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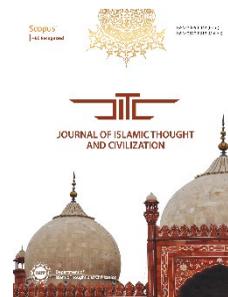|	
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ISIS' Miscontextualization of Ḥadīth through the Strategic Linguistic Propaganda: A Socio-political Analysis

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Abstract

ISIS has used language propaganda to further its sociopolitical objectives and defend its harsh behavior through the miscontextualization of ḥadīth. This study uses linguistic stylistics to demonstrate the language used in ISIS's magazine "*Dabīq,*" which made piecemeal usage of Ḥadīth (Prophet Muhammad's sayings) to justify its actions. To do so, the study first thematizes the ḥadīth*s* that ISIS reported. It then points out the silences (by "silences," we mean important ḥadīths that are missing from ISIS's discourse) involved in ISIS's discourse concerning these themes, in which the critical ḥadīth*s* are absent from ISIS's discourse as they emphasize lessons and teachings other than those that ISIS propagates. The results revealed that ISIS used two ḥadīth*s* to celebrate its role in what they consider the revival of the *Khilāfah*, four ḥadīth*s* to portray itself as the Jihādist organization that most imitates *Imamah,* two ḥadīth*s* to reinforce violent *Jihād* as the spearhead of its *Minhāj* (way or path)*,* and one ḥadīth to call for *Hijrah* in its territories. The study revealed ISIS's preference for particular themes in ḥadīth over others; thus, the study gives voice to those ḥadīth*s* that are absent from ISIS's discourse, where the ḥadīth*s* directly related to the thematic areas involved in ISIS's speech are unavailable.

Keywords: ḥadīth, ISIS, Miscontextualization, Propaganda, Socio-political, Stylistics.

Introduction

In 2004, Al-Qaeda's ISIS branch was officially acknowledged in Iraq. The founder of this group, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, ruled the branch of Al-Qaeda in Iraq for several years. He dealt with his enemies more brutally than Al-Qaeda did. Remarkably, ISIS gained more supporters after the USA and its allies' invasion of Iraq in 2003 as there was sectarian vehemence and conflict between the Shia and the Sunnis in Iraq and Syria.[1] The Sunnis in these countries were intimidated and mourned grimly under the Shia rule of Al-Assad in Syria and Al-Māliki in Iraq, who could not sustain a bilateral attitude towards the different religious groups of their countries which caused a rebellion against the two regimes. Later, the civil war in Syria gave ISIS more ground for expansion because thousands of Syrians were exasperated and disheartened by the discriminatory treatment of the regime ruled by Al-Assad.[2] ISIS has been successful in recruiting new fighters. In doing so, Al-Assad dealt viciously and belligerently with the public, prompting enraged young men to fight against the Syrian army and later join ISIS. At this point, the rest of the resistance groups were seen as the allies of foreign interests. Many Syrians felt an international power game maltreated them, and thus they

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[1]Fajri Matahati Muhammadin, "Refuting Da'esh Properly: A Critical Review of the "Open Letter to Al-Baghdādī," *Journal of International Humanitarian Action* 1, no. 1 (2016): 1-10.

[2]Zana Khasraw Gulmohamad, "The Rise and Fall of the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Shām (Levant) ISIS, *Global Security Studies* 5, no. 2 (2014).

sought vengeance to recoup their civilian rights. ISIS that time appears to be a powerful force that could accomplish these goals.[3]

In June 2014, ISIS took control of Mosul, Iraq. At that juncture, the West and America were unaware that the group would surge with disastrous speed. Al-Baghdādī, ISIS's leader, stepped into the pulpit of a mosque in Mosul in July 2014 to convey a Ramadan sermon. That time, he announced himself as the caliph of the Islamic State. He attempted to impose a Wahhabi and radical Salafi interpretation of sharia and Islamic law. This definite interpretation of Islam and its beliefs is central to ISIS rhetoric when enrolling youth from other countries. The majority of Muslim academics denounce this philosophy as unendurable and spiteful.[4] Thus, they rejected their actions and vigorously struck down their misinterpretations, disparaging them as un-Islamic.

The current study employs linguistic stylistics to demonstrate the language used in ISIS's *Dabīq* magazine, which uses Ḥadīth (Prophet Muhammad's (*SAW*) sayings and traditions) piecemeal to justify its actions. To do so, the study first thematizes the ḥadīths that ISIS reports. It then points out the silences in ISIS's discourse concerning these themes. By "silences," we mean important ḥadīths that are missing from ISIS's discourse and emphasize lessons or teachings other than those promoted by ISIS. Thus, by highlighting ISIS's preference for particular themes of *ḥadīth* over others, the study gives voice to those *ḥadīths* that are absent from ISIS's discourse. Importantly, this study also notes the authenticity ranking of the *Sanad* (chains of narration) of each ḥadīth used in this study. These rankings are typically categorized as *Saḥiḥ* (authentic), *ḥasan* (good), and *daʿīf* (weak), among others. Thus, this study does not only give attention to the *matn* (content) of ḥadīths but also their authenticity; where *ḥadīths* directly related to the thematic areas involved in ISIS's discourse are unavailable. The study relies on *ijmāʿ* (Islamic scholarly consensus) to emphasize lessons and teachings other than those that ISIS propagates. *Ijmāʿ* is the third source of Islamic law after the Qurʾān and *Sunnah*, and it is thus best positioned, after the *Sunnah,* to counter ISIS's discourse.

The particular source of *ijmāʿ* that this study uses is "*Open Letter to Dr Ibrahim Awwād Al-Badri, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdādī', and to the Followers and Fighters of the Self-Declared' Islamic State."*This source is an open letter to Al-Baghdādī that systematically refutes ISIS's practices on theological grounds. Notably, at the date of its signing, it had been endorsed by 126 Islamic scholars and community leaders and thus served as a powerful source of Islamic consensus. Moreover, it directly relates to ISIS. While, due to its nature as a document of agreement, it has no clear, particular author. The "*Open Letter"* was presented by Nihad Awad of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) in Washington, D.C., on Sep. 24, 2014, as an initiative to dissuade the radicalization of Muslim youth.[5]

Remarkably, ISIS uses the Qur'ān to legitimize its activities and the Ḥadīth to provide an explanation for those actions. The themes involved in ISIS's piecemeal use of the Qurʾān to justify its activities are:

(i)   ISIS's celebration of its role in what they consider the revival of the *Khilāfah*;
(ii)   ISIS's portrayal of itself as a *Jihādists* organization that mostly imitates *Imamah*;
(iii) ISIS' reinforcement of violent *Jihād* as the spearhead of its *Minhājj* (way or path); and

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[3]Elmira Akhmetova, "Islam and Politics in Malaysia since 1957," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization*, 9 (2), (2019): 01-19.

[4]Fajri Matahati Muhammadin, "Refuting Da'esh properly: A Critical Review of the "Open Letter to Al-Baghdādī," *Journal of International Humanitarian Action* 1, no. 1 (2016): 1-10

[5]Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR). (2014, Sep. 24). *CAIR: U.S., World Muslim Leaders' Open Letter Refutes ISIS's Ideology, Urges Supporters to "Repent," "Return to the Religion of Mercy."*

(iv) ISIS' thematic unity among these two strategies of using the Qurʾān and ḥadīth coincides precisely with ISIS's strategy of using generic Islamic terms to promote its ideology (vocabulary reinforcement). The generic Islamic terms ISIS uses to promote its ideology are *Khilāfah*, *Imamah*, *Jihād,* and *Hijrah*.

The main multi-lingual propaganda documents as well as media modes have been used as prime sources for ISIS's propaganda strategy. Moreover, it is employed through vocabulary reinforcement and piecemeal usage of the Qurʾān and ḥadīth.

The problem of this study lies in scrutinizing ISIS's exploitation of linguistic propaganda strategy to achieve socio-political goals and justify its extreme actions through the mis-contextualization of ḥadīth. The study attempts to illuminate the following question: "How did ISIS use ḥadīth miscontextualization as part of its linguistic propaganda strategy to justify its extreme actions in pursuit of sociopolitical goals?"

1.1. Significance of the Study

The importance of this study stems from its role in clarifying that all linguistic strategies that comprise ISIS's discourse which revolve around four main themes: *Khilāfah*, *Imamah*, *Jihād,* and *Hijrah*. These connections are meaningful because they clarify the priorities inherent in ISIS's discourse as an instrument for achieving socio-political gains and agendas. Moreover, this study highlights the authenticity ranking of the *Sanad* (chain of narration) of each ḥadīth used in this study. It relies on Islamic scholarly consensus (*ijmāʿ*) to emphasize lessons/teachings other than those that ISIS propagates.

The study aims to illustrate the role of miscontextualization of the ḥadīth through ISIS's linguistic propaganda strategy from a socio-political perspective by highlighting ISIS's preference for particular themes of ḥadīth over others and by giving voice to those ḥadīth that are absent from ISIS's discourse.

1.2. Definition of Terms

Miscontextualization: It is the act of forming an incorrect understanding of what is said or done; it is the use of discourse to signal relevant aspects of an interactional or communicative situation.[6]

Ḥadīth (also known as "Athār."): It refers to what most Muslims believe to be a record of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad's (*SAW*) actions, words, and silent agreement.[7]

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) (Dāʿish): It is a militant group and formerly unrecognized proto-state following a Salafi-Jihadist doctrine. It was established by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and achieved an international status in 2014, when it drove Iraqi forces out of the main northern cities in Western Iraq.[8]

Propaganda: It is a specific synthesis of manipulative information that often includes both truths and falsehoods, used to influence attitudes and influence the behaviour of target audiences to engage in particular actions.[9]

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[6]Ruth Wodak, and Kristof Savski, "Critical Discourse-Ethnographic Approaches to Language Policy," *The Oxford Handbook of Language Policy and Planning* (2018): 93-112.

[7]Muhammad Mustafa Azami. *Studies in Hadith Methodology and Literature* (American Trust Publications, 1978).

[8]Alex P. Schmid, "Challenging the Narrative of the "Islamic State"," *The Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism* 14 (2015).

[9]Ibid.

Socio-political: This term describes the differences between groups of people relating to their social class and political beliefs. [10]

Stylistics: It studies texts of all types and spoken language regarding their linguistic and tonal style, where style is the particular variety of language used by different individuals or in other settings. [11]

For this study, linguistic stylistics is used to demonstrate the language used in *Dabīq*, Issue 1, in which ISIS made piecemeal usage of ḥadīth [the reported sayings of Prophet Muhammad (SAW)] through its propaganda publications to justify its extreme actions. The relevant data were collected and analysed.

2. Literature Review

Abumelhim and Radaideh (2022) explored ISIS's linguistic propaganda strategy by illustrating that ISIS is able to get by with systematically abusing human rights in the name of Islam through using a particular linguistic strategy when engaging religious texts (Qurʾānic verses and ḥadīth) and beliefs. The study's findings concluded that ISIS was used selectively in Qurʾānic verses and Ḥadīth. The results also demonstrated that, with ISIS's use of any particular passage, its proper contextualization revealed a different scriptural intention. Furthermore, by addressing the critical tension between ISIS and the Islamic tradition regarding ISIS's ideology and actions, the study legitimizes the denunciation of ISIS as un-Islamic. [12] Also, Abumelhim and Abu-Melhim pointed out that ISIS's press releases was to better understand the sociolinguistic context in which ISIS runs and the socio-political impact of these press releases. It was for interpreting how ISIS uses language to involve the international community in general and the Jordanians in particular, as well as the socio-political effects of this language use. Accordingly, contextualizing the particular instances in which ISIS cites ḥadīth does not only clarify how these citations supplement ISIS's linguistic strategy of selectively using the Qurʾān to justify its actions, but also clarifies how ISIS's equally selective use of ḥadīth works to promote its ideology.

Boutz and Lancaster focused on the ḥadīth quotations contained in a sample of authorized ISIS propaganda comparing the related frequency of particular themes to define which ḥadīth collections ISIS propagandists' desire. The authors compared the quotations of ḥadīth across media platforms (magazines newsletters, and videos), genres (video and print), and languages (English and Arabic). The study also highlights a specific classification of religious scripture: Prophet Muhammad's ḥadīth (Muhammad's collected words and actions). The body of ḥadīth has historically served as a bridge of authentic authority from past to present, connecting later individuals and groups to the legacy of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). The study sheds light on major variances between English and Arabic language propaganda, particularly indicating that materials in English language propaganda concentrates more on apocalyptic prophecies than Arabic language does. The study illustrates how ISIS selectively draws on the enormous body of ḥadīth literature as part of the group's strategic structure. The study's results indicate that ISIS's messaging inclines to quote ḥadīth from canonical Sunni collections. [13]

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[10]Ruth Wodak, and Kristof Savski, Critical Discourse-Ethnographic Approaches to Language Policy," *The Oxford handbook of language policy and Planning* (2018): 93-112.

[11]Henry George Widdowson, *Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature* (Routledge, 2014).

[12]Mohammad Abumelhim, and Ramzi Radaideh. "Sociology of Terrorism: A Brief History and Overview of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria's (ISIS) Propaganda Wing from a Socio-Educational Perspective," *Journal of Educational and Social Research* 12 (2), (2022): 399-399.

[13]Muhammad Feyyaz, "Faith, Reason, and Statecraft in Contemporary Islam," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization*, 3 (1), (2013): 75–102.

Bisgin et al. investigated how ISIS distinguished its notorious techniques, tactics, and methods from those of other terrorist groups. The study used text mining along with natural language processing to analyze *Dabīq* magazine in order to examine propagandists' elements. The study's findings showed that ISIS is adept at enlisting foreign militants thanks to its highly developed "*netwar*" capabilities. Additionally, it demonstrated how ISIS and organizations focused on the term "*jihād*" continuously use Islamic sources in their propaganda. The findings also showed that, despite a detailed examination of ISIS's propaganda videos and photos, there was no systematic study of the written content. The findings also showed that ISIS predominantly focuses Shiites by disparaging their religious beliefs and attempting to establish ISIS's assaults against them.[14]

Mahood and Rane examined the core narratives that characterize ISIS's propaganda disseminated through its media productions. According to the study, ISIS has effectively used Islamist records and selectively relevant fields of Islam to recruit its motivation for pursuing its political objectives, resulting in significant inquiries about the role of Islamism among Muslim extremists and in the process of radicalization. The study concluded that ISIS's employment propaganda is not only a contemporaneous expression of the political ideology of Islamists but also reflects the group's selective manipulation and extreme interpretations of Islam, along with the war-torn social, economic, and social circumstances in which it takes place. The study also revealed that these fields resonate in ISIS's selective use of Islamist narratives, sounds, and images in its media text and characterizations of self and others.[15]

Schmid asserted the need to construct a counter-discourse capable of challenging and disproving ISIS's effort to legalize violence. In this context, the study argues against ISIS's discourse by discrediting its false representations, most significantly that a virtuous Islam would never revive again without a sword. It also argues against ISIS's belief that the caliphate is the truthful nucleus for the land of Islam, so migration to ISIS is lawful and obligatory. The study concludes that what we need to encounter ISIS's illusions and disprove its allegations is a multidisciplinary, systematic, and synergic group capable of creating powerful counter-discourse and counter-arguments efficiently.[16]

3. Results and Discussion

The results of the study revealed that all linguistic strategies that comprise ISIS's discourse to promote its ideology revolves around four main generic Islamic terms: *Khilāfah, Imamah, jihād,* and *Hijrah.* These connections are meaningful because they clarify the priorities inherent in ISIS's discourse as an instrument for achieving socio-political gains and agendas, as revealed below:

3.1 ISIS's Miscontextualization of Ḥadīth

ISIS's Miscontextualization of Ḥadīth has been revealed in different places as discussed below:

3.1.1. Celebrating Khilāfah

ISIS uses two *ḥadīths* to celebrate its role in the revival of the *Khilāfah* (caliphate). The first *ḥadīth* which was reported by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (it is considered *daʿīf* (weak):

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[14]Halil Bisgin, Ḥasan Arslan, and Yusuf Korkmaz, "Analyzing the Dabīq Magazine: The Language and the Propaganda Structure of ISIS," In *International Conference on Social Computing, Behavioral-Cultural Modeling and Prediction and Behavior Representation in Modeling and Simulation*, 1-11. Springer, Cham, Mahood 2019.

[15]Samantha Mahood, and Halim Rane, "Islamist Narratives in ISIS Recruitment Propaganda," *The Journal of International Communication* 23, no. 1 (2017): 15-35.

[16]Alex P. Schmid, "Challenging the Narrative of the "Islamic State"," *The Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism* 14 (2015).

Prophethood will exist for as long as Allah wants it to, and He will end it when He wants. Then, for as long Allah pleases, there will be *Khilāfah* on the prophetic approach; Allah will remove it when He pleases. The severe law will thereafter remain in place until Allah decides to abolish it, which will happen at His discretion. Then, a despotic ruler will rule for as long Allah pleases, and He will do away with it when He pleases. *Khilāfah* then speaks on prophetic approach.[17]

Before citing this ḥadīth, ISIS discusses the establishment of the *Khilāfah* as a goal that has occupied the hearts and minds of the *mujahidīn* (fighters) since what it considers the *jihādists* (fighters) revival of the 21st century.[18] In so doing, ISIS sets the stage for portraying itself as the vanguard of the *jihādist* movement by actualizing what it considers the *Khilāfah*. In other words, ISIS sets itself up as the vehicle through which the *jihādists'* dream of a *Khilāfah* has become a reality. The ḥadīth above portrays the establishment of the *Khilāfah* itself as being divinely ordained and, therefore, spiritually legitimate and providentially inevitable. After citing this ḥadīth, ISIS discusses how, although the *Khilāfah* has been the dream of the Jihadist movement since the beginning of this century, Jihādists have been divided in terms of how to implement the *Khilāfah*. In response, ISIS provided the *Manhaj* of al-Zarqawi, whose contents are based on al-Zarqawi's jihadist experiences in Afghanistan at the beginning of the 21st century. Importantly, and as will be further analysed in the following, al-Zarqawi's *Minhājj* (way or path) has violent *Jihād* as its spearhead, which is a "*Jihād…* based upon *Hijrah, bayʿah* (allegiance), *Taʿah* (obedience), *Samʿ* (listening), and *i'dad* (training), leading to *Ribat* (fighting), then *Khilāfah* or gaining the *Shahadah*."[19] In presenting al-Zarqawi's *Minhājj* as the vehicle for implementing the *Khilāfah*, ISIS equates its *Minhājj* to the prophetic *Minhājj* mentioned in the ḥadīth above. Hence, ISIS references al-Zarqawi as the *Mujaddid* (reviver of the *Khilāfah*). [20]

The second ḥadīth, reported by *Saḥiḥ Muslims* and considered authentic, reads: "Kill anybody who comes to you when you are unified behind a single man and seeks to undermine your unity or your solidarity."[21] Importantly, ISIS fails to provide the full context of this ḥadīth, namely, that such violent actions are only to occur if the ability to deter disruptors (or those who would cause sedition) through reproach fails. Having said that, although ISIS's use of this ḥadīth could be understood as promoting violent *Jihād*, contextualisation reveals that its real aim is to consolidate Al-Baghdādī's power through the idea of the *Khilāfah*. Specifically, before citing this ḥadīth, ISIS presents a brief history of its organization in light of its leadership's roles in attempts to establish the *Khilāfah*. Then ISIS celebrates its part in what it sees as the resurgence of the *Khilāfah* by stating that the efforts of its leadership have created a "new condition" that allows for no dissent and that "prepares the way for the total unification of all Muslim territories and peoples under the *Khilāfah*'s rule."[22] Immediately afterwards, ISIS emphasizes the obligation for Muslims everywhere to obey the ḥadīth above. Thus, by supplementing its threat to deal harshly with any dissent with the ḥadīth above, ISIS promotes a narrative which makes it obligatory upon every Muslim to give *bayʿah* to Al-Baghdādī. ISIS writes blatantly: "It is now more important than ever for all Muslims to speak up and declare their loyalty to Abu Bakr al-Husayni Al-Baghdadi, the *Khalifa*, and Imam Muhammad and Amirul-Mu'minin (May Allah raise his allies and humiliate his enemies)."[23]

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[17]David Harris, "The Islamic State's (ISIS, ISIL) Magazine," *Clarion Project* 10 (2014).
[18]Ibid.
[19]Ibid; Samantha Mahood, and Halim Rane, "Islamist narratives in ISIS Recruitment Propaganda," *The Journal of International Communication* 23, no. 1 (2017): 15-35.
[20]David Harris, The Islamic State's (ISIS, ISIL) Magazine," *Clarion Project* 10 (2014).
[21]Ibid.
[22]Ibid.
[23]Ibid.

According to the "*Open Letter to Al-Baghdādī*", however, ISIS's discourse fails to acknowledge that although there is *ittifāq* (agreement) among Islamic scholars that a *Khilāfah* is obligatory for the *Ummah* (Muslims Nation), the establishment of a new *Khilāfah* would require consensus from all Muslims as opposed to consensus solely from ISIS loyalists. Furthermore, the "*Open Letter*" cites Omar Ibn Al-Khattab as saying: "Anyone swears loyalty to a man without consulting Muslims in the proper manner has deceived himself, and neither he nor the fellow to whom he swore allegiance should be followed since they have both put their lives in danger."[24]

Accordingly, the failure to seek the consensus of all Muslims before announcing a *Khilāfah* causes *fitnah* (sedition), as it would render all those that failed to give consensus apostates. Thus, while ISIS uses *ḥadīth* to celebrate its role in what it considers the revival of the *Khilāfah*, *ijmāʿ* (consensus) reveals that ISIS's proclamation of a *Khilāfah* is inherently illegitimate.[25]

3.1.2. Imitating *Imamah*

ISIS uses four *ḥadīths* to portray itself as the Jihadist organization that most imitates *Imamah*. The first *ḥadīth*, narrated by Abdullah Ibn' Amr and considered *saḥiḥ* (authentic), reads: "Ask Allah to revive your Imān in your heart since a man's Iman (faith) wears away inside him just like a garment does."[26] Immediately after citing this *ḥadīth*, ISIS discusses how in recent years, young Muslims worldwide have witnessed a revived yearning in their hearts for *Tawḥīd* (the monotheistic principle of Islam that holds that God is to be worshipped solely and in a wholehearted manner), which would help renew their faith. Significantly, ISIS describes a desire to disassociate oneself from non-Muslims as an attribute of *tawhidī* (monotheistic) worship. Moreover, such dissociation would involve ceasing to respect secular government powers. ISIS then moves on to criticize Jihadist organizations that fail to dissociate themselves as such, and thereby sets itself up as not only the vanguard for *tawḥīd* for young Muslims but also as the overseer of such *Jihadist* organizations as they said: "So, it became necessary for us to restore the elements of this *Millah* [path to *Tawḥīd*] that had deteriorated inside the people's spirits and try to provide guidance to those attempting to reverse it [work of the Jihādists' movement thus far]."[27]

ISIS then uses three related *ḥadīths* to consolidate Al-Baghdādī's power through the idea of the *Imamah*. These *ḥadīths* argue that Al-Baghdādī's religious leadership (as recognized by ISIS) involves spiritual and political roles. The first *ḥadīth*, narrated by Abdullah ibn Umar, reported by al-Bukhārī, and considered *saḥiḥ* (authentic), reads: "Beware! You are all shepherds, and each of you is in charge of his own flock. As a result, the imam (or caliph) is a shepherd over the people, and he will be questioned about his flock (issues pertaining to how he conducted their affairs)."[28]

The second *ḥadīth*, narrated by Hudhaifa bin Al-Yaman, reported by both al-Bukhārī and Muslim, and considered *saḥiḥ* (authentic), reads:

"People used to ask Allah's Messenger (*SAW*) about the good, but I used to ask him about the evil because I didn't want to be overtaken by them." So I said, "O Allah's Messenger (SAW)! "We were living in ignorance, and an (extremely) bad atmosphere, then Allah brought to us this good (i.e., Islam); will there be any evil after this good?" He said, "Yes." I said, 'Will there be any good after that evil?" He replied, "Yes, but it will be tainted (not pure)." I asked, "What will be its taint?" He replied, "Will there be some people who will guide others contrary to my tradition?" "You will

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[24]Fajri Matahati Muhammadin, "Refuting Da'esh properly: A Critical Review of the "Open Letter to Al-Baghdādī"," *Journal of International Humanitarian Action* 1, no. 1 (2016): 1-10.
[25]Ibid.
[26]David Harris, "The Islamic State's (ISIS, ISIL) Magazine," *Clarion Project* 10 (2014).
[27]Ibid.
[28]*Sahih Bukhari,* The Book of Rulings. Chapter: God Almighty says: Obey God and obey the Messenger, Ḥadīth no. 7138.

approve of some of their deeds and disapprove of others." I asked, "Will there be any evil after that good?" He replied, "Yes, there will be some people calling at the gates of the (hell) fire, and whoever responds to their call will be thrown by them into the (hell) fire." I said, "O Allah's Apostle! "Are you able to describe them to us? They will be of our people and understand our language, he remarked. What are my orders if such a situation arises in my life, I asked. "Stay with the Muslims and their imam (ruler)," he said. He said, "Steer away from all those cults, even if you were to bite (consume) the roots of a tree till death overtakes you while you are in that situation, if there is neither a community of Muslims nor an Imam (ruler)."[29] It requests that you adhere to the Muslim community's *jama'ah* and imām. Also, if a person does not have access to either a *Jama'ah* or an imam, they are required to stay away from all groups, even if that means biting into a tree root until they die.

Another *ḥadīth* narrated by Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah said, "Anyone refuses rightful loyalty to the leader and separates the society and dies in this situation would have died in ignorance. Whoever dies in this state fighting under the flag of one who is blind, raging for tribalism's sake, calling for tribalism, or supporting tribalism, would have perished in ignorance. Anybody who rebels against my country by harming both the good and the bad, sparing no one—not even the believers—and breaking the security commitment has nothing to do with me and I have nothing to do with them."[30]

And Umm al-Husayn reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, delivered a sermon during the farewell pilgrimage, saying: "Even if an Abyssinian slave were appointed in charge over you and he led you with the Book of Allah, you must listen and obey."[31]

Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah said, "You must listen and obey authorities in hardship and ease, what you are eager for and what you dislike, even if they give undue preference over you."[32]

Wa'il al-Hadrami reported: Salamah ibn Yazid asked the Messenger of Allah saying, "O Prophet of Allah, what do you think if rulers are charged over us who demand their rights and prevent us from exercising them? "What do you command us to do?" The Prophet (*SAW*) turned away from him and then asked a second or third time, so Al-Ash'ath ibn Qays pulled him to the side. The Prophet said, "Listen and obey, for their burdens are upon them, and your burdens are upon you." [33]

Abu Huraira reported: "The Prophet (*SAW*) said, "Whoever follows me, has obeyed Allah; and whoever refuses to follow me has disobeyed Allah. Everyone who follows my deputy's orders has done so at my direction, and the reverse is also true."[34]

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[29]*Sahih al-Bukhari,* Afflictions and the End of the World, Chapter: If there is no righteous group of Muslims, 7084.

[30]*Sahih Bukhari,* "The call to prayer. The chapter: leading the slave and the master," Part No.:1, 140.

[31]Muslim b Hajjaj, *Sahih Muslim,*Book Emirate. Chapter: obedience to rulers in non-disobedience, Hadith No. 1836; *Sahih Al-Bukhari*: The book of the call to prayer. The chapter on leading the slave and the master 693; *Sunan Ibn Majah*: "The Book of Jihad, Chapter on Obedience to the Imam," Hadith No.: 2860.

[32]*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Hadith no.* 1846.

[33]*Sahih Muslim, "*Book of Principality," Chapter: obedience to princes, Hadith No. 1846.

[34]*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī,* "The Book of Jihad and Life," Chapter: Fighting behind the imam and protecting himself through him, Ḥadīth 2957.

Ibn Abbas reported: "The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Whoever sees something from his ruler that he hates, let him be patient. Whoever secedes from the community by as much as a hand's span and dies will have died a death of ignorance."[35]

Another *ḥadīth*, narrated by Abdur-Rahman Ibn Abd-Rabbil- Kʻbh, which is reported by Muslims and considered *Saḥiḥ* (authentic), reads: "Anyone who pledges allegiance to a ruler, giving him the grasp of his hand and sincerity of his heart, should obey him to the best of his capacity. If another man comes forward disputing his authority, then you should behead the latter."[36]

Thus, ISIS understood that anybody who swears loyalty to an imam with his hand and sincerity should try their best to obey him. He should strike the neck of any other man who steps up to challenge his validity.[37]

As seen, ISIS's usage of these *ḥadīths* is problematic because it contradicts the *ḥadīths'* underlying message, which is to promote a sense of unity among Muslims while discouraging sedition. The *ḥadīths* state that it is scholars' duty, just as the prophets' duty, to explain all forms of sound, encourage people to perform them, and guide them to their path. It is also their responsibility to elucidate all forms of evil and warn people against it. The *ḥadīths* display that the early Muslim generations were granted safety from trials. In contrast, its late generations will be afflicted with sin and practices that will make the coming problems belittle the earlier issues. Safety (from these trials) lies in monotheism, observance of the *Sunnah,* gentle treatment of people, adherence to the pledge given to the ruler and refraining from rebelling against him, and killing whoever wishes to sow discord among the Muslims.[38] However, ISIS's usage of this *ḥadīth* is problematic because it justifies *takfirism* (which involves legitimizing the killing of other Muslims by accusing them of heresy) by allowing ISIS to set itself up as the overseer of Jihadist organizations. Any Jihadist organization that does not disassociate itself from government powers will be declared apostate. Furthermore, this usage is problematic because it bestows Al-Baghdādī's authority over the *Ummah's* religious and political affairs. Such authority would similarly render apostate all Muslims who fail to dissociate from secular government powers and give *bayʿah* (allegiance) to Baghdadi.

Takfirism, in turn, conflicts with the following *ḥadīth*, narrated by Osamah ibn Zaid, and it is considered *Saḥiḥ* (authentic). According to Ibn Zaid, after killing a man who made a *Shahāda* (declaration of faith). To take up Islam, one must perform the *shahadah*. "I witness that there is no deity but Allah, and I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah," is the Islamic *shahadah*." and it quotes the Prophet (*SAW*) as saying: He said, "There is no God but God," and you killed him! I replied, "O Messenger of God, he only said it out of fear of [our] arms." He said, "Did you see inside his heart to know whether or not he meant it?'.[39]

This ḥadīth highlights the Prophet's merciful attitude towards all human beings, even those fighting against Islam. Moreover, this attitude of the Prophet clearly conflicts with ISIS's use of violence in promoting its ideology. Thus, while ISIS uses the above ḥadīths to portray itself as the Jihadist organization that most imitates *Imamah* (by setting itself up as the overseer of other Jihadist organizations and bestowing authority over the entire *Umma's* religious and political affairs on Al-Baghdādī), this conflicting ḥadīth clarifies that such Takfirism is inherently un-Islamic.

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[35]*Sunan Abi Dawood*, "The first book of temptations and epics," Chapter: Mentioning Fitnah and its Evidence, Ḥadīth 4248.

[36]*Sunan Ibn Majah,* "The book of Temptation," Chapter of what may be temptation, Ḥadīth No. 3956.

[37]David Harris, "The Islamic State's (ISIS, ISIL) Magazine," *Clarion Project* 10 (2014).

[38]HadeethEcn.com: https://hadeethenc.com/ar/home

[39]Fajri Matahati Muhammadin, "Refuting Da'esh properly: a Critical Review of the "Open Letter to Al-Baghdādī"," *Journal of International Humanitarian Action* 1, no. 1 (2016): 1-10.

3.1.3. Strengthening Violent Jihād

ISIS uses two *ḥadīths* to reinforce violent *Jihād* as the spearhead of its *Minhājj* (way or path). The first *ḥadīth*, narrated by Abu Hurairah and accepted as authentic, states,

> The hour will not be established until Muslims vanquish the Romans at "*Dabīq"* or *"Al-Amaq*," (two locations near each other in the northern countryside of Halab, Turkey's border region), on their way to conquering Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul). The greatest people on earth at that time will form an army from Madina and march toward them. The Romans will command, "Leave us and those who were taken as prisoners from among us so we can battle them," as they form lines of soldiers. "Nay, by Allah, we will not surrender our brethren to you," the Muslims will reply. Therefore, they will battle them. A third of them will then run, and Allah will never pardon them. The best martyrs for Allah will be among the one-third who will perish. And one-third will defeat them; fitnah will never overtake them (sedition). They will then take control of Constantinople. Satan will yell, "The [false] Messiah has followed after your family [who were left behind]!" as they divide the battle spoils after hanging their swords on olive branches. They will thus depart [for their families], notwithstanding Satan's deceitful claim. He emerges when they get to Sham. Then, as they are lining up in their ranks and getting ready for war, prayer is called. Ibn Maryam (Jesus) will therefore descend and guide them. He will dissolve when the adversary of Allah sees him, just like salt does in water. He kills him with his hand and then displays his blood on his spear because, if he were to abandon him, he would melt till he died.[40]

ISIS's stated purpose in using this is to clarify the origins of the name of its magazine, *"Dabīq."* Necessary for our purposes, however, is that this is not only the first *ḥadīth* provided by ISIS in this issue of *Dabīq* but also the first topic covered. In light of this thesis's previous analysis of ISIS's use of vocabulary reinforcement to promote violent *Jihād* as the spearhead of its *Minhājj*, it is no surprise that it would give this *ḥadīth* priority.

The second *ḥadīth*, reported by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and al-Tirmidhī and considered *ḥasan* (good), reads: "I command you to do the five things Allah commanded me to do: *Jamāʿat* [community], *samiʿa* (listening), *Ṭāʿat* (obedience), *hijrah* (migration), and *Jihād Fi sabīl Allah* (struggle for Allah's sake); Therefore, anybody who departs from the Jama'ah by a hand's width has, until they return, freed themselves from the scourge of Islam. …'[41]

While a significant purpose of ISIS's use of this *ḥadīth* is to emphasize the importance of community among its followers, another goal is to blatantly emphasize *Jihād* (understood by ISIS as violent *Jihād*) as the spearhead of its *Minhājj* (way or path). ISIS's use of these *ḥadīths* is problematic, however, as it departs from the established usage of *Jihād*. *Jihād* traditionally refers to violent and nonviolent collective struggles against societal oppression and individual struggles against sin. In fact, these usages are often given varying levels of importance in Islamic discourse. For example, according to one ḥadīth, *Jihād* as an individual struggle against sin, that is, against the lower self, is referred to as "the greater Jihād,"

In contrast, *Jihād,* a collective struggle against societal oppression, is referred to as "The Lesser *Jihād*."[42] ISIS, however, capitalizes divisively on the idea of *Jihād* exclusively being a violent collective struggle against societal oppression to further its own purposes, ignoring the variant meanings of *Jihād* mentioned above. Moreover, in laying out guidelines for its recruits to invest themselves in the pursuit of a *Khilāfah*, ISIS supplements the Prophet's commands for the community- listening, obedience, migration, and *Jihād*- as mentioned in the ḥadīth above with *"iʿdad* (training), leading to *ribat* (fighting), then *Khilāfah* or *Shahada* (martyrdom)."[43] In other words, ISIS

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[40]David Harris, "The Islamic State's (ISIS, ISIL) Magazine," *Clarion Project* 10 (2014).

[41]Ibid.

[42]Diane Morgan, *Essential Islam: A Comprehensive Guide to Belief and Practice,* ABC-CLIO. (2010).

[43]David Harris, "The Islamic State's (ISIS, ISIL) Magazine," *Clarion Project* 10 (2014).

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replaces the Prophet's command for *Jihād* with training, fighting, and martyrdom. In doing so, ISIS cements its translation of "*Jihād*" from the term's established usage to one that promotes violence.

3.1.4 Calling for *Hijrah*

Finally, ISIS justifies *Hijrah* in its territories by citing a *ḥadīth* to promote *Hijrah* for the sake of violent *Jihād* ("The Lesser Jihād") in line with its own sociopolitical aims. One translation of this *ḥadīth,* reported by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and considered *ḥasan* (good), reads: "*Hijrah* will continue as long as Jihād exists." Another translation, reported by al-Nisāʾī, reads: "*Hijrah* will continue as long as the Kuffār (nonbelievers in Islam) are fought."[44] To recap, one of the variant meanings of "*Jihād*" is a violent collective struggle against societal oppression. Accordingly, an example of a situation that would merit such a violent collective struggle would be one in which Muslims were not freely allowed to practice Islam. In that case, "the lesser *Jihād*" would be used to protect freedom of religion. Thus, ISIS's use of the above *ḥadīth* is problematic because, in using it, it capitalizes divisively on the idea of violent *Jihād* to further its own purposes rather than promote social stability for Muslims. In other words, ISIS uses this *ḥadīth* to encourage societal upheaval in the name of Islam as opposed to, for example, ensuring the freedom of religion for Muslims.[45]

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, this study uses linguistic stylistics to demonstrate the language used in *Dabīq, Issue 1,* in which ISIS made piecemeal usage of *ḥadīth* to justify its actions. It did so by systematically thematizing the *ḥadīth* that ISIS reports. It then highlighted the silences involved in ISIS's discourse concerning these themes. Specifically, these silences applied *ḥadīths* or insights from *ijmāʿ* (Islamic scholarly consensus) that are absent from ISIS's speech and that emphasize lessons or teachings other than those that ISIS propagates. Thus, by highlighting ISIS's preference for particular themes of *ḥadīth* over others, this study gave voice to those *ḥadīths* that are absent from ISIS's discourse.

Conflict of Interest

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[44]Ibid.

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