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SOCIAL MEDIA AS A RECRUITMENT
TOOL FOR ISIS

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By
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The essay of Abdullah S. Almutairi is hereby accepted:

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Abstract

ISIS entered public consciousness as a splinter group from Al-Qaida, both of which have been associated with random, unwarranted acts of violence and terror in the post 911 world. ISIS carved out its own "caliphate" hence the name ISIS, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria destroying both its subject territories cultural treasures and subjugating its people. Americans tend to think of ISIS as having sprung up in a power vacuum in a wave of self-radicalization. News reports featured barbarous acts of barbarism all committed in the name of the self- proclaimed state's interpretation of Islam. However, behind this incongruous group of disreputable and undesirable individuals, there are clearly highly educated and technologically proficient operatives whose communication management skills have been put into the service of disseminating ISIS' message of hate, violence, and destruction and most significantly drawing in recruits from many parts of the world, especially from regions apart from the Middle East. They have planned, produced, and posted on line music videos mimicking the appeal and the style of those which have become universally popular with young people across cultures with however a significant different. These mingle pleasant landscapes with soulful, nostalgia music with scenes of opponents digging their own mass graves and summary executions. At the same time, they appeal to alienated youth, mostly male, who are searching for a sense of belonging and a true calling, a sense of mission and value for their disaffected lives. Whatever their current status on the battlefield, the communication managers serving ISIS have become amazingly successful propagandists in a world of anomie.

Social Media as a Recruitment Tool for ISIS

Introduction

My master's project explores the issue of ISIS recruitment through social media, most particularly Twitter and videos posted on sites such as YouTube and jihadology.net. This is an attempt to analyze the communication process between a well-crafted message and a vulnerable audience. Social media is an especially effective means by which to reach this audience whose objective to incite terror, foment social upheaval, and both justify and encourage violence, murder, and summary extrajudicial executions. A better understanding of this use of social media will enhance the abilities of ISIS's opponents including Western powers such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and France to combat it more successfully. By an odd or rather unfortunate coincidence of socio-political history and innovation in communication technology, a perfect storm of human evil has been unleashed by the promulgation of ISIS messaging through social media perverting the true meaning of the tenants of Islam. Al Qaeda and ISIS are each targeting people from a different perspective; however, the mission of both groups remains the same despite their use of different strategies. They are increasing their long-term strength by targeting youth through social media and attacking Sunni communities in Syria.

Purpose and significance

Any attempt to understand how ISIS can create messages to lure hundreds of thousands, even westerners and non-Muslims, to their cause, requires a critical analysis of the interaction between the rhetoric of the message and the psychology of the vulnerable receiver, including a profile of those drawn to ISIS, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, which came into being as the result of the power vacuum and civil disorder stemming from the Western invasion of Iraq and the civil war in Syria.

Governments in the Middle East and North Africa of predominately Muslim countries do not, of course, welcome terrorist groups. However, many of those who inhabit these countries believe they have no other recourse as democratically elected governments have been overthrow by military coups while totalitarian or absolutist leaders remain. In such areas, the people have no power to influence the governments of their own countries. Demands for change or attempts to improve the situation often land them in prison. Western powers, for the most part, have turned a blind eye to these oppressive governments with which they have done business, as for example in their insatiable appetites for carbon based fuels. In counterpoint to western influence, the imams may incite hate and violence against the west. Many governments even in Saudi Arabia feel that some of the imams are dangerous. And when an event happens such as September 11th, they take this situation seriously and put some of them in prison, which only results in more trouble.

At the same time, western governments pursue their own interests. Indifferent to the fate of the people, they make war without regard for the consequences. To the West it doesn't matter. It's just collateral damage. They tell the people that "I made the Iraqi people free from Saddam Hussein," but for many in retrospect this was no cause for celebration. Now in Iraq people even wish that Saddam Hussein could return. Those in the Middle East need the safety and security they deserve, but even the occupiers don't provide that. Consequently, ISIS uses this indifference to persuade the people that westerners are evil infidel Christians who hate Islam and wish to kill all Muslims. When Muslims die, as for example in an air strike that kills civilians, especially children, ISIS can further its agenda by saying, "I told you so."

When we look at ISIS we need to know how their people think to understand the enemy. On this point, just this one point, I agree with Trump: Isis is the most

dangerous organization in the world. ISIS's appeal is augmented by western countries when interfere in Islamic countries. ISIS uses this to its advantage. Those to whom ISIS appeals are not educated, sophisticated, or cultured people (much like Trump supporters) who cannot see ISIS 's message for what it is: propaganda. However, when western countries intervene, these people see it as ISIS being proven correct. These acts of violence and suicide have become commonplace because many of the people don't think deeply. When Americans or the British bomb a mosque or something like that by accident, groups like ISIS flood the internet with the pictures proclaiming that not only do they kill us, but they destroy the holiest thing we possess, the mosque.

Behind ISIS's public face and presence in international news, there are clearly highly educated and well-practiced communication managers who have created a medium that blends the familiar elements of a prototypically western music video with ISIS's proclamations of brotherhood and the pursuit of a common enemy. These communicative skills are put to use to create a familiar and accessible format to uproot new adherents from typically mundane, directionless lives to join a cause that serves a purpose far greater than themselves. Through acts considered well out of the norm of human civilization, these "bands of brothers" can face death with equanimity now that they have found their mission and purpose in life. However, it is the skills of the communication managers who have led them to that conclusion.

Literature Review

Terrorism and acts of violence have become an essential if not the defining issue of our age. We can no longer exercise our right to assemble in public places and live without fear of sudden death and dismemberment. Acts of terror and attempts to understand and prevent them have produced a huge body of print and electronic media. Even a cursory look at common search engines such as Google and academic sources

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such as Academic Search Complete reveals the extent to which ISIS's use of media has become the focus of speculation and analysis.

A study conducted by Gates & Podder (2015) reviewed how the Islamic State relies on social media for recruitment, especially of foreign fighters. The ISIS organization needs to control their followers and maintain their allegiance while at the same time substantially increasing their numbers after loss due to death or desertion. Consequently, extensive efforts at recruitment by means of the ISIS media machine play an ever more dangerous role in achieving their central objective. ISIS's mastery of media motivates people to join them and thus continues the cycles of murder and military operations (Gates & Podder, 2015). In this context, Syria and Iraq are collecting data from Twitter and by obtaining names and descriptions gain insights to profile ISIS supporters (Magdy, Darwish, & Weber, 2015).

The Uses and Gratification (U & G) theory can be applied to explain how a user would seek out social media to meet these social needs. (Quan-Haase and Alyson L. Young, 2014). Historically, this theory was applied in only one direction, specially the impact of media as it then was, e.g. print, radio, the cinema, and television, on individuals' lives. These outlets might have been seen as having a primary purpose to inform and entertain, but those elements, even then, also carried a significant element to persuade and influence. The obvious historical example would be the use of media as a tool of propaganda during the period of Nazi Germany. This would have been the first time that any electronic media had been available on such a mass scale to influence an entire population. Now of course social media is more transparent and interactive.

In sum, ISIS is successfully using media by taking every possible advantage to promote their cause. Since young people are skilled in using these communication technologies by appropriating them to their purpose, ISIS can attract followers to spread

the message and even some Imams incite the people by showing clips. "Look at the Muslims they killed. Look at the child. They killed his father." Their strategy is to appeal to the emotions of their followers. At the same time, ISIS tells its audience that even though we don't have guns like the enemy we can still defeat them and win. Consequently, ISIS provides information on how to create bombs from readily available materials as in the case of the Boston Marathon bombing. At the same time, they show how one person who has committed suicide looks happy as he is about to blow himself up. Without actually seeing it, who could believe that someone would be happy to do that? ISIS shows the viewers of their videos and readers of their tweets that they are right and heaven will be waiting for those who are martyred in their name. Consequently, these individuals think to themselves: "Of course let's go." They don't try to save themselves. ISIS has posted many clips showing how these people don't move even in the presence of an air strike. Rather, they stand steadfast rooted to the ground. They don't mind because they have been led to believe they will become angels. ISIS has mastered the technique of creating intense emotions. They tell them it is time to join. It is time to fight. Consequently, our news media are saturated with accounts of bombings, attacks, and even copycat acts of violence of the same style with no relation to ISIS. ISIS has set the tone for our age. It is time to bomb. Bomb! Wherever you live you can bomb. If you live in Saudi Arabia. Bomb. Bomb there and you will be in heaven.

ISIS presents a real danger to the world. And I am disappointed because I see our world has not accepted the task of ridding itself of ISIS seriously enough. They don't restrict ISIS's use of the Internet. They (the government) needs an enemy, but this kind of enemy can't control them. They teach that they can become closer to Allah by killing.

What can communication managers expect to gain? International terrorists such as ISIS and others represent a thorny problem for those who are imbued in the concepts and practice of western liberal democracy. In other words, how can we accept censorship in the face of terrorists using multiple media outlets to disseminate their messages of hate and more importantly lure followers to a life of unthinkable barbarism? Managers of communication must be on the lookout for such messages and be educated in the underlying principles of communication theory to understand how ISIS and other organizations create such powerful and persuasive messages.

Robert Cialdini (2009) developed a six-principle set of concepts which he has referred to as "persuasive heuristics' that have been applied in a number of divergent situations and might give us insight into the workings of ISIS. Twitter and ISIS came into existence at a relatively close period in time (2006 and 2014 respectively). The use of Twitter satisfies some basic human needs to feel connected to other people, which is more commonly satisfied by interpersonal contact within families and communities but in this case through social media for those who are disaffected and alienated. The psychologists Henry Murray and Abraham Maslow both laid the foundation for the study of this need for affiliation with others. The role that previously was taken by living as a part of a social group has now become instead being a part of a social network. Membership in a group offers a feeling of emotional safely and the needs met by emotional support arising from community living. This need for a social connection motives Twitter users. Had Twitter or other social media outlets not existed, these ISIS recruits might have sought social support through more traditional and established means.

It is commonly understood and expected that at its most fundamental level, communication management strives to ensure that an organization achieves and maintains an efficient and effective system of communication (from the Latin to mean "to make one with") to achieve the goals and objectives for which that organization was created. Therefore, it is incumbent upon those responsible for communication management to create and implement a plan both to be responsible for the content of the organization's message and then decide and monitor the channels through which that message should be conveyed. This is in keeping with the classic schema of the communication process involving the speaker or the sender, the message itself, and the medium by which that message is then transmitted to a specific audience or recipient who will then interpret the message which will then influences the audience's beliefs and more particularly their actions.

ISIS of course has created and continues to develop technologically sophisticated means to spread its message of hate through popular and easily accessible channels of social media and thereby incite its audience to commit acts of violence that are nothing short of crimes against humanity and at the same time create a false set of beliefs in the western mind that Islam is a religion of violence rather than peace, a total perversion of the Holy Koran.

Therefore, this study sets out to analyze the communication process as stated above beginning with the speaker and ending with the course of action the intended audience undertakes. How does the speaker establish his ethos with the community he is addressing, how is the message fashioned, and what factors in the audience lead them to act? Obviously, these practitioners are highly skilled and technologically informed. The enigma of this process leads one to ponder if it is the rhetorical skills that persuade or something that already exists within the character of the target audience.

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In arguing for a consistent and coherent body of knowledge, Manley and Valin (2016) create a detailed outline of the skills that should be possessed by practitioners of public relations and communication management across the globe. We can extrapolate from these certain elements such as communication models and theories as well as current issues in public relations, e.g. "societal trends and trends in modern engagement tools, the effect and impact of current and emerging technology on communication models, multimedia and global issue and various world social, political, economic, and historical frame works" to provide a sense of direction at how we might understand the producers of these messages. At the same time and perhaps most significantly we can seek to understand the psychological and social factors of ISIS recruits. Cialdini's 6 principles of persuasion can then be seen as enhancing the practicing of communication management by increasing the awareness of the psychological dimensions.

Cialdini's theories of persuasion applied to ISIS recruitment

This section of the project sets out to examine several aspects of the persuasion process based on the well-known theories of Robert Cialdini that have been applied to marketing strategies, political campaigns, and the analysis of propaganda in the hopes that this will provide a partial answer to the question of the role persuasion plays in ISIS recruitment. In other words, it would be desirable from both an intellectual and pragmatic perspective to determine which element of the communication process is most likely to unleash such force that otherwise undistinguished individuals, most particularly young men, abandon lives of mundane anonymity in Western nations, e.g. the UK, France to fight and in many cases die for the sake of this illusion of the new caliphate, the Islamic state. Is it something in their personalities or characters, the ethos

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of ISIS itself, or in the persuasive power of the messages themselves and the media through which they are delivered to this impressionable audience?

Robert Cialdini (2009) developed a six-principle set of concepts which he has defined as "persuasive heuristics:" reciprocity, commitment and consistency, social proof, liking, authority, and scarcity. In the study at hand, they might serve to give us insight into the reciprocal relationships that empower ISIS, though ISIS itself has probably not applied them consciously, but likely discovered them independently. A heuristic refers to a commonly used technique usually applied early in the research process as a means of posing questions to generate a sense of direction in information gathering that might lead then to a working hypothesis. Attempts to better understand and put into specific practice the power of persuasion has been a preoccupation for philosophers, political scientists, e.g. Machiavelli, demagogues, and public relations professions and marketers across the centuries. In a series of publications, Cialdini has looked at deeply rooted human drives and needs that, when understood, can be applied in an attempt to crystalize our understanding of persuasion in part as a deterrent from being taken in by it and at the same time to be able to utilize it by the most effective means possible, as for example to sell products and win votes, which well may be seen as two sides of the same coin. His 6 heuristics consist of the following concepts: reciprocity, commitment and consistence, social proof, liking, authority, and scarcity.

Reciprocity can be simply understood as returning the favor, doing something for someone who has done something for us, a sense of obligation to repay in kind. To those who have offered us help we should likewise provide some equally valuable kind of service or aid and thereby avoid the stigma as being seen as an ingrate or insensitive to the feelings and needs of others. But of course, a free offer, a free gift is never really free, and instead creates a sense of obligation into the bargain that commits us to some

kind of pay back. If we want to consider the origins of this instinct, it well may have provided a form of survival value to our species throughout our evolutionary process emphasizing the need to promote the best interests of the community not just the needs of the individual. This concept can be clearly linked to ISIS recruitment. The individual soldier might die, but it would be a hero's death, not just for the sake of his comrades, or the new caliphate, but for the sake of Islam itself.

On a more psychological level, ISIS offers its recruits a sense of purpose, commitment, even identity, as well as fellowship, social support, and even material survival since many come from backgrounds of chronic unemployment. All of these factors combine to create a sort of "brand" loyalty on the part of these former recruits who are now active militants themselves in possession of a sense of gratitude and indebtedness within the community and a higher calling in their lives. Now they will be able to take part in the videos to be posted on YouTube to encourage others to join them: where you are now, so once was I too. Once having taken a stand for ISIS, the recruits remain loyal despite the demands made upon them. In the face danger, they develop a careless, indifferent attitude toward their lives, facing death with equanimity.

While many themes and elements of persuasion overlap among them, the following ISIS produced videos can be better understood by an application of Cialdini's six principles. For example, "There is no life without jihad" persuades by illustrating the communal nature of the ISIS movement. The emphasis here in on demonstrating the diverse origins of the individuals who have become united under the banner of ISIS. The appealing tranquil soundtrack is combined with the visual element of a file of combatants moving through an area of lush and tall greenery. The speaker emphasizes the group's higher purpose which is not just to expand the territories held by ISIS but

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expand the rule of Islam law. The iteration of the word "brothers" emphasizes their reciprocal relationships and loyalty to each other for a higher purpose.

The above segues smoothly into the principle of commitment and consistency which suggests that when people aspire to an idea or a goal, they are more likely to abide by that commitment especially as it enhances their self-image and consequently set aside their critical reasoning faculties as to why they should continue to follow it rather than question if it is in their best interests. In most cases keeping a commitment would be considered a praiseworthy attribute associated with reliability, even honor. It is in the nature of human beings to behave in a consistent manner. In deviating from a course of action the individual faces both internal and interpersonal pressures to conform to a predetermined course of action.

It is obvious that consistency has great survival value both inside the confines of the Islamic state and in the nations that the recruits have come from. From a biosocial point of view, it reflects a natural part of establishing and maintaining a human community. However, all too often ISIS recruits have experienced lives which might be described as unfulfilled and unfulfilling, disjoined, erratic, with high rates of unemployment and disenfranchisement with the non-Muslim communities around them. Commitment to ISIS, however, (perhaps the first true commitment to anything or anyone they have made in their lives) now gives these new combatants a sense of purpose and direction in their lives and the military-like social structure around them, unlike the chaos of their earlier lives, ensures that that they will keep their promises to ISIS for the rest of their lives, however long or short they may be. The recruits keep their word and the organization keeps them in check. In point of fact, these recruits often adopt a nom de guerre as part of their new identities, which if it were expressed in Christian imagery, might even be called a baptism of fire.

Since no video can be seen as limited to a single form of persuasion, "There is no life without jihad" also represents commitment and consistency. Those assembled are committed not only to each other but to their cause. In contrast to the preceding, "No respite" features a harsher auditory accompaniment in keeping with its hostile message pointing out that (at least at that time) ISIS controlled territory larger than Great Britain and as a group sought specific targets.

Cialdini's next heuristic Social Proof is reminiscent of Bandura's well know and widely applied social learning theory. It the most general sense it posits that people learn from one another through observation, imitation, and modeling. People will do things that they see other people doing, again seemingly putting their critical reasoning in abeyance and engaging in behavior they well might not have done were they on their own. In Bandura's classic experiment, children observed an adult punching an inflatable doll, a clown called Bobo, clearly identifiable as a non-threatening figure with typical clown features. When the adult (the experimenter) left the room, the children who previously had not displayed aggressive behavior toward it, assaulted the poor defenseless creature by any means available to them, even surpassing their adult mentor and role model in ever more virulent attacks. They had clearly modeled their behavior on the supervising adult figure, but went him one better. How much more then will ISIS recruits imitate the behavior of the hardened ISIS warriors who have removed themselves from the norms of civilized human behavior. The newly initiated have seen violent videos of beheadings, abuse of corpses, and prisoners who are forced to appear gleeful as they dig their own graves as seen in the video *Flames of War*. How much more these recruits will behave violently as they identify with their ISIS mentors and strive to surpass them in cruelty and destruction. Even as the adult in the experimental design seeming gave the children permission to attack Bobo, the new zealots will strive

to destroy the Shia infidel and the western imperialists who are constantly waging war against their fellows on many fronts to destroy them and take their resources.

Observing what other people are doing, however horrendous, gives it an aura of acceptability, even a necessity in keeping with social proof. Having once joined in the fellowship and seeming brotherhood of ISIS, the recruit follows the orders of this welcoming group whose members he has come to like and believes that they like him. Likewise, the ISIS hierarchy established its authority over its rank and file members.

This leads logically to the concept of authority. People will obey authority figures even if what they are asked to do contrasts starkly with the commonly accepted norms of social behavior. This heuristic reflects the work of Stanley Milgram, a social psychologist who attempted scientifically to understand the inhuman behavior that was discovered to have occurred in the concentration camps during the period of the Second World War. Humanity sought a resolution to the fundamental question of how such atrocities could have occurred and on such a mass scale. How could seemingly ordinary human beings have performed such deeds and subsequently proclaim their innocence, defending their actions, as Adolf Eichmann so famously did, by saying, "I was only following orders."

Cialdini (2009) explains that we are trained as dependent children to obey the authority of our parents and those around us and soon learn that refusal to comply or to engage in an act of disobedience against authority will lead to punishment. As children, we have no conception of guiding moral principles, only fear, and even as adults when we are capable of reason, the fear of reprisals and the desire to conform to commands remain. According to Cialdini (2009) three distinct symbol systems contribute to obedience: titles, clothing, and the trappings of authority. In the case of ISIS specific titles such as muhajirin (immigrant), military uniforms, as well as rifles, guns, and other

weapons become the literal representatives of this symbolic system. These are the enforcers of authority with life and death consequences, not just fear of punishment. Likewise, imams represent the moral authority figures in the Islamic world. There have been notable examples of imams living in the west who have advocated the cause of ISIS. In Britain Kamran Hussain preached support for ISIS and was secretly recorded telling children that martyrdom was "greater than any other success" than they could achieve at school. British born Imam and self-described community leader Anjem Choudary used Twitter and YouTube as well as Fox News to celebrate 9/11 and justify ISIS. Both were subsequently tried, convicted, and imprisoned. Clearly the appeal to authority is inherent to the nature of these recruitment videos whether the source of authority in question is the group of militants, the structure of ISIS, or the Islamic religion itself

Individuals can be easily persuaded by people they like and can identify with and who appear to like them. This is why business owners train their employees to behave in a sociable manner, developing a rapport with the customer before promoting the items that the customer might be persuaded to buy. An attractive physical appearance tends to create a halo-effect to insure or increase a favorable impression. Likewise, we respond when we can identify with the other person who seems similar to us or whom we are led to believe possesses traits like our own. Extending a genuine or even a false compliment and praise to others also makes them more likeable even if the praise thus offered is palpably not true. People like you because they sense that you like them. The theme of liking is also recurrent and can be seen in those videos which demonstrate the coherence and feelings of brotherhood on the part of those who have been moved to join ISIS, such as Hijah (2015).

Videos created by ISIS operatives and posted on YouTube are noteworthy for the professional quality of their production and the conviction emanating from the members of the militia smiling into the camera, unlike the videos produced a few years ago that were intentionally crafted to be presented on cable news and featured the decapitation of journalists by a gleeful Jihadi John that created an association in the public mind with Islam and violence. The majority of the English language YouTube videos reviewed for this study presenting images of festive unity and a celebratory mood could easily be encapsulated by the slogan of the French Revolution: liberty, brotherhood, equality. Even the clean and attractive paramilitary uniforms contribute to this appeal to liking. The reality of life as a day to day struggle for existence is absent.

Scarcity can be illustrated simply by the marketing phrase: "for a limited time only," irrespective of the fact that the offered price well may not be a bargain for the consumer. Common expressions of folk wisdom urge quick and decisive action: e.g. "Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today,"

Scarcity and being concerned by time limits might seem to be an odd fit for joining the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, but soon after its inception and as recently as 2014 – 2015, the new caliphate was expanding at such a rate, attracting followers, acquiring territory, commandeering American military equipment and American cash, extorting taxes from the beleaguered population under its control, and illicitly exporting oil that it indeed seemed unstoppable and there was a race to join as quickly as possibly or miss out on the glory and the spoils, whether in this life or the hereafter. In this sense, it can be likened to other enthusiastically embraced conflicts that ultimate led to disastrous military failures such as the excitement on both sides in August of 1914 or even April 1861 in the American south. Marketing the ISIS jihad using the appeal that time is in scare supply echoes the advertising call to act now. The

element of scarcity can be seen in the video titled "The Chosen Few of Different Lands" (2014) which emphasizes the immediacy of ISIS's call.

The uses and gratifications (U & G) approach came into being when television, radio, and various forms of print constituted the major outlets of the mass media, potentially consigning this valuable theory to history. However, in the face of the burgeoning innovations of the last 25 or so years especially in the field of social media among the young, the U & G approach has been rejuvenate "as it can provide valuable insights into (1) what social media are adopted; (2) the uses of social media; and (3) what motivates adoption of different sites and services" (Quan-Haase and Young, 2014). Much of the early work on media in relation to their audience assumed a unidirectional relationship with the audience being essentially passive recipients without much critical response. Hence the mass media could be easily put to the service of propaganda. But these models were shown to be overly simplistic especially in view of the work of McLuhan (1964). Consequently, the U & G model came into existence thus reflecting the need to understand the complex interaction between audience and media. Of particular prominence has been the development of U & G as a theoretical lens and empirical means for studying how audiences engage with the media and integrate them into their every-day lives.

U & G presented these three innovations: a mass audience conceived of as engaged and actively participating in its media choices; a focus on what people do with the media, and the study of media gratifications, that is, (1) gratifications sought and (2) gratifications obtained. In contrast to other, older forms of media, social media exist much more in a collaborative relationship with their users. Among these social media, Twitter has been most closely associated with a need for social connection. Unlike in the previous case when Facebook surpassed My Space, Facebook and Twitter have

maintained a peaceful even symbiotic existence with many individuals maintaining and closely monitoring accounts with both.

Since this study has established itself for the relationship between ISIS and social media, it would be instructive to consider the psychological profiles of users who then become potential ISIS recruits and then followers into the field and furthermore establish their motivation for use with a working hypothesis that an inordinate need for social connection, the pursuit of a sense of self-worth, and concomitantly the desire for some significance in their lives beyond themselves. Considering the central role of Twitter, it is important to consider that the more hours per week an individual spends on Twitter, the more this behavior is reinforced because of the need to feel connected to other people that Twitter gratifies. This social need was extensively researched and established by Henry Murray and Abraham Maslow. Twitter fulfills this intrinsic need to become a member of a group. When the recruits ultimately go into the field, they believe they will have the emotional support stemming from the struggles of community living, which requires cooperation in order to survive.

ISIS's tweets

In an odd confluence of social movements that have led to the rise of unprecedented levels of violence and technological advances at a seemingly exponential rate, the age of terror, already in progress, has been aided and abetted by the simultaneous creation of the distinctive innovations in communication known as social media often used in tandem with the contemporaneous video sharing site YouTube. As recently as the 911 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, terrorist organizations had to rely on the slow forms of media, such as television, radio, and newspapers to put forth their beliefs and the images reflecting their desire for notoriety and destruction to a world audience. Now, however, this current generation

of terrorists has at its disposal this vast new world of social media enterprises such as Facebook and Twitter to present their messages and garner followers through their recruitment videos and tweets.

Klausen (2015) sought to demonstrate this essential role in the media strategy of the then recently formed organization known as ISIS or ISIL (the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) in Syria and Iraq by focusing on their use of Twitter; consequently, their operatives from the combat zones functioned as the sources of tweets that could then be retweeted, though the tweets and images were intended to give the appearance of spontaneous messages from the front to a generation that has quickly become at home with these innovative modes of communication. One might even argue that the technology lends itself to a kind of distancing from the experienced reality of what the images portray and the violence and hate behind them. Klausen demonstrates the importance of feeders linked to terrorist organizations, the vast majority of whom are Europe based or European in origin rather than emanating from combat zones. On Twitter, they are poised much more as senders rather than receivers in that they themselves have many more followers.

Interestingly, well-educated adherents to the cause of ISIS have taken on the role of behind the scenes communication managers to connect the tweets of fighters and the producers of YouTube videos to distribute them through retweeting to a much wider audience and at the same time act as would be censors. Since more naïve foreign fighters might inadvertently disclose strategic information such as their locations, recruits must turn over their cell phones upon entry into the camps. Klausen obtained a corpus of tweets and categorized them as to content into three groups:

Religious Instruction which includes references to *fatwas*, religious edicts, scholars, prominent religious figures, Osama bin Laden or other prominent *jihadists*, or

quotes from scripture. This category also included religious advice. These same themes are also obvious in the sample videos which follow.

Reporting from battle presents pictures of dead martyrs, pictures or discussion of battles, reporting current locations and/or activities related to battle and references to incidents in Syria or to specific battle-related incidents outside of Syria. These also includes providing information about how make it to the field of battle (i.e., recruitment).

Interpersonal Communication includes regular conversation, discussion of prior communications between the account holder and other participants in the Twitter chain, or references to anticipated future communications. Due to the consistency of the messages she infers that that it is "a select group of fighters who engage in this particular type of social media *jihad*." The reference to a "select group" is reminiscent of Klausen focuses on the "handles" of the Twitter account users and presumably creators and the resultant number of retweets. However, she does not include recruitment tweets, the texts of some examples which will follow collected from Google images for the purpose of the analysis of ISIS's ideology and techniques of persuasion.

One might pause for a moment and consider if nothing else the irony of the volume of tweets that are in English written by some for whom that is not their first language and for others who recognize English to be the lingua franca of the world even if they condemn the beliefs and want to destroy the institutions, not just in the UK and the US but throughout the West presenting the English language as a symbol of what militant Islam would like to conquer and yet so pervasive is it that even they have to resort to the language of the perceived enemy. At the same time, in view of the quantity and the significance of tweets in English, it is worthy of speculation why those who

have lived and grown up in Western Democracies are so disaffected and opposed to them.

Some representative ISIS Tweets

Blacks in Ferguson. There is an alternative to this indignity. Pick yourselves up with Islam like ISIS in Iraq (Ottoman, 2014)

This tweet appears to be recruiting Americans of African descent by exploiting the centuries-old and on-going racial divide in the United States most often seen in terms of disparity in income, employment opportunities, and unequal treatment in the criminal justice system. At the same time, it plays to the Black Muslim or Nation of Islam religious group and social movement founded by Elijah Muhammad who sought, among other things, to remind American blacks of their ties to and origins in Africa. This research has not found any specific African-Americans who became ISIS recruits and are featured in ISIS videos. Rather, the intent of this tweet well may be to heighten the consciousness of black Americans to their continued status as second-class citizens and therefore promote division within the United States. In Cialdini's (2009) terminology, this can be seen as an appeal to reciprocity. Joining ISIS will restore African-Americans' long suppressed sense of belonging and dignity, while at the same time they will be able to serve a cause that will give their lives much more of a sense of meaning than being second-class citizens in the United States. Likewise, there is the sense of mutual response and liking.

You can sit at home and play call of duty or you can come here and respond to the real call of duty… the choice is yours… (Al Britani 2014 cited by Murphy, 2015)

The British born Hussain al Britani (born Junaid Hussein) might well have phrased it as "your call of duty." Since this tweet is not directed at any specific nationality, its appeal is to the universal responsibility of their fellow Muslims to

respond to the call. Playing with the phrase "call of duty," the tweet brings to mind a series of popular military themed shooter video games originally set in the World War II period but later versions feature contemporary or even futuristic formats. At the same time making the connection between a violent video game and the actual violence depicted and preserved in YouTube videos discussed elsewhere in this project reinforces the obvious disconnect from reality in that the violence of war depicted in computer games becomes virtually indistinguishable from actual violence, promoting an unethical and amoral set of beliefs and concomitant acts of terror both ironically set into motion in the name of religion. Here the appeal is to the persuasive technique of authority (Cialdini (2009). In keeping with the combat themed video game which is alluded to in the text, this tweet coming with a more assertive tone as the author commands his audience to fall into line and experience real life, rather than just pretending sitting in front of a computer.

Allahu Akbar, 5 Jews were sent to hell by two brave Muslims. Allahu Akbar, if only every Muslim could kill 1 Jew, everything would change. (Mujahid Miski @the_Minnesotan3).

This tweet seeks to reinforce solidarity through a perceived common enemy. It assumes that there is a consensus (Cialdini, 2009) among world-wide Muslim community as to who their true opponents are. Unfortunately to a Western audience, this tweet plays into the stereotype that Islam is inherently anti sematic and historically has been, which is not true. Rather the conflict has a more recent origin in the Zionist movement based on the ideas of the Austrian Theodore Herzl (1860 – 1904), the Balfour Declaration (1917), and the subsequent founding of the State of Israel (1948) effecting the displacement of the Palestinian Arabs.

The question then arises: is it something about the persuasive rhetorical quality of such ISIS tweets that leads recruits in battle from the relative safety of their homes in the West or is it another case of the medium is the message? The medium through which these recruitment messages have been formatted and distributed has become so familiar that the message itself has gained instant credulity or rather it is something in the susceptible recruits themselves, the lack of some sense of purpose or commitment in their lives that lead them to seek meaning in this organization and the real possibility of death. Is it a hope for glory in the face of the prospect of a life of nothingness? Speaker, medium, message, or audience?

Another means by which ISIS attempts to arouse support is by portraying the conflict not necessarily as "the world versus the Islamic State," but rather, many of the videos point to history and the current geopolitical climate to paint a picture of "the world versus Islam" thus trying to draw in a world community of a billion plus members. In so doing, the videos may potentially resonate with Muslims in the West who perhaps feel persecuted or oppressed in their home countries, or who feel a larger kinship with the global Muslim population. The design features audio and video of speeches made by Western leaders to highlight the perceived war against Islam. This includes a clip of George W. Bush's infamous "either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists" ultimatum and another of former French President Manuel Valls affirming that, "we are at war . . . We will execute and strike, destroying this enemy. We will respond to this aggression justly, with high resolve and will." A threat again any Muslims, the implication suggests, is an attack against us all.

ISIS's goals are beyond defeating Western coalition forces e.g. the US, the UK, and France or indigenous forces sponsored and supplied by them such as the Kurds, in conquering Iraq or defeating Assad in the Syrian civil war in the pursuit of an expansive

caliphate. Rather ISIS has sought to establish an illusory pan Islamic state conceivably across the world. Notice how in the videos that will be examined below, the appeal is specifically directed across the globe, e.g. Indonesia, Australia, Canada, as well as Europe, particularly France, home to a large immigrant population from the former colony Algeria, other parts of North Africa, as well as the majority Muslim countries in the Middle East. Galloway (2016) has pointed out that ISIS's goals are well beyond using its media strategies in establishing an Islamic superpower but promoting a specific ideology "with a constant on –and off –line output merging pre-modern ideology with 21st Century communication management" (583) They want to create a state in physical reality that is the manifestation and reflection of the image of their current cyber-state. In its missionary zeal to bring this about, ISIS has assembled highly sophisticated teams of communication mangers and skilled technicians whose productions are unlike anything the world has previously seen. ". . . IS is also recognized as demonstrating mastery of strategic communication through coordinated messaging across multiple message platforms in order to attract different audiences for the same purpose: strengthening the jihad" (Galloway 2016).

In terms of the structure of its propaganda organization, Isis tries to give the impression to its on-line followers and potential recruits that its media operations are decentralized to promote the myth of the wide dissemination of ISIS's power and the extent of its followers. In point of fact its communication managers and expert production teams are almost exclusively located in captured territory in Iraq and Syria.

The descriptive terms which have almost become a cliché to describe the target audience, those vulnerable to persuasion, are "disaffected young men," as well as women who live as part of minority communities in Western or western affiliated nations. These young men in particular feel a barely suppressed rage at the countries in

which they live blaming the mostly white populations around them for the discrimination which has prevented them from achieving any success in life and at the same time reducing them to a mere subsistence existence, rather than their own ineptitude and lack of direction. Without any hope for a better future, it seems logical from their perspective to join ISIS and for once in their lives become part of a larger community with a shared sense of values and finally a purpose in life: to wreak vengeance on the imperialistic powers that dominated and ravaged their countries of origin (though in most cases they were not actually born there) in the name of a higher power (Islam) and a higher purpose (the furthering and continuation of the Caliphate). It is noteworthy here that Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the self-proclaimed caliph, is in point of fact named Ibrahim Awad Ibrahim al-Badri and took the name of the Abu Bakr in a form of prestige borrowing as an allusion to the first caliph, the successor to the Prophet Muhammad.

At the same time these young men are part of a world-wide generation whose access to the Internet and video games has inured them from shock and repulsion at images of graphic violence. In other words, they cannot separate Al-Qaida or ISIS produced videos of ritual beheadings such as occurred to the journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff with what they have long witnessed and enjoyed on their computer screens.

Consequently, the media strategists who have given their skills and expertise to ISIS have created an unprecedented presentation of the glorification of violence with no pretense of artifice which produces no shock, no remorse, no compassion for the victims, only an unrivaled seemingly irresistible power of persuasion bringing about the decision on the part of the viewers to abandon all that has been familiar to them in their lives to join the cause of ISIS and to either kill or be killed or both in the process.

Analysis of Videos Produced by the Islamic State

There is consensus among commentators that social media represent the chief recruiting tools of ISIS. Therefore, it would be instructive from an academic point of view and useful from a pragmatic perspective to enhance the understanding of how these messages have been crafted to appeal to their target audience as part of combatting ISIS's media strategy. A close look at a sampling of the imagery and messages of these recruitment videos within the contexts of discourse analysis may lead to some insights about how the methods suit the target audience and thereby lead them to even greater levels of radicalization.

The content of terrorist media output ranges from the 140-character messages found on Twitter right up to professionally shot and edited videos. These are techniques that have their origins in the media innovations of Leni Riefenstahl and Joseph Goebbels, historically two of the earliest masters of propaganda through electronic media, viz. film and radio. Despite the association in the Western mind of ISIS and violence, not unjustified, an extensive look at ISIS videos aimed at recruiting Western nationals appear to have some elements in common with appeals for donations to charitable nonprofits, such as the Red Cross and the American Cancer Society in terms of rhetorical appeals.

People have an inherent social and psychological need to belong to groups, and terrorist organizations have been shown to prey on these basic needs with their media outputs. Each video was watched several times to evaluate both its message and the manner of presentation. One of the first things that is apparent about ISIS produced videos is the undeniable quality in which they are shot, edited, and produced. Their communication managers obviously have access to both the technology and the

expertise required to make videos of a high standard. The editors of the videos have a keen understanding of what makes for effective, engaging, and emotionally manipulative media, borrowing many stylistic cues from documentaries and music videos. The men featured in these videos often stress that they were once "normal" people who became disenfranchised from the lives they were leading, but are now finding fulfillment in ISIS and urge others to do the same. That is their message and the reason for the creation of the videos to further the cause of ISIS.

A note on the music of jihad

Many westerners including military and intelligence experts, professors, and journalists have commented on Isis's skills in producing professional looking and technologically advanced materials to be broadcast on various forms of social media, most particularly YouTube and Twitters. At the same time, these means of propaganda and recruitment are easily accessible, virtually omnipresent, and intelligible to an English (and sometimes French) speaking audience. However, there is another layer to the package the full understanding of which most westerners do not have access to, though again they can intuitively appreciate its quality; that is, the background music, the theme songs of the ISIS state, called in Arabic nasheed which might be best rendered into English as chant. Without understanding Arabic, the listener is drawn to the melodiousness of these chants, most famously "Dawlat al-Islam Qamat," which has come to be known as the national anthem of the ISIS state. Alternating between a soft, gentle male voice and responses from a male choir the appealing beat prompts the listener to keep time along with the singers. Then after two minutes and 52 seconds into the nasheed there is the sound of martial boots marching in time and the easily recognizable sound of gun fire in contrast to the gentle music. In point of fact this song is declaring "through the blood of those who have virtue the Islamic state has come into

being. Mixing melody and message, such chants calling for jihad (even the westerners can understand the repetitions of the work jihad) have permeated ISIS controlled media, though they received much less scholarly attention than Tweets and videos, perhaps because nasheed are in Arabic. As a musical form, however, nasheed have had a long history in the Muslim world.

By way of making a testimonial to the fraternity of ISIS, in *There is No Life Without Jihad* (2014) a man alternatively speaking Arabic and fluent but slightly accented English reflecting his Arabic origins conflated with his long residence in Australia narrates as he sits with his comrades and professes, "We have brothers from Bangladesh, Iraq, Cambodia, Australia, UK., nothing has guided us except to make Allah's word the highest." "We respond to Allah and his messenger." "IS understands no borders." We will fight until there is no more fitna," [temptation, trial]. Several men of presumably British or Australian origin sit together, rifles in hand, and take turns addressing the camera. The men preach, they quote Mohammad and the Quran, but above all, they call on their brothers in Western countries to join them. Toward the end of the video, men seen laughing and smiling together, indicating once again that the life of an IS soldier, while replete with danger and the ever-present possibility of death, possess also joy since it revolves around a group of like-minded combatants who are united in fellowship and community. Another speaker says, "Read the Koran, read the instruction for life to understand jihad." Apart from the omnipresent rifles and the reference to jihad, there are no images of violence or indications of their lives as militants. It is obvious how this appeal to social cohesion and adherence to the true meaning of Islam could motivate socially isolated and culturally marginalized young people, most particularly men, growing up as the first generation in a western country but whose roots are, for example, in north Africa or the Middle East.

Join the Ranks (2014) features an Indonesian man sitting with his ISIS "brothers", this time speaking Indonesian and addressing the Muslim population of his birthplace, which is a Muslim majority nation. Speaking fervently, and feverishly and at times even shouting, the man addresses the unknown audience beyond the camera and professes, "We are your brothers from Indonesia who have come to the Islamic State. We emigrated for the sake of hijrah and jihad following in the path of Allah." He asks the Muslims of Indonesia whether their "homes, businesses, and wealth more beloved to you than Allah." The appeal here, of course, is to encourage followers from Muslim countries not located in the Middle East or usually associated with the call for jihad against the west to join their coreligionists at this time of extreme need and thereby demonstrating their faith and subservience to Allah.

In *The Chosen Few* (2014) the Canadian ISIS recruit presented in the video, a Caucasian man calling himself Abu Muslim, speaks to the camera and says, "I am your brother in Islam here in Syria. I originally come from Canada," and while panoramic shots of a snow-covered Canadian mountain range with children playing hockey in the foreground appear on screen he continues, "before Islam I was like any other regular Canadian, I watched hockey, I went to the cottage in the summertime, I loved to fish . . . I liked outdoors, I liked sports." He goes on to urge other Canadians Muslims not to continue living in a land where they are oppressed, implying that even "normal" people like him are capable of making the trip to Syria and are accepted once they arrive. He assures his audience that in contrast widely held beliefs and the images of the debris of bombed cites prominently featured in the Western media, the life of an IS solider is not so different or difficult. He claims that, "Mujahedeen are regular people too, we get married, we have families, we have lives just like any other soldier in any other army." The Canadian makes the point that ISIS needs not only soldiers for combat, but

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followers who can serve in any capacity. He stresses that even if one is unable to physically fight, he may contribute in other way for the benefit of the organization and the overall movement: "We need the engineers, the doctors, the professionals, we need volunteers and fundraising, we need everything and there is a role for everybody. Every person can contribute something to the Islamic State. If you cannot fight, you can give money, and if you cannot give money, you can assist in technology, if you cannot assist in technology, you can use some other skills, you can even come here and help rebuild . . . There is a role for everyone here in Syria." This message is underscored by the fact that it is delivered by a Caucasian Canadian, someone whom it must be assumed became a Muslim and joined ISIS entire out of choice with no family connection, his family having become his brothers in arms in the field.

The title *Flames of War* (2014) ironically alludes to or calls to mind a World War II tabletop game which uses armies represented by painted miniature tanks, soldiers, artillery, and aircraft against another similar opponent's force. The ISIS version presents itself in a documentary-style format, yet paralleling the war game from which it has taken its name as it chronicles the examples of ISIS's military successes, illustrated with footage of both minor skirmishes and major battles, as well as shots of ISIS soldiers raising their flag over captured buildings. Meanwhile the narrator describes the significance and outcomes of each victory. Again, the parallels between the video and the game should not escape notice, the game having a greater foundation in reality than the video. *Flames of War* would seem to have been produced to make the case for the legitimacy of violence and killing. While understandably a lesser theme in ISIS produced recruitment videos, it is well known that acts of violence are regularly committed by ISIS "soldiers", whether those who are truly soldiers or individual operatives acting in the name of ISIS. The end of the video presents a scene of several

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soldiers whose nationality is not given. The English-speaking narrator, his face obscured by a mask, appears on screen for the first time, as these soldiers, recently captured by ISIS, are forced to dig their own graves just behind him. Despite the imminence and absolute certainly of death, these captured soldiers praise the strength of these ISIS forces and admire their faith. One of them even claims that, "it's as if Allah has blessed the Islamic State. They captured us in a matter of seconds even though there were 800 of us and they only numbered in the dozens" (one can be easily dubious of such a claim especially coming out of the mouth of someone who knows he is about to die). In the next shot, the narrator and a few other ISIS soldiers stand before the prisoners, now kneeling before the graves dug by their own hands. Speaking to the camera, the narrator promises that, "the flames of war are only beginning to intensify; the fighting has only just begun." The prisoners are then executed by a pistol shot to the head and tumble into the freshly dug graves. The film ends with a warning to America and to the West about engaging in proxy wars: "As for the near future, you will be forced into a direct confrontation and the sons of Islam have prepared for this day." The implication here is that The United States and Iran are the true combatants here.

This scene, though obviously preserving a real event, has a sense of unreality about it, as if it had been staged to portray a swaggering and inhuman display of power. It presents a powerful example of the ongoing theme of strength and victory pervasively presented by ISIS. These videos are produced to affirm and visually demonstrate the obvious, even superhuman strength of the forces of ISIS and its soldiers and had been created just at the moment when ISIS burst forth and overwhelmed the region by force due to their continuous series of victories on the battlefield. At the point of this writing, however, the territory they hold has been significantly reduced and their military power

obviously diminished; however, this is not to say that their passion and potential for violence is ebbing. Rather it will change form and change focus to increase the kind of terror attacks that can be brought about by a small group or a few individuals, which appear as front-page news in our print medium and the lead story in network broadcasting.

Aside from issuing threats and intimidation especially to those then on the periphery of ISIS held territory, it also makes attempts at belittling and undermining the resolve and ability of its enemies. In this video as footage is shown of ISIS soldiers storming an enemy building, the narrator states that "the secularists tasted the wrath of Allah, the flames scorching them, forcing them to run like cowards." Then later in the video, the narrator describes the defeated soldiers of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) as fighting "with a secularist ideology for the sake of land for a secularist state," adding that, "strong fighters they were not, their very foundation was weak, they only stood to fall." Allied with the Americans, the Kurdish forces have been a significant factor in retaking territory from ISIS controlled land. However, their long-held dream of a Kurdish state (the Kurdish section of Iraq has the largest percentage of oil reserves) will be ignored.

Hijrah (2015) was produced in emulation of the format of the American music video, featuring an a capella vocal arrangement in the style of the nasheed which has been discussed above. The lyrics of the song sung in *Hijrah* claim that "our enemies are in severe terror," while the grey-haired French recruit raises his rifle toward the sky perhaps symbolizing the limitless and extent of the power of ISIS' forces.

The video features soldiers as they train, gaining experience in the use of their weapons. The intention here of those taking on the role of communication management and video production is to enhance the images of these exercising soldiers by creating

a distinctive aura of innate strength, which along with the experience they are shown to be acquiring will increase their overall battle readiness. The video affirms the message that even a small but dedicated ISIS unit will continue to be victorious against the enemy forces allied with the West despite their overwhelming advantages of territory, resources, numbers, and weaponry. Indifferent to their apparent circumstances as enumerated above, these soldiers in the videos look confident that their virtuous lives and true faith will lead them to victory (a common theme across videos).

Honor is in Jihad June 2015 was produced to simulate the style of a documentary and plays on themes of comradery, brotherhood, the inclusively of the Islamic state. Chillingly, it features images of children smiling and playing juxtaposed with archival footage documenting the persecution of Bosnian Muslims during the 1990s Yugoslavian civil war, which included ethnic cleansing. The narrator states, "Our children were killed and our sisters were systematically raped and slaughtered," as clear, detailed images of children's corpses fill the screen. By simultaneously threatening and belittling their obviously militarily superior enemies, ISIS soldiers are shown to be unfazed by the odds against them and remain steadfast, perpetually brave and unafraid. An Isis soldier pointing and speaking directly to the camera threatens the West and supposedly infidel Muslims by saying that "By Allah, black days are coming to you. You will fear to walk in the streets. You will fear working in our offices. We will put hear in you and terrorize you even in your dreams when you are asleep." Note that this theme is also present in ISIS tweets. Here the United Nations, a common target, is referred to as "the church of secularism."

With themes and a manner of presentation similar to the above, the narrator in *No Respite* (2015) claims that to ISIS "there is no difference between an Arab and a non-Arab, or a black man and a white man except through piety" As this line is

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delivered, an image is shown of four men with noticeably different racial backgrounds. The men face the camera with their arms around each other's shoulders and faces full of smiles. The implication of this video, which goes on to criticize America on a number of different fronts, is quite clear—while the Western world is plagued with problems of racism and tense race relations, those are problems that do not exist within the ISIS. This theme is repeated and paralleled in ISIS tweets directed to African Americans in the United States to join them, drawing on much publicized outbreaks of racial tension such as occurred in Ferguson Missouri and many other places. The narrator claims that despite the "countless deviant factions raising their false banners" against them, the ISIS remains confident and constant in its commitment to a victory that will establish the long-sought caliphate. As an image appears on screen showing the flags of all the nations that have officially opposed the ISIS, the narrator confidently offers a challenge: "bring it on, all of you, your numbers only increase us in faith. Gather your allies, plot against us, and show us no respite, our ally is the greatest, He is Allah." In Cialini's terms this is an appeal to the highest level of authority.

Furthermore, the narrator in *No Respite* directly questions the determination of American soldiers, arguing that America may have the numbers and weapons, but "your soldiers lack the will and resolve. Still scarred from their defeats in Afghanistan and Iraq they return dead or suicidal with over 6500 of them killing themselves each year. We continue to haunt the minds of your soldiers and sow fear into their hearts, with 18 of your soldiers committing suicide each day."

As the voice of the unseen narrator conveys the message recorded above, images of coffins draped in American flags, distraught familiar of dead American soldiers, and pharmaceutical pills (to treat posttraumatic stress disorder [PTSD]) appear in succession on the screen, to further the belief that American soldiers, lacking the

faith and piety of IS soldiers and fighting for secularism, are destined to either die, or to return from combat both physically and emotionally scarred and constantly haunted by the experience for the rest of their lives. In *No Respite* the narrator asserts that while the ISIS is built on a" prophetic methodology" inspired by the Quran, the West is a secular state built on man-made laws accompanied by images of Barack Obama, Joe Biden, George W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and corporate logos (including those of Shell Oil and the Federal Reserve). The message here is that Western ideology is based on greed, corruption, and the fallible principle that the citizens of a nation should be able to rule themselves, while ISIS has a government and a larger society reflecting the infallible word of Allah, and is thus superior.

Child soldiers engaging in mock military training stand in formation (*Blood for Blood* 2016). At the same time, images of bloodied, injured, and deceased children are shown, interspersed with shots of "enemy" leaders such as Barrack Obama and Vladimir Putin, with the implication that the conscious and intentional actions of these leaders were the cause of the violence that occurred resulting in the slaughter of these children represented in graphic images across the screen. The lyrics of the song hint at the violent acts that ISIS combatants are ready to engage in: "Well armed soldiers are ready to kill you…our swords are sharpened to slice necks, men are ready to blow themselves up …your roads will soon be rigged with mines by well-trained and determined brothers, our warriors are everywhere."

The intention in the minds of the creators of *Blood for Blood* was to either parrot or parody the style of a Western music video, in other words, to use the format that the West created and enjoys making a case against it. It features a song, performed in French, composed to make the listeners aware of the crimes that the West has committed against the ISIS. Throughout the video, a restless young boy aimlessly

wanders through the rubble of destroyed buildings (with the implication that this destruction was the result of American bombing) as both other images and the translation of the lyrics into English are superimposed over the shot. The viewer receives the message that this young boy's neighborhood has been completely destroyed by the forces of the West. As the boy sorrowfully looks into the blown-out buildings, apparently seeking family, friends, or even any other living human being but finding no one else, flashes of "enemy" leaders such as Barrack Obama, Vladimir Putin, and Manuel Valls are seen, accompanied by the song's lyrics: "Your soldiers kill our children and you call them heroes, you show no remorse for the thousands you killed . . . You grant yourself the right to massacre us in the name of your so-called precious freedoms . . . Your fighter jets bomb and destroy, your intellectuals look on without shame, your media conceals all the atrocities, our dead are not being mentioned by your media. You are liars and manipulators."

The natural pathos produced as a normal human emotion at the sight of a distraught and lone child is put into service to condemn an incongruent grouping of political leaders to pit the west indiscriminately against the noble, self-sacrificing, and even holy images of the ISIS warriors striving to build a righteous civilization.

In documentary style, *The Religion of Unbelief* (2016) presents a quick succession of disturbing images of their enemies killed in a variety of horrific methods. At the same time, the narrator reaffirms in the minds of his viewers that ISIS, "will fight . . . until the ultimate goal of jihad is achieved." This video sets out to prove or justify the necessity of such acts of violence that ISIS is generally known to commit and which feature prominently in Western news broadcasts. These acts have been directed to the infidels in the west, and the unbelievers who practice a false interpretation of Islam for the sake of the survival of ISIS. Interestingly, these acts of violence are presented not

in the gratuitous manner made famous by the British adherent "Jihadi John;" instead, it is shown only briefly and with rapid cuts to the next image which allows the viewers to recognize what is depicted in the images but not dwell on their cruelty or inhumanity. The astute ISIS communication managers have obviously designed and produced these videos for the consumption of an audience living in the West but emotionally and philosophically not of the west and consequently then most vulnerable to ISIS propaganda and eventual recruitment. Their decision not to let the camera linger over the depiction of violent acts committed by ISIS soldiers though obviously callous was nevertheless critical to the potential success of conveying their message.

In voice over the narrator explains to his young audience who no doubt knows little of history how America and Russia, once enemies during the Cold War, have now become allies in their war against a common enemy ISIS. They had done the same when they joined to defeat Nazi Germany, implying that motivation in global politics stems more from convenience and mutual desires than any moral or religious principles. He goes on to suggest that the geopolitical situations of nations such as Turkey and Pakistan, as well as their conflict with the ISIS, are nothing more than the machinations of the Americans and Russians and their desire to unite the world against a new common enemy.

Past victories of the ISIS are celebrated and put to use as a means to suggest a constant succession of military success. *My Revenge* (2016*)* makes specific reference to the then contemporary events at the Bataclan Theater in Paris and the Brussels Airport, showing CCTV and emergency footage of the aftermath of these attacks. The intention here was to prove to the audience that the destruction caused by these attacks proceeded totally as originally planned. *My Revenge* hits many of the same thematic notes, featuring another French song with lyrics aimed at exposing Western atrocities,

"Valls [Manuel Carlos Valls, Prime Minister of France from 2014 until] wants to threaten us and see our corpses amassed. When their planes take off and bomb our schools and when they take control of our lands and plunder our oil." The video tells a story through music and imagery with shots of men packing their bags, followed by the same men walking out their front doors, arriving at an airport, flying in a plane (with a visible Air France logo on its side), and arriving in IS territory (portrayed as a beautiful and sunlit location). The implication obviously is that these men have left their homes to fight for the IS. Next, a Caucasian man, speaking French, addresses the camera, "this is a message . . . from your French brothers who have made hijrah—what are you waiting for?" We then see shots of men engaging in training drills and exercises, running obstacle courses, and shooting weapons—a collection of shots resembling the type of recruitment videos produced by the American army.

In conclusion

To the best of my knowledge, no one has stepped from behind the curtain of ISIS media communication management wizardry, but we can certainly infer based on the extensive evidence we have in terms of tweets and videos the skills if not the convictions of those employed by ISIS in the role of communication managers. Within the usual understanding of the job of communication manager he (assuming it is still predominantly a male dominated role based on the opportunity for education) has to maintain the support and enthusiasm of those already directly involved in the day to day operations of ISIS, as well as inspire new adherents, much in the way a communication manager in, for example, a charitable non-profit, attracts new donors and retains previous donors by justifying the goals of the cause and the consequent organization's existence.

Not all recruits can be in the field of battle or be one of the "lone wolves" of international terror. The communication management team has to coordinate between the equivalents of business and management, that is, those who keep ISIS' revenues flowing through the illicit sale of oil, looted antiquities, and taxes imposed on the subject populations of ISIS controlled territories, now however rapidly diminishing and the CEO or self-proclaimed caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and his various lieutenants and underlings.

As has been shown, those functioning as communication managers have developed sophisticated, affective, and engaging content in terms of music videos which convey their message of hate and violence against multiple opponents (westerners, Christians and allegedly apostate Muslims) while at the same time maintaining the recognizable elements of the genre which they have so successfully emulated. In other words, the medium through which the message is conveyed helps to persuade the views to answer these calls to action with behaviors outside the norms of civilized human behavior. These are coupled with knife in the chest 140 character tweets which have been crafted to create the impression of spontaneous composition driven by passion, not premeditated rhetorically constructed weapons of persuasion.

These ISIS communication managers have direct social contact with combatants or their commanders so that their messages have the feel of reality and reflect the experience of the soldiers to give them credibility, though they are in reality propaganda, the product of art and artifice in keeping with the now long history of media put into the service of military objectives. These communication managers have revealed their skilled in all platforms –Twitter, Facebook, YouTube – with the intent of increasing "brand loyalty" as well as recognizing the need to guard against the threat of splinter groups or mutiny. As professional communication managers, they should

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also be conscious of how and where their messages are received. As in other communication situations, the managers need feedback to judge if their output has been constructed in such a way as to be effective by means more than just imprecise accounting of the number of new recruits.

The CM's must coordinate their efforts between different locations well away from any area of combat. While continuing to manage and develop new content as a reflection of ISIS' current status and on-going contemporary events. Though the name of ISIS still evokes fear and serves as a synonym for senseless killing and violence, their shrinking territory has revealed them to be vulnerable. At the same time their presence in the Western media is being replaced by copy-cat home-grown media events related to mass shootings which may evoke ISIS but which have not been generated them. The immediate response to any news report of sudden and irrational violence immediately leads one to think of an act for which ISIS is responsible, but which well may prove to be unrelated. Likewise, the focus of western media has shifted to national and international political events, in other words, a daily focus on the incompetence of the scandal ridden Trump administration. Likewise, the ascent of China, the uncertainty of the consequences of Brexit, Angela Merkel's inability to form a government, both creating instability in Europe, and the on-going, relentless incoherence of the American policies and political system have shifted the world's attention. Consequently, ISIS is a diminishing phenomenon and presence in western media. The public has a short attention span. The names of places that flashed across the screen are now fading from memory, supplanted by more recent events. By now ISIS may have saturated the media to the point of indifference.

Though ISIS may fade from history as a potent political force, it has certainly created a further paradigm of how the skills of communication managers in the broadest

sense can be used for good or ill. Consequently, Communication Theory remains not only an honored tradition stemming from Classical Greece, but a vital area of study, not just in an academic setting, but also as a source for the development of practical applications in the wider world. Communication is ubiquitous. We must continue to understand how it operates to harness its potential for good and guard against the furthering of deception and demagoguery with the goal of safeguarding the principles and practice of liberal democracy and enabling it to spread to a larger portion of the globe.

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