate understanding of situations as shortcuts, evoke emotion, and set in motion. Thus, combining the narration and emotional power of visual images reinforces the audience's radicalization process (Baele et al. 2019, 4). Also, as stated in page 7, identities are

constructed through communication. Accordingly, visual images also play an essential role in radicalization dynamics by setting the boundaries of in-group and out-group identities. In brief, terrorist groups construct their own reality with visual images, an essential part of an extensive propaganda network. Thus, they present the reality they construct a whole frame of mind.

In this direction, terrorist organizations put a considerable effort into the image war front and use all the tools at their disposal, as written, verbal, and visual message contents. Accordingly, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, leader of Al-Qaeda, stated, “More than half of the battle is taking place on the battlefield of the media. We are in a media race for hearts and minds” (cited by Schmid 2020, 565). He further argues that propaganda war must go hand in hand with armed battle (cited by Payne 2009, 110). Thus Al-Qaeda, successfully embracing image war (Roger 2010, 12), has been using all its tools to battle ideas through social media platforms, their English magazine, Inspire, etc. It combines audio-visual and written messages which transcend both literacy and technology barriers (cited by Al-Tabaa 2013, 10). Accordingly, O’Shaughnessy and Baines state that there has never been a terrorist group that spoke in such a way before. Now, it is not just about terrorism but also its visual celebration (2009, 228). In contrast, the visual part is given less attention than the written and verbal parts of “image war” literature. However, this situation contradicts the realities of the age. With advancing technology, visual communication in society has come to the fore, and terrorist organizations prominently invest in their visual communication strategy. Thus, the image war is mainly carried out on visual images. Daesh, without a doubt, is the most recent example of mastery in image war, as evidenced by their exceptional performance in this field.

2.5 Visual Propaganda of Daesh

Since its founding, Daesh has been fighting the world with its messages besides the military war with all the means at its disposal to exist in the global public arena and popularize its war. Thus, it has been attached with great importance to the image front of the war from the beginning. From a historical perspective, Daesh utilized several propaganda tools used by previous terrorist groups. Furthermore, it uses the same

contents and narratives that its predecessors used. Accordingly, Ingram describes Daesh as more strategic plagiarists than geniuses (cited by Baele 2019, 6). In other words, in terms of the content, Daesh does not offer unique narratives not used by its predecessors. However, they strategically integrate what they have taken from the past into the global language of the 21st century, which is visual, and use all technological opportunities to present it to the global public. In this regard, Daesh sets an outstanding example in terms of quality and quantity in its propaganda strategy.

In this regard, technological advancements, thus the changing nature of war, are undeniably the most significant factors. Technological development has allowed Daesh to take its propaganda to a new level, especially with a visual celebration. At this point, the most critical share is the organization's use of social media with a command of the global cultural language. The fact that it could present its materials directly to the public and ensure that they were in constant circulation strengthened the dominance of the media over the public, primarily due to its rhizomatic structure. As a result, Daesh is one of the most visible actors in image war that exploits the asymmetrical power its nature offers. Daesh's entire existence can be attributed to its success on today's main battlefield, image war, using the primary opportunities of a new century. Relatedly, Difraoui states that the global Jihadist movement might not exist without audio-visual propaganda to unify sympathizers with a shared identity (cited by Difraoui and Hahn 2018, 229). Accordingly, it was due to Daesh's success in image war that, even when it lost power on the field, it was still able to organize home-grown terrorist activities throughout the world. It accomplishes all these objectives through high-quality propaganda tools it keeps in continuous circulation through the Internet, specifically social media and smartphones. At that point, the use of global visual language plays the leading role in the success of its propaganda strategy. Thus, Daesh takes advantage of all these possibilities to create its reality in a different field in this era of the visual. To put it differently, Daesh has invested heavily in its visual propaganda to win the victory on the image war front, which is the main result of technological advancements and the involvement of non-state actors in a war.

Daesh has produced a comprehensive propaganda system with specific differences depending on the target audience, considering the language and content. Thus, it offers a

comprehensive belief system to attract people to its just cause and imagined state. Accordingly, Baele states that Daesh's propaganda is unique in its ability to systematically present the most relevant information using innovative methods without leaving unused fields of activity (1-2). Thus, they regard Daesh's propaganda system as an outstanding example of "full-spectrum propaganda" since it implements propaganda aimed at fulfilling its full potential rather than simply using a specific format, specific target audience, and aiming at a particular level of objective (Baele et al. 2019). Furthermore, this multifaceted propaganda network aims to seep into all areas of daily life. Thus, trying not to leave any space for alternative thinking. Since one of the necessary conditions for the success of propaganda is repetition, it offers various materials such as newspapers, official magazines, posters, audio-visual videos, cartoons, e-games for children, etc. Thus, propaganda aims to occupy even leisure time—accordingly, propaganda texts are substituted by music, games, or films (Baele and Winter 2019, 189). In other words, Daesh invests heavily in capturing the audience from all angles possible within this image war.

At this point, the manipulative power of visual imagery, which is the most effective way of capturing the audience, is especially prioritized within the propaganda system to succeed in image war. Although the emphasis is generally placed on beheading videos about Daesh's visual propaganda within the literature, it is much more a far-reaching strategy that strengthens its position in today's conflict, image war. Relatedly, Daesh uses images strategically and wisely to convey its legitimization and narratives and to influence potential supporters (Hassan and Azman 2020, 8). Thus, Daesh strategically weaponizes visual images to succeed in this fight over perceptions. In other words, scholars have been primarily interested in beheading videos and using gruesome images as part of Daesh's visual propaganda (Friis 2015; Auchter 2018; Cottee 2022; Koch 2018), yet the Daesh project goes far beyond descriptions of youth culture, barbarism, or an irrational obsession with violence (Anfinson 2021, 722). Hence, Daesh's visual propaganda is way complex and comprehensive to be reduced to violence pornography. Daesh makes visual preferences rationally by considering global trends, agendas, target audiences, and objectives.

Furthermore, visual choices are made consistently considering the platform on which the material will be released. In other words, images are produced to serve different specific aims. Thus, Daesh's visual strategy is based on calculations and target choices rather than a motiveless, random distribution of images. Thus, the comparison of visuals released by Daesh, based on the platform on which the materials were released, can be studied in future research if sufficient data is collected.

Daesh's visual propaganda, which is tried to be carried out systematically, producing contents and materials in a regular and planned way, considering the developments in the field, covering all areas of life, has multifaceted purposes. However, in basic terms, Difraoui and Hahn explain the goals of jihadist organizations at three levels. First, to recruit followers and gain physical, financial, and material support for jihadist causes. At the second level, to position itself as the sole authority over Islamic concepts and symbols. Finally, by expounding Islamic concepts and symbols to establish the doctrine of salvation, they are the only ones ascending to paradise (2018, 235). As stated, Daesh, like other international terrorist groups, aims to accomplish a variety of goals through the battle it is fighting. However, in this study, we aim to get to the root of the subject and understand the relationship between the intensity of the messages and the emotions in the images used to achieve these goals. As a result, taking into account the studies in literature¹, we chose to examine the visual images distributed in *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, Daesh's English-language publications in two main categories: narrative and emotional.

¹ E.g., Stephane J. Baele, Katharine A. Boyd, and Travis G. Coan, "Lethal images: Analyzing extremist visual propaganda from ISIS and beyond." *Journal of Global Security Studies* 5, no. 4 (2020): 634-657. Roland Bleiker, David Campbell, Emma Hutchison, and Xzarina Nicholson, "The visual dehumanisation of refugees." *Australian journal of political science* 48, no. 4 (2013): 398-416. Lene Hansen, "Theorizing the image for security studies: Visual securitization and the Muhammad cartoon crisis." *European journal of international relations* 17, no. 1 (2011): 51-74. Roland Bleiker, ed. *Visual global politics*. Routledge, 2018. Combating Terrorism Center, "The Islamic Imagery Project: Visual motifs in jihadi internet propaganda." (2006). Helena Flam and Nicole Doerr, "Visuals and emotions in social movements." In *Methods of Exploring Emotions*, 249-259. Routledge, 2015.

2.5.1 Narrative power of images

As stated above, images are distributed via magazines, daily news briefs, videos, photo reports, newsletters, and other similar mediums (Tracker 2018, cited by Winkler et al. 2021, 1324). The organization's publications especially online magazines, that Daesh gives the most weight along with videos, use high-quality photographs, satellite images, photographic reports, infographics, and other images. Herein, one can claim that the organization's use of such a variety of visuals is to benefit from both the narrative and emotional power of images. In the first place, visuals make narratives easier to comprehend because they eliminate language barriers. Hence, broadens narratives' global outreach.

Furthermore, the visualization of the information allows them to be easily understood by the viewer more concisely the target. Herein, infographics can be given as the best example, which Daesh gives a considerable place in its visual strategy, especially in *Rumiyah*. As its name suggests, infographics are the visual representation of information, which is one of the most effective ways to convey audience information in a concise and easy-to-understand way. In addition, infographics also serve to present information more convincingly, as if it were a fact. Thus, as the previous study shows, Daesh attempts to present itself as a credible source of information via infographics (Winkler et al. 2018).

This applies to each kind of visual output since images are more credible and convincing than their textual counterparts. The Daesh narration targets two different categories: Muslim and non-Muslim audience. Relatedly, they primarily employ historical and religious references in images when targeting a Muslim audience while relying mainly on political considerations when targeting a non-Muslim audience. Thus, they attempt to persuade the Muslim audience of their claim to be a legitimate global caliphate while also attempting to establish their significance as a remarkably powerful political force to non-Muslim audiences. For instance, the raised index finger is one of the most used icons in images targeting Muslims. The Raised index finger, a symbol of *Tawheed* in Islam, refers to "the unity and uniqueness of God." Accordingly, in the images used by Daesh, this symbol is extensively used to signify the victory of the faith. In this context, a Muslim

audience that familiar with Islamic culture infers from the message when they see this symbol in the photos. Thus, *Tawheed* symbol is giving the message that they will be among the winners as long as they are on the side of Daesh. Relatedly, the meanings these symbols directly point to have already been established; when the viewer first sees the first image, their interpretation that comes to mind is developed independently of Daesh. Some scholars also claims that Daesh has created its imagery and subculture by reinterpreting and hijacking Islamic concepts and symbols (Difraoui and Hahn 2018, 235).

In another eye-catching photo, pr soldiers are caressing cats². The combatting figures immediately recall brutality and wildness, the caring of a cat demonstrates emotionality and mercy. Additionally, cats are known to be the favorite animals of Prophet Muhammed. Thus, the information itself is a part of collective memory for Muslims. However, the symbolization of cats is entirely new in Islamic history (234). While Daesh employs the religious symbols, it also generated and rebuilt new symbols with referral to Islamic history to convey messages effectively. In other words, Islamic symbols provide a straightforward narration tool for Daesh to convey its message, especially to the Muslim audience.

The military uniform worn by Daesh soldiers can be cited as an example for references in images targeting non-Muslims. The Daesh paramilitaries wearing military uniforms are depicted as skilled state troops in the visual propaganda of the group, particularly in the photos used in *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*³. In other words, the use of military uniforms as a symbol resonates with the idea of the state-like structure of Daesh in the audience. Also, uniform conveys a meaning of professionalism and power. As a result, images involve symbolic information as metaphors so that the viewer can easily understand the message's implication or essence (Baele et al. 2019, 3). Thus, using and manipulating symbols to spread its narratives are one of Daesh's most frequently used methods in its

² See *Dabiq* no.15 9

³ See *Dabiq* no.1 3, *Dabiq* no.4 16, *Dabiq* no.6 10, *Rumiyah* no.4 10, *Rumiyah* no.7 24, *Rumiyah* no.13 20 and etc.

visual propaganda. The symbolism is usually too rich, and the shots are too carefully composed (Robinson and Dauber 2019, 81).

Therefore, symbols are a crucial component of Daesh's visual propaganda, and they strategically benefit from the propagation and perception of historical events in the public's consciousness (Simons 2018, 328). They also use political symbols to assert themselves as a significant political power to non-Muslims. In other words, the organization employs cultural and political symbols to articulate a message according to the targeted audience, such as raised *Tawheed* finger, black flag, Quran, weapons, blood, etc. Thus, symbols and metaphors are often used to take advantage of the narrative power of the image by Daesh. In summary, images serve as a shortcut to the narrative by directly containing information, including various symbols and themes, or simply describing the event. Daesh utilized the photos and graphics to form a solid narration with symbols and emotions. For these reasons, analyzing symbols and themes in visual propaganda enables a deeper understanding of the intended narrative and audience. Thus, one can claim that the frequency of symbols and themes can provide an indication to measure the narrative power of an image. Terrorist groups extensively utilized photos and graphics as a part of their propaganda techniques. Islamist groups have particular expertise in this field as well. One of the first and most comprehensive cataloging of the repetitive motifs and symbols utilized by jihadist propagandists is reported by the Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) (2006). In the report, one-hundred recurring themes, what they call motifs, are identified through analysis of Islamic jihadi imagery used in violent jihadi websites, literature, and propaganda (1). Furthermore, each motif's cultural, historical, and experiential basis is set forth. In other words, the study covers the ground that provides legitimacy for radical Islamist groups. The study still represents the most thorough analysis of jihadi visual patterns with their explanation.

2.5.2 Emotional power of images

The visual power capture, provoke, and represent an emotion is much denser than its textual parts. Since images have the power to leave a strong impression on people. Relatedly, Lene Hansen has studied why visual materials are often subject to censorship

and harsh warnings but not texts of the same events (2014, cited by Bleiker 2018, 195). The emotional power of visuals makes images more dangerous than words. Thus, images' power is highly associated with their emotional dimension (Bleiker 2018, 195). This being the case, Daesh utilized the emotional power of images, just as their predecessors did. However, one can claim they carried further point than predecessor groups. Daesh dramatically exploits the emotional power of images to contribute to the radicalization process and, more generally, to gain public support.

In their essence, images allow the audience to witness events or moments. Daesh, similarly, enables the viewer to witness situations where the images are emotionalized by using various techniques and producing fictional images. Thus, manipulating symbols and framing makes the audience feel before they even think (Hassan & Azman 2020). In this way, how the targeted audience will interpret what they see is shaped even without witnessing an event. Hence, the audience cannot interpret the narrative in an alternative way. Relatedly, as the images evoke a sense of emotion in the viewer, it prompts people to act, thus becoming an issue of political stance. Consequently, Daesh harnesses the emotional potency of visual imagery as a political instrument to succeed in today's image war, effectively leveraging its potential for various strategic ends.

Within the literature, the centrality of emotions to visual security is generally based on the prominent role of emotions in the establishment of self and other poles (Sasley 2011; Buitrago 2018; Alloa 2020). As Fierke argues, people perceive themselves as a part of a collective identity through emotions and make decisions considering norms and morals based on that particular identity (2012, 93; Hadith 2013; cited by Buitrago 2018, 306). In other words, group identity, which establishes specific rules and principles that members operate in accordance with, is greatly influenced by the emotional impact of images. So, triggered individual emotions are one of the driving forces behind different collective political actions. Thus, individual emotions become collective and political phenomena (Bleiker & Hutchison 2014; cited by Schlag 2018, 210). In short, as the self and the other are delineated, a vast realm of meaning is generated, which exercises a binding force over the group's constituents. Thus, the emotional power of visuals in the identity construction process sets the base for the vision of international actors. Furthermore, emotion-laden visual content allows members to join an international Jihadi community on equal footing

with other cultures and communities in the digital world (233). This strengthens the group's identity and dedication to its violent and intolerant interpretation of Islam. Consequently, in-group and out-group identity is determined as a primary methodological category to analyze its relations to narratives in analyzing visual propaganda of Daesh by the studies within the literature (e.g., Baele et al. 2020).

Accordingly, Daesh's visual strategy heavily relies on its visual content's emotional impact to construct and reinforce group identity. In Daesh's visual strategy, self-other demarcation is the most apparent notion that all narratives are built. The group aims to simplify, just as all the jihadist materials, complex religious content to rhetorical dichotomies of "us" (the "real" Muslims) vs. "them" (everyone else), with no room for compromise (Difraoui and Hahn 2018, 235). In line with this, the emotions desired in images vary according to the targeted audience, just as in narratives. While positive emotions are conveyed in images targeting real Muslims defined by Daesh, negative emotions are conveyed in images targeting non-Muslims. For instance, a sense of solidarity is often depicted in photographs where the target audience is Muslims. Accordingly, in the photographs used in the magazines, sections of the communal lives of the Daesh fighters were featured frequently: where they fought together, won victory together, had fast-breaking together, and worshiped together. Thus, they show the strength of the bond between members and the importance of group identity to promote unity and a sense of belonging between the followers. Additionally, "mercy" is another emotion Daesh frequently uses to address Muslims. For instance, they use photographs of fighters, civilians, and children injured or killed by the enemy to evoke the feeling of mercy. In other words, the visuals in which the enemy victimizes Muslims and innocents evoke a feeling of mercy among the audience. Accordingly, by building empathy in the potential audience, they gain support for their cause and even evoke a desire to take action.

On the other hand, fear is one of the most frequently used emotions in images addressing non-Muslim audiences. Fearful expressions on the faces of the hostages before their execution and all photos containing violent acts can be shown as an example. For instance, destroyed city photos are also used quite frequently in magazines by Daesh. In other words, numerous photographs were circulated showing the brutal destruction of

Daesh's enemies and their cities, primarily to spread fear to non-Muslim audiences. At this point, this emotion can be read as the emotion that the image's composition evokes in the audience, as well as the facial expressions of the people in the image. Additionally, "desperation" is another emotion employed by Daesh to target non-Muslim audiences. The portraits of the world leaders are the best examples for this case. These portraits, which evoke the feeling of despair on their faces, are sometimes presented as black-and-white images, trying to convey the emotion more intensely. Thus, for non-Muslims, Daesh is portrayed as potent organization whose enemies are desperate against it. In short, in-group and out-group identity sets a fundamental distinction in the utilization of the emotional power of images within magazines. While positive emotions are addressing Muslims to convince them they are the legitimate caliphate of the modern century, negatives are addressing non-Muslims to show them they could not stand against the power of the Daesh.

In addition to transforming individual emotions into political phenomena by establishing in-out group identity through images, individual emotions also become political phenomena via emotionalization. Emotionalization is one of the central notions within visual security literature that plays a critical role within the image-security-emotions nexus. Emotionalization refers to increased emotional content or intensity using specific methods such as emotional framing and symbols (Buitrago 2018, 306). In other words, image content is made emotional or more emotional with various techniques and symbols. The objective is to elicit an emotional response in the viewer and forge a stronger connection between the viewer and the message being presented. At this point, one of the most practiced methods for emotionalization by Daesh is producing imaginary images (see Figure 2.1). To elaborate, in addition to capturing the actual events, they also create fictionalized versions of the events to portray the emotions they wish to convey. Besides, Daesh also uses professional techniques such as lighting and adjusting the camera angle to convey emotion to the audience as a real-like atmosphere. In other words, emotionalization impacts perceptions and interpretations by bringing the cognitive and emotional spheres closer together (Buitrago 2010, 143). Thus, visuals provide cinematic storytelling tools for the ones mobilizing images systematically.

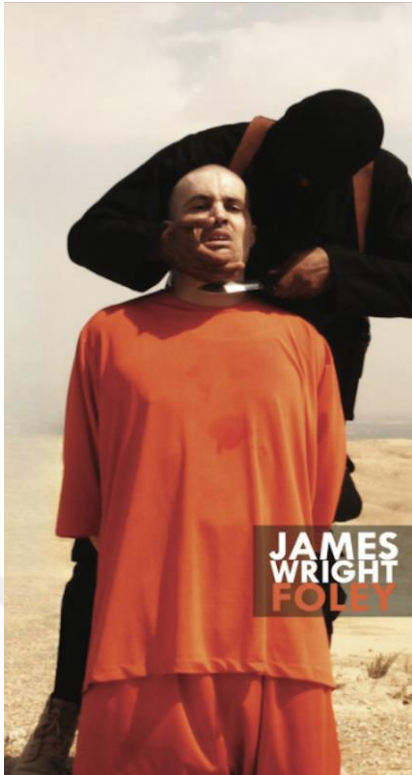


Figure 2.1 *Dabiq* no.3 p. 4

Notes: Fictionalized beheading photographs are the common examples of emotionalization Daesh uses. In the image, apart from the symbolic meanings carried by the black and orange dressings, all attention is drawn to the victim due to the contrast of colors. Especially the expression of fear on the victim's face deepens the viewer's sense of fear.

Previous studies within the literature have shown that Daesh strategically put into use of iconic symbols to establish and strengthen its group identity (Dauber 2014; Difraoui and Hahn 2018; Simons 2018;), gruesome images to shock and to intimidate people (Lakomy 2019; Owen, Noble, and Speed 2017; Venkatesh et al. 2020; Baele, Boyd and Can 2019), children images to arouse sympathy and to engender a sense of prospective longevity for the group (Al Ibrahim 2020; Bloom, Horgan and Winter 2016), “propaganda of the deed” images to incite revolution (Winkler et al. 2021; Bolt 2020). Additionally, other studies are made on specific concepts in Daesh's visual propaganda, such as statehood, Damanhoury 2019; Anfonson 2021), and martyrdom (Winkler & Pieslak 2018; Miotto 2022). Besides analyzing the symbols, narratives, and themes portrayed in the images, an analysis of Daesh's visual propaganda's static and dynamic structures was conducted by coding images used in groups' official magazines *Dabiq*, *Rumiyah*, and *Al-Naba'* (Winkler et al. 2021).

Accordingly, some researches involved mixed method approach analyzing intertextuality that incorporated textual analysis alongside visual examination (Md Yusof, Muhammad 2019; Wignell et al. 2018; Winkler et al. 2018; El Damanhoury 2018; Wignell, Tan, O'Halloran 2017) while others treated the visuals as autonomous materials subjected to analysis in which the scholars encode components and narratives the scholars encode components and narratives, consistent with cross coders (Movahed, Niknejad 2019; Baele et al. 2020; Winkler et al. 2021; Impara 2018; McMinimy et al. 2021). Concerning the available research, Baele et al.'s study represents the most comprehensive review of Daesh's visual content to date (2020). In their study, the authors manually coded images found in Daesh's official magazines, *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, based on a protocol they developed. This involved categorizing the images according to criteria, including the type of individuals depicted (in-group or out-group), an image's connection to an existing narrative (categorical: linked to one of the identified narratives), the emotional strength of the image (gruesome or not), and the presence of specific symbols (9). However, while their study has a robust methodological framework, the list of symbols presented is limited and emotional readings of the images are not sufficiently included. Furthermore, the research recognizes the narrative and emotional components of the visuals as two distinct elements rather than addressing how they relate to one another.

On the contrary, this thesis analyzes the correlation between the narrative and emotional intensity of visual materials in *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*. In this direction, we will manually score the motifs in the images. Second, we will address the primary emotion that visuals convey. Thus, the correlation between the intensity of the symbols and the emotions will be analyzed. For the coding of the images, we will rely on the study "The Islamic Imagery Project: Visual Motifs in Jihadi Internet Propaganda," the first and still the most comprehensive cataloging of symbols used by violent jihadi groups, published by the Combating Terrorism Center (2006). Thus, the images will be categorized using a broader range of symbols and themes compared with other studies⁴.

The emotion classification proposed by Parrott (2001) will be applied to address the emotions in images. Parrott provides a tree-structure classification of emotions under six

⁴ See, the methodology section for further details on symbols and themes.

major, with twenty-six secondary and one hundred thirty-six tertiary emotions. In other words, the levels of emotions do not separate them from each other; on the contrary, the primary emotions include the secondary and tertiary emotions. In this study, it was decided to encode primary emotions for each visual. In addition, the images will be coded in two stages according to the emotion aimed to be evoked in the in-group and out-group audience. Thus, the emotions that Daesh aims to evoke in both in-group and out-group audiences will be revealed. Finally, the relationship between the frequency of motifs and the emotions will be examined. By examining the correlation between narrative and emotional intensity, we aim to propose a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the impact these visuals may have on viewers.



3. SEEING BEYOND PIXELS

The theoretical framework and the body of literature that serve as the study's foundation are covered in the earlier chapters. This chapter's first section explains the methods used to evaluate Daesh's visual propaganda. The rationale behind the frameworks utilized for assessment, as well as the data that we chose to rely on, are discussed. The second section of the chapter presents the findings we reached by the following methodology and their analysis.

3.1 Methodology

This thesis aims to analyze the visual propaganda of Daesh, who managed image warfare most effectively, based on the argument that the image front is the most crucial front in today's conflicts. Accordingly, the images in *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* magazines, the most significant outputs of Daesh's visual propaganda, are chosen as the examination subject for the analysis. Advertising images, promoting other propaganda products of the group, and infographics, are excluded from the scope of the study. Advertising images frequently include an excessive number of images in a single piece. Consequently, they have an excess of symbols and emotional expressions. Thus, they are excluded from the study since they are considered outliers. Infographics, on the other hand, are not included in the study's scope since their heavily text-based structure made them inappropriate for the study's purpose.

Images in *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* were selected as the study's unit of analysis since they reveal the organization's global visual propaganda that appeals to a worldwide audience. Both magazines' issues are obtained from jihadology.net, an academic website with the most extensive collection of jihadi content. While *Dabiq* magazine has 15 issues published between 2014-2016, *Rumiyah* magazine has 13 issues published between 2016-2017. According to specified criteria 1012 images in *Dabiq* and 363 images in *Rumiyah* are subjected to analysis.

Since this thesis seeks to investigate how Daesh uses visuals as weapons in its image warfare, examining the narrative and emotional aspects, which are the core components

of images, is crucial for the analysis. To elaborate, what makes images weapons is their power to deliver a message and elicit an emotion. Images can both establish a world of meaning and mobilize the audience according to the norms of this perspective. For this reason, what weaponizes an image as a propaganda tool is the messages and emotions it carries. Therefore, images require a two-stage analysis involving an examination of their narrative and emotional elements and an exploration of the relationship between these factors. To be used as an effective weapon in consciously designed propaganda, images are expected to have high narrative and emotional values. Accordingly, we developed a methodology to assess the narrative and emotional loads of images in *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* to comprehend how Daesh weaponizes images in its image warfare.

To measure the narrative loads of the images, the report published by the Combating Terrorism Center (2006) is used as a template. According to the study, while communicating a narrative, deeply held beliefs and intersubjective understandings in society help the audience cognitively frame the messages. (Brachman & Boudali 2006, 6). For this purpose, symbols, icons, colors, and themes resonating with collective memories and preexisting meanings are employed in the visuals. Accordingly, the study argues that jihadi organizations developed their unique genre of Internet-based Islamic iconography based on collective memory and belief references (5). In the study, images from online jihadi websites were examined, and commonly recurring themes, motifs as they name, were identified. The findings consist of a hundred motifs presented under five main and twenty-two subheadings (see Table 3.1). In addition, a reading of all motifs regarding Islamic history, culture, language, and experience is provided with a glossary entry. Thus, the report also includes instructions on how to evaluate the narrative load of images.

Twenty-two sub-motifs are chosen as the criterion in this thesis, where the report is used as a template to evaluate the message intensity of images. This is because coding by five primary motifs would produce a broad result, and coding by 100 different motifs would be computationally challenging and unsuitable for analysis due to its excessive intricacy. Accordingly, each image has an absolute value scored according to the presence or background, religious beliefs, and even their particular set of experiences all have an absence of the twenty-two motifs. Thus, images are categorized as 1 or 0 values based on

Table 3.1 The Islamic Imagery Project: Visual Motifs in Jihadi Internet Propaganda by *Combating Terrorism Center*

No.	Main Motif	Secondary Motif	Tertiary Motif
1.	Nature	Sun	Sun, figurative. Sun, literal
		Moon	Moon, general. White Crescent. White Crescent in Sky. Green Crescent
		Water	Water Drop. Body of Water in Background. Waterfall. Water, figurative
		Flora	Flowers, general. White Rose. Red Rose/Red Flowers. Palm Tree. Greenery, general
		Landscapes	Flowers, general. White Rose. Red Rose/Red Flowers. Palm Tree. Greenery, general
		Animals	Mountains, literal. Mountains, figurative. Sandy Desert. Rocky Desert
2.	Geography, Political Symbols, and States	Weather	Weather and Storms
		Globe/World	Globe, literal. Globe, figurative
		States	States, general. State with Battle Flag. Afghanistan. Iraq. Italy. Kashmir. Kuwait. Palestine. Saudi Arabia
		Flags, Currencies & Foreign Symbols	White Flag – al-liwaa. Green Flag, general. Green Flag, Saudi. Flags Combined. American Flag. Stars and Stripes. American Flag with Star of David. Star of David. British Flag. Foreign Currency. Inverted Currency
		Holy Places	Holy Places, general. Dome of the Rock. Al-Aqsa Mosque. Kaaba
3.	People	Significant Events	Important Defeats. Important Victories
		Political Leaders	Jihadi Religious/Strategic Leaders. Jihadi Operational Leaders. Jihadi Leader: Osama bin Laden. Jihadi Leader: Khattab. Non-Muslim Political Leaders. Muslim Political Leaders
		Martyrs	Martyr, general. Martyr in Frame. Martyr with Country. Martyrs, 9/11. Martyr with Koran and Weapons. Female Martyr
		Women	Women
		Children	Children
4.	Weapons, Warfare & Afterlife	The Afterlife	The Path of the Koran. Paradise, the Heavenly Garden. Hell for Enemies of Jihad
		The Black Flag	The Black Flag
		Weapons	Weapon, pre-modern. Weapon, modern. Weapon combination. Crossed Weapons
		Blood	Bloody Sword. Blood, Martyr & State. Blood on Desert. Bloody Text

5.	Other	Colors	Black. Blue. Green. Red. White
		Hands	Raised Hands, Prayer. Bloody Hands. Clasped Hands, Unity. Hand of God

the existence of motifs. In this way, the narrative load of each image is measured (see Figure 3.1). While visuals are taken as a means of expression in themselves, yet subtitles are considered when coding images with subtitles. For instance, in specific corpse images, the group identity of the deceased may not be apparent at first glance. However, if the person is identified as a martyr in the subtitle, the martyr category is coded. Therefore, the textual information is not excluded when interpreting images but incorporated into the interpretation.

For the second phase of the study, which is to measure the emotional load of the images, Parrott's classification of emotions (2001) is taken as a framework. He classifies emotions into different levels based on their intensities. This classification consists of six primary, twenty-six secondary, and one hundred thirty-six tertiary emotions (see Table 3.2). Parrott lists identified emotions in a tree-structured categorization. In other words, secondary and tertiary emotions are included in the sub-scope of primary emotions. He argues that there is a special connection between the emotions on different levels. Tertiary emotions are the least intense, whereas primary emotions are the most intense emotions. It has also been employed as a methodological framework in other studies since it offers a clear list of emotions. For instance, to identify the complex characteristics of emotions in written texts (Abbasi and Beltiukov 2020), to decode emotional textual contents in the form of tweets (Mondal and Gokhale 2021), or to examine hierarchical emotions of daily experiences (Yıldırım 2019). Accordingly, in this thesis, Parrott's classification of emotions is chosen as the framework for the assessment of the emotional load of images. Based on the classification's tree structure, any groupings can be selected to analyze the images. For this study, the category of primary emotions is chosen for analysis. The main reason for this is to reach a measurable objective result.

Unlike motifs, which include concrete representations as symbols, the emotions in the images are abstract, therefore, it is not easy to detect them. Instead of seeing the emotion in the image, the audience perceives it. Therefore, a person's cultural impact on how they perceive emotions. In this direction, since defining and categorizing secondary and

Table 3.2 Parrott's Classification of Emotions (2001)

No.	Main Emotion	Secondary Emotion	Tertiary Emotion
1.	Love	Affection	Adoration. Affection. Love. Fondness. Liking. Attraction. Caring. Tenderness. Compassion. Sentimentality
		Lust	Arousal. Desire. Lust. Passion. Infatuation
		Longing	Longing
2.	Joy	Cheerfulness	Amusement. Bliss. Gaiety. Glee. Jolliness. Joviality. Joy. Delight. Enjoyment. Gladness. Happiness. Jubilation. Elation. Satisfaction. Ecstasy. Euphoria
		Zest	Enthusiasm. Zeal. Excitement. Thrill. Exhilaration
		Contentment	Contentment. Pleasure
		Pride	Pride. Triumph
		Optimism	Eagerness. Hope. Optimism
		Enthrallment	Enthrallment. Rapture
		Relief	Relief
3.	Surprise	Surprise	Amazement. Surprise. Astonishment
4.	Anger	Irritation	Aggravation. Agitation. Annoyance. Grouchy. Grumpy. Crosspatch.
		Exasperation	Exasperation. Frustration
		Rage	Anger. Outrage. Fury. Wrath. Hostility. Ferocity. Bitter. Hatred. Scorn. Spite. Vengefulness. Dislike. Resentment
		Disgust	Disgust. Revulsion. Contempt
		Envy	Envy. Jealousy
		Torment	Torment
		5.	Sadness
Sadness	Depression. Despair. Gloom. Glumness. Unhappy. Grief. Sorrow. Woe. Misery. Melancholy		
Disappointment	Dismay. Disappointment. Displeasure		
Shame	Guilt. Regret. Remorse		
Neglect	Alienation. Defeatism. Dejection. Embarrassment. Homesickness. Humiliation. Insecurity. Insult. Isolation. Loneliness. Rejection		
Sympathy	Pity. Mono no aware. Sympathy		
6.	Fear	Horror	Alarm. Shock. Fear. Fright. Horror. Terror. Panic. Hysteria. Mortification
		Nervousness	Anxiety. Suspense. Uneasiness. Apprehension. Worry. Distress. Dread

tertiary emotions would produce more subjective results, coding is done by primary emotions. However, secondary and tertiary emotions were not disregarded while coding. If any emotion from the secondary or tertiary emotions is seen in an image, the primary emotion is coded. In the coding of the images, the same way is followed as the coding of the motifs. Images are encoded as 1 or 0 values based on the existence of emotions.

Furthermore, we also implemented a cross-coding procedure to avoid subjectivity. To elaborate, to ensure the coding results are consistent and objective in the case of emotions, 10% of images, which corresponds to 102 images for *Dabiq* and 37 images for *Rumiyah*, are coded by another person following the coding protocol. At the end of the process, consistency of 97.87% for *Dabiq* and 97.75% for *Rumiyah* is achieved.

In addition, before coding the images, we assumed they were propaganda weapons targeting only out-group members. However, while coding the images, we realized that the images also target in-group members and carry different emotional loads for them. In other words, the emotions the organization aims to convey to two audiences when using an image differ. For this reason, the emotion encoding process is done in two stages for in-group and out-group audiences. First, the emotion intended to be evoked in the in-group audience is coded, and then the emotion intended to be evoked in the out-group audience is coded. Thus, we discovered the specific emotions the organization prioritizes for both the in-group and the out-group audience. (for image coding sample, see Figure 3.1).

The narrative and emotional loads of images are compared as follows. First, the means of the motifs and emotions coded separately for *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* magazines are calculated. This provided a benchmark by which we could evaluate each image's narrative and emotion load individually. Second, images are classified as above or below the mean for motifs and emotions. In a strategically designed visual propaganda where the images are weaponized, we expected images to be highly loaded regarding both vectors. For this reason, we compared these two values for each image. Hence, the images are categorized as those with motif and emotion above mean, those with motif and emotion below mean,



Figure 3.1 Rumiya no.2 p.18

Coded Motifs

Significant Events	Black Flag	Weapons	Colors
1	1	1	1

Coded Emotions

Joy (in-group)	Anger (out-group)	Fear (out-group)
1	1	1

those with motif above mean with emotion below mean, and those with motif below mean with emotion above mean. Thus, we have reached the ratio of images that we can claim to be intentionally designed by Daesh, remaining on the threshold regarding motif and emotion. However, we needed a further interpretation of these values to reveal the most used motifs and emotions and the relationship between them, if any, in highly loaded images. Since the number of images is too large for such an analysis (288 for *Dabiq* & 78 for *Rumiya*), we decided to investigate the top images by ranking them according to the sum of their motif and emotion values. In fact, our objective was to reach the top 10 image lists for both magazines. However, as there were other images with the total value of the 10th image, we included all images with the same value of the 10th image in our

ranking. As a result, we reached 14 images for *Dabiq* and 16 images for *Dabiq*. Thus, we discovered the motif and emotion distribution in these images, which are the most loaded in both respects. Finally, we examined the top 5 images for both magazines to see the specific usage of motifs and emotions and to explore their relationship, if any.

Lastly, we present a sample Excel table in the appendix to demonstrate how we calculated and classified images. Our Excel sheets include each image itself, its type, size, subtitle information, position on the page, motif and emotion coding separately, the total number of emotions and motifs, calculation of total mean, and, accordingly, the image status according to the threshold. However, for the sake of simplifying and showing the thesis's analytical structure, we included representative Excel schedules of the top 14 images of *Dabiq* and the top 16 images of *Rumiyah* in the appendix.

3.2 Assessing Daesh's Visual Style

We present and discuss the assessment results in the remaining parts, highlighting the key motifs and emotions in Daesh's image warfare. Through an analysis of their relationship, we uncover how Daesh strategically weaponized images in its campaigns. Subsequently, we seek to apprehend the explanations behind the outcomes that we reached.

3.2.1 Narrative loads of images: findings and discussion

First, the ratio of themes used in *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* magazines are demonstrated in Figure 3.2 respectively. In both magazines, the most used motif is colors. Besides, the rate is almost the same as 18% for *Dabiq* and 17.8% for *Rumiyah* magazine. Herein, most of the coding in the color category refers to the color black. According to the report, the importance of black in Islamic history stems from the color of the prophet's flag and its association with the Abbasid Caliphate. It also indicates religious devotion and piety in Sunni and Shia traditions (2006, 105). For this reason, the use of the color black can be read as a reference to both religious piety and desire for the times of the caliphate. Also, the color red is one of the most coded colors. Red is used to give both positive and

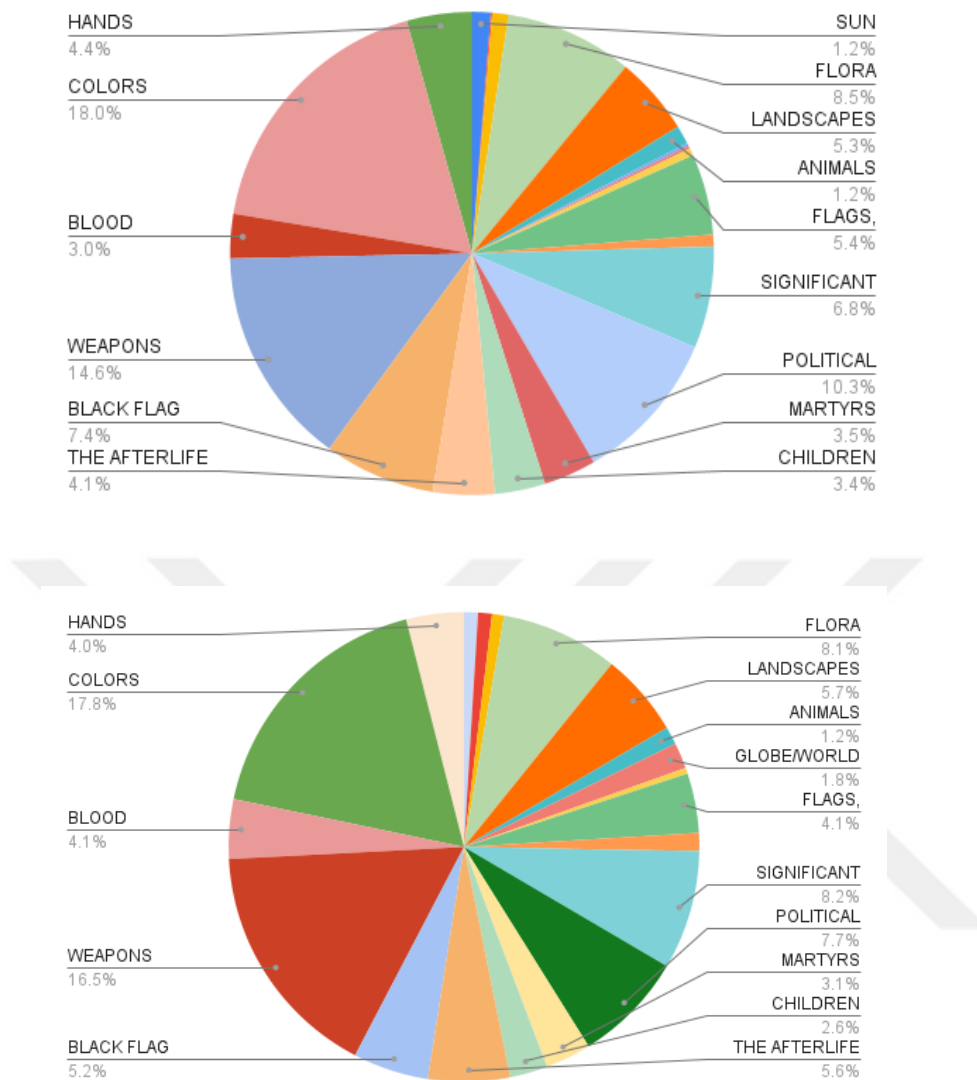


Figure 3.2 Distribution of Motifs in *Dabiq* & *Rumiya* respectively

negative messages. To illustrate, it is widely used in visuals that emphasize how enemies victimize Muslims and in armed conflicts to show the success of Daesh in the field and to give the message of how everywhere has turned into hell for its enemies, especially in the form of blood and flames. Furthermore, one can claim that white is another frequently used color. It is generally used to emphasize purity and piety. It is generally used as a background in photographs of martyrs or as a white shroud they wrapped in to emphasize the message of their purity and peace about their afterlife (see Figure 3.3).

Daesh widely employs colors in its image warfare for several reasons. In some cases, to directly denote a specific concept, to legitimize its brand identity, to attract the audience's attention, and to reveal some emotions. In other words, symbols and motifs are not independent of emotions. In addition to conveying a narrative, they also elicit emotion in the audience. For instance, as the color red can convey specific narratives, red is frequently connected with rage, just as white and blue are associated with peace and hope in the images. As a result, it must be noted that in this study, we take motifs to assess the narrative load of images, yet they also play an essential role in conveying emotions. Furthermore, color usage as a means of message carrying can be seen in different visual contexts in *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*. The given samples portray a limited selection.

The second most used motif for both magazines is weapons, with 14.6% in *Dabiq* and 16.53% in *Rumiyah*. They employ both pre-modern and modern weaponry images. Pre-modern weapons frequently evoke memories of the earliest Islamic eras, establishing a link to those eras and making claims to be their continuation. Herein, one can claim that the knives of Daesh's executioners in the images of executing captured prisoners are the most common example of its specific use in both magazines (see Figure 3.4). Furthermore, modern weaponry is generally used to signify power and superiority. In both magazines, Daesh members are presented not as terrorists but as fully equipped and uniformed state soldiers. At this point, high-tech weapons are used as an indicator of power projection as a political narrative. Besides, Daesh combines weapons with other symbols, such as the Holy Quran, in fictional images to highlight the necessity of jihad as God's will. Therefore, using weapons as a symbol conveys the political narrative by associating it with religious justifications.

The third most used motif in *Dabiq* is "the political leaders" by 10.3%; in *Rumiyah*, it is the "significant events" by 8.20 %. The leaders of the globe are typically portrayed in the photos as the root of the issue plaguing the Muslim world. While coding the political leader category, no distinction was made between non-Muslim leaders and jihadi leaders. But the message in the use of these two is quite different from each other. If we look at the usage rates in the magazine, it will be seen that the rate of world leaders who are non-Muslim or Muslim but regarded as non-Muslim by the organization is much higher than



Figure 3.3 *Dabiq* no.8 p.6



Figure 3.4 *Rumiyah* no.5 p.14

jihadi leaders. In the images leaders are typically portrayed as the root cause of problems experienced by the Muslim world. Additionally, they are also presented as irresponsible leaders of their people in compositions with other images. For example, after giving an execution photo of an American journalist, a photo of Obama in good spirits, playing golf, is presented. In addition, photographs of Muslim world leaders shaking hands with Western leaders and having fun together are included to highlight their cooperation (see Figure 3.5). Apart from these, there are also images with the faces of the leaders in question being sullen. Such images depict how Daesh brought the world's most powerful countries to their knees and left them helpless. Images of the jihadist leader are also included, although relatively less frequently. The best example of this is the photographs of Osama bin Laden. With these visuals, Daesh associates itself with the broader jihadist ideology and its achievements as 9/11 and seeks to strengthen its legitimacy.

Similar to the category for political leaders, significant events, the third-most frequently used theme in *Rumiyah* magazine, is likewise utilized to express two opposing messages. The first of these is the essential defeats in which enemies victimize Muslims. Examples include images of ruined cities and the newborns who died due to American bombardment, as previously described. In other words, as Baele et al. describe, they present the narrative of “Muslims as victims of their enemies’ evil actions” (2019, 12). Present the adversaries as the core cause of the issues Muslims suffer, and as such, they must be eliminated. As a result, the audience is persuaded that they are at war and must launch a counterattack. In addition, there are also images showing essential victories. While these may be victories achieved by Daesh on the ground, they may also be visuals



Figure 3.5 *Dabiq* no.14 p.31



Figure 3.6 *Dabiq* no.9 p.15

of the historical successes of the jihadi movements, which Daesh portrays itself as an extension of, such as the collapse of the twin towers (see Figure 3.6). The message in these images underlines how successful Daesh is in jihad and how helpless their enemies are against Daesh's power. In simple terms, they serve as a form of power display. Thus, with these visuals, trust and confidence in jihad are strengthened, and the audience is encouraged to participate.

“Flora” is the fourth-most often used motif in *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* magazines, with rates that are almost the same as 8.5% and 8.1%, respectively. In the coding of the images, the most prevailing elements were the greenery and palm trees. The report states that both are generally used as non-specific and background elements (2001, 24). Yet, palm trees have also been used as geographical markers. In addition, there are also fictional images where trees in general and greenery are employed on purpose. Examples include scenes where meetings with a circular seating arrangement are surrounded by trees and images of martyrs with greenery and trees in the background. In such images, greenery refers to the concept of the Islamic Garden paradise (*Al-Firdaus*), which is the destination after leading a purposeful life. In addition, trees were sometimes combined with photographs of children with guns and reciting the Quran (see Figure 3.7). In these images, trees have a stronger connection to the future and symbolize the organization's dynamic, multigenerational structure.

According to our data, a black flag for *Dabiq*, with 7.4%, and political figures for *Rumiyah* with 7.65% are the fifth-most prevalent patterns. The images of the political figures are exactly as they appear in *Dabiq*, as we have already mentioned. The black flag



Figure 3.7 *Dabiq* no.12 p.35



Figure 3.8 *Dabiq* no.6 p.6

is not used in any specific way in the photographs or graphics. It has been used in a variety of contexts in photographs and graphics. To illustrate, soldiers wave it during celebrations after a victory, hoisted to the banner in city centers, in reunion photographs with other groups declaring allegiance or carried by military units while being trained (see Figure 3.8). Since the black flag was the flag of jihad used during the time of the Prophet, it is used by many jihadist organizations as well as by Daesh. The flag used by Daesh also includes the seal of the Prophet. Thus, the black flag also carries a claim of succession by associating itself with the Prophet. Furthermore, the symbolization of the black flag also stems from the so-called apocalyptic hadith claiming that Mahdi will arrive at the end of the time with an army carrying a black banner (Mahood and Rane 2017, 26). In the hadith, Muslims are advised to be on the army's side in any circumstance as follows: "If you see the Black Banners coming from Khorasan go to them immediately, even if you must crawl over ice, because indeed amongst them is the Caliph, Al Mahdi" [Nar-rated on authority of Ibn Majah, Al-Hakim, Ahmad] (cited by Mahood and Rane 2017, 26). Based on this hadith, Daesh also positions itself as the savior of Muslims and encourage Muslims to participate. In addition to being a religious symbol, the black flag also has a political meaning. The black flag is a part of Daesh's brand identity. Daesh is the only terrorist organization that has so far claimed statehood. Like modern nation-states, there are many images where the flag is raised over city centers, military bases, or used as a background for political leaders. Thus, Daesh employs black flag in its visual propaganda as a symbol of its authority and legitimacy.



Figure 3.9 *Dabiq* no.9 p.26

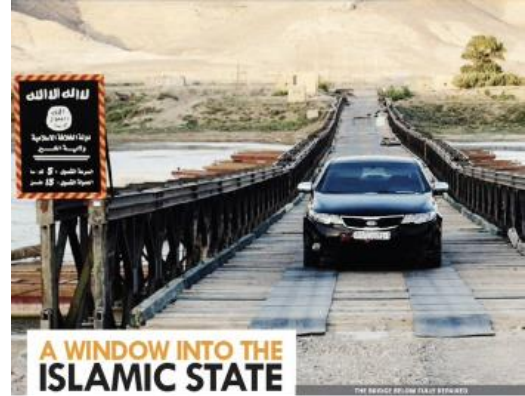


Figure 3.10 *Dabiq* no.4 p.27

In fact, it is crucial to note that there is another type of set of images through which Daesh conveys the narrative of Daesh as a state. There are various images in which Daesh portrays itself as a social state across both *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*. Images of doctors treating their patients under the title “Healthcare in Khilafah” or visuals announcing completed road construction and bridge repairs can be given as examples (see Figure 3.9 and Figure 3.10). There are also images that demonstrate Sharia rules being implemented and justice being served, such as an image of a person subjected to the hadd punishment (amputation of hands) for theft⁵ (see Figure 3.11). In short, Daesh employs narratives emphasizing its legitimacy and statehood character in its visual propaganda. However, the report we took as a template to assess the narrative load of images, conducted in 2006, lacks the motif corresponding to the statehood claim of Daesh. The main reason for this deficiency is that Daesh is the first terrorist organization to claim statehood. For this reason, it is significant to note that Daesh as a state is one of the frequently used narratives, even though such a result does not arise from our coding.

Furthermore, the landscape category is not as coded as other motifs but has a certain percentage for both magazines, as 5.3% for *Dabiq* and 5.7% for *Rumiyah*. As stated in the report, although sandy deserts are not very common in the Middle East geographically, the desert image immediately recalls the Arab-Islamic regions due to the

⁵ See *Dabiq* 10 p. 60. Hadd punishment refers to the amputation of hands and feet, flogging, and death penalty in Islamic law covering specific crimes as theft, false accusation of adultery, adultery or fornication, consumption of intoxicants, and apostasy.



Figure 3.11 *Dabiq* no.8 p.33



Figure 3.12 *Dabiq* no.10 p.60

vision in people's minds (2001, 27). Daesh uses this as a reference to the early years of Islam. In the images of magazines, it is typically shown as a ground. Besides, in some images, camels traveling through deserts are depicted, associated with the Islamic concept of migration *hijrah* (see Figure 3.12). Thus, by referencing the migration to establish an Islamic state in the early years of Islam, the audience is encouraged to do the same today.

On the other hand, although Daesh is famous for using gruesome images and has carried it to an advanced level, the rate of blood as a motif is relatively low in each magazine, 2.97% for *Dabiq* and 4.10% for *Rumiyah*. Possibly, this is to prevent Daesh from losing sympathy among its target audience and increasing negative perceptions of the group. However, it must be noted that very striking and memorable lethal visuals are still included in the magazines since gruesome images remain part of Daesh's visual propaganda.

Furthermore, the visibility of martyr and afterlife motifs ratios is relatively low (3.5%, 4.1% *Dabiq*, 3.1%- 5.6% *Rumiyah*). This can be a result of the scarcity of presentable martyr photographs. To elaborate, the most basic common point of the images used in both magazines is that all in-group members are shown in a presentable manner. So much so that, at first glance, none appear to be terrorists but professional soldiers. Another reason may be that messaging varies according to visual options. When we look at the percentage distribution of the motifs, we see that there is no dramatic difference between the motifs except the first three motifs and that there is a balanced distribution. Therefore, we can evaluate this rate because of narrative diversification.

Finally, the motifs of sun, moon, water, animals, weather and storms, globe, states, and holy places are the least used motifs for both magazines, and their total ratios are around 5% for *Dabiq* and 7% for *Rumiyah*. This may be because the symbolism of these motifs is less potent than the others in terms of Daesh's strategic goals.

In keeping with, *Rumiyah* is not as well designed and developed as *Dabiq* magazine. It can be readily noticed when we compare the magazines' average page count and the quality of content. Also, images in *Rumiyah* are given a place in larger sizes and utilized across the issues. In other words, the fact that Daesh has suffered severe territorial and human losses in the field has also affected its propaganda materials, such as *Rumiyah*. Accordingly, the quality and quantity of the images featured in *Rumiyah* have declined. However, we do not observe a dramatic in the case of motif distribution between the *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*. This result demonstrates that the organization is following consistent propaganda within the framework of a specific strategy, regardless of the developments in the field.

3.2.2 Emotional loads of images: findings and discussion

Since by using the same image, Daesh elicits different emotions from in-group and out-group members, emotion reading of the images is done in two stages, as explained in the methodology part. First, the emotion to be conveyed to the in-group, then the emotions to be conveyed to the out-group are coded for each image. As a result of the coding, we discovered that images targeting in-group members stimulate positive emotions, while those targeting out-group members generate negative emotions. However, we also observed that specific types of images do not fit this categorization: world leaders' photographs. These photos generally include individual happy moments of world leaders and moments where they laugh together and shake hands. While no emotion is intended to be elicited in the out-group in these photographs, the in-group members are intended to be angered against the enemy. Especially by presenting photos of world leaders together, Daesh emphasizes their cooperation and denotes everyone outside the group as

Table 3.3 Emotion Distribution by Audiences in *Dabiq* & *Rumiyah* respectively

in-group positive total	out-group negative total	in-group negative total
33.67%	51.76%	14.57%

in-group positive total	out-group negative total	in-group negative total
32.68%	55.21%	12.11%

an adversary. Thus, it draws demarcation sharply without leaving any gray area between in-out group members. Anyone not belonging to the in-group is designated as an “enemy” that is the source of the Muslims’ suffering, hence, must be destroyed. In other words, by using the images of world leaders, Daesh strictly defines the other and seeks to inflame the audience’s anger, making them ready to take revenge.

The distribution of positive and negative emotions based on the target audience is displayed in Table 3.3. If we look at the target audience-based emotion distributions for both magazines, we can claim that the emotion distributions targeting in-group and out-group are balanced. In the *Dabiq* images, emotions targeting in-group fellows form 48.2% of overall emotion, while emotions targeting out-group 51.8%. There is a greater difference in *Rumiyah*, yet still a balanced distribution as 44.8% of the emotions address the in-group, compared to 55.2% in the out-group. However, when positive and negative distributions of emotions are examined, it is evident that negative emotions are dramatically more employed than positive emotions, with a ratio of 66.3% to 33.7% in *Dabiq* and 67.3% to 32.7% in *Rumiyah*. Herein, as stated above we encounter a significant proportion of Daesh’s specific use of images, which are addressing negative emotions, namely, anger to in-group members by 14.6% in *Dabiq* and 12.1% in *Rumiyah*.

When we delve into the detailed distribution of emotions, just as in the case of motifs, we encounter a quite similar framework across both magazines, as demonstrated in Figure 3.13. Although there are slight differences in the ratios, the ranking of the emotions’ frequency is the same for both magazines.

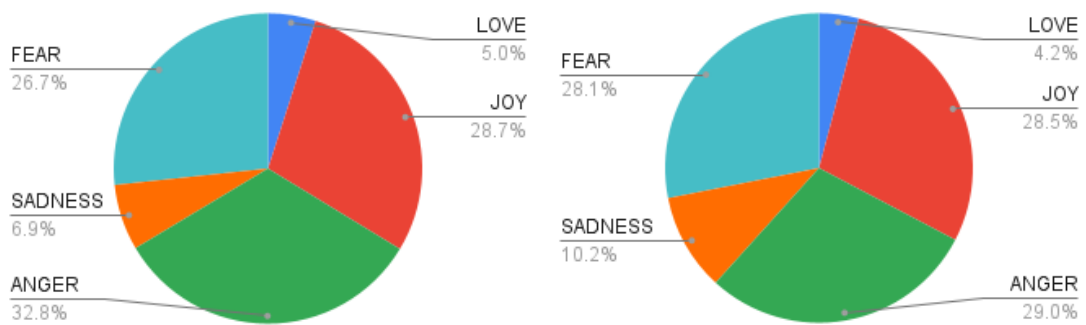


Figure 3.13 Emotion Distribution in *Dabiq* & *Rumiyah* respectively

Anger is the most utilized emotion by 32.8% in *Dabiq* and 29% in *Rumiyah*. Furthermore, anger is the only emotion that is aimed to be provoked in both audiences. The particular type of images in which anger is stimulated for in-group has been explained in detail, along with the reasons above. When the ratio targeting the in-group is removed, 18.2% of *Dabiq*'s images and 16.9% of *Rumiyah*'s images provoke anger in the out-group. Images of successful terrorist attacks carried out by Daesh in various parts of the world or territorial conquests can be given as examples in which anger is coded for out-group, mainly based on secondary and tertiary emotions such as irritation, rage, and annoyance. Secondly, execution and torture of people taken hostage by Daesh can be given as another distinct type of image that provokes irritation and annoyance in out-group members. Another example, as a particular type of images creating anger in the out-group is in which Daesh damages symbols and historical heritage that are important to the out-group. For example, the images of breaking of pilgrimage symbols, or demolition of sculptures, and engravings of idols of out-group members⁶. As a result of employing images that stir anger, Daesh attracts more attention and reaches a broader audience in image warfare. Daesh has a unique way of expressing their anger through pictures. In addition to depictions of death and victory, Daesh expresses its hate towards symbols of Muslim tradition that are not acknowledged as the "true path" by them. The protection of artifacts from ancient civilizations by Muslim governments is also portrayed as a form of *taghut(ic)*⁷ misdirection. This animosity spread to the established international order as

⁶ *Dabiq* no. 8 p. 22-24, *Dabiq* no. 11 p. 32-33

⁷ Taghut is an Islamic term accepting a worship position other than Allah. Any focus of worship other than Allah that directs astray from the true path, icons, devils, and fortune-tellers are considered within the scope of taghut.

well as the civic life of the majority of Muslim governments. In every way conceivable, the leaders of Muslim countries who support the war against Daesh have been viciously condemned in various issues of publications.

Joy is the second most used emotion, by 28.7% for *Dabiq* and 28.5% for *Rumiyah*. The emotion of joy is aimed only at in-groups and has various visual typologies. The first one is the victory images. Such images are entirely consistent with the motif of “important victories”. Both magazines included many victory photographs and graphics depicting Daesh’s successful terrorist attacks in various parts of the world or celebration of new territorial gains. In the first type of visuals, the “blood” motif is frequently used to illustrate the chaos of the attacked country. On the other hand, “the black flag” and “finger of *Tawheed*” motifs are primarily used in the images of soldiers celebrating captured territories. Also, visuals that induce optimism, the secondary emotion under joy, are another sort of image in which the emotion of joy is encoded. The most common motif associated with emotion of “hope” is “children.” While various depictions of children are utilized, they are typically illustrated as the future lion cubs of the Caliphate in their own words in 8th issue of *Dabiq*, thus eliciting hope for the continuity of the organization (20). Furthermore, the joy category is also coded through the secondary emotions of contentment and relief. There are essentially two categories for these kinds of photographs. First, the photos of militants praying and reading the Quran with their weapons beside them; second, photos of martyrs who appear to be at peace. Thus, images with contentment and relief are generally associated with “Quran” and “martyr” motifs. To summarize, by bringing out the feeling of joy among its members, Daesh aims to strengthen the enthusiasm among the group members and deepen their devotion. Additionally, it reinforces the sense of unity among people gathered around a promising goal. Thus, Daesh weaponizes the emotion of joy in images to consolidate its base in line with its objectives.

Fear is the third most frequently utilized emotion in both magazines by, 26.7 % -*Dabiq* and 28.1 % -*Rumiyah*. However, it is the most used emotion that targets the out-group. Creating fear in the out-group is the primary aim of all terrorist organizations, as it is included in almost every definition of terrorism. Therefore, it is not unexpected that fear is the most weaponized emotion in the images targeting the out-group. If we examine

how the fear is conveyed in *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, shocking, gruesome images depicting beheadings and instances of torture are the first that come to the forefront. Therefore, “blood” is one of the most prevalent motifs in these images. Besides, it must be noted that most images that are a source of joy within the group, as explained above, are a source of fear for those outside the group. Thus, Daesh’s significant victories can be given as an example. Images of successful attacks worldwide, conveying the message to the viewer that they are never safe, are typical images that evoke fear. For this reason, another motif strongly related to the emotion of fear is “significant events.” A more extensive list of examples can be added as children who stand in for the organization’s future, martyrs who sacrifice their lives, etc. However, a commonality among many of these images is the presence of “weapons.” Almost every image containing a weapon is encoded based on either the primary emotion of “fear” or its secondary emotion, “nervousness.” Therefore, one can assert that the most associated motif with the emotion of “fear” is “weapon” when the shares of motifs are considered. Almost every image containing a weapon is encoded based on either the primary emotion of fear or its secondary emotion, nervousness. As a result, in line with the nature of terrorism, “fear” is the main emotion that is used to weaponize images targeting out-group. By inducing fear via its visual propaganda, Daesh makes the legitimacy of the state’s questionable in the eyes of the citizens and portrays them as vulnerable. As a result, Daesh appears as a more potent actor on the global stage and serves as motivation for potential recruits.

In the images in both magazines, the emotion of sadness is less prevalent than other emotions by 6.9%-*Dabiq* and 10.2%-*Rumiyah*. “Sadness” is mainly coded in the context of the secondary emotions of humiliation and disappointment. In the first place, the images of beheading and torture can be given as illustrations of the emotion of humiliation in *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*. Gitmo suit can be shown here as a symbol that matches the sense of humiliation, although it is not in the list of motifs of the report we use. In the first place, the images of beheading and torture can be given as illustrations of the emotion of humiliation in *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*. Gitmo suit can be shown here as a symbol that matches the sense of humiliation, although it is not in the list of motifs of the report we use. To elaborate, in retaliation for jihadists captured during the Gulf War and allegedly tortured at Guantanamo Bay, Daesh makes its captured prisoners wear Gitmo suits as a

sign of humiliation. Other instances of humiliation include trampling flags, destroying pilgrimage markers, and eradicating cemeteries, which are not as common as images of execution and torture. Successful terrorist attacks carried out by Daesh in other countries can be given as examples of visuals that provoke disappointment. Such images create disappointment and distrust that citizens feel towards their state. Thus, the weaponization of these images makes the adequacy and capacity of the state questionable and gives Daesh the upper hand in image warfare.

“Love” is the least used emotion in the visuals in *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* by 5% and 4.5%, respectively. This category is coded under different types of images. Some of these can be associated with the tertiary emotion of caring. For example, in the photo of a child receiving treatment in *Dabiq* 9, the following subtitle is given: “caring for the Muslims and their children” (p.26). Besides, there are visuals depicting how Daesh brought order to the lives of its people in the territories it conquered. Another type of visual coded under the love category is the visuals in which group members are presented in unity and solidarity. Various examples can be given, from soldiers standing side by side while fighting in the field to group members having fast-breaking meal together. However, the most common are the visuals in which militants from different nationalities clasp their hands together, highlighting the unity for a noble cause. Hence, one can claim that the most employed motif under the love classification is “clasped hands.” As a result, using such visuals, Daesh strengthens its collective identity and fosters its followers’ commitment in line with its objectives in image warfare.

Lastly, it must be noted that the emotion of surprise, which is a positive emotion, is not depicted in any image.

3.2.3 Consistency between vectors of images: Narrative and emotion

In strategically designed visual propaganda, we expect images to be weaponized in both terms as narrative and emotional. Accordingly, the study’s central hypothesis is that Daesh has sought to succeed in image warfare by weaponizing images that are loaded in terms of both narrative and emotions. For this reason, we developed a methodology to

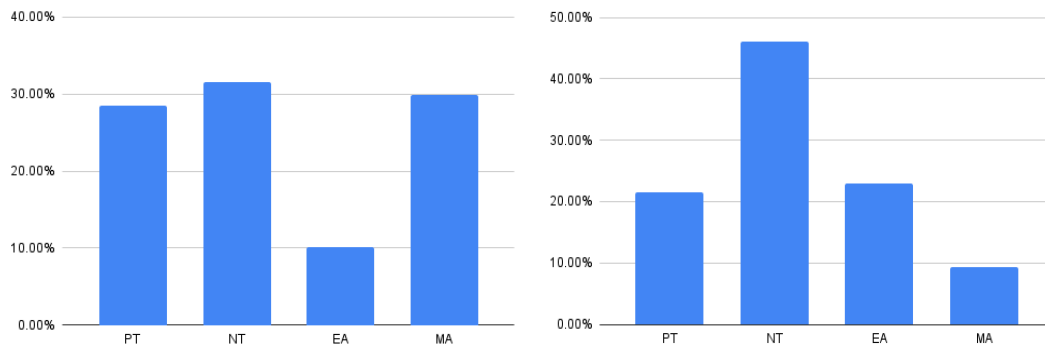


Figure 3.14 Correlation Rates between Narrative and Emotional Loads of Images in *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, respectively

Notes: Positive True (PT) stands for the images both narrative and emotional loads are above the threshold, Negative True (NT) stands for the images both narrative and emotional loads are below the threshold, EA stands for the images emotional loads are above the threshold yet narrative loads below the threshold, MA stands for the images narrative loads are above the threshold, but emotional loads are below the threshold.

compare narrative and emotional loads of images, as explained in the methodology part in detail. By taking the means of used motifs and emotions as a threshold, we have reached the ratios of images as those with motif and emotion load above the threshold, those with motif and emotion load below the threshold, and those with motif load above the threshold whereas emotion load below the threshold, and those with motif load below the threshold whereas emotion load above the threshold (See Figure 3.14).

As the data shows, the rate of images loaded narratively and emotionally above the threshold is 28.5% in *Dabiq* and 21.5% in *Rumiyah*. Thus, there is a 7% decline in the ratio of images loaded narratively and emotionally above the threshold across the two magazines. These percentages refer to the ratio of images intensely loaded thus, weaponized in terms of both vectors within the scope of image warfare. Additionally, whereas the proportion of images with narrative and emotional values below the threshold is 31.5% in *Dabiq*, it is 46.1% in *Rumiyah*, with an increase of 14.6%. In other words, we see that the number of powerful images in both aspects that Daesh uses is decreasing, while the number of those that are not powerful enough is increasing at a high rate. This situation is primarily due to the loss of territory and resources experienced by Daesh during the period of *Rumiyah*'s production. Accordingly, Daesh's ability to produce quality and depth images in terms of content has decreased throughout the process. As a

result, we can claim that in this period, Daesh's hand weakened in both the military and image warfare fronts relatedly.

Furthermore, the ratio of images loaded solely based on emotions is 10.1% for *Dabiq* and 22.9% for *Rumiyah*. In comparison, the rate of images loaded solely based on motifs is 29.94% in *Dabiq* and 9.39% in *Rumiyah*. The reason for the apparent difference between magazines can be due to the strategic needs of the organization based on the reality in the field. While Daesh may have prioritized promoting its ideology during in times of strength, corresponding to the release of *Dabiq*, it may have aimed to mobilize its sympathizers readily by triggering emotions during times of decline, corresponding to the release of *Rumiyah*.

Also, it must be noted that the ratio of images that remain above the threshold, both narratively and emotionally, is far lower than we expected. In other words, the rate of intensely weaponized images is remarkably lower than our initial estimate. One of the reasons for the mismatch between the expectation and the outcome is the images that are not original and not created by Daesh, yet taken from other sources. As explained above, the photographs of political leaders used to evoke anger in in-group members set an example of this situation. Although these images serve a particular aim, they numerically have a low motif and emotional load. Another reason could be that Daesh prioritizes using narrative or emotion in specific images. Accordingly, there is a need for qualitative analysis for further explanations of achieved results. In other words, further analysis of the correlation between narratives and emotions is required to comprehend how Daesh weaponizes images to succeed in image warfare. Thus, to reveal the relationship between motifs and emotions, we examine the images with the highest sum of motifs and emotional load in the following part.

3.2.4 Analysis of Top 5 images in *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*

As stated above, we needed a qualitative analysis to make sense of how Daesh weaponizes images in its visual messaging, to determine the kind of images being utilized, to identify the most used motifs and emotions and to reveal how these elements relate to one another. In other words, we subjected the highly loaded images that we coded based on the

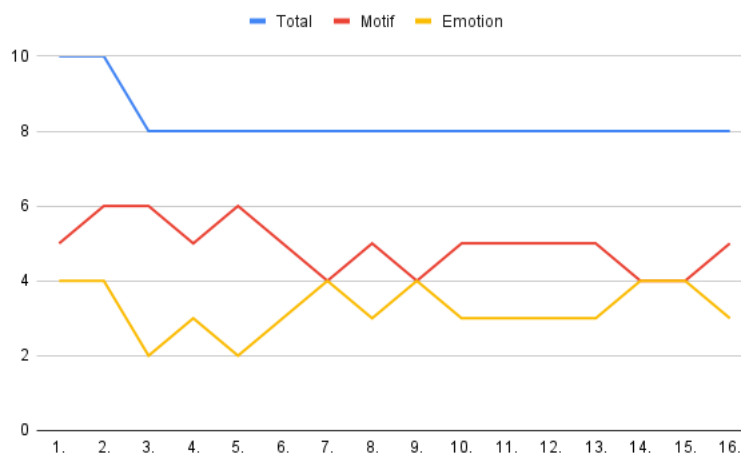
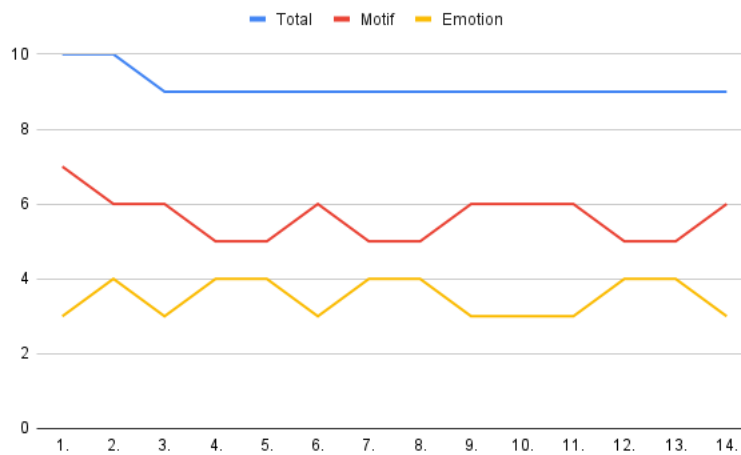


Figure 3.15 Motif, Emotion and Total Values of Top-14 Images in *Dabiq* and Top-16 Images in *Rumiyah* respectively

existence of motifs and emotions as 0 or 1 by borrowing templates from the literature to qualitative analysis. Accordingly, as the number of images is too large for such an analysis, we decided to examine the top 10 images above the threshold in both motif and emotion as a sample. Hence, we ranked the images based on their total load of motifs and emotions. However, since there are other images with the value of the tenth image, we included all images with the last value in our ranking. As a result, we formed *Dabiq*'s top-14 list and *Rumiyah*'s top-16 list (see Figure 3.15). As can be inferred from the chart, there is a slight difference between the total loads of the images in both magazines. The most common feature of the images in both lists is that they are all from the field and produced by Daesh. Thus, there is no image that Daesh borrowed from different sources

that is on the list of top-loaded images. Furthermore, the fact that more than half of the images are manipulated graphics is another similarity between the two lists. 7 of the top 14 images in *Dabiq* and 9 of the top 16 in *Rumiyah* are graphics, while the remaining images are photographs. In other words, by manipulating the visuals, Daesh increased the motif, emotion loads, and depth of visuals in image warfare. Accordingly, the most frequent editing techniques used in both magazines include manipulating colors, blurring the background, and creating collages from photographs. Thus, adjusting lighting and color and making collages are Daesh's most common techniques in its image warfare to make images more compelling.

When we look at the distribution of emotions, we see that the categories for joy and fear are coded for all images for both lists. The outcome is not unexpected, given that an image that conveys joy to the in-group also causes fear to the out-group and vice versa. In addition, whereas anger is coded in each image in the *Dabiq* list, it is not coded in just two images in *Rumiyah*. Anger is such a prevalent emotion because images' main themes are Daesh's success, ideology, and methods. To elaborate, the recurring contents in the images are that Daesh's victories, its goal of establishing a global caliphate, and its method of warfare are a source of irritation and annoyance for out-group audiences. Furthermore, sadness is portrayed in 5 images in *Dabiq's* list and six in *Rumiyah's* list. It is coded in the context of its secondary and tertiary emotions of disappointment and humiliation. To illustrate, images of Daesh's successful terrorist attacks worldwide are frequently labeled as images of disappointment, while images of prisoners being executed by humiliation are labeled as humiliation. Finally, the emotion of love was coded only for two images in the *Dabiq* list. One of these is encoded in the context of affection, a secondary emotion, and the other is coded in the context of linking, a tertiary emotion.

When the motif distributions are examined, the most employed motifs are weapons, colors, and the black flag for the images in both lists. Therefore, it can be argued that Daesh prioritizes its claim to be a state and highlights its brand identity by recurrently employing its flag. Furthermore, along with its historical usage of the black flag, Daesh's black flag has the Prophet's stamp on it. Hence, it portrays legitimacy by establishing a linkage to the Prophet Muhammad. Therefore, the black flag as a motif is very rich in meaning and is a very influential symbol for Daesh to utilize in image warfare. In

addition, using a weapon as a symbol displays the method used by the organization to achieve its goal. Therefore, it is an integral component of Daesh's visual propaganda. Furthermore, using and manipulating colors is commonly operated, as mentioned above. The meaning that the color symbolizes varies depending on which color is used and manipulated. Accordingly, instances will be presented below. Another frequently used motif is flora. Although flora is consciously employed as a motif that resonates like a garden of paradise, and it also includes non-specific usages as a background element.

Furthermore, when *Dabiq*'s top 14 images are examined, the first theme seen is the depiction and the celebration photos of victories. 9 of the 14 images in *Dabiq* depict or celebrate Daesh's successes on the battlefield. Therefore, the significant event is another most used motif in *Dabiq*'s list. On the other hand, only three images have a similar theme in the top list of *Rumiyah*. This thematic difference across magazines is because of Daesh's loss of power and military capacity during the release of *Rumiyah*. Hence, it lacked the opportunities to visualize its victories on the battlefield. Another motif we frequently encounter in *Dabiq* is children. Seven of the photographs contain children. However, while two of them are fictional images in which children play the leading role, in the others, children have a figurative role in the crowd. On the other hand, there are children in four images in *Rumiyah*. In two of these, children are more in the foreground, while in the other two, they again have a figurative role in the crowd. The images where children are at the forefront are portrayed as the future jihadists, emphasizing the organization's continuity.

As a result, when the highly loaded images of both magazines are compared, there are similarities and variances in how emotions and motifs are distributed. In the remaining paragraphs, the top 5 images from both *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* will be presented respectively, as examples to elaborate on the motifs and emotions used and examine the relationships between the two.



Figure 3.16 *Dabiq* no.5 p. 31

Total Value: 10

Motifs: Flora, Foreign Symbols & Flags, Significant Events, Black Flag, Children, Weapons, Colors

Emotions: Joy, Anger, Fear

This image sets a typical example of Daesh's victory celebration images. For all such victory celebration images, significant event motif is coded in the scope of the secondary motif: important victories. Therefore, the most used motif in such images is significant events. In addition, in all such images, joy is coded for the in-group, and anger (annoyance) and fear (nervousness) are coded for the out-group. Thus, the important victories category always matches the emotion of joy for the in-group and the emotion of anger and fear for the out-group. Another motif frequently used in such celebration photographs is the waving black flags. To elaborate, in some images the waving black flag highlights the victory of the organization's ideology, beliefs, and goal. Furthermore, the color black appears quite prominent in the photo, especially in the dressings of the combatants. Thus, we can claim that within the scope of image warfare, the organization emphasizes success with its organizational colors, black.



Figure 3.17 *Dabiq* no.5 p.16

Total Value: 10

Motifs: Flora, Landscapes, Significant Events, Black Flag, Weapons, Colors

Emotions: Love, Joy, Anger, Fear

This image is an illustration of another type of victory celebration. As stated in the caption, the photo is taken on a victory. For this reason, the most apparent motif in the image is the significant event. Accordingly, while joy is triggered in the in-group due to the victory, anger (annoyance) and fear (nervousness) are evoked in the out-group. However, unlike the victory image above, giving thanks to God via prayer is the manner of celebration in this image. Hence, thanking God by praying here is a sign of religious affection (love) and relief (joy). Furthermore, as in the image above, a black flag is also planted in this image. Therefore, the victory of the organization's beliefs, goals, and ideology is emphasized. Thus, we can argue that Daesh promotes its victories with its unique brand symbol in image warfare.

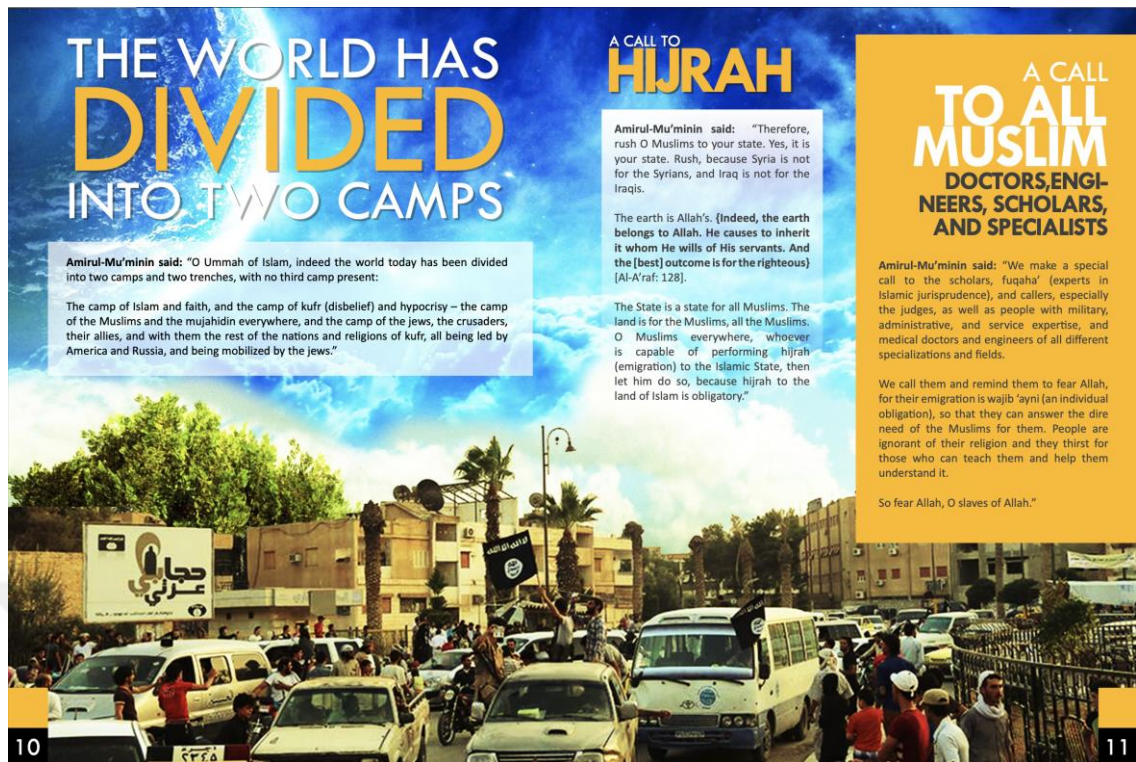


Figure 3.18 *Dabiq* no.1 pp.10-11

Total Value: 9

Motifs: Flora, Globe, Children, Black Flag, Weapons, Colors

Emotions: Joy, Anger, Fear

As indicated, six motifs and three emotions are depicted in this image. By arguing that “the world has divided into two camps,” the image illustrates the vivid life in the Islamic Caliphate and calls Muslims to migrate. By editing a photograph taken in the field, the emotional and motif load of the image is increased. The fact that they fictionalize a bright blue sky (motif: color blue) in the background and a separate world (motif: globe) on the left of this sky gives the message that they offer an alternative and bright world. Thus, the emotion of “hope” is triggered by manipulating the colors of the sky and the trees. In addition, waving black flags positioned at the center of the image are presented as the identity element of the promising utopian state for Muslims. As a result, although there are six motifs depicted in the image, the most striking motifs are “colors,” “globe,” and the “black flag.” Besides, although the idea of a successful utopia idea triggers anger (annoyance) and fear (nervousness) in the out-group, the most dominant emotion of the image is joy elicited in the in-group. The image matches many emotions in the secondary of joy, such as enthusiasm, happiness, enjoyment, and hope. Accordingly, we can argue

that the most dominant emotion of the image, “joy” (hope), is strongly sparked by the most dominant motif of the image, “color” (blue).



As the mujāhidīn of the Islamic State continue their march against the forces of kufr there is a new generation waiting in the wings, eagerly anticipating the day that it is called upon to take up the banner of imān. These are the children of the Ummah of jihād, a generation raised in the lands of malāhim (fierce battles) and nurtured under the shade of Shari’ah, just a stone’s throw from the frontlines.

The Islamic State has taken it upon itself to fulfill the Ummah’s duty towards this generation in preparing it to face the crusaders and their allies in defense of Islam and to raise high the word of Allah in every land. It has established institutes for these ashbāl (lion cubs) to train and hone their military skills, and to teach them the book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam). It is these young lions to whom the Islamic State recently handed over two agents caught spying for Russian Intelligence and an agent caught spying for the Israeli Mossad, to be executed and displayed as an example to anyone else thinking of infiltrating the mujāhidīn.

Figure 3.19 *Dabiq* no.8 p.20

Total Value: 9

Motifs: Landscapes, Children, Weapons, Blood, Colors

Emotions: Joy, Anger, Sadness, Fear

This image is an example of the fictional images that are planned and shot professionally by Daesh. It depicts an enemy being executed by a child. In other words, the enemy has been humiliated to be killed by a child. Accordingly, sadness, the primary emotion of humiliation, is coded. However, the most dominant emotion stirred in the image is joy (hope). As in the previous image, the bright blue sky behind the child indicates the emotion of hope. Following the title “Lions of Tomorrow,” there is an emotion of joy (hope) in all images depicting child members of the organization since they represent the organization’s continuity. Thus, Daesh employed children’s photos in image warfare to trigger joy (hope) in the in-group audience. For another common motif emotion match, we can give weapons and fear as examples. Especially if the weapon and blood motifs are combined, as in this image, an emotion of fear is always depicted. For this reason, Daesh has included considerable photographs from the field, including blood and weapons, to spread fear among out-group audiences.

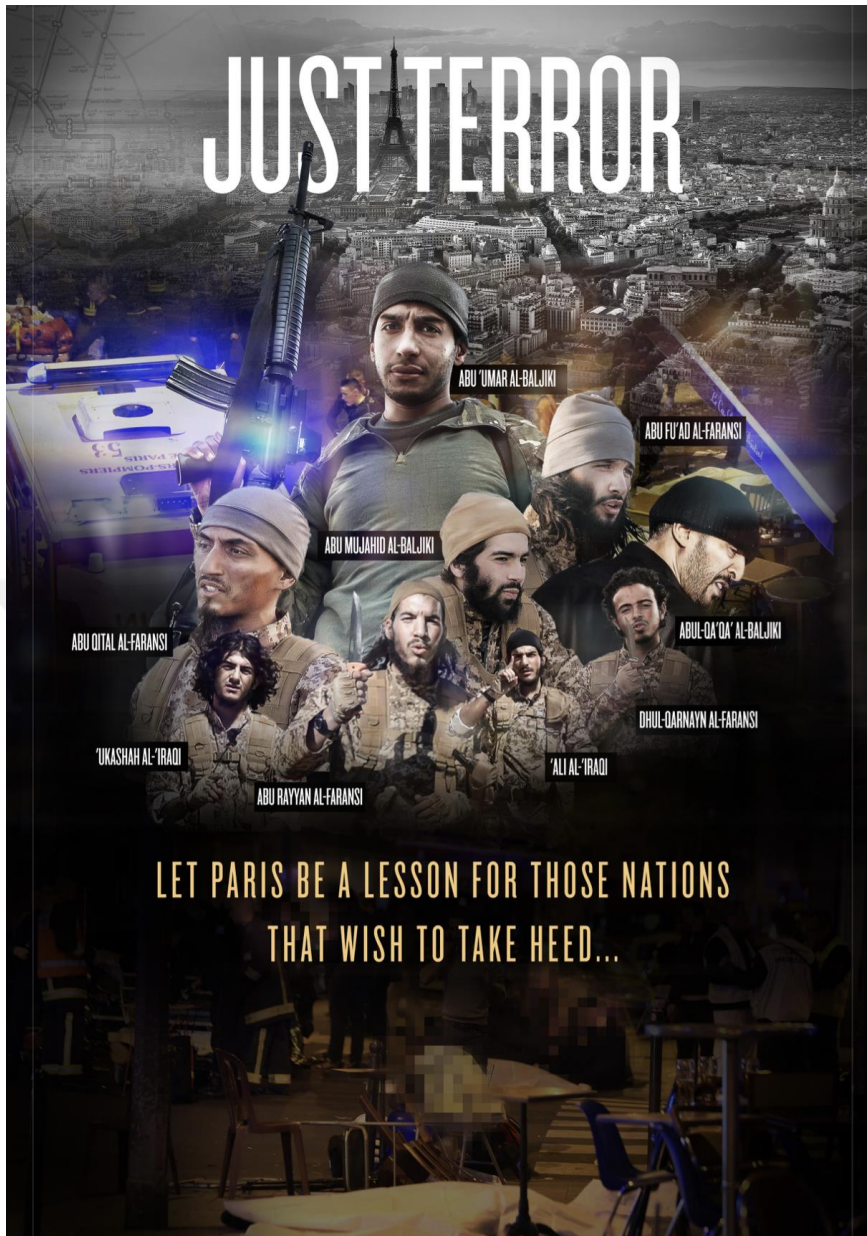


Figure 3.20 *Dabiq* no.13 p.5

Total Value: 9

Motifs: Significant Events, Martyrs, Weapons, Colors, Hands

Emotions: Joy, Anger, Sadness, Fear

Figure 3.20 is a graphic image showing the chaos and those responsible after the simultaneous attacks in Paris on November 13. There are many photographs in *Dabiq* of successful attacks in various parts of Europe depicting motifs of significant events. The common point of such visuals is to project power for the in-group audience, and by displaying the chaos after the attack, to create fear and to form a disappointment among

the out-group towards their state. Thus, the most common emotions in such visuals are joy (triumph) for the in-group audience, anger (rage), sadness (disappointment), and fear for the out-group. Besides, these images depicting successful attacks worldwide can be regarded as the visual re-weaponization of propaganda of deeds for image warfare. In other words, these images are samples of propaganda of deeds that are visually recirculated in the virtual world to reach more people.



Figure 3.21 *Rumiyah* no.5 p.16

Total Value: 10

Motifs: Significant Events, Children, The Afterlife, Weapons, Blood, Colors,

Emotions: Joy, Anger, Sadness, Fear

As can be seen, the image is a graphic that combines different images and creates a composition by making edits. The graphic signifies the taken revenge by burning the imprisoned soldier to death in return for the children burned to death by the attacks of enemies. Taken revenge matches the emotions of relief and satisfaction, the secondary

emotions of joy for the in-group. In addition, the soldier's death by burning matches the rage and sadness based on secondary and tertiary emotions as humiliation and suffering. Nevertheless, the prominent emotion of the graphic is undoubtedly fear (horror). The fear sensation has been further intensified by recreating with visual colors, making flame colors more prominent in a dark environment, and using additional red details. Besides, although the image has six motifs, the central motif is "the afterlife." One of the narratives of the afterlife motif is "hell for the enemies of jihad." Such graphics are composed with a flame that evokes hell and depicts the pain of the adversaries. Thus, they depict hell on earth for heretics. Additionally, as the soldier seen in the above photograph, the jihadists who condemned them to hell are portrayed as the legitimate and victorious side of the conflict. Therefore, in image warfare, Daesh deploys the motif "hell for the enemies of jihad" essentially to assert its legitimacy, instill joy in the in-group, and evoke fear in the out-group.

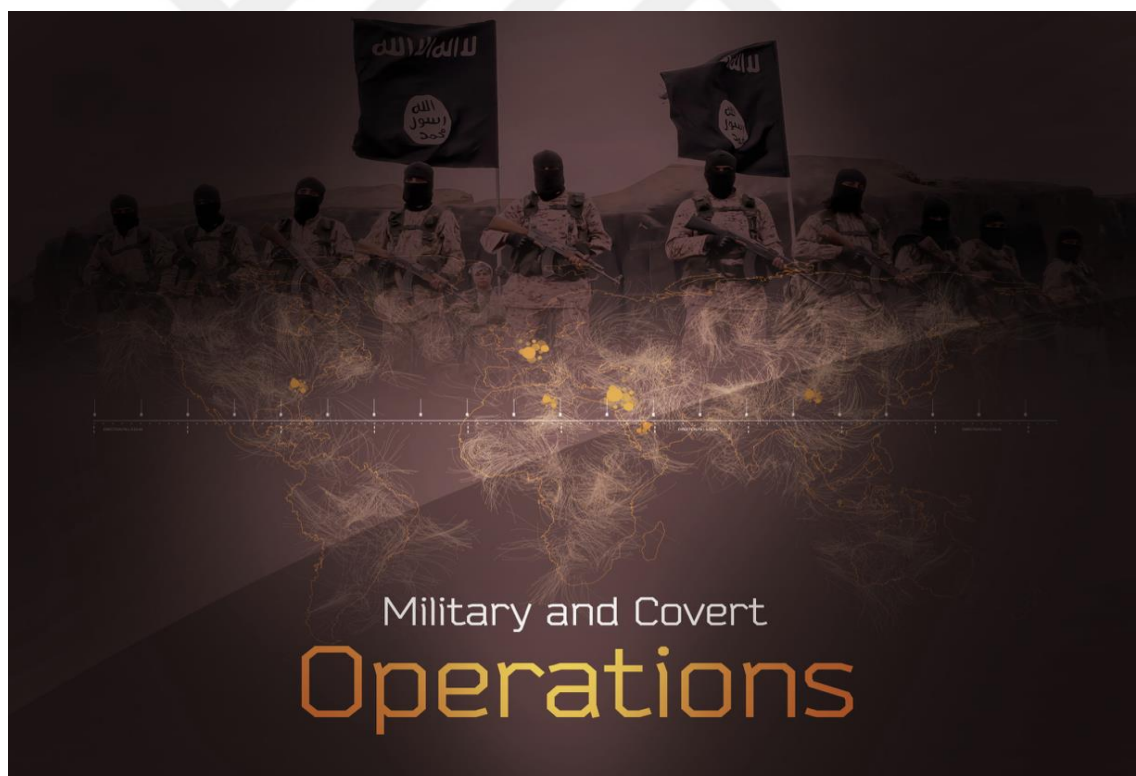


Figure 3.22 *Rumiyah* no.10 p.32

Total Value: 10

Motifs: Landscapes, Globe, Significant Events, Black Flag, Weapons, Colors,

Emotions: Joy, Anger, Sadness, Fear

This graphic is an image found in all issues of *Rumiyah*. It depicts the successful terrorist attacks carried out by Daesh so far, marked on a world map. Accordingly, the graphic is a visual version of the propaganda of deeds used in image warfare. The global caliphate target is highlighted with the world map under the soldiers and the flag as the main message. The central motifs in the image are significant events (important victories) and the globe, while the primary emotion is joy for the in-group and anger and fear for the out-group.



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Figure 3.23 Rumiya no.8 Cover

Total Value: 8

Motifs: Martyrs, Children, The Afterlife, Black Flack, Colors, Hands

Emotions: Joy, Fear

The image shows a smiling photo of a martyred Daesh member holding his baby. In the images of martyrs, smiling photographs taken while they were alive are generally presented. The martyr's tawheed finger sign is a reference to the fact that he will go to heaven as someone who believed in the unity of Allah and died on this path. Making the background white in this image is an example of a standard color manipulation method

used in martyr photography. Using lighting, the organization highlights that the martyr is in a peaceful environment, that is, in heaven after death. Thus, the color white is a commonly employed motif in martyr photographs to highlight their purity and piety. A child is also used in this visual to reinforce this narrative. While the martyr can be presented in white clothes, as in this image, images of the martyrs wrapped in a white shroud are frequently used in martyr photographs. Thus, martyrs as a motif are related to the secondary emotions of joy, as relief and contentment.



THE RELIGION CANNOT BE ESTABLISHED EXCEPT THROUGH JIHAD

Figure 3.24. *Rumiyah* no.12 p.20

Total Value: 8

Motifs: Landscapes, Animals, Black Flag, Weapon, Colors

Emotions: Joy, Anger, Fear

This is a fictional photo taken by Daesh for a purpose. Employing pre-modern weapons such as swords and using horses as a mount with the background of a rocky desert resonates with the early years of Islam. Thus, it establishes a linkage to the first generations of Muslims. In other words, rather than being emotionally intense, the image prioritizes the narrative of legitimacy and ideology of the group by establishing a historical linkage. The emotion of anger is coded based on annoyance and irritation in the out-group, while the emotion of joy is coded based on enthusiasm and eagerness in the in-group. However, as in other images, the connection between the motif of “weapon”

and the emotion of “fear” is quite evident in this image. Therefore, there is a strong association between the motif of weapons and the emotion of fear in Daesh’s visual propaganda employed in its image warfare.



ABU SABAH ﷺ JOINED THE MUJAHIDIN IN EAST ASIA WHO WOULD GO ON TO GIVE BAY'AH TO THE KHILAFAH

Figure 3.25 *Rumiyah* no.10 p.29

Total Value: 8

Motifs: Flora, Children, Black Flack, Weapon, Colors, Hands

Emotions: Joy, Fear

Rumiyah magazine does not contain images that emphasize the victory as much as *Dabiq* does due to the loss of power on the battlefield. Instead, in *Rumiyah* images of the groups participating in the organization are included to demonstrate the group’s strength, as shown above. By such visuals, an attempt is made to give the message that Daesh is still powerful and expanding. Accordingly, the photograph above is an example of such images. Although the image is rich in symbols, its emotional impact is slightly less. It is intended to trigger fear in the out-group while eliciting joy for the in-group audience. Accordingly, while the emotion of fear is associated with the "weapon" motif, we can match the emotion of “joy” (optimism) with greenery and child motifs in the photograph.

As a result of the analyses of the top 14 images in *Dabiq* and the top 16 images in *Rumiyah*, it is observed that there is a clear relationship between symbols and emotions in the visual propaganda of Daesh. While motifs can elicit different emotions in specific contexts, some motifs match certain feelings. Weapon and fear match can be given as the first example, as seen frequently in the images above. Every weapon employed in Daesh's visual propaganda is a sign of violence targeting the out-group. Therefore, even if the central theme of the image is far from fear-inducing, the weapon in the image is a source of nervousness for the out-group audience. Therefore, weapons and fear are among the most used symbol-emotion matches. Another direct symbol and emotional relationship is blood and fear. Almost all images containing blood used by Daesh convey a sense of fear for the out-group audience.

Another example of a motif-emotion relationship is significant events and the emotions of joy, anger, and fear. In the report we use, the significant events motif includes two narratives. The first is “important victories” and the second is “important defeats.” A vital victory constantly stimulates the emotion of joy within the group and provokes anger and fear for the out-group. On the other hand, Daesh sometimes uses important defeat images to incite in-group members against the enemy. Therefore, in the case of significant defeats, the feeling of anger is triggered in the in-group audience. As a result, specific emotions are stirred in both the in-group and the out-group, depending on the significant event narrative used.

Similarly, the motif of the afterlife includes two narratives as “paradise, the heavenly garden” and “hell for the enemies of jihad”. To explain, the afterlife motifs are used in visuals depicting the lives of in-group and out-group members after death. In such images, the in-group members live peacefully in an environment full of trees while the out-group members suffer in fire. Therefore, depending on the narrative used, the motif of the afterlife evokes a feeling of joy in the in-group and fear in the out-group.

Furthermore, although it varies depending on the context, the children motif is often used to convey the feeling of hope (joy). To elaborate, the children motif is sometimes used as a figure in the crowd and sometimes in the foreground in the visuals. Although children as a motif do not express any direct emotion when it is depicted as an ordinary member

of the public in the crowd, in the visuals that show them performing an execution or being trained with Quran and weapons in their hand, they are depicted as an indicator of the continuation of the organization, thus directly stimulates the feeling of hope.

Finally, we can discuss the role that color interacts with emotions. In the report we use, the color motif refers to the colors of black, white, green, blue, and red. Since black is the primary color of the organization, it is the most frequently used color in the top images of both magazines. However, it is more related to distinct narratives than eliciting an emotion. For instance, historical and religious references to using black in clothing and jihadist flags can be related to the notions of jihad and the claim of the legitimate caliphate. However, the color black has no recurrent association with a specific emotion. On the other hand, Daesh utilized the color blue to evoke sense of hope and optimism in its image of warfare. For instance, it is utilized as a realistic bright sky as a background in the images depicting martyrs, victories, or Daesh as a utopian state to create sentiments of optimism and hope (joy). Subsequently, Daesh utilized red to highlight or create depictions of blood and fire in its visual propaganda. For this reason, red is generally used to evoke the emotions of anger and fear.

To sum up, Daesh employed motifs and emotions in its visual propaganda to convey messages and emotions. However, these two vectors do not address messages and emotions independently of each other. The employed symbols and themes also evoke various emotions. Therefore, Daesh consciously employs both motif and emotion elements and uses them for its strategical purposes. Thus, images are used as weapons in image warfare by combination of these two factors. Direct and indirect examples of these are explained in detail above. However, this does not mean the aforementioned motif-emotion connections are valid for every case. In this part of the thesis, we displayed the motif-emotion patterns we observed by selecting representative images from the images loaded in both vectors.

In summary, the analysis of images based on narrative and emotional elements indicates how Daesh weaponizes images by using the relation between symbolic and emotional components for the organization's purposes. By repeatedly employing specific motifs and emotions, Daesh creates its own visual language serving its strategic goal, establishing a

global caliphate. First, it influences the perspectives of a much larger out-group audience with much less effort and increases the scope of influence of propaganda of deeds. Thus, it has the ability to shock and frighten the out-group audience with much less effort and cost. Furthermore, the main character of this visual language is to reference cultural, religious, and historical codes. These references allow Daesh to gain legitimacy and mobilize its people through encouraging or provoking. Therefore, Daesh utilizes images not only to fight over out-group's perceptions but also to cement in-group bonds, as seen in the data. As a result of two-stage reading of emotions during the coding process, we see that the in-group and out-group audiences are targeted at almost the same rate based on the emotions appealing to them. Therefore, the images in the magazines are weaponized not only to terrorize and recruit the out-group, as we initially assumed but also to reinforce the in-group's identity.

Furthermore, as we have deduced from the coding results, a considerable number of specific images (14.6%-*Dabiq*, 12.1%-*Rumiyah*) aim to evoke negative emotion, anger, in the in-group beyond our expectations. To elaborate, although positive emotions target the in-group and negative emotions target the out-group in the general distribution, in some specific visual uses, Daesh aims to elicit negative emotions, particularly anger, in the in-group. By doing this, it aims to provoke its members against the enemy, thus consolidating its base. However, these images could not appear in the data among the images we claimed were deliberately weaponized. Yet, these images set significant examples of how Daesh weaponizes images by engaging in motif-emotion matches. Therefore, we argue that although these images are not loaded above the threshold, Daesh strategically weaponizes specific motif (political leaders) with specific emotion (anger) to consolidate its members against the enemy.

All in all, this chapter attempted to uncover how Daesh exploits symbols, emotions, and the relation between them, by using quantitative and qualitative methods. Accordingly, we unveiled the most used symbols and emotions with their religious, cultural, and historical references. Furthermore, by examining the highly loaded images we also revealed the imagery choices based on the relation between motifs and emotions. As a result, we argue that to succeed in image warfare, Daesh weaponizes images by manipulating the relation between narrative and emotional components.

4. CONCLUSION

The nature of war has undergone a significant change in the present century. The evolution of technology has had a significant impact on the field of international relations through changes in the information system. The communication tools have evolved into a weapon and power in everyone's hands due to the disrupted top-down communication hierarchy and everyone acting as both a message producer and recipient. Since we live in a visual age, images are the most potent weapons in the media front of today's wars. This shift in the nature of war resulted in transition from techno to image war (Roger, 2010). It does not mean a complete transition that image war has replaced techno war. However, it appears as the front of the age and as an effective way of combat that can alter the course of techno war.

Political actors who lacked adequate military capacity to win conflicts were the ones that embraced this development the most. Relatedly, terrorist organizations, specifically Daesh, who put forward an unprecedented propaganda product in terms of quality and quantity, took the lead in image warfare. Therefore, in this thesis, the visual propaganda of Daesh is examined through the images in *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* magazines, occupying a central position in Daesh's propaganda system and appealing to a worldwide audience. Daesh's visual choices are analyzed through the narrative and emotional factors. In the literature there are other studies revealing the message and emotional dimension of Daesh's visual propaganda. However, there is no study employing a systematic comparative methodology to analyze these components. As we explained in detail in the methodology section of Chapter 3, we subjected the images in *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* magazines to a semantic analysis of motifs and emotion elements by borrowing templates from the literature. By coding the images according to these templates, we presented the motifs and emotions that Daesh prioritizes in its image warfare strategy. As an unexpected result of this coding, we observed that the emotions targeted in-group and out-group audiences at almost the same rate. Thus, we argue that Daesh attaches importance to strengthening the identities of in-group members as much as it attaches importance to fighting over perceptions of out-group. Another unexpected result is the use of images that trigger negative emotion, in particular anger, in in-group members.

Except for one visual type, all visuals are intended to evoke positive emotions for the in-group and negative emotions for the out-group. However, there is a type of images that Daesh aims to enrage its people against the enemy, with the narrative demonstrating the enemy as the source of Muslims' suffering. Hence, Daesh aims to trigger negative emotions against the enemy as well as using positive emotions to strengthen its base.

As a third step, we identified highly loaded images by setting the means as a threshold since we expected images to be rich in both terms in well-designed propaganda. Thus, we discovered the images we thought were weaponized in both aspects. However, the rate we achieved is relatively lower than we expected, 28.5%-*Dabiq* 21.5%-*Rumiyah*. The main reasons are that we claim the images taken from external sources and those below the threshold, even though they have a motif-emotion relationship. However, the rates do not claim a strong relation between motif and emotional components.

For this reason, we conducted further analysis to test the motif-emotion relation in Daesh's visual choices. Since the number of images is too large for such an analysis, we took samples from the most loaded images and conducted a qualitative analysis. As a result of this analysis, we depicted correlations with specific use of motifs and emotions. While in some cases, a specific motif matches a specific emotion, in general, combinations of motifs elucidate the emotion. The relationship between these motifs and emotions is established through cultural, religious, and historical references. By combining these references with political elements, Daesh attributes legitimacy to itself and cements its base through provoking. In other words, Daesh created its own visual language to meet its strategic ends by exploiting images' narrative and emotional power. Thus, we argue that by manipulating the relation between message and emotional components, Daesh strategically weaponizes images to succeed in image warfare.

Finally, the limitations of the study should be noted. Since the study's objectivity is prioritized, primary emotions are chosen to analyze the images. However, this situation prevented us from examining the emotions in-depth. An analysis conducted with secondary emotions, where the objectivity problem is resolved, will provide more comprehensive explanations about the role of emotions in Daesh's propaganda. The second limitation is the fact that the report we used to depict motifs does not include the

political narratives used by Daesh. This is because Daesh is the first terrorist organization to claim statehood and the report is published in 2006. The second limitation is that the report we used to depict motifs does not include the political narratives used by Daesh. Daesh is the first terrorist organization to claim statehood. Relatedly, both magazines include images of Daesh highlighting this claim, such as providing health services, establishing justice, and road maintenance announcements. Therefore, an important narrative of the propaganda could not be included in motif distribution. Lastly, the study has a scope limit. The study contains an analysis of a considerable number of images (1375). However, Daesh's visual propaganda has numerous outputs, such as videos, social media posts, posters, and other propaganda materials. Therefore, although a sufficient number of images have been examined in the thesis to reach a meaningful conclusion, it only reflects a part of Daesh's visual propaganda.

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APPENDIX A

A. 1 *Dabiq* Top-14 Images' List

Image ID	Emotion in-group	Emotion out-group	Total Emotion	Mean Emotion	Motif	Mean Motif	Total Value	Status
1	1	2	3	2.053359684	7	1.994071146	10	PT
2	2	2	4	2.053359684	6	1.994071146	10	PT
3	1	2	3	2.053359684	6	1.994071146	9	PT
4	1	3	4	2.053359684	5	1.994071146	9	PT
5	1	3	4	2.053359684	5	1.994071146	9	PT
6	1	2	3	2.053359684	6	1.994071146	9	PT
7	1	3	4	2.053359684	5	1.994071146	9	PT
8	1	3	4	2.053359684	5	1.994071146	9	PT
9	1	2	3	2.053359684	6	1.994071146	9	PT
10	1	2	3	2.053359684	6	1.994071146	9	PT
11	1	2	3	2.053359684	6	1.994071146	9	PT
12	2	2	4	2.053359684	5	1.994071146	9	PT
13	1	3	4	2.053359684	5	1.994071146	9	PT
14	1	2	3	2.053359684	6	1.994071146	9	PT

A. 2 Rumiya Top-16 Images' List

Image ID	Emotion in-group	Emotion out-group	Total Emotion	Mean Emotion	Motif	Mean Motif	Total Value	Status
1	1	3	4	2.124309392	6	2.022099448	10	PT
2	1	3	4	2.124309392	6	2.022099448	10	PT
3	1	1	2	2.124309392	6	2.022099448	8	PT
4	1	2	3	2.124309392	5	2.022099448	8	PT
5	1	1	2	2.124309392	6	2.022099448	8	PT
6	1	2	3	2.124309392	5	2.022099448	8	PT
7	1	3	4	2.124309392	4	2.022099448	8	PT
8	1	2	3	2.124309392	5	2.022099448	8	PT
9	1	3	4	2.124309392	4	2.022099448	8	PT
10	1	2	3	2.124309392	5	2.022099448	8	PT
11	1	2	3	2.124309392	5	2.022099448	8	PT
12	1	2	3	2.124309392	5	2.022099448	8	PT
13	1	2	3	2.124309392	5	2.022099448	8	PT
14	1	3	4	2.124309392	4	2.022099448	8	PT
15	1	3	4	2.124309392	4	2.022099448	8	PT
16	1	2	3	2.124309392	5	2.022099448	8	PT

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