“Don’t Hear about Us, Hear from Us”

The role of ISIS’ online magazine *Dabiq* in shaping foreign fighter motivations

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3 August 2016

A thesis submitted to the Board of Examiners in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in Conflict Studies & Human Rights

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3 August 2016

Program Trajectory: Research and Thesis Writing Only (30 ECTS)

Word Count: 22,090

The title on the previous page is a recurring phrase that came up repeatedly during interviews with ISIS members discussing the organisation's media strategy, conducted by Weiss and Hassan (2015: 107).

Abstract

Despite myriad counter measures taken by governments and community initiatives, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has attracted unprecedented amounts of foreign fighters since the establishment of the so-called caliphate in July 2014. This thesis aims to go beyond traditional explanations for this surge by contributing to the growing body of literature on the mobilising efficacy of the organisation's propaganda. Recent efforts of countering the organisation's strategic message have proven inefficient and call for a deeper understanding of the underlying message of ISIS to formulate effective counter policy. This research aims to fill that void by providing an in-depth analysis of the organisation's online magazine *Dabiq*, in order to determine how ISIS constructs a discursive message that aims to shape the motivations of foreign fighters. A combination of theories is used to formulate an answer. After defining foreign fighter motivations through extensive literature review, Corpus-Assisted Discourse-Studies (CADS) is used to establish the overarching message of *Dabiq*'s fourteen current issues. This information is then interpreted using a combination of Collective Action Frames and Identity Narrative Theory to formulate an answer to the research question.

The analysis finds convincing evidence that *Dabiq* creates a discursive message that aims to mobilise foreign fighters by constructing diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames. The findings further demonstrate that it is plausible that the specific realisation of these frames aims to mobilise individuals looking to satisfy their need for identity and a place to belong, by offering certainty and reinforcement of tradition by commitment to the in-group.

Acknowledgements

First of all, I owe a debt of gratitude to the Royal Netherlands Navy, who decided to allow me to follow the Conflict Studies and Human Rights Masters Programme. They granted me the opportunity to experience 'the other side of the fence' and learn to see the field I have been studying for five years from another perspective. I still stand with the motivation I provided a year ago for following this programme. It has greatly enhanced my knowledge of the field of conflict studies and human rights and broadened my outlook on the academic field, as well as nuanced my view on my own profession as a Naval officer. Understanding where our civilian counterparts come from in the formation of their vision and practice will genuinely help me in my further career.

Second, my supervisor Dr. Mario Fumerton, whose emails and conversations never failed to aptly point out the flaws in my work that I had come to be too blind to see. Without your help, this thesis would no doubt have looked very different.

Third, I would like to thank my girlfriend, Michelle Kox, for tolerating my increasing dedication to this thesis and the resultant social neglect she has had to withstand. Living together with someone who turns your apartment into a combination of an office and a library is no easy feat.

Fourth, my parents and close relatives. You have supported me whenever necessary and were always interested to talk about my progress, even when I was not. Your active efforts of pulling me out of my splendid isolation have been important in maintaining steady progress.

Finally, a word of appreciation for my classmates, whom I had a great year with at Utrecht University. Our contact kept me aware that the problems I ran into were neither unique, nor insurmountable. Furthermore, the fiery discussions, both in class and whenever opportune, made me think critically about things I had held for given facts before.

"We do not understand the movement, and until we do, we are not going to defeat it . . . We have not defeated the idea. We do not even understand the idea."[1]

[1] Comment on the influence of the Islamic State and its followers, by Major General Michael K. Nagata, U.S. Special Operations commander in the Middle East (Schmitt, 2014)

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Word list

Bay'ah	Pledge of allegiance.
Dabiq	Islamic State online propaganda magazine, as well as a village in Syria that is foretold to host the final battle of Islam.
Dārul	Lands (of).
Hadith	Refers to the collection of spoken reports attributed to the Prophet Muhammad. Each *hadith* can be verified by the chain of narrators going back to the direct companions of Muhammad.
Hijrah	The act of migrating, referring to Muhammad's journey from Mecca to Medina.
Jawlani [front]	Jabhat al-Nusra, another important militant Islamic faction in Syria.
Jihād	War to preserve the religion of Islam.
Khalīfah	Caliph, the ruler over the caliphate.
Khilāfah	Caliphate.
Khilafāh	Caliphate, an area governed according to *Shari'ah* and declared accordingly.
Kuffār	One who is guilty of *kufr*.
Kufr	Not acknowledging Allah, act of unbelief.
Mujāhidīn	One who is engaged in war, mostly interpreted as *jihād*.
Murtadd	Apostate, one who turns back from Islam.
Rāfidah/Rāfidī	Derogatory term to describe Shi'ah Muslims.
Sahwah	Iraqi militias supporting the United States.
Shām	Historical the Levant, or Greater-Syria.
Sharī'ah	The Islamic laws, supposedly given to men by Allah.
Shirk/Mushrikīn	Apostasy, idolisation.
Tāghūt	Someone guilty of *Tawāghīt*.
Takfir	The act of declaring someone *kufr*.
Tawāghīt	Apostasy, instigating rebellion among Muslims against their leaders.
Ummah	The Muslim community.
Wilāyat	Islamic province, often associated with the caliphate.

1. Introduction

"In Antwerp, hundreds of young female Muslims are supporting the Islamic State, and declaring their loyalty to its leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi." (Lagast, 2016). This statement was made by Intisar Umm Mansur[2], a twenty-three-year-old Belgian Muslim, who once was one of these girls she called sisters. She cheered when the attacks on Charlie Hebdo were committed, felt like "justice was done" (Schouten, 2016), she felt unwelcome, frustrated, and removed from Belgian society (Woussen, 2016), and felt like she had to join the fight by travelling to the Islamic State "because it was something obligatory" (Schouten, 2016). But when the November 13 Paris attack killed and injured hundreds of innocent civilians (Eigenraam, 2015), she began questioning herself, and wanted to "redeem myself from the ideology that has planted itself so deeply inside of me". (Umm Mansur and AlDe'emmeh, 2016).

This is the story of a young Belgian girl who dreamed of traveling to Syria to join the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). She did not go, but many others did. Since its establishment, it is estimated that between 27,000 and 31,000 persons from at least eighty-six countries have travelled to Iraq and Syria to join the Islamic State and other violent extremist groups in the region.[3] Despite sustained international efforts to contain the Islamic State and limit the flow of militants to the region, these numbers signify an increase of more than one hundred percent in eighteen months (The Soufan Group, 2015: 4). These trends constitute a serious risk to the national security and public safety in countries, both in the region and around the globe. To illustrate, of the eight perpetrators of the November 13 Paris attacks, between four and five were French and Belgium nationals that visited Syria before committing their heinous crimes. Apart from the chance of fighters returning to commit attacks in their country of origin, insurgencies containing transnational recruits are also found to account for higher levels of violence than their local counterparts, as well as being more successful in achieving their goals (Malet, 2007; 2009). Indeed, foreign fighters are found in battles across Syria and Iraq, such as the 2015 battle against Kurdish militias near Tall Tamr (Reuters and The Associated Press, 2015).

Of course, people migrating to fight a foreign war in a distant land is neither new, nor exclusively Islamic and has been extensively studied by historians (see, among others, Malet, 2010 and Jung, 2015).

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[2] Intisar Umm Mansur is a pseudonym, as she fears retaliation from her 'sisters' with Sharia4Belgium (Lagast, 2016).
[3] It is naturally hard to determine who joins which organisation and in what exact quantities, as these jihadists are notoriously secretive about their intentions, and when they have arrived getting in touch is hard. However, it is commonly understood that the majority of foreign fighters are with the Islamic State (The Soufan Group, 2015).

The present stream of foreign jihadists[4], however, is unprecedented in recent times (Schmid, 2015: 1), and has inspired an increase in policies aimed at countering this development. The formulation of aims and forms of these policies varies from one country to another, but they generally combine 'hard measures' to discourage and hinder efforts of potential jihadists with 'soft measures' to prevent radicalisation processes (Rijksoverheid, 2014; Muller, 2011). Examples of the first include confiscating passports of suspected potential jihadists, suspending their social welfare benefits, and prosecuting recruiters. Examples of the latter include cooperating with Imams and community workers, supporting relatives who suspect radicalisation of a loved one, and campaigns to counter ISIS's recruitment message (e.g. the Dutch community initiative 'Dare to be Gray' and the U.S. government's 'Think Again, Turn Away' project). Despite these well-intended efforts, the steady increase of migrants to the Islamic State shows that these policies are yet to yield significant results (The Soufan Group, 2015: 4).

So how is ISIS able to motivate foreign nationals to migrate to the so-called Islamic State? This question forms the empirical complication that motivates the current research. Several explanations have been offered by a variety of authors, ranging from the accessible geographic location of Syria (Sutherland, 2014) to psychological delusion (Benmelech and Klor, 2016), but neither have been found to realistically account for the extremely high quantities of sympathisers (Benmelech and Klor, 2016: 5). Sutherland (2014) and De Graaf (2015), among others, suggest that the West has long been overlooking the power of media. Some years earlier, Malet (2009) pointed in this direction by arguing for the importance of framing in motivating foreigners to fight in distant insurgencies. ISIS's propaganda effort is notoriously extensive, and is seen as an important factor in mobilising potential foreign fighters (Benmelech and Klor, 2016).

Still, the efforts of countering jihadist narratives – known as counter framing (Chong and Druckman, 2011) – have been ineffective and unable to target ISIS's message (Tucker, 2016; Katz, 2014). This is mostly due to the fact that current counter framing projects seem to copy ISIS's arguments and formulate an antithesis, without addressing the underlying message that they construct. Consequently, the counter message misses a positive note; it says 'no, don't do that', without saying 'do this instead' (Katz, 2014). It is clear that this policy can benefit from a thorough scrutiny of ISIS's propaganda message. This study aims to provide a contribution in that direction by analysing the online magazine *Dabiq*, which is regarded as a central part of ISIS's propaganda efforts (The Carter Center, 2015). This far, research has focussed on topics such as the slick production, gore, and use of social media by the organisation (Ingram, 2016: 2). Concerning *Dabiq*, Ryan (2014) and Gambhir (2014) studied its structure and contents, but failed to explicitly link

[4] The term jihadist is generally used in the media and every day conversation. Because of this general usage, we will use the term in the introduction, to replace by a more fitting terminology in the methodological section.

these to theories and knowledge of foreign fighter motivations. This study aims to fill that void by conducting an in-depth analysis of *Dabiq*, in order to determine how ISIS aims to discursively shape the motivations of foreign fighters. By investigating this question, it intends to shed light on the apparent underlying strength of ISIS's message, which provides essential knowledge to inform further counter framing policies.

1.1. Research puzzle and sub questions

From the preceding discussion, the research question of this thesis can be formulated as: *How does ISIS construct a discursive message that aims to shape the motivation of foreign fighters through its propaganda magazine Dabiq, since the establishment of the Caliphate on June 29th, 2014?* To answer this question in a structured manner, we work out a series of supporting sub questions to address its constituent elements.

The remainder of chapter one starts with depicting and operationalising the research design, with attention to data collection, method, and the corpus building process. Then, the concept of foreign fighter motivations is operationalised by reviewing the relevant empirical evidence and related field literature. The first chapter will thereby answer the first sub question:

What motivates foreign fighters?

Chapter two contains the analysis. As may be noted here, this is not preceded by an expansive analytical framework. Instead, in order to let the evidence speak for itself, the message is first analysed using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in order to establish the overarching message of *Dabiq*. This has been a conscious decision to avoid a bias while studying the corpus – understood here in as a large, structured sample of texts – which is always a risk in discourse analysis (Freake, Gentil & Sheyholislami, 2011). As such, the second chapter provides an answer to the second sub question:

What overarching message can be identified in Dabiq?

The third and last chapter introduces the interpretive theories that constitute the analytical framework. Based on the preceding analysis of the *Dabiq* corpus, the selected theories are Benford and Snow's Collective Action Frames (1988; 2000), modified and expanded with Identity Narrative (Denis-Constant, 1995). Together, this chapter formulates the answer to the third sub question:

How does the overarching message in Dabiq *relate to the foreign fighter motivations?*

Finally, the answers to these questions are brought together in the concluding chapter to formulate the answer to the research question. As this composition makes clear, the study is interested in the relation between structure and agency; *Dabiq* constitutes a form of organisational communication of ISIS. By investigating how it aims to shape foreign fighter motivations, this study positions itself on the ontological bridge between structure/holism and agency. Epistemologically, it takes an interpretive stance by focussing on understanding how the message is constructed in order to aim to motivate foreign fighters.

1.2. Research design

This section depicts the structure of the research, starting with the data collection methodology and the research strategy. After that, the corpus building process and related criteria are stipulated, with special attention to the medium of *Dabiq* magazine and reliability and validity claims.

1.2.1. Data collection

For this research, the central aim is to analyse ISIS's propaganda magazine *Dabiq*, in order to identify the ways in which it aims to shape the motivations of foreign fighters. To do so, the first important step is to identify the appropriate approach to establish the message that *Dabiq* promulgates. Hence, this section begins by dissecting the qualifier 'propaganda', that has previously been used to seemingly describe the magazine's character. Indeed, propaganda is one of the most pervasive terms in social science literature, owing to its notoriously diverse variety of definitions (Postman, 1979: 128). Without defining what is understood here when using the term and what characterises it, it remains an empty pronoun that is prone to misinterpretation.

First of all, propaganda is a form of communication (Cunningham, 2001) which disseminates information in the form of facts, arguments, rumours, and other conventional communicative devices (Smith, 2016). What sets it apart from neutral or innocent transmissions of information, though, is its more or less systematic effort of influencing public opinion by manipulating other people's beliefs, attitudes, or actions (Smith, 2016). Building on Ellul (1957), Winter (2015: 15) argues that propaganda is more than a means to secure support, rather it is a means to "activate an individual's participation in the propagandist's ideas, while remaining under the illusion of independent thought". Earlier studies of *Dabiq* (Winter, 2015; The Carter Center, 2015) provide evidence that it can indeed be regarded as an effort to activate participation among its audience, as well as distorting and reinterpreting facts, both relating to current events (Gambhir, 2014) and to religious interpretations (Ford, 2016). Still, this conceptualisation does not provide an analytically applicable concept that can be used to analyse *Dabiq*'s message. The partly related concept of discourse does. Being defined as a collection of ideas, concepts and categories that give meaning to reality

(Hajer, 2005: 300), it is often understood as social texts that actively construct meaning and representation (Jabri, 1996: 94-95), making it is easy to see how it is often conflated with propaganda. Discourse analysis offers the analytical possibilities that propaganda theories lack. So, while acknowledging the clear differences between discourse and propaganda, we follow Weaver, Motion, and Roper (2006: 21) by conceptualising the latter as a "restricted, singular discursive perspective".

However, discourse analysis brings some shortcomings, too. The most relevant of these is the often levelled critique on the selection of texts to be studied. Being rooted in qualitative methods, discourse analysis traditionally resorts to manually analysing a small amount of texts, making it impossible to establish the significance of the conclusions in relation to the larger body of discourse (Stubbs, 1994), leading to a risk of bias. (Baker et al., 2008: 283). Since *Dabiq* entails to a total of 863 pages, it is impossible to avoid selecting texts for in-depth scrutiny. Hence, the critiques are applicable to this research and must be dealt with. To do so, we follow Baker et al. (2008), Freake, Gentil & Sheyholislami (2011), and Van Leeuwen & Wodak (1999) by combining an important branch of discourse analysis – the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) – with the quantitative features of Corpus Linguistics (CL) into what is known as Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) (Baker et al., 2008: 297).

The CADS approach offers two important advantages that set it apart from alternative methodologies and make it the most relevant approach. First, CL allows us to use quantitative techniques – further explicated in the next section – to identify the most important themes that constitute the overarching message of *Dabiq*, without being hindered by preconceived notions (Baker et al., 2008: 277). In other words, it allows the data to speak for themselves, instead of 'looking for evidence to proof a preconceived idea' (Baker et al., 2008: 283). Second, the DHA makes a point of taking into account the history and context that shape the specific discourse (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009: 119-120). This necessary qualitative aspect is crucial to understanding *Dabiq*, as it frequently taps into existing pools of ideas, concepts and narratives to construct its message (Winter, 2015: 16). The next section works out the application of the various techniques and concepts related to the CADS approach in the scope of this research.

1.2.2. Research method

The research method constitutes the plan for collecting and analysing evidence that enables the formulation of answers to the research questions (Ragin, 1994: 26). Therefore, this section works out the steps that guide the research process, based on the methods of CL and DHA analysis. To ensure that the process accurately fits the current research, we draw inspiration from different studies that have applied this approach to a variety of themes.

The first step identifies the motivations that underlie foreign fighters' decision to migrate to a

foreign conflict area. This is done by first reviewing the literature to define what exactly is understood as a foreign fighter in this investigation. Subsequently, the evidence of foreign fighters' motivations joining ISIS is compared to the literature on foreign fighter motivations in general to operationalise these for the rest of the research. This step comprises paragraph 1.3.

Step two identifies the central narratives by combining CL and DHA, in order to formulate the overarching message. Narratives are defined here in accordance with the prevailing scholarly literature as "representations of real or fictive events and situations in a time sequence" (Prince, 1982: 1) that constitute a message (Hajer, 20015). These are dissected from the corpus of *Dabiq* using Laurence Anthony's (2005) AntConc software, version 3.4.4. Here, we briefly describe the main steps of the process to provide a basic understanding of the interconnected vocabulary used throughout the next chapter. First, a research corpus is designed and demarcated in section 1.2.3. Then, a frequency list is computed of the words in the corpus. By comparing this to a reference corpus of general English – which is clarified further in section 1.2.3. – we are able to calculate the words that are found more often in *Dabiq* than can reasonably be expected based on statistical chance ($p < 0.0001$) (Anthony, 2014). To get a full understanding of the relations between these key words and the meanings they carry, we examine the collocates (above-chance frequent co-occurrence of two words within a pre-determined span), clusters, and concordance lines (the direct lexical context of the key words) (Baker et al., 2008: 278). Whenever necessary, the concordance lines are extended to whole texts to ensure the correct interpretation of meaning. On occasion, owing to *Dabiq*'s common use of religious or other existing pools of ideas and concepts to construct their narrative (Winter, 2015: 16), we triangulate the CL findings with relevant contextual, historical, and sociological theories to ensure the correct interpretation of its intended meaning, thus following the DHA component of CADS (Reisigl and Wodak, 2008: 119). Finally, to verify the quantitative findings, we follow Baker et al.'s (2008) technique of downsampling to locate every narrative in a representative text by locating the highest key word frequencies using dispersion plots. Altogether, this process forms a reliable indication of the 'aboutness' of a text (Scott, 1999). By departing from the CL findings and using DHA aspects of in-depth background analysis where necessary, this approach resembles the corpus-driven paradigm of CL research (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001) that ensures a high level of objectivity. This section results in the formulation of *Dabiq*'s message from the combination of the identified narratives.

This message is then interpreted. The exact realisation of this process depends on the results of the analysis phase. Step number three, placed in section 3.1.1., compares the established message with the foreign fighter motivations to determine who it aims to address these, finding that the most plausible category is the Identity Seeker. In order to verify this finding and to further determine not only *who* the

message aims to address, but expand the answer to *how* it aims to do so, relevant theories are selected to shed light on the underlying mechanisms. An argued case is made for the integration of Identity Narratives (Denis-Constant, 1995) with Collective Action Frames (Snow and Benford, 1988; Benford and Snow, 2000) to fulfil this function. This work is depicted in sections 3.1.2. and 3.1.3. Building on these theories, an analytic framework is constructed in section 3.1.4.

The fourth and final step, then, uses this analytical framework to determine how the discursive construction of the message plausibly aims to mobilise the selected foreign fighter category's motivations to migrate. This step, found in paragraph 3.2., determines the mobilising potential efficacy of *Dabiq*'s message. This results in an answer to the last sub question, allowing us to proceed to the conclusion in subsequent chapter three.

1.2.3. Corpus building

To analyse ISIS's message, we must determine the sources we use. In the case of ISIS, this message is disseminated via multiple media to recruit foreign fighters, most notably through the internet in the form of social media such as YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram (Klausen, 2015). We have argued before that *Dabiq* is a central part of ISIS propaganda. Adding to this conclusion by many experts, the next section consults the CADS literature to test the appropriateness of *Dabiq* as the unit of observation for this approach. In doing so, this section also attends to the important step of corpus building (Freake, Gentil and Sheyholislami (2011).

Previous CADS studies have often fallen into the pitfall of making limited or casual use of their corpora, for example by merely using it as a repository for examples (Flowerdem, 1997) and avoiding quantitative analysis (Baker et al., 2008: 275). Since this thesis combines both quantitative and qualitative methods into a corpus-driven approach to avoid bias, the selection and demarcation of the reviewed corpus is essential in guaranteeing its reliability.

Because we aim to explore the ways in which ISIS uses propaganda to shape the motivations of foreign fighters, the potential corpus consists of the complete collection of ISIS propaganda. However, averaging three videos and over fifteen photographic reports per day, the amount of propaganda produced by the organisation and associated groups is vast. This daily output is supplemented by incidental films, the magazine *Dabiq*, and *nashīds* (jihadist a-cappella songs) (Winter, 2015: 12). To study all products of this organisation would both be impossible in terms of time and resources, and invalid because not all of these products aim for the same target audience of foreign fighters. To focus our research, the first criterion for our corpus is therefore language; the use of Western languages (preferably English, due to personal linguistic limitations) indicates a possible intention to target a Western audience (Gambhir, 2014:

1). Next, because the pattern of language that constructs a message is rarely accurately discernible from a single text (Stubbs, 1994: 204), and because the fast production rate makes it hard to distinguish the core of well-thought ISIS propaganda from the periphery of related productions, random selection of English-spoken propaganda from the total body is not an option. The highly regulated, English online magazine *Dabiq*, published by Al-Hayat media centre, offers a realistic corpus. To determine its suitability, we must determine its representativeness in terms of text topic, text source, and time span (Gabrielatos, 2007).

The text topic must be related to the audience of foreign fighters. Although it is one of the purposes of this research to determine if this actually is the case, earlier research provides compelling arguments to justify the preliminary choice for *Dabiq*. It is one of ISIS's most elaborate, English-spoken, online propaganda vehicles (The Carter Center, 2015: 1), which is understood as addressing three transnational target audiences: (1) Western policy makers, (2) English-speaking second-generation Muslims or converts, and (3) ISIS members who are not functioning well in the organisation (Colas, 2016: 3)[5]. The second group corresponds with an important group of foreign fighters, whose motivations this research aims to explain. Although the themes change according to the relative situation in the world, the main topic will always be the Islamic State and its relation to its target audiences. Therefore, *Dabiq* is representative in terms of its topic.

As indicated, it is impossible to conduct a qualitative, in-depth study of the complete corpus of ISIS propaganda, urging us to establish a corpus that is a sufficiently representative source to support conclusions relating to ISIS's narrative. *Dabiq* is a clearly defined, high volume periodical – containing an average of sixty pages per issue – which implies that it is able to autonomously develop a recurring narrative over multiple issues.[6] Related to the source representativeness is the corpus size, which must be large enough to enable valid quantitative analysis. With 366,050 words, the *Dabiq* corpus is ideally situated between small (20,000-200,000) and large (one million and above) corpora (Baker et al., 2008: 275). As a result, the quantitative analysis can reliably establish word frequencies. Because a corpus this large cannot be manually analysed, the DHA analysis will take place in an ad-hoc manner, based on the need to verify *Dabiq*'s terms with their general connotations. More in-depth analysis is conducted on a selection of texts, chosen according to the earlier mentioned downsizing process. Its size and autonomous position thus qualify

[5] Discussions about the target audiences of ISIS propaganda continue to this day. Some, including Winter (2015: 32-40) identify up to seven categories. Concerning *Dabiq*, many distinguish either two (Western policy makers and foreign fighters) or three groups (Western policy makers, foreign fighters, and malfunctioning members).

[6] It must be stated here that on 31 July, 2016, Dabiq Issue 15 'Break the Cross' was released. Unfortunately, it was too late to incorporate this new eighty-two-page magazine in the corpus. Nevertheless, it proofs that *Dabiq* is still current and analysing its message remains relevant.

Dabiq a representative source for this research.

The last category, time span, is rather straightforward. Since the establishment of the caliphate in June 2014, the amount of foreign fighters has surged (Briggs and Silverman, 2014: 12). The reasons for this apparent increase in fighter motivation are likely diverse, as pointed out in the introduction. Nevertheless, this coincided with a shift in quantity, quality, and narrative of ISIS propaganda, including the first issue of *Dabiq* (Winter, 2015: 12). By investigating *Dabiq*, we take this shift into consideration and demonstrate a representative time span by focussing on the 'new', seemingly successful ISIS narrative. Altogether, this chapter demonstrated that *Dabiq* provides a realistic representation of ISIS's propaganda effort towards foreign fighters, as well as a researchable option that fulfils the criteria of corpus representativeness.

The last step of the corpus building procedure encompasses the creation of the reference corpus, which is used to determine the key words in the *Dabiq* corpus. According to the literature, a good reference corpus is at least five times larger than the corpus the researcher is interested in – the study corpus (Berber-Sardinha, 2000: 7). In the case of *Dabiq*, which amounts to 375,649 words, this means that the reference corpus must contain at least 1,878,245 words. Furthermore, since we aim to identify the presence of themes you would not expect in a normal, unrelated text, a corpus of general English provides the best option. The choice is made here to use the Open American Nation Corpus (OANC), which comprises 14,698,123 words. These cover themes ranging from newspaper articles, to journals, letters, and fiction to provide as complete an impression as possible of the general use of English. Having covered this last methodological issue, this chapter now proceeds to its final paragraph to discuss the scholarly debate around foreign fighters and their motivations.

1.2.4. Validity and reliability

Every research is impeded by certain limitations due to the methodological choices, leading to a range of implications on the validity and reliability of the results. In the case of this research, the reliability is maintained by using CL techniques and software to filter out keywords. This ensures that as long as the same reference corpus is used, the results of the CL analysis will be comparable. It also reveals the fact that perfect reliability is challenging to achieve, especially in social sciences. The researcher will always have to make choices regarding the corpus selection, keyword interpretation, and interpretation of the results. Being aware of these hazards is important to enable the researcher to handle the study with prudence.

The use of the CADS method also creates external validity. By using keywords and collocates to select themes and articles from the whole *Dabiq* corpus, it can reasonably be argued that the findings are representative for all *Dabiq* issues. Relating to the complete body of ISIS propaganda, further research will have to address the generalizability of the results, as this is beyond the scope of this thesis.

The internal validity concerns the problem of proving a relationship of cause and effect. In this case, two issues arise. First, due to personal limitation of being a non-Muslim, nor being an Islamic scholar, I risk imposing false attributes on certain terms and concepts, such as *jihād*. To overcome this risk of unjust interpretations and therefore flawed conclusions, secondary literature is always consulted concerning such concepts.

The second issue that arises concerns the very valid question: is *Dabiq*'s message the only cause to the effect of foreign fighter motivation? The answer is clearly 'no'. There are other causes, as discussed before, that all interplay in different compositions to motivate an individual to join the Islamic State. However, it is not the aim of this research to uncover all factors that possibly shape foreign fighter motivations; this is done elsewhere. This study intends to understand how *Dabiq* aims to shape these motivations, not to measure its role in relation to other factors. Hence, the external validity is ensured by embedding the study in the scholarly debates of foreign fighter motivations and Collective Action Frames.

1.3. Foreign fighters and their motivations: the academic debate

In the daily conversation and the media, a number of seemingly similar or interrelated terms are being used to describe members and supporters of ISIS without the Syrian or Iraqi nationality – i.e. not originating from the conflict region. These range from jihadist to terrorist. We saw that ISIS has proven capable of mobilising extraordinary amounts of foreign fighters for their cause, despite being an extremely violent and rejected social movement among most parts of the world's population. To get a better understanding of this, the next paragraph starts by disentangling the interrelated terms and defining the concept of foreign fighters. Then, advancing towards the core question, it determines what motivations underlie foreign fighter's involvement in general and review the known evidence of the apparent motivations of foreign supporters of ISIS. This is concluded by classifying foreign fighter motivations to operationalise them for the remainder of the research.

1.3.1. Defining foreign fighters?

The term jihadist is often used in the media to describe the recent influx of Western citizens traveling to – mainly Middle-Eastern – conflict regions. As such, it usually entails both Islamist militant movements and individuals that are perceived as being 'rooted in Islam' and 'existentially threatening' to the West (Hammer and Rothstein, 2012; Kramer, 2003). However, this generalising practice obscures the concept of *Jihād*, which traditionally relates to the struggle of maintaining the religion (Abou El Fadl, 2007: 221). Scholars do not agree on the exact implications of this meaning, as the fiery debate indicates. A divide is sometimes made between a 'greater' and a 'lesser' *Jihād*, with the first denoting an inner spiritual struggle, and

the latter being an outer physical struggle against the enemies of Islam (Morgan, 2010: 87). This dichotomy is controversial, as many scholars denounce it as false and an attempt by "Muslim apologists who are trying to present Islam in the most innocuous manner possible." (Cook, 2005: 165-166). This ongoing debate has led to critique on the use of the term jihadist as being "clumsy and controversial" (Brachman, 2009: 4). This definitional ambiguity makes the term jihadist too inaccurate to use for this research.

Alternative labels include 'fundamentalists' and 'Islamists' (Kramer, 2003), but both terms are insensitive to the crucial difference between locally mobilised fighters and foreign supporters. Instead, Malet makes an argued case for using the term 'foreign fighters', because its widespread use in both popular media and recent research generates greater recognition than jargon-laden terms such as 'transnational insurgent' (2010: 107). Recently, the influx of Western citizens traveling to conflict regions and terrorist attacks by groups such as ISIS and Al Qaeda has sparked renewed attention for the phenomenon of foreign fighters. However, despite stimulating much-needed research, this surge tends to eclipse the fact that the phenomenon itself is much older and foreign fighters have been playing roles of different variety in armed conflicts throughout history (Mendelsohn, 2011).

The combination of a long-existing reality and a lack of scientific attention has led to the proliferation of definitions. The term first appeared in news outlets in the late 1980's (Borum & Fein, 2016: 4), but its popularity spiked after the battle of Kunduz in 2001 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Malet, 2010: 108). Since then, multiple definitions have been proposed. Moore and Tumelty define foreign fighters as *"non-indigenous, non-territorialized combatants who, motivated by religion, kinship, and/or ideology rather than pecuniary reward, enter a conflict zone to participate in hostilities"* (2008: 412). Although striking, this formulation is insensitive to the variety of people that typically join a transnational insurgency, and it requires the fighters to enter the conflict zone. This could deceptively lead us to conclude that the foreign fighters are most present in conflicts based on ethnic rifts to which they are ethnically connected. However, Malet found that the exact opposite is true; non-coethnics involved in non-ethnic conflict make up the majority of foreign fighters (2013. In Borum & Fein, 2016: 14). As we saw earlier, this especially holds true for the population now joining or representing ISIS. They are remarkably young – typically 20-25 years old as opposed to 25-35 in earlier surges (Bakker, 2011; Barrett, 2014) – and have a very superficial understanding of religion and politics (Coolsaet, 2015: 8). Furthermore, coming from around eighty different countries, they constitute an extraordinarily diverse group (Borum & Fein, 2016: 21). The key to understanding this difference lies in the distinction between primordial and constructivist definitions. Ethnicity is primarily related to achieving a sense of belonging to a group, *"based on the belief in shared culture and*

common ancestry" (Demmers, 2012: 24). Although sometimes seen as a 'given (primordial) fact', it is commonly accepted that ethnic identity is, in fact, socially constructed. One of the most salient means of doing this is rhetorically (Baumann, 1999: 67), for example through discursive constructions (Fearon & Laitin, 2000: 851). This pertains especially to the case of foreign fighters, where framing distant conflicts as "threatening a transnational identity group" (Malet, 2010: 99-100) has proven to be the most effective way to attract external combatants (Rosenau, 1964: 293). The group that has perfected the use of these new media is clearly ISIS.

These facts present us with the need for a more flexible conceptualisation. Malet meets this need by offering a simple definition: according to him, foreign fighters are *"(…) non-citizens of conflict states who join insurgencies during civil conflict"* (2013: 9), on which Hegghammer builds when defining a foreign fighter as *"(…) an agent who (1) has joined, and operates within the confines of, an insurgency, (2) lacks citizenship of the conflict states or kinship links to its warring factions, (3) lacks affiliation to an official military organization, and (4) is unpaid"* (2011: 58). This formulation responds to our need for a flexible definition and is therefore the best fit for this research. But formulating a definition is only the first step towards understanding how people are mobilised for a foreign insurgency.

1.3.2. Foreign fighter motivations

As with most questions of human behaviour, there is no singular answer to what motivates people to fight elsewhere or sacrifice their lives for the cause of a struggle taking place thousands of kilometres across the globe (Bergema & Koudijs, 2015: 5; De Graaff, 2016: 45). A French journalist, who remains anonymous for security reasons, infiltrated a French group of ISIS sympathisers for six months and found "an angry group of young men using faith as a cover for their violent intentions" (Fogarty, 2016). In Belgium – one of the largest suppliers of foreign fighters to ISIS's cause – Coolsaet found that motivations varied from anger at Western indifference to the suffering of the Syrian people, to a search for heroes to look up to or become one themselves, to grievances over a lack of hope for a successful future (2015: 17). Overall, it is concluded that the surge is a reaction to an environment that young people feel and perceive as complex, demanding, unequal and devoid of hope for a change for the better (Coolsaet, 2015: 17-18). Notably, Coolsaet found the frequent wish to *"find refuge in a more welcoming environment*" (2015: 17).

To provide some structure to the myriad incentives, we refer to the distinction between push and pull factors made by both Coolsaet (2015:17-19) and Borum & Fein (2016: 7). Push factors are conceptualised as mostly including grievances, such as suffering from discrimination and the absence of a future. Pull factors naturally connect to these feelings by offering an opportunity to defend an identity-based

group (Borum & Fein, 2016: 7) on which movements can capitalise by representing themselves as a provider of these opportunities (Coolsaet, 2015).

Venhaus (2010), by reviewing interviews and personal histories of 2,032 foreign fighters in detention, reaches a similar conclusion. He found one theme was recurring in the interviews: all fighters were "looking for something . . . they want to understand who they are, why they matter, and what their role in the world should be. They have an <u>unfulfilled need to define themselves</u>" (2010: 8. Emphasis added). This motivated him to refer to foreign fighters as 'seekers', dividing them into four categories of potential recruits (Venhaus, 2010: 14): (1) The Revenge Seeker, who perceives himself as a victim in society and accounts for around thirty per cent of the database, mostly residing in Middle Eastern Muslim societies. To him, external forces are making his life hard and preventing him to succeed. This anger can be fuelled by nearly anything, and are often related to fights with family members or being involved in neighbourhood disputes and squabbles. The inflated sense of self-worth that these youngsters often show signs of, underlies their belief that they could set the world aright, but in the end they are mostly looking for an outlet for their frustrations (Venhaus, 2010: 15-16). The (2) Status Seeker sees a world that does not understand or appreciate him as he perceives himself, amounting to around twenty-five per cent of the total group and mostly found among diaspora communities in the West. Their frustrations are born in unrealised expectations that they will be successful in his new home country and be recognised by the new community. Slightly similar to the Status Seeker, these individuals believe they have value and a worth to the world that their position in society does not reflect. This motivates them to try to improve their status in the community or demonstrate their prominence to the world. Thus, this group is looking to stand out from the crowd and receive the recognition they claim to deserve (Venhaus, 2010: 15-16). The third group consists of energy-filled (3) Thrill Seekers looking to prove their manhood by accomplishing an arduous task or surviving a harrowing adventure. This need is fuelled by the feeling of a boring and unchallenging life at home and a longing for the next adventure. This group is the smallest of all, accounting for only five per cent of the total group. By contrast, the fourth and final group constitutes the largest category of potential foreign fighters with forty per cent of research subjects fitting within its definition. These are the (4) Identity Seekers, who, unlike the other types who want to stand out from the crowds, are more concerned with assimilating into a defining organisation. This need to define oneself by group identity is strong and universal among developing adolescents (Venhaus, 2010: 18). Individuals fitting this category need the structure, rules and, perspective that come from belonging to a group, because it helps them define themselves and the world around them by offering clear rules and a coherent world vision. In short, they are looking for a place to belong (Venhaus, 2010: 18-19). Now that we have defined what this research

regards as foreign fighters and what evidence and literature say about their motivations, we can proceed to formulating a sub conclusion that answers the first sub question.

1.4. Sub conclusion – A typology of foreign fighter motivations

After considering a variety of methodological issues, this chapter presented the scholarly debate on foreign fighters and their motivations, which allows us to answer the first sub question: *What motivates foreign fighters? We followed* Hegghammer's flexible formulation of defining a foreign fighter as an agent *"(…) who (1) has joined, and operates within the confines of, an insurgency, (2) lacks citizenship of the conflict states or kinship links to its warring factions, (3) lacks affiliation to an official military organization, and (4) is unpaid"* (2011: 58). It was then found that foreign fighters are motivated by myriad incentives, often very personal. Building on a variety of in-depth analysis, Venhaus (2010) concluded that these stimuli are often related to the search to satisfy unfulfilled needs. Therefore, he proposes to categorise foreign fighters accordingly as Revenge Seekers, Status Seekers, Thrill Seekers, and Identity Seekers. This classification provides us with a manageable conceptualisation of the motivations. Therefore, the answer to the first sub question is: Foreign fighters are motivated by their search for fulfilling needs as Revenge, Status, Thrill, and Identity Seekers. In order to answer the research question of *how Dabiq* aims to shape these motivations, the next section proceeds to discuss the analysis of *Dabiq*'s overarching message.

2. Analysing *Dabiq* magazine

This chapter provides the analysis of *Dabiq* magazine using a combination of CL and DHA methodology to answer the second sub question – What overarching message can be identified in *Dabiq*? To do so, we first explore the findings of recent scholarship on *Dabiq* and discuss their relevance for the current analysis. Subsequently, we discuss the preliminary step of constructing the frequency and keyword list, in order to provide insight in the database that underpins the further analysis.

Then, the analysis itself is presented in three sections, each pertaining to one of the key narratives identified through the analysis. These narratives are brought together in the conclusion to formulate the overarching message in *Dabiq* and answer the second sub question.

2.1. Preliminary exploration

Much research has been conducted lately on ISIS's propaganda in general (Fernandez, 2015; Winter. 2015; Zelin, 2015) as well as on *Dabiq* specifically (i.a. Ryan, 2014; Gambhir, 2014). Of these focussed projects, The Carter Center (2015) offers the most relevant information for this study. Analysing the first twelve issues, they identified three recurrent topics in *Dabiq*: Religious discussions, non-military discussions of the West, and discussions of developments in and around the territory of the Islamic State. Using these themes as a vantage point, a closer look at the fourteen issues currently available reveals that approximately thirty-one per cent concerns overt religious discussions. Fifteen per cent relates to the West in a non-military way - an illustrative example is the frequent column 'In the Words of the Enemy', in which Western publications and statements are discussed and often interpreted to suit ISIS narratives. The last significant category consists of updates, mostly military, from in and around the territory of the Islamic State.[7] The preliminary reading of *Dabiq* unveiled that some of these themes are constructed as narratives over the course of multiple articles in what can be seen as a serial story. The seven articles concerning Al Qaeda and its supposed allies provide a case in point. Furthermore, the first reading showed that narratives are also constructed across various genres (Fairclough, 1995: 14). For example, the narrative concerning the introduction of the *dinar* as the Islamic State's currency is developed in both specific articles

[7] Despite the fact that *Dabiq* Issue 15 could not be included in this research, in-depth reading of the articles supports the conclusions drawn in this thesis. Especially noteworthy is the fact that this issue focusses on denouncing Christianity and discussing/interviewing 'brothers' who converted from Christianity to Islam.

and in the op-ed style writings of John Cantlie.[8] For our research, this dispersion of the Carter Institutes' themes confirms the earlier statement that nominating texts for in-depth analysis, based on their titles, risks finding patterns that are not actually representative of the complete message.

The CADS approach used in this study aims to overcome this deficiency. Following Freake, Gentil & Sheyholislami (2011), we start the analysis by computing a keyword list. In this research, this list comprises a total of 2,678 words that occur more often in the target corpus than expected by chance ($p < 0.0001$) (Baker, 2006; Anthony, 2014: 7), of which commonly the top 100 are examined to determine the 'aboutness' of the target corpus (Gabrielatos, 2013). By using a reference corpus of general English, we managed to sort out those words that are to be expected in everyday language use – so-called stop words (Luhn, 1959) – such as 'the', 'a', and 'our'. The resulting keyword list is depicted in appendix 1. By analysing the collocates of each keyword and placing it in the context of concordance lines, we create an overview of what is said about the topics. By grouping together words with similar discursive meanings, based on a combination of background analysis and co-text occurrence, we classify them into three categories of reference or topics.

The first category is the position of Muslims and Islam, consisting of: '*Kufr/Kuffār/Kafir'*, '*Takfir'*, 'Crusaders/Crusader', '*Rāfidah/Rāfidī*, 'Factions', 'Sahwah', '*Tāghūt*/*Tawāghīt*', 'Jawlani [front]', 'Syrian', '*Murtadd*/*Murtaddīn'*, 'Apostate/Apostates/Apostasy', 'Allies', 'Fight/Fighting', 'Enemy', 'Regime', '*Shirk/ Mushrikīn'*, 'Hypocrites', 'Lands', and '*Dārul*'. The second category covers keywords relating to the *Islamic State itself*. These are 'Islamic', 'State', '*Khilafāh'*, '*Wilāyat/Wilāyah*', '*Mujāhid*/*Mujāhidīn'*, 'Muslims/Muslim', 'Soldier/Soldiers', 'Cause', '*Ummah'*, '*Khalīfah'*, *Shām*', and '*Sharī'ah*. The last category covers a personal call to action, indicated by the keywords '*Hijrah', 'Jihād'* and *'Brother/Brothers'*. Although it only consists of three keywords, the in-depth analysis shows their significance to the message of *Dabiq*. Clearly, these three categories are not strictly divided. As the next section demonstrates, they relate to each other to construct a collective narrative that defines the discursive message of *Dabiq*.

[8]John Cantlie, a British war photographer and correspondent born in Winchester, was abducted twice in 2012 by jihadist groups in Syria. After being rescued within a week the first time, he was captured again and remains imprisoned to this day. On 18 September 2014, he suddenly reappeared in the first part of the ISIS video series 'Lend me your ears' (BBC, 2014). He has presented ten videos since then, covering various themes that mostly focus on discrediting Western interventions with the Islamic State. Besides his filming, a regular column in *Dabiq* is attributed to Cantlie. It is impossible to ascertain whether he is the actual author or the articles are only published under his name for propaganda purposes.

2.1. Identifying narratives

2.2.1. Narrative One – The position of Muslims and Islam

One of the most prevalent themes in *Dabiq* is the situation of Muslims, both regionally and globally. This is most strongly evidenced by the many keywords concerned with determining who qualifies as a 'true' Muslim and who does not. In the eyes of ISIS, many groups are placed outside the Muslim community, either because they are of other faith altogether and therefore *Kuffār*[9] (i.a. Christians and Jews)[10] or because they are apostates and are declared *Kufr*. *Dabiq* uses an elaborate vocabulary to denote both groups. The keyword *Takfīr* (*N* = 132) is explanatory of this practice, as it describes the very act of declaring other Muslims as *kufr*, who can therefore be killed without sin (Watt, 1968: 55-56). The most common keyword is 'Apostates' (including the word forms 'Apostate' and 'Apostasy', total *N* = 531), and the associated 'Hypocrites' (*N* = 117) and '*Murtadd*' (plural '*Murtaddīn*', total *N* = 373), indicating Muslims who consciously abandon Islam in either word or deed (Peters and De Vries, 1976: 7). In *Dabiq*, these keywords collocate with the keyword 'Regime' (*N* = 245) to denote the regimes that are Sunni-oriented – and thus acknowledged as true Muslims by ISIS – but have abandoned their faith. Those declared as apostates include the governments of Turkey, Afghanistan, and Saudi-Arabia. Other apostate collocates are the Iraqi Sunni faction that cooperated with the United States, known as the '*Sahwah*' (*N* = 244) and other insurgent factions in the region such as the *'Jawlani Front'* (Jabhat al-Nusra, *N* = 213) and the 'Free Syrian Army' (*N* = 48). Furthermore, '*Tāghūt*/*Tawāghīt'* (*N* = 447) – representing the grave act of instigating rebellion among Muslims against their leaders (Mir, 2007: 55) – collocates with Arab (*N* = 29). Lastly, ISIS appears to give exceptional attention to the *Rāfidah/Rāfidī* (*N* = 489), one of the most frequent keywords in the corpus. It is used as a derogatory sobriquet to portray someone as a rejectionist of legitimate Islamic authority and leadership. In practice, the term has become synonymous with members of the Shi'a branch of Islam, who make up important majorities in Iraq and Iran (Kohlberg, 1979: 677-679). The high frequency of this keyword suggests that ISIS places special interest with discrediting those groups as insincere Muslims who oppose truthful Islam. The message that ISIS seems to send with this is that their interpretation of the faith is the only right one to follow, denoting all other regional actors as imposters.

Further scrutiny of the collocates and clusters associated with these keywords reveal attributes of

[9] *Kaffir* is used as a derogatory term for unbeliever, *Kuffār is the plural form.*

[10] Whether or not Jews and Christians, as People of the Book or *Ahlul-Kitāb*, are actually *Kuffār* is a point of religious debate, but they are often treated more leniently than other accused of *Kufr* (Glasse, 1989: 247; Houtsma, 1993: 619). Nevertheless, ISIS regards them as one and the same, for example when speaking of the *"(…)* Jihād *against the* Kuffār *of* Ahlul-Kitāb*."* (*Dabiq 10*: 10).

(military) threat to this message. The strongest common collocate among all is 'Against', creating clusters such as 'The *tāghūt* in the war against Islam' (*Dabiq* 10: 8) and 'waging defensive *jihād* in their own land against the nearer apostate enemies' (*Dabiq* 14: 13). Other collocates include 'Army' (*N* = 13) and 'Soldiers' (*N* = 10)[11] to add to the militaristic character of the threat. Lastly, the apostates are often portrayed as working together, as is indicated by clusters representing generalising synecdoches, which replace a semantically narrower expression with a semantically wider one to. Examples include *whole for part, species for genus,* and *plural for singular* (Wodak et al., 2009: 44). In *Dabiq*, this is found in patterns such as "(…) the *Murtaddīn* from the apostate factions allied to the *tawāghīt* of Pakistan" (*Dabiq* 13: 53). These patterns imply argumentation schemes of comparison and similarity, allowing ISIS to compose the scenario of a varied group of regional apostates, united in their aim to fight against the 'rightful' Muslims, that are therefore under threat (Wodak et al., 2009: 37-38).

The message of threat is further expanded by including the groups that are undisputedly *Kufr*, as is illustrated by the fact that the keyword *Takfīr* does not collocate with any of the next keywords to indicate that it is not deemed necessary to explicitly excommunicate these groups. Again, ISIS uses different labels, namely *'Kufr/Kafir/Kuffār*' (*N* = 742) and '*Shirk/Mushrikīn'* (*N* = 229). The latter means polytheism/polytheists, which is an unforgivable crime in Islam and therefore treated in the same way as *kuffār* (Kamoonpuri, 2001). The fact that they collocate with each other (*N* = 21) indicates that ISIS treats them as such. For example, when discussing Bush's statement that ISIS is a threat to civilisation, *Dabiq* notes that by this he means *"the civilization of* shirk *and* kufr, (…) of usury and prostitution, (…) of humiliation and subjugation." (*Dabiq* 4: 4). At the same time, this showcases ISIS's idea that the world is strictly divided into two categories; Muslims and *Kuffār*/apostates. They underscore this stance by associating words denoting geographical adjectives such as 'Lands' (*N* = 69) and '*Dārul*' (*N* = 83), which means 'house of' or 'lands of' (Haleem, 2010: 68). Throughout *Dabiq*, these collocate with the words *'Kufr'* (*N* = 39) and 'Islam/Muslims' (*N* = 44) to form an argument of comparison that portrays the world in terms of black and white (Wodak et al., 2009: 42), emphasising intra-group differences. Just how deeply ISIS wants to stimulate this message of 'us against them' becomes apparent in the fact that they conceal the third historical '*Dārul*', *Sulh* – or the lands with which Muslims had treaty obligations (Haleem, 2010: 66).

Again, ISIS qualifies those they have identified as non-Muslims as enemies of true Islam. The most frequent collocate 'Against' (*N* = 115) forms clusters of threat, such as *'Kuffār* against the Muslims" (*Dabiq*

[11] Some collocate frequencies may seem relatively low when compared to the keyword frequencies (e.g. *N* = 13 versus *N* = 531). This is explained by the fact that collocates are very specific word combinations, as described in chapter one. All collocates have been selected as having a statistical significance of 5.0 or greater to ensure their relevance in determining *Dabiq*'s message.

Issue 10: 58). To enhance the perception of threat, the keyword 'Crusader/Crusaders' (*N* = 629) is very often used to represent the unbelievers abroad. Referring to the historical Christian invasions of the Near-East does several things. First and foremost, it reinforces the message of foreign forces of a different faith, invading Muslim lands to impose their religion and massacre Muslims (Tyerman, 2006). Going beyond contradicting Muslims with the unbelievers, this creates the impression of an existential fight for the survival of righteous Islam, depicted by the frequent collocate 'War' (*N* = 28) in clusters such as 'War against Islam and the Muslims' (*N* = 22). Furthermore, grounding the threat in historic narratives constructs a sense of continuation (Wodak et al., 2009: 37). Altogether, these arguments constitute another message of external military threat to pious Muslims, this time on a global scale and firmly rooted in history to emphasise its severity.

The third and last group of significant keywords modifying *Dabiq*'s message consists of 'Enemy/Enemies' (*N* = 370) and 'Ally/Allies/Allied' (*N* = 401). Analysis of concordance lines shows that the first group represents the assertion that the plethora of factions named above have found a common enemy in Islam, that urges them to mutual support. The word group revolving around alliances further illustrates the same argument through specific collocates such as 'Jawlani' (*N* = 21), 'Al-Qa'Idah' (*N* = 27), 'America' (*N* = 16), and 'Crusaders' (*N* = 30), suggesting that regional apostates (Jawlani Front and Al-Qa'Idah) and the global epiphany of *kuffār* (America and crusaders) are working together to fight against an existential war against true Islam. This is the first overarching argument that can be identified as an important narrative in the *Dabiq* corpus.

To verify this narrative, we used the most frequent and representative keywords – 'Apostates', 'Kufr', 'Crusaders', and 'Against' – as criteria for selecting texts for downsampling. The two-fold threat of apostates and crusaders makes it hard to find texts that cover both subjects, so we chose to work with two separate examples. The first text is *"The Extinction of the Grayzone"* (*Dabiq* Issue 7: 54-66), which is the only article containing all four keywords. The theme is the end of all forms of apostasy – occupying a 'grayzone' – to be replaced by the strict division of apostates that instigate the decay of Islam and crusaders that are set on destroying Islam. Linguistically, these arguments of dissimulation are constructed by juxtaposing synechdochical anthroponyms such as 'camps of apostasy' and 'the lands of Shirk'. Words constructing difference, such as 'either', are used to strictly divide the world (Wodak et al., 2009: 38); *"either you are with the crusade, or you are with Islam"* (*Dabiq* Issue 7: 54). This emphasis on dismantling the grayzone was not picked up by the quantitative analysis, proving the value of the combination of CL and CDA. The second article, *"From the battle of Al-Ahzāb to the war of coalitions"* (*Dabiq* Issue 11: 46-55),

underscores this dichotomy by discussing the relations between apostates and crusaders and their common goal of seeing Islam destroyed.

Altogether, the in-depth analysis of the selected articles confirms and expands the overarching argumentation patterns that we identified through collocate and cluster analyses. An important factor in the message of both threats to Muslims is the role of the *Khilafāh* as the solution to both problems. This particular argument will be the focus of the next section.

2.2.2. Narrative Two – The Islamic State

The second recurring theme in *Dabiq* concerns the Islamic State itself, focussing on its historical roots and hostile relationship with the outside world. This is indicated by the high frequency of the keyword 'Islamic' (*N* = 1550), which collocates with 'State' (*N* = 1536) in eighty-one per cent of the total number of collocates, implying that they are functionally related to each other to form the word group 'Islamic State' (henceforth IS). The number of associated keywords that carry a historical-Islamic background is remarkably high. '*Khilafāh*' (caliphate, *N* = 579) is often used as a substitute for IS, and its 'provinces' are referred to as '*Wilāyat/Wilāyah*' (*N* = 310), including the classical region '*Shām*' (*N* = 437) for modern-day Syria. Lastly, the leader of the organisation – Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī – is given the title '*Khalīfah*' (*N* = 113).

All the seemingly trivial analogies above carry important symbolic meaning, which can only be laid bare through in-depth analysis of the respective sociohistorical context (Reisigl and Wodak, 2009: 93; Wodak, 2009: 3). The connecting argument is the keyword *'Ummah'* (*N* = 184) – the Islamic community, regardless of nationality – which collocates with the directly preceding words 'Muslim' (*N* = 19) and 'The' (*N* = 186) to form the cluster 'The Muslim *Ummah'* (*Dabiq* Issue 1: 3). This pattern is important, because the use of the definite article 'The' sets it apart from the more general use as simply meaning 'community' (Houtsma, 1993: 125-126). The *Ummah*, according to the *Qur'an*, was first founded by the prophet Muhammad and later ruled by his successors, who are called *Khalīfah* (caliph). These rulers are seen as leaders (*Imamah*) in both religious and political affairs for the entire Muslim community, and specifically in the area that they govern according to Allah's '*Sharī'ah*' (meaning Law, *N* = 297) – the so-called *Khilafāh* (Kadi, 2013: 81-86). ISIS's use of this vocabulary in representing both their Islamic State and its leadership is instrumental in narrating its message, which is illustrated by the feature length article *"The concept of* Imamah *(leadership) is from the* Millah *(path) of Ibrahim"* (*Dabiq* Issue 1: 21-29). Here, they formulate their perspective on the inheritance of divine leadership in detail, claiming that *"the Islamic State . . . is regarded as an unquestionable* imamah*"* (*Dabiq* Issue 1: 27) and the 'Revival' of the *Khilafāh* (*N* = 16). So, the message ISIS aims to transmit here seems to be that their Islamic State is the direct continuation of the original caliphate, *"founded upon the prophetic methodology"* (*N* = 18) of Muhammad. This means that they are a

state and a leading light for Muslims of all nationalities – *the Ummah* – which is founded on the heritage and will of Allah. Using the classical terms of *Shām* and *Wilāyat/Wilāyah* upholds this image. The first refers to the name of the region of Syria under the caliphate, the latter to its administrative regions. In the case of ISIS, factions all over the world can declare their loyalty to the IS in order to qualify as a *Wilāyat*, underscoring the idea that the IS supports *all* Muslims, as long as they abide to their interpretation of Islam (Lavoix, 2016).

From the depiction of the Islamic State as representing the *Ummah*, it follows that the apostate and crusader threats that trouble Muslims are the responsibility of the *Khilafāh* to avert. Over the course of *Dabiq*, this topic is repeatedly addressed, as indicated by keywords and collocates relating to military themes. Much like the keywords denoting the threat to Muslims in general, 'Islamic State' itself collocates strongly with 'Against' (*N* = 223), 'War' (*N* = 67, and 'Coalition' (*N* = 25) in clusters such as 'The war against the Islamic State' (*N* = 19) and 'They form a coalition against the Islamic State' (*N* = 25). These patterns imply that the Islamic State is being threatened by an alliance of foreign armies. However, rather than simply defending itself, keywords indicate that *Dabiq* portrays the *Khilafāh* as being on a conquest. Collocates such as 'Expansion' (*N* = 28) and 'Mission' (*N* = 11) illustrate this, for example when stating that "*[the Islamic State] strive[s] to re-establish a* Khilafāh *stretching from Spain to Indonesia*" (*Dabiq* Issue 4: 4).

Further keyword analysis confirms the inclination towards the military aspects of the caliphate. Significant themes include 'Soldier/Soldiers' (*N* = 450), '*Mujāhid*/*Mujāhidīn'* (those who fight for Islam (Aly, 2016), *N* = 614), and 'Fight/Fighting' (*N* = 578). The latter implies that for the Islamic State to be successful, a fight must be fought, "*until there is no fitnah* (rebellion) *and until the religion, all of it, is for Allah*" (*Dabiq* Issue 7: 22). Furthermore, it collocates with 'Cause' (*N* = 31) in the pattern 'In/For the cause of Allah' (*N* = 23) to connect the effort of fighting to the divine purpose of the Islamic State. The first two categories elaborate on this purpose by discussing the soldiers and *Mujāhidīn* of the *Khilafāh* – both are used interchangeably – to give a more personal note to the rather abstract terms of the existential struggle it has been describing until this point. Recurring interviews with Islamic State fighters in the section 'Among the Believers are Men' are further evidence of the importance ISIS seem to attach to individual identification. The next section will build on this evidence when discussing the personal dimension of *Dabiq*'s message.

To verify the findings from the analysis, we use the keywords 'Islamic State', '*Khilafāh'*, 'Soldier/Soldiers' and '*Mujāhid*/*Mujāhidīn'* as downsampling criteria for selecting a text to analyse the text-internal co-text (Reisigl and Wodak, 2009:93). All of these are brought together in the article "*Remaining and Expanding"* (*Dabiq* Issue 5: 22-33). The core is made up of the pledges of allegiance of several *Wilāyat* – the Arabian Peninsula, Yemen, Sinai, Libya, and Algeria – to the Islamic State. Each of these expresses

some words of advice “*from* Mujāhidīn *to* Mujāhidīn *everywhere*” (*Dabiq* Issue 5: 22), often reiterating the earlier found message of a caliphate on the prophetic methodology. The vast majority of the recommendations reminds the reader of their *“obligation to unity under the* Khilafāh”, sometimes addressing them directly – “*what is your excuse, O* Mujāhidīn?” (*Dabiq* Issue 5: 24). This confirms the impression given by the earlier keyword and collocate analyses that the Islamic State calls on every Muslim, irrespective of nationality, to join their fight against the apostates and crusaders.

Thus, the second narrative in *Dabiq's* message can be formulated as: The Islamic State is the direct continuation of the prophetic *Khilafāh*, which embodies the political and religious leadership of the international Muslim community. As such, it takes up arms against the apostates and crusaders that threaten and suppress the Muslim *Ummah*. Furthermore, the in-depth text analysis revealed significant amounts of personal calls to action. The next section deepens this notion through additional systematic scrutiny.

2.2.3. Narrative Three – An individual duty

The final frequent theme in *Dabiq* is the personal call to action they send out to their audience. This focus emerged from the in-depth co-text analysis of the second narrative and is validated by the keywords ‘*Hijrah’* (*N* = 246), *‘Jihād’* (*N* = 661) and *‘Brother/Brothers’* (*N* = 442). Although only three keywords denoting this theme have passed the threshold of significance, their constant high frequency indicates their salience within the corpus (Baker, 2008). Similar to the keywords in the second narrative, the first two concepts carry important historical-Islamic value. So to discern their meaning in *Dabiq*’s message, we will start by scrutinising the sociohistorical context (Reisigl and Wodak, 2009: 93; Wodak, 2009: 3).

‘Hijrah’ is a relatively complicated term that fuels a long-standing debate (for a compelling overview, see: Rahmaan al-Mutairi, 2001), which is mostly translated as ‘to emigrate in the name of Allah’ (Solomon and Al Maqdisi, 2009). Although this is essentially true, the full associations it entails are left unspoken. The concept dates back to the first *hijrah* by the prophet Muhammad from Mecca – where he and his followers were an endangered minority – to Medina in 622, to preserve the Muslim community and make it prosper (Gould, 2015). These days, the Islamic scripts relating to *hijrah* are interpreted as existing in two ways: *hijrah* to leave an area ruled by sin (because living among sinners without correcting them makes a sinner of oneself), and *hijrah* from the lands of *kufr* if one fears for his religion (Rahmaan al-Mutairi, 2001). The preceding sections showed how *Dabiq* plants the seeds for promoting emigration by stating that Muslims are threatened in non-Muslim lands and by distinguishing between the lands of the crusaders/apostates and the lands of Muslims. The collocation of ‘*Hijrah*’ with ‘land/lands’ (*N* = 26) and Dārul (*N* = 16) to form the cluster ‘*Hijrah from* Dārul-Kufr *to* Dārul-Islam’ (*N* = 6) underlines this assertion.

In light of the question of whether or not performing *hijrah* is indeed obligatory, three categories

are distinguished: those living among disbelievers, who are unable to practice their faith and are able to migrate, are obliged to do so. Those living among *kuffār* that are able to practice their religion, are recommended to emigrate to Muslim lands. Finally, those unable to perform *hijrah* are acquitted of this duty (Rahmaan al-Mutairi, 2001). In *Dabiq*, ISIS ignores these categories and '*calls upon every Muslim in every place to perform* hijrah *to the Islamic State*' (*Dabiq* Issue 9: 54) and claims that if a *Khilafāh* is present, '*hijrah to the land of Islam is obligatory'* (*Dabiq* Issue 1: 11).

'Hijrah' frequently collocates with *'Jihād'* (*N* = 23) to denote ISIS's interpretation of emigration as '*taking the first step towards* jihād – hijrah*.'* (*Dabiq* Issue 3: 28). As an Islamic concept, *jihād* can be understood as either an inner spiritual struggle or as the physical struggle against the enemies of Islam (Morgan, 2010: 87). The latter is a collective duty (*Fard al-Kiyafa*) to the extent that only those who are directly threatened are obliged to join in *jihād* (Khadduri, 1955: 60). However, Sunni-Muslims attest that if a caliphate is present, the *Kalīfah* can declare *jihād* an individual duty (*Fard al-Ayn*) for all Muslims (Al-Dawood, 2013). The previous sections have provided evidence that ISIS frames its strive as a 'defensive' (collocates with '*Jihād'*, *N* = 10) existential struggle, which they use to justify the proclamation – in the frequent cluster – that *'*Jihād *is* Fard al-Ayn' (*N* = 14). Furthermore, the collocate 'Claimant/Claimants' (*N* = 97) to depict other jihadist factions shows that *Dabiq* portrays ISIS as the only legitimate faction to follow in *'Jihād'*, so as to distinguish itself from other jihadist organisations in the region. The additional collocates 'Cause' (*N* = 24), 'Path' (*N* = 22) and 'Allah' (*N* = 61) remind the audience that by performing *jihād*, they follow in the direct footsteps of the prophet Muhammad and fight '*For the cause of Allah'* (*N* = 13).

The final keyword pertaining to the personal dimension of *Dabiq*'s message is 'Brother/Brothers' (*N* = 442), which in itself denotes a family metaphor (Lakoff, 1996: 13). The practice of referring to others as siblings highlights an act of ethnic insider designation that defines a fictive relation of kinship (Kim, 2015: 3). Such constructions are seen as an important indicator of a metaphorical sense of belonging to a group (Harland, 2005: 495). Hence, the frequent use of this term in *Dabiq* demonstrates an effort to suggest a sense of belonging among those that abide by the rules of the Islamic State and their interpretation of Islam. In addition, 'Brother/Brothers' collocates with a remarkable regularity with the personal deictic expressions 'Our' (*N* = 46), 'My' (*N* = 18), 'His' (*N* = 36), and 'Your' (*N* = 49). The use of these pronouns is proven to serve a solidarity-building function (Zupnik, 1994: 367) by delineating groups of inclusion and exclusion (Miller, 2004: 13; Adetuni, 2006: 178). Concordance analysis reveals that 'Our' and 'His' are mostly used in a descriptive sense: "(…) *if you do this [follow Allah's commandments] then you are our brothers*" (*Dabiq* Issue 10: 60); "(…) *his brothers clashed with the apostates*" (*Dabiq* Issue 9: 42). 'My' and 'Your' indicate a personal speaker addressing the reader, hence it is almost exclusively found within the

genre of interviews, for example "*My brothers and sisters, I call on you to be concerned about the condition of the* Ummah" (*Dabiq* Issue 7: 51). Both forms – descriptive and personal – increase the awareness of the possibility of belonging to the in-group of the *Ummah*, and of the fighters of *Jihād* in particular.

Through downsampling, we selected the article *"Hijrah from Hypocrisy to Sincerity"* (*Dabiq* Issue 3: 25-34) to verify the results of the keywords '*Hijrah'* and *'Jihād'*. The central theme of text is the act of *hijrah* and *jihād* – again, *hijrah* is portrayed as the path to *jihād* – and the urgency of performing it. It is stated time and again that *"an unkept promise of* hijrah *to Allah could result in a devastating ending for the slave [the believer]*" (*Dabiq* Issue 3: 25) that leads to hypocrisy. As we have seen in the first narrative, ISIS regards hypocrites as *Kuffār*, meaning that refusing to perform *hijrah* is enough to cross the border to the group of unbelievers. This, and other reminders that Muslims are *"(…) subjugated to a kāfir master"* (*Dabiq* Issue 3: 29) and that every minute spent among *Kuffār* makes a Muslim more sinful (*Dabiq* Issue 3: 29-31) create an overall high sense of urgency to migrate to the Islamic State.

Because no article could be found that addressed all three keywords of this section together, a second article was selected to verify the results of the earlier analysis. The article *"Interview with Abū Muqātil at-Tūnusī"* (*Dabiq* Issue 8: 59-62) presented the highest quantity of the keyword 'Brother/Brothers' (*N* = 33) and thus qualifies for further scrutiny. *Muqātil* is interviewed about his deadly attack on Tunisian politician Mohammed Brahmi. This in itself underscores the focus on personal agency that we mentioned earlier, by capitalizing on the effects one man can have. The article further contains a report of how and why *Muqātil* conducted his actions and his opinions on current events. All these discussions are interlaced with high respect for his 'brothers' with whom he conducted the attack, and with deep resentment towards the *tawāghīt*. The article then ends with a call to the "*brothers in France"* to *"(…) wake up and fight the enemies of* Allah *for* Allah's *cause"* (*Dabiq* Issue 8: 62).

These articles are both exemplary of the arguments we deducted from the corpus through quantitative analysis. Consequently, the third narrative that ISIS seems to transmit comes down to: *Hijrah and jihād* have been made into an individual duty to preserve the Muslim *Ummah*. Those who respond to it are granted a place among the brothers of the caliphate, those who ignore it become more hypocritical by the day and are therefore *kufr.* With this last narrative, all significant keywords have been examined. The next paragraph brings the results of the analysis together in order to formulate the overarching message of *Dabiq*.

2.3. Sub conclusion – *Dabiq's* message

The combined use of quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis, with additional theoretical insights whenever relevant, has provided a valid insight into the most frequent and significant keywords in ISIS's discourse in *Dabiq*. The first narrative that was thus identified promotes a bipolar worldview in which no grayzone remains for 'fake believers' to hide in. An alliance between apostates and unbelievers (*kuffār*) is suggested and they are portrayed as a grave threat to the international community of Muslims, the *Ummah*. The narrative is formulated as follows:

> *The world is divided along the lines of faith into two hostile regions:* Dārul-kufr *and* Dārul-Islam. *Regional apostates* (Jawlani *Front and* Al-Qa'Idah) *and the global epiphany* of kuffār *(America and crusaders) are working together to fight against an existential war against true Islam.*

The second narrative raises the recently established Islamic State as the protector of the *Ummah* that takes up arms to defend and expand the reign of Islam. It makes extensive use of references to Islamic history to validate these claims. Consequently, it places the Islamic State in the lineage of the *Khilafāh* of the prophet Muhammad. Frequent use of military-themed terms denotes the violent aspect of the solution offered by ISIS. The narrative can then be defined as:

> *The Islamic State is the direct continuation of the prophetic* Khilafāh*, which embodies the political and religious leadership of the international Muslim community. As such, it takes up arms against the apostates and crusaders that threaten and suppress Muslims.*

The third and final narrative builds on the sense of threat to connect the caliphate solution to individual involvement of every Muslim. The organisation capitalizes on the religious concepts of *hijrah* and *jihād* by emphasising the aspect of duty in both of them to invoke a sense of personal urgency to act. They expand this argument by again stressing a bipolar perspective; either you commit yourself to these duties and you become a brother, or you neglect them and you are nothing better than the loathed unbelievers. In summary, this narrative comes down to:

> Hijrah *and* jihād *have been made into an individual duty to preserve the Muslim Ummah. Those who respond to it are granted a place among the brothers of the caliphate, those who ignore it become more hypocritical by the day and are therefore* kufr*.*

Combining these three narratives allows us to formulate the overarching message that characterises *Dabiq* magazine. The exact wording and focus of the message depends on the specific genre of the article – e.g. an interview, report, or feature article – and on the context – e.g. recent attacks, the refugee

crisis, or the establishment of the *khilāfah*. Some articles centre around the threat narrative, or the bipolar perspective. Others dive deep into the personal experiences of foreign fighters to illustrate the acts of *hijrah* and *jihād* in an individual sense. But taken together, the quantitative analysis showcased the underlying message that encompasses all the issues of *Dabiq*:

> *The world is divided in two categories – Muslims and* kuffār *– with no space in between for hypocrites and where the* kuffār *have forged an alliance to annihilate Islam and all Muslims. To defend the true believers, the Islamic State has been established on the legacy of the* khilāfah *of Muhammad and it will fight the* kuffār *alliance until Islam prevails. These facts are reason to make the acts of* hijrah *and* jihād *an individual duty for every Muslim. If you ignore it, you are the enemy of Islam and* kufr*, but if you heed the call, you are among the brothers that form the core of the caliphate.*

This message clearly appeals to the keywords and their collocates that are dominating the discourse in *Dabiq*. To establish if and how this message aims to shape the motivations of foreign fighters, the next section provides an interpretation by including several relevant theoretical approaches.

3. Interpreting *Dabiq*'s message

In this chapter, we turn back to the main research question of how the message in *Dabiq*, which is now established, aims to shape foreign fighter motivations. Recalling Venhaus's (2010) four categories, we compare the identified message with the four categories of foreign fighter motivations to determine which of these it most likely aims to address. However, answering the *who* question is not sufficient to establish *how Dabiq* aims to shape the motivations. Therefore, we build on Identity Narrative Theory (Denis-Constant, 1995) and Benford and Snow's (2000) theory of Collective Action Frames to interpret its mobilising value and the constituent elements.

3.1. *Dabiq*'s message and foreign fighter motivations

The preceding chapter provided convincing evidence that ISIS formulates a coherent overarching message in their magazine *Dabiq*. Throughout the message, three clear lines of argumentation stand out: first, the world is strictly divided into two categories: pious Muslims and unbelievers, consisting of a coalition of apostates and crusaders. Second, the Islamic State is justified as saviour of the *Ummah* through assertions of threat, and historical and religious anecdotes. And third, the Islamic State demands individual participation of every righteous Muslim through *hijrah* and *Jihad*. The question now rises as to *who* this message can reasonably be said to aim to address. To answer this question, let us first briefly revisit the Venhaus's (2010) four categories of foreign fighter motivations.

3.1.1. Recalling motivations and comparing with findings

As we saw in chapter one, evidence shows that the current trends in foreign fighter motivations are accurately categorised by the four groups of 'Seekers' identified by Venhaus (2010). First, the Revenge Seekers are introduced. According to Venhaus, foreign fighters motivated by revenge are looking for an outlet for their frustration. Having an inflated sense of self-worth, they are typically attracted to an organisation that can fulfil their desire to "set the world aright." (Venhaus, 2010: 16). *Dabiq*'s message contains elements pertaining to individual agency in saving the *Ummah*, which could be aimed at attracting this group. However, this is only one of its many aspects and as such is insufficient to assert that ISIS constructs their message in order to shape these motivations.

In the second category, Status Seekers feel under-appreciated and are convinced of their own capabilities. They seek to improve their status and demonstrate their prominence to the world (Venhaus, 2010: 17). In the message of *Dabiq*, elements can be found of glorifying the successful attacks of individual

Mujāhidīn. But by portraying them as 'brothers' and stressing that "*hijrah* is a great deed but it is not a license to view yourself better than others" (*Dabiq* Issue 3: 34), it is soon made clear that the Islamic State is not a place of personal apotheosis. Hence, ISIS does not appear to aim at shaping the motivations of this group through their message in *Dabiq*.

Third, the Thrill Seekers are individuals filled with energy and drive, yearning to prove their valour through achieving something remarkable. They are attracted to depictions of glory that offer them an opportunity to give rein to these passions (Venhaus, 2010: 19-20). Although images of spectacular violence and military victories fill some pages in *Dabiq*, they do not constitute a significant component of the overarching message. Thus, it is unlikely that the message is formulated with shaping this group's motivations in mind.

The last group consists of the Identity Seekers. Contrary to the other categories, Venhaus (2010: 18) found that, rather than standing out, these adherents want to assimilate into a group to evoke a sense of belonging. Consequently, they are attracted to an organisation that offers a unique identity group with clear rules and a coherent world vision (Venhaus, 2010: 18). *Dabiq*'s message contains many defining elements. Its bipolar world view clearly sets boundaries on who is accepted as a member and who is seen as an adversary. It portrays the Islamic State as the solution to a grave threat and it stipulates meticulously how one can join through *hijrah* and *jihād*. So, it seems plausible that the overarching message in the magazine are aimed at shaping the motivations of foreign identity seekers. Still, the apparent resemblance between this category and the message thus far only addresses the question *whose* motivations *Dabiq*'s discursive message aims to shape, without supporting it with clear evidence from the corpus. Therefore, the next section expands the argument by exploring the role of identity in social mobilisation and comparing this to the aspects that *Dabiq*'s message likely aims to address. This will simultaneously support the claim that *Dabiq* aims to address Identity Seekers and provide an answer to the final question of *how* it aims to shape their motivations.

3.1.2. Constructing a Social Identity group

Much has been written on the topics of identity and social mobilisations, and indeed identity is widely regarded as an important factor in fields of mobilisation, religion, ethnicity and nationalism (Demmers, 2012: 18). Yet despite its abundant use in both (social) scientific research and everyday use in the media and in conversation (Denis-Constant, 1995: 5), it remains notoriously difficult to conceptualise it and grasp its full meaning. This thesis does not allow for a rich discussion of the debate on identity definitions, and indeed that would be beyond the scope of the research, but a well-defined understanding of what we regard as the foundations of identity is imperative to fathom the relationship between *Dabiq*'s message

and the Identity Seeker's motivations.

In its most straightforward form, identity is understood as the "(…) relatively stable elements of an individual's sense of self" (Seul, 2999: 554) and forms the answer to the question "Who or what am I?" (Demmers, 2012: 19). Because we live in communities of multiple individuals, the answer to this question is not only based on our isolated perception of ourselves – the so-called self-concept – but also on our perception of our relations to the social world around us – the social identity (Demmers, 2012: 20). As such, social identity is defined as "that *part* of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1981: 63). Thus, people have an inherent inclination towards associating themselves with a social group, which is often referred to as the 'identity impulse' (Seul, 1999: 556). This impulse is informed by three psychological needs: the need for a simplified, predictable world by means of *categorisation* (Tajfel, 1981: 132), the need for a *sense of belonging* (Seul, 1999: 554), and the need for a *secure sense of self* (Demmers, 2012: 38). Together, these needs constitute the motivation for people to associate with certain social identity groups (Seul, 1999: 556).[12] From this, it follows that if these needs are not fulfilled – for example because they feel confused and lack proper guidance, feel discriminated, or feel threatened in practicing their religion – individuals start looking for a group that can provide them with the means to fill these voids. It is these underlying mechanisms that form the structure of the Identity Seeker's motivations as Venhaus (2010) formulated it.

So how can a social movement organisation (SMO), in this case ISIS, exploit these feelings to mobilise an identity group, in this case potential foreign fighters? In an effort to theorise the link between identity and social mobilisation, Denis-Constant (1995) conducted a comparative field research that resulted in some helpful insights in understanding the mobilising efficacy of ISIS's message. The starting point of his theory is the widely accepted premise that social identity is constructed (Demmers, 2012: 26) and can therefore be influenced by social actors (Denis-Constant, 1995: 8). He argues that the successful social mobilisation of identity groups depends on two consecutive processes. First, an individual must be persuaded to perceive himself as belonging to a specific group in order to achieve a certain group consciousness. Borrowing from Anderson (1983), he calls this the construction of an imagined community, which is often achieved through the means of an 'identity narrative' that is told by SMOs (Denis-Constant, 1995: 8-9). To detect the potential discursive elements that construct such a group, we consult Fearon and Laitin's definition of social identity groups as:

[12] For a more in-depth discussion of these principals and the underlying sociological and psychological assertions, see for instance: Wodak et al. (2009), Tajfel (1981), Seul (1999), and Demmers (2012).

Sets of people given a label (or labels) and distinguished by two main features: 1. rules of membership that decide who is and who is not a member of the category; and 2. content, that is, sets of characteristics (such as beliefs, desires, moral commitments, and physical attributes) thought to be typical of members of the category, or behaviours expected or obliged of members in certain situations (roles)." (2000: 848).

Thus, by discerning the discursive constructions of boundaries in *Dabiq*, we are able to establish who ISIS defines as in-group and out-group. And by combining this with the elements of the identity impulse and the characteristics ISIS imbues itself and its in-group with, we can establish the social group identity they promulgate throughout their message.

3.1.3. Mobilising a Social Identity group

The Identity Group we defined in the last section is passive by default and must be imbued with a cause for action in order to mobilise those who perceive themselves as members. Denis-Constant found that this is most often achieved by first portraying the imagined community as threatened by some member of the out-group, the Other. In the case of identity groups, it is further assessed by multiple authors (i.a. Hogg, Meehan, and Farquharson, 2010; Hogg and Adelman, 2013; Doosje, Loseman, and Van den Bos, 2013) that this 'perception of crisis' tends to be characterised by three variables, of which the first is the most pervasive element. These are: (1) Uncertainty – consisting of complexity, ambiguity, deficit knowledge, and unpredictability (Hermans and Dimaggio, 2007) – (2) the breakdown of tradition, and (3) the influence of the Other (Ingram, 2016: 7). By emphasising the antitheses to these elements as 'solutions', i.e. (1) certainty, (2) reinforcement of tradition, and (3) commitment to the in-group, the SMO can pull its audience towards mobilisation for its cause (Ingram, 2016: 8). Denis-Constant calls this an element of ideology. This will increase the perceived salience of the in-group for the audience, which is then completed by presenting the organisation as the solution to the threat (Denis-Constant, 1995: 8).

Although the underlying assertions of an interplay between perceptions of crisis and solution are well-established, Denis-Constant's operationalisation proofs flawed upon further scrutiny due to two major issues. The first is the use of the word ideology, of which he fails to provide a working definition, leaving its use as an analysing concept ambiguous at best. From the context in which it is used, the author seems to convey Turner and Killian's conception as "prescriptions or maps that tell the individual how to look at events and people, and . . . provide a simplifying perspective through which the observer can make sense of otherwise overwhelmingly complex phenomena and find definitiveness in otherwise vague and uncertain impressions." (1972: 270). Still, this notion fails to clarify the relationship between ideology and shaping audience motivations.

Wilson (1973: 91-92. Emphasis added) provides this element by suggesting a more detailed understanding of ideology as "containing statements about the rightness of certain social arrangements and what action would be undertaken in light of those statements." However, although ideology has played an important role in social movement literature (Snow and Benford, 2000: 5), using it as an analysing concept contains some major flaws.[13] Most importantly, definitions of ideology are descriptive and static, rather than analytic and dynamic (Benford and Snow, 2000: 613; Snow and Byrd, 2007: 120). For our case, this means that although it can be used to qualify ISIS's message as an ideology, consisting of norms, beliefs, and values (Oliver and Johnston, 2000: 7), it does not offer tools to evaluate the aspects of an ideology that motivate mobilisation. Furthermore, the contention that ideology is static implies that its contents have been around for more than a few years to qualify as an ideology, which cannot be said of the two-year-old magazine *Dabiq*. Hence, ideology as it is traditionally understood and implicitly used by Denis-Constant (1995) does not suffice as a label to cover the full complexity of ISIS's message.

This brings us to the second flaw: Denis-Constant's theory accounts for pointing out a problem for the identity group, caused by the Other, and for raising the SMO as the solution, the hero to solve the crisis. However, this provides no convincing guarantee that the adherents are actually now motivated to join in the actual action. Two major problems arise in this regard, that might discourage the members of an identity group: the fear of risks often associated with collective action (Snow and Byrd, 2007: 128), and the free-rider problem – in other words, why risk your life for a collective cause while others are doing it for you? (Olson, 1965). To be used as an analytic framework, we must account for these flaws and formulate a tailor-made approach that allows us to determine *how Dabiq*'s message aims to shape the motivations of Identity Seekers. The theory of Collective Action Frames (Snow and Benford, 1988) provides the alternative.

[13] For an extensive discussion on the relation between ideology and social movements, see Oliver and Johnston (2000), Snow and Benford (2000), and Snow and Byrd (2007).

3.1.4. Analytic Framework

Building on the earlier definitions of ideology, Snow and Benford (1988) start by fleshing out the concept by introducing the theory of frames, which has subsequently found considerable currency in various fields.[14] Within this framework, ideology is seen as an important resource for framing activity that informs, facilitates and constrains the framing processes (Snow and Benford, 2000: 9). Departing from the perspective that movement actors are involved in the "politics of signification" (Hall, 1982), these frames constitute an action-oriented set of beliefs that functions as a means for social movement organisations (SMO's) to legitimate their activities and mobilise potential adherents (Snow and Benford, 1988: 198; Benford and Snow, 2000: 614). As such, it has come to be seen as one of three central dynamics in understanding the character and course of social movements – the two other factors being resource mobilisation and political opportunity processes (Benford and Snow, 2000: 612).

Collective action frames consist of two groups of characteristic features: the core framing tasks carry the two-fold function of mobilising agreement on a problematic issue among the target audience, and subsequently motivating them to resort to action in line with the SMO's goals (Klandermans, 1984; Benford and Snow, 2000: 615). When conceptualising these tasks in their theory, Snow and Benford (1988) build on Wilson's (1973) decomposition of ideology into three components to inform their classification of diagnostic, prognostic and motivational frames. The first category aims to mobilise consensus in order to focus the audience's attention and facilitate agreement. The second category then formulate the proposed solution to the problem and the global means and strategies attached to it. The last addresses the adherents directly by stipulating the individual's role in social action and aiming to overcome the risks of fear and free-riders.

The second set of features refers to the dynamic processes that support the generation of these core framing tasks, such as frame development, diffusion and contextual constraints (Benford and Snow, 2000: 615, 623-628). Although these are important processes of collective action framing, this research confines itself to determining the possible influence of *Dabiq*'s message on the motivations of foreign fighters, not on the preceding constructive processes. Within this scope, and with regards to the message that has been identified earlier, the core framing tasks by themselves offer the most suitable explanatory approach by focussing attention on the relationship between the message composition and its mobilising efficacy. As such, these collective action frames fulfil the same functions as Denis-Constant's theorisation,

[14] These include the currently relevant fields of linguistics and discourse analysis (Tannen, 1993; Van Dijk, 1977), sociology (Goffman, 1974), and most importantly, social movements in the form of collective action frames (Benford and Snow, 2000: 612).

and they expand it by attending to individual agency, while also providing a structured approach to analysing the message. Therefore, we take Collective Action Frames as the analytic framework to further scrutinise the elements in *Dabiq* that reasonably aim to shape the motivations foreign fighters. Because of the focus on Identity Seekers, we will use Denis-Constant's (1995) findings about mobilising identity groups as sensitising concepts to refine the collective action frames analysis.

3.2. *Dabiq*'s mobilising potential

This section depicts the diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames found in *Dabiq'*s message.

3.2.1. Diagnostic Frames

The first category of core framing tasks is diagnostic framing. This type of frame addresses the first issue in motivating possible adherents: mobilising consensus to focus the audience's attention and facilitate agreement (Snow and Byrd, 2007: 124; Benford and Snow, 2000: 615). Within this framing task, two functions can be distinguished. The first provides an answer to the question of "What is or went wrong?" in order to define an event or aspect of social life or system of government – that was previously seen as unpleasant but tolerable – as problematic, intolerable and demanding transformation (Snow and Byrd, 2007: 124). Then, the second function links this situation to a cause, a scapegoat, a step that is often referred to as "the blame game" (Lewis, 2002: 159) by seeking an answer to the question "Who or what is to blame?" (Benford and Byrd, 2007: 124). In practice, both steps are often intertwined, as enmities and threats between groups cannot be seen as separate from the culpable agents behind them (e.g. Osama bin Laden, 2002; 1998: 1 in Snow and Byrd, 2007: 125).

Dabiq's message clearly identifies abominations and threats over the course of its articles. The first is the internal decline of Islam. Articles such as "*The Extinction of the Grayzone"* (*Dabiq* Issue 7: 54-66) proof exemplary for this argument, as they meticulously describe the past years as facilitating a 'grayzone' in which 'hypocrite' Muslims took shelter. They demonise Muslims living with unbelievers as hypocrites, accusing them of being false Muslims. Seeking for a scapegoat for this widespread misery, ISIS quickly points to what they call *Tawāghīt*, *Murtaddīn*, and *Mushrikīn*, which they all collect under the category 'apostates'. They insist that these, along with the average hypocrite Muslim, are to blame for the overall decay of the Muslim *Ummah*. A final category is reserved for Shia Muslims, who are being called *Rāfidī* and regarded by Sunni Muslims as having the sole purpose of destroying Islam (Kazimi, 2006: 1). This group, although constituting the second-largest branch of Islam worldwide, is not accepted as such by ISIS

and depicted as equal to *kuffār*[15].

The second problem identified in *Dabiq* is connected to the first, but ingrained with far more pressing arguments to underscore its urgency. The apostates are portrayed as aligning themselves with the eternal enemy of Islam; Western crusaders, whose wars against Islam are recently receiving renewed attention in Islamic circles, and other *kuffār*. By doing so, ISIS calls into mind the medieval wars of Christians in the Middle-East, fighting to capture the holy cities that Muslims, too, held as sacred. Thus, they stimulate the impression of modern Western unbelievers as invaders of Muslim lands, which can clearly build on recent aggressive acts such as the 2003 invasion of Iraq. These arguments extend the idea of an internal decay by adding an external threat to it. By suggesting, as we saw during the analysis in chapter two, that apostates and crusaders form a coalition is formed against the *Ummah*, the sense of threat is further increased.

ISIS's apparent efforts of denouncing a variety of other groups resembles earlier works on the role of boundary framing in social movement mobilisations. Hunt, Benford, and Snow (1994: 193-194) define this act as "[involving] a social movement's strategic efforts to situate itself on an ideological turf it regards as fundamentally oppositional to that of specified nonmovement (*sic*) actors". By drawing these sharp lines between movements, clear in-group and out-group communities are delineated. The importance of achieving this is conceivably two-fold in the case of ISIS: they define a collective identity, precisely by naming what they are *not* (Demmers, 2012: 21). This demarcation is crucial in mobilising potential adherents (Silver, 1997: 489), especially in a region where so many SMO's are 'in the market' for foreign fighters (e.g. Jabhat al-Nusra, Al Qaeda and others). By highlighting the mutual differences and downplaying the similarities, polarization strategies transform possibly minor distinctions into major rifts (Wiktorowicz, 2004 :165; Ignatieff, 1999: 51). In *Dabiq*, these differences are stretched by aligning apostates with *kuffār*. Instead of Hunt, Benford, and Snow's original three categories of audience – protagonists, anatagonists, and bystanders (1994: 186, 195) – ISIS stresses their bipolar worldview of *Dārul-kufr* and *Dārul-Islam* to further polarise the in-group of 'pious' Muslims and the out-group of 'forces of evil'.

Besides – but strongly related to – defining boundaries, *Dabiq*'s message strongly associates with the often-seen act of adversarial framing (Gamson, 1995). They plainly define those opposed to them in pejorative terms such as *kuffār*, Crusader, *Murtaddīn*, *Tawāghīt*, and *Rāfidī*. The use of these terms is strongly patronising towards their opponents and calls into mind the concept of depersonalisation, which

[15] The struggle between Sunni and Shia Islam goes back to a theological feud over the succession of the prophet Muhammad's heritage and as such has been cause for many disagreements in the Muslim world (Wright, 2006). However, the extent and frequency of this theme in *Dabiq* is remarkable.

enables adherents to buy into ISIS's bipolar perspective by shifting the nature of interpersonal relations to inter-group terms (Tajfel, 1981: 240). This is often seen as a necessary step towards dividing the world in 'good' and 'evil', which again strengthens the contrast between those who ISIS accepts as faithful Muslims of the *Ummah* and those it sees as its enemies.

In addition to being derogative and depersonalising, the specific terms used by ISIS call into mind historic mortal enemies – Crusaders, whose medieval wars against Islam are recently receiving renewed attention in Islamic circles, and Rāfidī, who are seen by Sunni Muslims as having the sole purpose of destroying Islam (Kazimi, 2006: 1). The use of such terms denotes an existential threat to the Muslim community, creating the idea that the survival of one's group is in danger. This is commonly linked to intensifying group attachment and identity (Huddy, 2013; Pyszczynski, Solomon, and Greenberg, 2003; Castano et al., 2002; Greenberg, 1990).

Finally, the various terms used for qualifying other Muslims as hypocrites or apostates, such as *Murtaddīn* and *Tawāghīt* show ISIS's determination to distance itself from other, seemingly comparable members of the Sunni-branch. Building on Freud's 'narcissism of minor difference', Ignatieff states that "[i]t is precisely because the differences between groups are minor that they must be expressed aggressively." (1991: 51). ISIS seemingly capitalizes on dividing definitions of Islamic concepts to enhance these minor differences and reinstate the lines of demarcation.

To summarise, *Dabiq*'s message contains the elements of a diagnostic frame; it identifies the pressing threat to the Muslim *Ummah*, formed by moral decline of Islam and the simultaneous external threat from unbelieving crusaders, as the problem that needs to be solved, thus mobilising consensus. Consequently, it focusses blame on the regional apostates and global crusaders, who are presented as forming a coalition against Muslims that is determined to destroy it, injecting the threat with a survival component.

Throughout these arguments, Islam is used as the knife that divides the world into two identity-groups: Muslims and non-Muslims, giving way to multiple arguments of shaping in-group boundaries, especially by denouncing every kind of out-group. ISIS adds considerable salience to this divide by portraying the out-group as a threat to in-group Muslim survival in the form of the traditional *Ummah*. By emphasising this as the definition of the in-group and by magnifying the minor differences between pious and 'apostate' Muslims, they portray the out-group (the Other) as threatening the traditions of the Muslim identity group, both from within and without. Hence, the message defines the boundaries of in-group and out-group by denouncing all who do not follow their lead. This provides adherents with a simple, understandable perspective on the world that reduces uncertainty. Moreover, by presenting them as mortal enemies, they create the impression of a pending breakdown of traditions, single-handedly caused by the out-group

of collaborating apostates and *kuffār* crusaders. So the diagnostic frame in *Dabiq* appears to focus on shaping the motivations of Identity Seekers, whilst also containing elements that discursively construct an imagined community. The stage is set, and it is a pressing matter indeed for all Islam, that begs for a solution. We study ISIS's interpretation of this solution in the next section.

3.2.2. Prognostic Frames

The second category of core framing tasks is prognostic framing, which addresses the second issue in motivating possible adherents: mobilising action. Building on the now concentrated attention of the audience on grave injustices, prognostic frames stipulate remedies or solutions to the identified problem and provide general means or tactics for accomplishing these objectives (Snow and Byrd, 2007: 126). The Leninesque question that is thus answered is "What is to be done?". The answer to this question does not necessarily flow naturally from the preceding diagnostic frames, but they are conventionally seen as being a correspondence between diagnostic and prognostic framings (Gerhards and Rucht, 1992; Benford and Snow, 2000: 616). As we will now discuss, for the case of *Dabiq*'s message, these connections are apparent (as in other Islamist discourses, see Osama bin Laden, 2002 in Snow and Byrd, 2007: 127).

As we have seen throughout the analysis of *Dabiq* in chapter two, themes pertaining to the Islamic State and to the *Khilafāh* play a central role in the message of the organisation. As a remedy to the diagnosed threat, the Islamic State is portrayed as a home for all Muslims that protects and solidifies the continuation of the *Ummah*. To reinforce this image, ISIS revives the concept of the ancient Muslim caliphate. As discussed during the analysis, this invokes associations of a state *exclusively for Muslims*. As such, it deals with the diagnosed problem of Muslims being threatened by their *kufr* governments, by offering a safe haven. But this historic dimension has deeper consequences. By referring to itself as the inheritor of the caliphate predecessors, it taps into the myths of origin (Breuss et al., 1993: 553) and divine ruling that are normally associated with the *Khilafāh* of Muhammad. This selective recollecting of past entities and presenting them as important for the creation of an Islamic safe haven evokes Halbwachs's concept of Collective Memory (Halbwachs, 1985). He argues that this maintains a historical continuity by recalling specific elements from the archive of historical memory. De Cillia, Reisigl, and Wodak (1999) recognise this as an important constructive aspect in discourses on national identity. Through, among other things, myths of origin, mythical figures, political triumphs, and times of flourishing and prosperity (De Cillia, Reisigl, and Wodak, 1999: 158), SMO's are able to discursively construct a group identity. In the case of *Dabiq*'s message, these categories are illustrated by their expansive narratives on the origin of the Islamic State in the *Khilafāh* and its accompanying victories against the apostates and crusaders, and the emphasis on religious characters such as the prophet Muhammad. In short, the prognostic frames concerning the Islamic State

as the saviour of all Muslims appears to be strongly focussed on presenting its audience with a self-definition. This definition contains discursive elements that construct a form of national, in-group identity that preserves and continues traditional concepts like the *Ummah* and the *khilafāh* as the solution to the threat.

Another frequent theme contains the abundant religious references that ISIS uses, both to justify acts such as rape ("Slave-girls or Prostitutes?", *Dabiq* Issue 9: 44-49) and to position itself as a divinely blessed nation (e.g. "The concept of *Imamah* (leadership) is from the *Millah* (path) of *Ibrahim*", *Dabiq* Issue 1: 21-29). The function of justification strategies is obvious; they aim to legitimise acts associated with the Islamic State to maintain its status quo. The idea of a religious nation, then, has specific implications in terms of identity formation. Prominently, Seul (1999: 561) found that religion provides a sense of "seamless continuity between past, present, and future", that is stronger than any other identity provider such as ethnicity or ancestry. By presenting a myth of common origin – i.e. a caliphate built on Muhammad and Ibrahim's example – the state is firmly grounded in the past, while doctrines of salvation connect its members to the prospect of eternity (Little, 1995). These narratives create an impression of stability with which people easily identify (Breakwell, 1986). In addition, it imbues ISIS's adherents with a sense of identity as being 'the chosen people', setting them apart from those who do not belong to ISIS; the apostates and *kuffār* (Little, 1995; Seul, 1999: 560). Moreover, this belief in being a 'chosen people' invokes the rare capability of religion to transcend formerly dividing identities – tribal, linguistic, ethnic – and unify all under the banner of their similar faith. ISIS explicitly promotes this understanding if Islam as a binding factor in their first proclamation of the *khilafāh*: "It is a state where the Arab and non-Arab, the white man and black man, the easterner and westerner are all brothers." (*Dabiq* Issue 1: 7). This perspective forms an important step in representing the in-group identity – its content (Fearon and Laitin, 2000: 848) – by characterising them as a unified in-group that is superior to other, out-group members (Roccas, Klar, and Liviatan, 2006).

The relationship between the Islamic State and its enemies takes central stage in the further themes pertaining to a military fight against their existential threat. *Dabiq* presents a global strategy of violent war against non-Muslims as the only way to achieve its goal of safeguarding the *Ummah*. The global means by which this is achieved, consist of both fighting the apostates in the region and committing global violent attacks in the lands of *kufr*. Little (1995) categorises such arguments as a narrative of holy struggle, which constitutes an important aspect of constructing group identity by emphasising the proposed significance of the cleavage between them and 'the others' (Rogers et al, 2007 in Ysseldyk et al, 2010: 65). The

term 'crusader' adds a further eternal element to this fight by presenting it as the continuation of an eternal struggle (Ysseldyk et al., 2010: 65).

In summary, *Dabiq*'s message contains multiple elements of prognostic framing. It defines the establishment of the Islamic State as the remedy to the problems of religious decay and existential threat that were diagnosed in the preceding frames. To put this to practice, the message further stipulates global strategies of war against the regional apostates and global unbelievers as the means and tactics to consolidate the *khilafāh* and achieve the diagnostic goals.

Throughout these frames, history and religion are raised as defining concepts that illustrate the identity of the Islamic State. By explicitly placing it in the footsteps of the glorious caliphates of history and connecting it to the religious paths of Ibrahim and Muhammad, ISIS grants its project a sense of historic continuity by appealing to a supposed collective memory that infuses it with an aura of temporal stability. Narratives of chosenness reinforce the feeling of a sacred in-group, bound together by their faith in Allah. Using these terms to define the in-group's content, on top of completing the second step in the creation of an imagined community, clearly appeals to identity seekers by depicting the protection and continuation of Muslim traditions and showing their commitment to the in-group as a 'chosen people'. The designated strategy of war is fleshed out in the narratives concerning individual responsibility, which are discussed in-depth in the next section.

3.2.3. Motivational Frames

The third and final category of core framing tasks consists of motivational framing, or the agency component of collective action frames (Gamson, 1995). Despite having established the diagnostic and prognostic frames, the challenge of action mobilisation is not completely met without activating the ideological adherents – that is, those who subscribe to the earlier formulated diagnostic and prognostic frames (Snow and Byrd, 2007: 128). Motivational frames aim to move people from the metaphorical balcony to the barricades by depicting a call to arms or rationale that goes beyond the diagnostic and prognostic frames (Snow and Benford, 1988: 202). This rationale must overcome the fear of risks often associated with collective action (Snow and Byrd, 2007: 128), as well as the so-called free-rider problem – in other words, why risk life and limb for a collective cause while others are doing it for you, leaving you to reap the benefits of their labour (Olson, 1965). Benford (1993) builds on Mills's (1940) notion of motives by introducing the concept of vocabularies of motive to describe the ways in which people formulate the justification of their own compliance with social movements (Silver, 1997: 490). These are (1) the severity of the problem, (2) the sense of urgency, (3) the efficacy of taking action, and (4) the propriety of taking action (Benford,

1993: 201-208). By adopting these motives in their motivational frames, SMO's can aim to shape the motivations of their adherents to engage in ameliorative action (Benford and Snow, 2000: 617). Hence, these vocabularies provide a readily applicable framework to assess the motivational frames in *Dabiq*'s message.

As we saw during the content analysis of *Dabiq*, the overarching message contains two themes that mainly relate to individual agency: *hijrah* and *jihād*. Importantly, ISIS argues that performing both Islamic practices has become an individual duty (*Fard al-Ayn*). They base this statement on the arguments about the severity and urgency of the decay of Islam and existential threat to the *Ummah*, put forward in the diagnostic and prognostic frames. So, these two vocabularies of motive have been addressed, leaving the agency frames only to stress their gravity. The propriety of calling for *hijrah* and *jihād* is established through frequent religious references. For example, the article "*From* Hijrah *to* Khilafāh" (*Dabiq* Issue 1: 34-41) meticulously stipulates a roadmap, starting with *hijrah*, that will lead to the successful installation of the caliphate. By portraying the end goal – the caliphate – as only achievable through the accumulation of individual acts of *hijrah* and *jihād*, they bestow considerable agency upon the individual Muslim, projecting them as part of the greater religious cause (Seul, 1999: 560).

But the calling of *Fard al-Ayn* implies more than just requesting or stimulating involvement and action. ISIS stresses the obligatory character of these duties whenever they are mentioned. For example, when addressing Muslims studying in Western countries, they state that "their *hijrah* from *dārul-kufr dārul-Islām* . . . is now more obligatory than ever." (*Dabiq* Issue 3: 26). Furthermore, as we discussed in length in chapter two, abandoning *jihād* is marked as an act of hypocrisy, qualifying the perpetrator as a *kufr*. Through such reasoning, ISIS appears to mitigate the risk of free-riders. Because all who share ISIS's goals and abide to their message are compelled to take action, as it is their individual responsibility. And failure to comply will be punished – if not by ISIS, their own conscience and the 'wrath of Allah' will constitute the incentive.

Another important theme that was identified during the analysis is the personal dimension in the form of interviews with members of the Islamic State, who are referred to as 'brothers'. Relating to *hijrah*, these 'brothers' tell their audience what life is like in the *khilafāh* and, more importantly, how their *hijrah* went and how happy they are they reached the 'blessed lands'. A primary example is the article "The Twin Halves of the *Muhājirīn*" (*Dabiq* Issue 8: 32-37), depicting an emotional account of a woman's journey, and "Among the Believers are Men" (*Dabiq* Issue 13: 22-23), in which ISIS quotes Abū Muhārib al-Muhājir as testifying how he made *hijrah* "right under the nose of the much-overrated MI5 British intelligence agency". In addition to these personal documentations, *Dabiq* provides detailed instructions for those migrating to the Islamic State. The article "Advice for those Embarking upon *Hijrah*" (*Dabiq* Issue 3: 33-34)

provides a disclaimer that you may find imperfections “that need mending”, and further urges those in doubt to join the migration, assuring them that Allah will look over them. Thus, ISIS aims to diminish the fear of risk that might discourage potential foreign fighters.

Concerning *jihād* and the efficacy of joining this effort, *Dabiq* provides ample examples of successful brothers that have conducted attacks against apostates and crusaders. Nearly every issue contains the regular item “Islamic State Reports / Military Reports”. These list successful attacks by ‘brothers’ both in the ‘provinces’ as well as beyond the borders of the Islamic State. Moreover, spectacular attacks like those in November 2015 in Paris are attended to in articles on current events. These features highlight the overall effectiveness of performing *jihād*, thus addressing the motive concerned with efficacy.

The frequent use of the family metaphor – indicated by the keyword ‘Brother/Brothers’ – has already been discussed above, when the conclusion was reached that this practice has the potential of invoking a sense of belonging [in-group content] to the in-group with its audience. Focussing on the concepts of *hijrah* and *jihad* adds new layers to this sense of in-group belonging [through hijrah and jihad]. In *Dabiq*, *hijrah* – although not officially seen (Hamid, 2005) and only sporadically suggested as such (Hawley, 2010: 401) – contains many aspects portraying it as a rite of passage. To support this statement, we consult Van Gennep’s (1909) classical definition of a three-phased process. First, the subject goes through the *preliminal rites of separation*, in which he (or she) withdraws from their current status and prepare to move on from one place or status to another, often through an act of ‘cutting away’ the old ties. In *Dabiq*, this phase takes place when an individual embarks on his *hijrah*, leaving his loved ones, possessions and nationality behind. This is explicitly promoted by ISIS, as in the article “The Twin Halves of the *Muhājirīn*”, where one woman recalls “I saw sisters who abstained from a life of luxury and abundant wealth [to perform *hijrah*]” (*Dabiq* Issue 8: 34). The second *liminal phase of transition* is necessarily ambiguous (Turner, 1969: 95) as it takes place in between leaving the former place or status and reaching the new one. In *Dabiq*’s, the journey from *Dārul-Kufr* to *Dārul-Islam* is often depicted as perilous and a hurdle that must, and can, be taken. As such, it alludes to the transition phase. Finally, the subject arrives in the *postliminal phase*, in which he is incorporated into the new identity with his new status. In *Dabiq*, the many articles praising those who performed *hijrah* provide evidence that it is presented as an important achievement that proves one’s conviction of joining the group.

According to Seul (1999: 563), rites of passage are important examples of (religious) socialisation mechanisms that contribute to individual identity construction and maintenance, guiding them into new statuses or roles. These roles are instrumental in relating the individual to the group identity. So, by presenting *hijrah* as a rite of passage, *Dabiq* aims at constructing a surmountable threshold that links the

individual to the group identity of 'their brothers' upon overcoming that obstacle. The demarcation line between 'good' – those who join and become brothers – and 'bad' – those who refuse to join – is further stressed by denouncing the last group as hypocrites, and therefore as enemies.

To summarise, *Dabiq*'s message contains multiple elements of motivational framing. First, building on the severity and urgency of the decay of Islam and the existential threat to the *Ummah* that were established in the diagnostic and prognostic frames, the message argues that these threats are of such gravity that the call for individual *hijrah* and *jihād* is needed. By describing historical religious examples of these acts and presenting today's situation as equal in nature and peril, the message aims to claim that individual performance of *hijrah* and *jihād* is the fitting solution. Then, using this duty as a motive, the message strictly divides its audience into two groups: those who heed the call, and those who ignore it. By portraying the first group as brothers and condemning the last group as hypocrites and thus enemies, they aim to mitigate the risk of free-riders. Moreover, stories of successful attacks are frequently covered to underscore the efficacy of fighting *jihād*. The personal accounts of 'brothers' that already emigrated and were committed *jihād* are presented and accompanied by instructions for those embarking on *hijrah*, aiming to nullify potential fear of risks among those still doubting to respond to the call.

Throughout these arguments, ISIS again frequently refers to their commitment to protecting the earlier established in-group by their commitment to protecting its integrity and traditions. These are, however, less prevalent in the motivational frames because their aim is to move adherents who already buy in to the narrative to action. The arguments used for this are nevertheless instrumental in supporting the duty narrative that forms the core of the motivational frames, as well as in portraying those who are accepted as in-group members as a surrogate family that forms an exclusive group one can enter after going through a rite of passage. Finally, by playing a role in a cause that is bigger than themselves, participants are being presented with a sense of stability and purpose (Seul, 1999).

3.3. Sub conclusion – Formulating *Dabiq*'s Collective Action Frame

To conclude this analysis of the mobilising value of ISIS's overarching message in *Dabiq* in relation to Identity Seekers, we bring together the separate frames that stood out as relevant to the formulation of collective action frames. By diagnosing the international Muslim society as threatened in its survival by a combination of internal decay and external threats, consensus is mobilised around the need to protect the *Ummah*. By clearly describing the threat as an out-group coalition of historic enemies and apostates that aims to annihilate Muslim society, the organisation portrays the world in simplifying bipolar terms, which reduces uncertainty for its audience and makes it supposedly easier to agree with the message. Also, this

constitutes the first step of creating an imagined community of Muslims as the in-group.

Then, to formulate a solution that constitutes the prognostic frame, the Islamic State is defined as a modern-day *khalifāh*, built on the foundations of Muhammad's ancient Islamic caliphate to form the means of defending the *Ummah*. The strategy is stipulated as a fight, both regional and global, against the apostates and the crusaders. This strategy and the severity of the threats it supposedly faces, provide the basis on which ISIS then constructs its motivational frame. This expands the image of the Islamic State as the protector of Islamic culture and Muslim lives. Moreover, by clearly delineating the content of the in-group, the formulation of the prognostic frames fulfils the discursive construction of an imagined community.

By claiming that the situation is extremely dire, *Dabiq* argues that it has become an individual duty for every pious Muslim to perform *Hijrah* and join in *jihād*. By condemning all those who ignore the call as hypocrites and enemies, and praising those who heed it as brothers, they aim to overcome the risk of free-riders. The problem of fear of risks involved in committing to the cause is mitigated by spreading the personal accounts of successful migrants who performed *hijrah*, as well as by frequently reporting successful attacks of the *jihād*. Finally, this last frame grants those who are accepted as members of the ISIS in-group a family-like status of brother, equal to the other members of a highly exclusive club that is safeguarded by the rites of passage that are *hijrah* and *jihād*. By inserting this role-element for adherents to fulfil in the greater cause of Allah and the caliphate, ISIS creates a sense of stability that Denis-Constant (1995) identified as missing in many live of Identity Seekers. Together, *Dabiq's* message clearly adds up to form a collective action frame that has the potential of being able to shape the motivations of identity seeking foreign fighters, thus answering the last sub question: *How does the overarching message in* Dabiq *relate to the foreign fighter motivations?* The next chapter brings all information of the preceding chapters together in order to formulate an answer to the research question.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study set out to explore the link between ISIS's propaganda and the surge in foreign fighters migrating to the Islamic State since its establishment in 2014. The existing literature on this topic has been quick to formulate explanations, but slow to acknowledge the power of media and propaganda in relation to attracting foreign sympathisers. This has created a scattered field that focusses either on peripheral explanations and ignores the link between propaganda and reality. Consequently, government policies to counter this hazardous trend of migration by promulgating a counter message that struggles to focus and is ineffective because of it.

This thesis sought to connect the knowledge of foreign fighter motivations in general with an objective corpus-based analysis of *Dabiq*'s overarching message in order to bridge the gap and provide insight in the discursive construction of the message that aims to shape these motivations. In the path towards this goal, the research provided an overview of relevant literature on various types of foreign fighters and compared to the recent – still limited – evidence of the motivations of those who travelled to Syria and Iraq in recent years. Using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, the overarching message in *Dabiq* was established, and subsequently an analytical framework was constructed by expanding Benford and Snow's (2000) Collective Action Frames with Denis-Constant's (1995) Identity Narrative. As such, this study sought to answer the research question: *How does ISIS construct a discursive message that aims to shape the motivation of foreign fighters through its propaganda magazine Dabiq, since the establishment of the Caliphate on June 29th, 2014?* The main findings are chapter specific and were summarised in the conclusions of the respective chapters. This section reiterates and synthesises these findings to show how they converge to answer the research question.

First, the current stream of foreign fighters to the Islamic State should be understood as motivated by a personal incentive to satisfy a range of unfulfilled needs. By comparing the current knowledge of the motivations of foreign fighters migrating to the Islamic State with the literature on foreign fighters and their motivations, it was found that they can most accurately be depicted as four categories: Revenge Seeker, Status Seeker, Thrill Seeker, and Identity Seeker. To operationalise foreign fighter motivations, the study adheres to these categories as the definition of what motivates foreign fighters to migrate to the Islamic State, and hence the answer to the first sub question.

Second, it was found that the overarching message in *Dabiq* constitutes a Collective Action Frame. By promoting a bipolar worldview in which Muslims are threatened both internally by the decay of Islam and externally by a coalition of Western crusaders and apostate Muslims, the problem is diagnosed. The Islamic State is presented as the modern-day *khalifāh*, built on the foundations of Muhammad's ancient Islamic caliphate to form the means of preserving Islam and safeguarding the *Ummah*, by force if necessary. This constitutes the prognostic frame. It then provides the motivational frame by calling upon every Muslim to fulfil their individual duty of *hijrah* and *jihād*.

Finally, considering the third sub question of how this message relates to the foreign fighter motivations, it was found that the combination of diagnostic and prognostic frames serves to clearly delineate the boundaries as well as the content of what *Dabiq* defines as the in-group of faithful Muslims, thus creating an imagined community that builds on ISIS's interpretation of Islam. The promulgated bipolar worldview satisfies the need for certainty often found in Identity Seekers by eliminating the so-called grayzone. Moreover, the solution of the Islamic State is infused with the intention of protecting and continuing Islamic traditions and their commitment to the highly exclusive in-group of 'brothers' that adherents become part of upon completing the rites of passage of *hijrah* and *jihād*.

Bringing these answers together, the research question is answered by concluding that in *Dabiq*, ISIS constructs an overarching discursive message that establishes the Islamic State as an imagined community of Muslims that strives to preserve Islamic traditions from internal decay by hypocrites and safeguard the sharply delineated, exclusive in-group community from the threat of a coalition of apostates and crusaders. This message aims to shape the motivations of foreign fighters seeking to satisfy their need for identity and a place to belong by offering certainty and reinforcement of tradition by commitment to the in-group.

4.1. Discussion

Regarding the theoretical field, this study underscores the importance of framing and counter framing and the role of ISIS's propaganda in their ability to mobilise extreme amounts of people. While subscribing to the importance of a comprehensive approach to the subject, this study thus diverges from more traditional explanations that, among other factors, point to the geographic accessibility of Syria and the relatively low risk of joining the insurgency (Sutherland, 2014; Hegghammer, 2013), as well as to a 'Jihadi cool' youth culture and the influence of peer pressure (Cottee, 2014). Although acknowledging the role all these factors play to one degree or another in individual cases, it aligns itself with arguments that point to the role of propaganda in mobilising adherents, as has recently been discussed by a variety of authors. Naturally, this is not the first endeavour to lay bare the persuasive efficacy of ISIS's propaganda. However, much of

the earlier scholarship has concentrated on either the polished, slick production of ISIS's strategic communications campaign (Shane and Hubbard, 2014), its apparent trademark of blood and gore (Friis, 2015) or its remarkably effective use of social media (Farwell, 2014) to explain its appeal. Both major publications (Weiss and Hassan, 2015; Hall, 2015, and Stern and Berger, 2015) and modest analytical articles (Fisher and Prucha, 2014) have concentrated on a combination of these topics. This study diverges from earlier analyses of ISIS's propaganda by placing its focus on how the content of the discursive message in *Dabiq* aims to shape the motivations of its audience to join the Islamic State as a foreign fighter. As such, this thesis contributes to the scholarly literature by further expanding the knowledge of ISIS's strategic communication in general and by providing additional insight in the logic and arguments underpinning *Dabiq*'s overarching message.

Fernandez (2015), Winter (2015), and Zelin (2015) all conducted broad analyses of ISIS's overall communications strategy, thus identifying a variety of themes that are prevalent throughout the organisation's messages. This study generally endorses these findings, and points out the discursive connections between the themes that constitute the overarching message. Other authors have chosen comparable approaches before. Ryan (2014), Gambhir (2014), and Ingram (2016) also analysed the interplay of structure and contents of *Dabiq.* All of them underscored the efficacy of the magazine and provided valuable insights. However, at the time of the studies conducted by both Ryan (2014) and Gambhir (2014) in August 2014, the number of *Dabiq* issues was limited to two publications. Seeing how this study found that ISIS constructs its message over the course of many articles, with some issues focussing heavily on thematic fields, this limited timespan restricts the generalisability of their findings, as well as their validity concerning the current message. In other words, their analyses provided valuable insights in the structure and contents of *Dabiq* that inspired the approach of this thesis. In addition, the specific analytical approach of combining CL and DHA to objectively identify the overarching message and compare this to Identity Narratives and Collective Action Frames to provide interpretation sets this study apart from similar projects.

The fractured results from scholarly literature informs an equally fractured landscape of governmental and organisational policy and initiatives, intending to counter ISIS's enchanting message. As discussed earlier, these efforts have not been very effective while some argue that they are even counter-effective (Katz, 2014; Cottee, 2015). The problem with many of these policies is that they tend to respond to ISIS's publications by copying the topic and providing superficial anti-thesis (Katz, 2014), thus missing the underlying points and arguments that construct of the overarching message that actually does the work of attracting foreign fighters. Furthermore, these counter narratives present half a message: 'Don't do this', which lacks the positive argument saying 'do this instead' that partly accounts for the proficiency

of the Islamic State's message (Cottee, 2015). The main practical contribution of the current study, then, is to provide insight in the constitutive elements of *Dabiq*'s message that shape the relationship between ISIS's communication and its audience. In doing so, it argues for two important amendments to current counter radicalisation policies. First, the formulation of counter narrative initiatives that should, informed by this and other in-depth studies, target the *message* of ISIS propaganda, rather than its *themes*. Second, although collective action frames have persuasive potency, they cannot create problems out of thin air (Snow and Benford, 1988). The fact that *Dabiq*'s message appears to be successful in shaping the motivations of Identity Seekers should therefore be taken seriously as a clear warning sign. The fact that it capitalises on offering certainty, stability, and a sense of belonging might indicate serious problems in the communities of many countries. Much research has been conducted in this area (Choudhury, 2007; Spalek, 2007; Veldhuis and Staun, 2009; Bux, 2007), but until the results are heard and implemented to actively change social reality and structural problems, the roots of the current foreign fighter motivations remain in place, lingering for social movement organisations to tap in to.

4.2. Future research

As was discussed in the methodology section, this research has its limitations that restrict its conclusions in terms of reliability and validity. By acknowledging these limitations, they helped narrowing down the research object by choosing the English *Dabiq* magazine. This choice also provides an interesting starting point for additional research. Having identified the overarching message of *Dabiq*, future scholars might be interested in testing the prevalence of this message throughout the complete spectrum of ISIS propaganda, including its variations across different languages. Approaches such as Multimodal Discourse Analysis, which extends the study of language per se to the studying it in combination with other resources such as images, symbolism, action, and music (O'Halloran, 2011: 120) can be useful. This and comparable approaches can yield important insights that reveal how different elements such as *Dabiq*, social media, and *nashīd* complement each other and differ, possibly depending on their target audience.

Lastly, the results of this thesis must be appreciated with caution and treated for what they are able to claim. That is, it has been made plausible here that ISIS aims to shape the motivations of Identity seeking foreign fighters, based on a solid methodological approach and thorough theoretical background study. But this is only one side of the propaganda coin. Further research is imperative to unravel the resonance of this message among its audience, for example through in-depth interviews or conversation analysis. Benford and Snow's (2000) theory of Collective Action Frames might again provide a valuable starting

point for such endeavours, allowing it to directly build on and incorporate the findings of the current research.

This thesis has provided valuable insights in the structure and contents of *Dabiq* magazine, thus enhancing our insight in one of ISIS's main elements in their notorious strategic communications campaign. By indicating how the magazine aims to shape foreign fighter motivations by capitalising on the topics of certainty, stability, and a sense of belonging, it revealed one of the ways in which the magazine intends to connect the Islamic State to the personal situation of its audience. It is essential that this, and other in-depth research of ISIS's overarching message and its supporting arguments, is considered to improve current and future efforts of countering foreign fighter migration.

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Appendix 1

Rank	Keyword	Frequency	Keyness
1	Allah	3153	22986.539
2	Islamic	1550	9600.539
3	Muslims / Muslim	783 / 554	4768.951 / 2934.446
4	*Jihād*	661	4290.819
5	*Khilafāh*	579	4276.288
6	Islam	682	4190.840
7	*Mujāhid/Mujāhidīn*	508	3751.908
8	State	1536	3373.220
9	Their	2709	2942.937
10	*Sallallahu 'Alayhi wa Sallam*	380	2806.545
11	*Kufr / Kuffār / Kafir / Takfir*	364 / 257 / 111 /132	2688.375 / 1898.111 / 819.807 / 974.905
12	Messenger / Prophet / Muhammad	420 / 360 / 264	2677.276 / 2280.291 / 1645.673
13	*Shām*	437	2665.286
14	Crusaders / Crusader	400 / 229	2656.026 / 1431.465
15	Them	2109	2642.056
16	Religion	521	2544.718
17	Against	1174	2528.695
18	*Rāfidah / Rāfidī*	329 / 160	2429.877 / 1181.703
19	Factions	347	2252.602
20	Shari'ah	298	2176.994
21	*Wilāyat / Wilāyah*	261	1927.653
22	Soldiers	426	1912.866
23	*Hijrah*	246	1816.869

24	Sahwah [Iraqi Sunni faction]	244	1802.097
25	Sunnah [lessons from Muhammad]	244	1802.097
26	Amongst	301	1777.680
27	*Tāghūt* / *Tawāghīt*	233 / 214	1720.855 / 1580.528
28	Jawlani [front]	213	1573.142
29	Imam	221	1563.245
30	Syrian	244	1543.547
31	Al Qa'Idah	207	1528.828
32	Lands	274	1456.508
34	Murtadd / *Murtaddīn*	197 / 176	1454.972 / 1299.873
35	Apostate / Apostates / Apostasy	203 / 180 / 148	1419.093 / 1307.496 / 1003.382
36	Allies	293	1402.342
37	*Shaykh*	194	1386.355
38	*Ummah*	184	1320.445
39	Whoever	237	1202.452
40	Brothers	283	1199.146
41	Fight / Fighting	347 / 231	1184.365 / 810.159
42	Iraq	335	1071.218
43	Will	1528	1064.742
45	Syria	205	1029.775
46	Scholars	230	1015.341
47	PKK	149	991.644
48	Enemy	232	987.931
49	Regime	245	979.495
50	Qur'an / Hadith	140 / 118	978.059 / 836.499
51	Dhawahiri	121	893.663
52	Shirk / *Mushrikīn*	123 / 106	880.232 / 782.878
53	*Khalīfah*	113	834.578

54	Believers	140	817.505
55	Ikhwan	109	805.035
56	Nusayri	108	797.650
57	Deviant	121	791.509
58	Ahmad	128	783.704
59	Sahih	105	775.493
60	Tawhid	105	775.493
61	Hypocrites	117	763.035

Table 1. Overview of Keywords and their frequency, ranked by keyness value.
Source: computed with AntConc version 3.4.4. (Anthony, 2005).