Dabiq: A Theological Narrative Analysis of *Da'esh's* Former Flagship Publication.

By

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ABSTRACT.

Da'esh is a proscribed terrorist organisation that rose to power in the Middle Eastern context following the US led invasion of Iraq and civil unrest in Syria. It's designation as a terrorist organisation is a political one which has arguably impacted upon the manner in which the movement has been researched. But *Da'esh* presents itself as a religious organisation advocating for the establishment of a caliphate through the use of military jihad. Its communication with the world at large was partly through an official publication titled *Dabiq* which ran between 2014 and 2016 producing 15 volumes in total. Using an insider perspective, this investigation performs a theological examination of *Dabiq's* narrative in order to better understand one question: What is/are *Da'esh's* ultimate theological goal(s)? This research advocates the post secular approach to the study of religious violence in which religion is not divorced from the secular and political phenomenon. It develops a theological framework of Sunni Islam against which *Dabiq's* theological propositions are critically examined. This broader theological reality is neither exclusively jurisprudential in focus nor reductive in theological engagement. Rather it is encompassing of disparate expressions within Sunni Islam creating a much needed theological backdrop against which religious actions can be understood and measured. The investigation argues that *Dabiq's* overall theological objective(s) are ambiguous and ill defined. The publications focus is primarily upon temporal interests that serve *Da'esh's* immediate operational needs raising questions as to the organisations overall the theological motivations.

DEDICATION.

In loving memory of my father, Ghulam Mustafa (1939-2005).

Dedicated to all those who have lost their lives as a result of war and conflict.

May their souls rest in peace.

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Bʿad al ḥamdi wath thanā'.

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Arabic Consonants

Initial, unexpressed medial and final:

ء	'	د	d	ض	ḍ	ك	k
ب	b	ذ	dh	ط	ṭ	ل	l
ت	t	ر	r	ظ	ẓ	م	m
ث	th	ز	z	ع	'	ن	n
ج	j	س	s	غ	gh	هـ	h
ح	ḥ	ش	sh	ف	f	و	w
خ	kh	ص	ṣ	ق	q	ي	y

Vowels, diphthongs, etc.

Short: َ a ِ i ُ u

Long: ـَا ā ـِي ī ـُو ū

Diphthongs: ـَوْ aw

ـَىْ ay

1.0 INTRODUCTION

'***Da'esh* is a conflicted and contradictory organisation focused on temporal objectives compromising theological validity and ethereal success.**'

Da'esh[1] is a proscribed organisation that rose to international notoriety in June 2014 when it declared itself as a caliphate. It is perhaps a point of irony that *Da'esh's* immediate foundations were set in the pro democracy protests of the Arab Spring, specifically the movements in Syria that were met with brutal repression by the Syrian government (Blakenmore: 2019). However, *Da'esh* began its journey as a branch of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) long before the civil unrest of the Arab Spring. The founder of modern day *Da'esh*, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, was instructed by bin Laden to establish a branch of al-Qaeda in Iraq. But operational differences between the leaderships of AQI and al-Qaeda 'proper' resulted in a public divorce between the two organisations (Weiss & Hassan: 2016) with *Da'esh* now openly challenging the legitimacy of its former patron al-Qaeda (Dabiq, 2014, vol.7, pp 36).

Da'esh has fervently utilised civil unrest and in reality created sectarian conflict in order to position themselves as the solution to the problems which they claim have consumed the Muslim world (Dabiq, 2014, vol.1, pp 05). Indeed as their battlefield 'victories' increased their organisational identity changed accordingly. The group changed its name from the 'Islamic State in Iraq & the Levant' (ISIL) and the 'Islamic State in Syria' (ISIS) to a broader

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[1] *Da'esh* is an acronym used to refer to this organisation in order to delegitimise its claims and associations with or to Islam. The term is increasingly being used by politicians and in the media. See https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-27994277 for further details.

offering of the 'Islamic State' (IS) in reflection of its expansionist ambitions (Irshaid:2015; Wilson: 2019). But as this thesis will highlight, despite the distinction and notoriety that *Da'esh* created for itself over the years it is embedded (specifically) within al-Qaeda's organisational heritage and (generally) in the broader movements of Faith Claimed Terrorism.[2]

This PhD study set out to better understand one fundamental question; 'what is/are *Da'esh's* ultimate theological goal(s)?' In order to do so it conducted a detailed theological narrative analysis of *Da'esh's* former flagship publication; *Dabiq*. *Dabiq* is the name of a small town located approximately 25 miles northeast of Aleppo. The town holds a great deal of eschatological significance as a prophetic narration recorded by Imam Muslim states that *Dabiq* will be the battleground for an apocalyptic conflict that will usher in the end of days.[3] *Da'esh's* eschatological focus has a strong presence across the volumes of *Dabiq* (as will be detailed in chapters 6 and 7). Each publication in the series begins with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's statement of condemnation against the 'kuffar armies' whom he wishes to see burning in *Dabiq* (the physical space). Indeed all of *Da'esh's* material efforts and even the core of their theological proposition is predicated upon conflict that leads to this envisioned and prophecised apocalyptic end. McCants (2015) raises this observation in his examination of the self-proclaimed Islamic State. He argues that *Da'esh's* claims, *prima facie*, evidence a strong millenarian identity which they have constructed through the use of eschatological narrations (McCants: 2015).

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[2] I propose Faith Claimed Terrorism as an alternative label to that which associates any given religion or belief to constructs of violence and terrorism. This will be elaborated upon further on in the thesis where I raise contentions with the term 'Islamism'.

[3] عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه أنَّ رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال لاتقوم الساعة حتى تنزل الروم بالأعماق أو بدابِق فيخرج إليهم جيش من المدينة من خيار أهل الأرض يومئذ، فإذا تصافوا، قالت الروم خلوا بينا وبين الذين سُبُوا مِنَّا نقاتلهم، فيقول المسلمون لا والله، كيف نُخَلِّي بينكم وبين إخواننا، فيقاتلوثم؟ فينهزم ثُلُث ولا يتوب الله عليهم أبدا، ويُقتَل ثلثُهم أفضل الشهداء عند الله، ويفتتح الثلث، لا يُفتَنون أبدا، فيفتتِحون قسطنطينية، فبينما هم يقتسمون الغنائم، قد عَلَّقوا سُيوفَهُم بالزيتون، إذ صاح فيهم الشيطان: إنَّ المسيحَ الدَّجَّالَ قد خَلَفَكم في أهاليكم، فيخرجون، وذلك باطل فإذا جاؤوا الشام خرج، فبينا هم يُعِدِّون القتال، يُسَوُّون صفوفَهم، إذا أقيمت الصلاة، فينزل عيسى بن مريم، فأمَّهم، فإذا رآه عدو الله ذاب كما يذوب في الماء، فلو تركه لانزاب حتى يهلك، ولكن يقتله الله بيده يعني المسيح فيريهم دَمه في حربته أخرجه مسلم.

However, after a detailed examination of *Dabiq* the answer to the research question remains unclear. The investigation was the result of an absence of focus on the non-jurisprudential theology of militant *Islamist* organisations. A great amount of literature has been penned on both militant *Islamism* generally and *Da'esh* specifically, but these examinations have been conducted primarily through a jurisprudential lens (Wiktorowicz & Kaltner (2003); Wiktorowicz (2006); Ali (2018) and Spier (2018)). Those studies which have engaged with the non jurisprudential dimension of *Da'esh's* theology have suffered from methodological flaws. They have attempted to understand a theological phenomenon, which is rooted in metaphysical reference, through a 'hard sciences' methodological approach (Jurgensmeyer (2003); Droogan & Peattie (2017); Keskin & Tuncer (2018) and Spier (2018)). The consequences have been surface level engagements with *Da'esh's* theology leading to superficial understandings of the groups' theological propositions. However, despite this consideration there have been representations to argue that Islam (however that is understood and defined) features within the narratives of terrorist organisations (Wiktotrwicz (2006); el-Badawy (2015); Welch (2018)).

This research embraced the methodological perspectives advocated by Asad (1993) Cavanaugh (2009) and Shakman-Hurd (2015) in adopting an insider perspective which appreciates the influence of theology and religion within a secular/post secular world. The study fills the gap in current literature in the theologically deconstruction of *Da'esh's* former flagship publication *Dabiq*. *Dabiq* provided an accessible source of data which ran over a period of two years. It was also the safest data pool to access in terms of source integrity as *Dabiq* was presented as *Da'esh's* message to the world. Therefore the theological material it contained was *Da'esh's* theology and not a second or third hand understanding or interpretation of it.

Furthermore, the insider perspective facilitated the development of a conceptual framework which took in to account the metaphysical dimension of *Dabiq's* theological propositions. The conceptual framework argues that the 'reality' of human existence in Sunni Islam is predicated upon the belief of impending theological accountability in the metaphysical realm. *'Ibādah* (the worship of Allah) is the construct through which Allah enables His answerable creation to fulfil their religious obligations whilst in the temporal world. So the physical 'worldly' realm is inherently connected to a metaphysical 'other worldly' realm through the rubric of faith, belief and worship. Jihad, as a definitive act of worship, feeds in to this very dynamic and is equally subject to the inescapable measure of accountability no different to any of the other acts of worship. In addition, this methodology placed much needed focus upon the individual actors who have supported *Da'esh*. Historically the theological considerations relating to the individual have either been subsumed within the broader analyses of the organisation (typically through political or social science examinations) or completely dismissed (typically through psycho-socio analyses). So this research found the middle ground where both the individual and organisation are given due regard.

The study found that despite the breadth of theological referencing contained within *Dabiq*, there was a notable lack of depth to its content. The Quran and hadith were presented as evidential statements to impress obligation, duty, permissibility and impermissibility. In doing so *Da'esh* communicated definitive stances on a multitude of issues that were more complex than their features in *Dabiq* suggested them to be. An illustrative example is found in the matter of *tawḥīd* and how it could only truly be realised through the conduit of military jihad. *Dabiq's* positioning of *tawḥīd* and the seeming clarity it provided enabled the mass 'apostosisation' and killing of anyone who did not support their cause. However, such a theological positioning was at the expense and detriment of the individuals who undertook what they considered to be a religious imperative but did not necessarily understand how it

fed in to the broader rubric of *ʿibādah* or how it affected their theological accountability. As a result *Da'esh* wilfully used Sunni Muslims, to kill Sunni Muslims in the name of Sunni Islam against a self declared mandate to protect Sunni Muslims. But as the study will reveal these endeavours were focused primarily for the benefit of the organisation; its preservation and expansion. They committed to this vision to such a degree that they sought to secure the continuity of their jihad in to future generations through the development of *tawaḥḥush al-fard* (individual savagery). Millions of people across the world have been directly or indirectly affected by *Da'esh's* jihad, *tawaḥḥush* and militancy. *Da'esh* have stripped people of respect, honour and dignity and placed them in dynamics of perpetual impoverishment that will cascade down several generations; yet as an organisation and support base they are blissfully indifferent about it. The reason for being so is because *Da'esh* do not define the greater context against which their jihad is being fought. They don't have an identifiable theological goal beyond this temporal realm and the primacy of Allah as the object of worship is relegated to a secondary position, behind revenge, expansion and tactical gains. Consequently, *Da'esh's* entire theological proposition, their claims of jihad as a theological construct and legitimacy of the caliphate is entirely questionable.[4]

Furthermore, the theological wellbeing of *Da'esh's* operatives was all but disregarded. *Dabiq* paid very little attention to the matters of self-development and rectification. The essences of *ʿibādah* were established by the conceptual framework of this study as *taqwāʾ* and the jihad *al-nafs*. Yet *Dabiq* afforded very little time and attention to these critical areas of theological preservation. Absence of self-awareness risks undermining the theological integrity and credibility of temporal acts of worship in the metaphysical realm. But not only

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[4] The legitimacy argument presented here is an academic one. Muslim scholars have engaged in a theological deconstruction of *Da'esh's* claims to legitimacy presented in their 'Open Letter to Dr Ibrahim Awwad al-Badri'. The letter was published in September 2014, shortly after the self proclaimed caliphate was declared and from a theological perspective it touches upon some of the arguments made in this thesis. For example plurality of the term jihad (p.10) and the intentions behind which the military expression of jihad should be performed (p.11).

did *Dabiq* fail to provide content to support their advocates in this area its volumes actually promoted competing interests that would undermine the theological integrity of their jihad. So if the theological construct of military jihad is compromised then *Da'esh* are no different to any other militant or separatist organisation operating for 'secular' purposes.

However, in order to arrive at this conclusion it was necessary to view the dynamic through the very same apparatus that *Da'esh* use to claim theological legitimacy. The theological lens has forced us to reflect upon *Da'esh* as a religious or theological organisation. If we accept self attributed labels without critically examining the foundations upon which those claims are made (Jurgensmeyer: 2018) then we undoubtedly give such organisations currency and legitimacy. *Dabiq* communicates *Da'esh's* foundations as being set upon temporal interests which the organisation will pursue at any cost. The establishment of the caliphate and *tawḥīd* is so important to *Da'esh* that they will happily kill anyone, Sunni Muslim or otherwise, in its realisation. It is for this very reason that this thesis argues that '*Da'esh* is a conflicted and contradictory organisation focused on temporal objectives compromising theological validity and ethereal success.'

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW.

2.1 Introduction.

This chapter provides a detailed review of the academic literature relating to *Islamism*, *Da'esh* and *Dabiq*. It presents a thematic analysis of existing literature in the field of terrorism studies beginning from a broad perspective. As the chapter develops its focus will progressively refine onto *Da'esh's* former flagship publication *Dabiq*. In doing so this chapter highlights the overlapping characteristics of terrorism be it 'secular', 'political' or 'religious' in its application. The chapter highlights that analyses conducted primarily through a political or social science lens have indeed engaged with the 'religious' question. However, these engagements have been hollow of the deeper theological imperative that faith and faith actions are intended to achieve. So a focused theological examination of militant *Islamism*, which looks beyond the jurisprudential debate and surface references to Quran and hadith scripture, is called for. Indeed as this chapter will highlight, current literature argues that this area of study is underdeveloped.

The chapter closes with a summary of discussions and the presentation of a research question which will set the endeavour of this thesis.

Throughout this thesis the terms terror, terrorist, terrorism, insurgent, insurgency, militant, militancy, militia, guerrilla warfare and anarchist will all be used interchangeably in reference to *Da'esh* as an organisation, its theological worldview, supporters and operations. This is in full recognition of the lively debate in academic writings on the accurateness of these terms to denote the designation of a given organisation (Wilkinson, 1977, pp 51-52; Tilly, 2004, pp 08-09).

2.2 Understanding Terrorism.

Da'esh has been proscribed by the UK government as a terrorist organisation (Home Office, 2019, pp 14). This means that from a UK legal perspective their actions amount to acts of terrorism and that their advocates are indeed terrorists. However, this proscription sits within a rich a lively debate regarding the 'construct' of terrorism which is necessary to appreciate in order to position the theological examination of *Dabiq* that is to follow.

2.2.1 Understanding Terrorism: A Political Science Perspective.

Wilkinson (1977) defines terrorism as *'the systematic use of murder and destruction, and the threat of murder and destruction in order to terrorise individuals, groups, communities or governments in to conceding to the terrorists political demands'* (Wilkinson, 1977, pp 49). Crenshaw (1981) shares this sentiment and argues that terrorism is a form of political behaviour to communicate a political message that transgresses state structures which are damaged as a result of the terrorist activity. She suggests that the absence of political participation is a conduit toward terrorism (Crenshaw, 1981, pp 379-380). Jenkins (1998) states that terrorism is a term used to describe 'systematic acts of violence to create a general climate of fear in a population and thereby bring about a particular political objective' (Jenkins: 1998) and Tilly (2004) states that terrorism is a political strategy (Tilly, 2004, pp 05). Hoffman (2017) supports the viewpoints of Wilkinson (1977), Crenshaw (1981), Jenkins (1998) and Tilly (2004) in arguing that acts of terrorism constitute any act of violence, or the threat of violence, which is made for the purposes of securing or influencing political change. Indeed Hoffman (2017) states that the widely accepted use of the term 'terrorism' relates to an inherently political struggle (Hoffman, 2017, pp 02-03). What becomes apparent from these definitions of 'terrorism' is its relationship with politics and

how an act of terrorism is positioned to assumedly lead to a political outcome. However this assertion is not without its contentions.

Hoffman (2017) challenges this notion (despite the reference above) in his extensive examination of terrorism. He argues that the almost synonymous relationship between politics and terrorism is arguably a product of the European enlightenment. Hoffman (2017) traces the origins of contemporary political terrorism to the 18th century French revolution. He argues that the revolution was conceived in order to contest the influence of exploitative religious elitism upon wider society. Hoffman (2017) argues that the utility of terrorism in the formative enlightenment period was to establish order following social reform (Hoffman, 2017, pp 02-03). He further states that as Europe passed through the stages of enlightenment and the industrial revolution it garnered a new sense of identity, one that was increasingly divorced from state religion and affiliation to royal lineages. The industrial revolution in particular brought a new set of challenges and new perceptions of exploitative governance structures, this time in the form of capitalism. Hence the application of terrorism evolved to address the social inequalities that were a product not of religious exploitation but industrial capitalism (*ibid*, pp 05). However, despite this 'evolution' the application of terrorism during the enlightenment period and immediately thereafter was not to influence political change *per-se* rather it was to challenge structures of inequality be they religious, capitalist or any other form (*ibid*, pp 38-39). Hoffman's (2017) analysis supports Crenshaw's (1981) assessment where she argues that inequality underpins a state of depravation that gives rise to terrorism against state actors and governance structures (Crenshaw, 1981, pp 383). Even though Crenshaw (1981) retains focus on the political objective of terrorism as an intended outcome, she argues that it is catalysed by factors of deprivation.

These sentiments are also shared by others. For example, Wilkinson (1977) argues that terrorism is not always politically motivated (Wilkinson, 1977, pp 48). Similarly, Kydd &

Walter (2006) argue that although the organisational goals of terrorist groups may have changed over the years; for example from challenging the omnipotence of religious rule during the pre enlightenment era to advocating for social reform in a post industrial context; the essential pretext of challenging inequality has remained the same. In addition, Crenshaw's (1981) structural overview of some of the drivers that legitimise terrorism such as the presentation of virtuous sincerity for a higher good, a sense of morality and the promise of a glorious future (Crenshaw, 1981, pp 394-395) are all non political outcomes. It is indeed possible to argue that the considerations raised here by Hoffman (2017) regarding the dissonance between 'religion' and 'state' in the post enlightenment era alongside the considerations raised by Wilkinson (1971) and Crenshaw (1981) all relate to challenging perceptions of injustice which are now viewed almost exclusively through a political science lens. Hence the application of terrorism in the post enlightenment context is assumed to be a declaration of political intent, despite disparate motivations, drives or ambitions. Whilst this argument emboldens the perspective that contemporary terrorism is inherently political, it is by no means absolute. However at this juncture it is sufficient to highlight that the range of activity within the spectrum of terrorism extends beyond political discourse and the apathy to which it has been reduced.

Another consideration with the analysis of terrorism through a political science lens is its regard for the threat or use of violence in order to influence change (Wilkinson, 1977, pp 49; Hoffman, 2017, pp 02-03). Terrorism's relationship with violence is largely uncontested and predates the post enlightenment construct of contemporary terrorism. However, unlike pre modern models of 'religious' terrorism (in which violence was mandated by religion or belief) the apprehension of violence during the European enlightenment was in order to challenge social inequality created through the discriminatory application of religious doctrine. Hoffman (2017) states that 19th century ideologue of terrorism in Europe, Carlo

Pisacane [d 1857], advocated that violence was necessary to draw attention to the cause, publicise it and to fundamentally gather the masses in support of a revolution (Hoffman, 2017, pp 05). Similarly, McElroy (2000) states that mass slaughter in public was advocated by German terrorist Johannes Most [d 1906] who argued that overthrowing existing structures of governance was best achieved through the annihilation of its exponents. So it was important to have a motion that massacred people en masse (McElroy, 2000, pp 97-98). Such theories have taken the concept of terrorism as a mechanism of embedding social stability post social reform and moulded it in to a practice of indiscriminate violence intended to influence or destabilise international governments by non state actors (Hoffman, 2017, pp 20).

These propositions, as constructs of post enlightenment areligious terrorism, share an affinity in practice with their pre modern religious counterparts. For example, the publications and practices of faith associated terrorist organisations are not dissimilar to the secularist designations of contemporary terrorism. Most's thesis shares a harmony with *Da'esh's* practice of *tawaḥḥush* (savagery). Although *Da'esh* applies *tawaḥḥush* as a preparatory measure for their jihad (this will be discussed in greater detail in section 6.5.2 of chapter 6) the resulting mass casualties and state of terror that they produce is no different from Most's intended outcomes through mass slaughter. Most's strategy has also been adopted by organisations like al-Qaedah and to a lesser degree Irish Nationalist movements such as the IRA. In particular, al-Qa'edah's attacks on the World Trade Centre buildings on 9/11 forcibly changed the paradigm of contemporary terrorism and feed in to discussions on the waves (Laqueur: 2001; Rapoport: 2001) and strains (Parker & Sitter: 2016) of terrorism. The impact of such operations by organisations who claim a religious affinity is precisely what Pisacane set out as an objective for the application of violence through terrorism.

The efficacy of contemporary terrorism is commented upon by Kydd & Walter (2006) who state that between 1980 and 2003 terrorism has been incredibly 'successful' (Kydd & Walter, 2006, pp 49-50). In analysing the strategies of terrorist violence, they make reference to 'targets of persuasion': being attrition, intimidation, provocation and spoiling as elements that lead to favourable outcomes for a terrorist group (Kydd & Walter, 2006, pp 59). These strategies are relatable to the IRA's operations during the 80's and 90's, identifiable in al-Qa'edah's narrative following 9/11 era and clearly evident across the publications of *Dabiq*. So in respect of delivering results and progressing organisational agendas, be they *Islamist*, nationalist or any other form, the dynamic of contemporary terrorism appears to share universal characteristics across the variations of its application. Perhaps it is ironic that that the mechanism utilised to challenge inequality by unseating pre modern religious hegemony was firstly itself rooted within 'religious' origin and secondly equally appears to be utilised by areligious terrorist groups. The methodological overlaps are profound and have blurred the lines of distinction between the disparate modes of terrorism (Rapoport, 1984, pp 659).

Nevertheless, the association of violence with terrorism is not exclusivist and does not preclude expressions of non violent challenge being designated as terrorism. For example, Gandhi [d 1948 CE] was labelled a terrorist by British Parliament in 1932 (Mosecon: 2013, Rao: 2013) for his opposition against British colonial rule of South Africa (Rai, 2000, pp 35) and India (DiSalvo, 2013, pp 14-15). However, Gandhi practiced *satyagraha*, a form passive resistance that is inherently non violent, yet he was still labelled as a terrorist due to his challenge of perceived structural social inequality. Similarly, Nelson Mandela and Malcolm X are further examples from the contemporary period of non violent reformation activists who were also labelled as terrorists (Mosecon: 2013). Likewise, non violent social reformation movements that challenge perceived structures of inequality have also been labelled as tools of terrorism. For example, the Boycott, Sanctions & Divestment (BDS)

campaign is argued by The Jerusalem Post as supporting terrorism (The Jerusalem Post: 2019) even though the campaign is essentially a non violent movement.

However, despite their non violent constructs such movements and campaigns are either attributed to or labelled as expressions of terrorism; which as highlighted in this section is a product of post enlightenment, secular modernity. As a result, the notion of challenging structural inequality is reduced to an endeavour of ultimately influencing 'political' change without recognising the structural elements upon which such a challenge is formed. For instance, Gandhis' practice of *satyagraha* activism was shaped upon the notion of realising 'truth' through peace, love and self scrutiny (Lotha: 2007). Yet its successes as a pacifist movement were not far removed from allegations that Gandhi was either sympathetic to terrorists (Jurgensmeyer, 2007, pp 34) or that his activism was underpinned by concurrent violent separatist movements (McQuade: 2016). This is of course in addition to him being labelled as an outright terrorist as cited above.

This discussion highlights the lack of consideration that a political science perspective affords to challenges of inequality that are not driven by an expression of political secularism. The separation of church from state and the use of terrorism to challenge religious hegemony was a significant factor within the evolution of terrorism during the enlightenment period (Hoffman, 2017, pp 05). As a result of the diminishing presence of religious discourse in public life, analyses of terrorism have primarily been skewered by a political science examinations at the expense of theological considerations. For instance, Tilly (2004) asserts that the application of terrorism is merely a strategy and not a creed (Tilly, 2004, pp 11). Such perspectives reduce the analysis of actors who claim religion or belief as the impetus for their 'terrorism' to mere tactical strategies within a construct of political apathy. When measured against *Islamist* organisations like *Da'esh* or al-Qaedah the methodological differences become evident. For instance, *Da'esh* consider democracy, manmade laws and

political participation to be apostasy and wholly in contravention of Allah's laws. So the outcome of political apathy that a social or political science analysis leads to is the very evil of idolatrous apostasy that *Da'esh's* acts of terrorism are seeking to destroy. Thus the catalyst for terrorism in this regard is not the absence of political process or participation within it, as suggested by Crenshaw (1981), rather it is the very existence of a political structure that is contravention of Allah's laws. Faruqi's (1995) assessment regarding the function of *tawḥīd* (oneness of Allah) at state and governance level further highlights this divergence. Faruqi (1995) argues that the concept of an 'Islamic State' is in fact the application of *tawḥīd* across all aspects of society (Faruqi, 1995, pp 143). So from a theological perspective a faith principle underpins all actions that constitute 'political' outcomes from a political science perspective. 'Terrorism' is one such phenomenon.

What this section has demonstrated is that political science examinations of terrorism position challenges to structures of inequality as inherently political. Even though there is a recognition of factors that influence terrorism and terrorist movements such as religion, in the post enlightenment era these factors are not given the credence they deserve. This section has highlighted the various modes of terrorism within the spectrum of political science analysis as well as highlighting distinct overlaps with 'terrorist' organisations who claim to be acting in the name of religion and belief. These overlaps have raised significant questions regarding the role of religion within terrorism and terrorist movements. So the following section, Understanding Terrorism: The Religious Imperative will examine Religious Terrorism in greater detail.

2.2.2 Understanding Terrorism: The Religious Imperative.

As detailed previously in section 2.2.1, the political science perspective argues that terrorism is driven by political intent. This premise creates a distinct division of opinion regarding the essential motivations behind terrorist activity. For example, Jurgensmeyer (2003) examines the role of religion in acts of violence and argues that religious violence is not simply a product of theological aberration; rather religious imagination is supportive of violence (Jurgensmeyer, 2003, pp 06). In his assessment of religious violence he asks a poignant question regarding the use of religion in political violence; is it being used solely for political ends? Jurgensmeyer's (2003) reflection is an important distinction as it not only reinforces the considerations raised in section 2.2.1 but it also highlights a disparity on the prominence of faith and religion in public life across different contexts.

Rapoport (1984) provides an overview of 'religious' terrorism across the Jewish, Muslim and Hindu faiths. He argues that prior to the 19th century, acts of terrorism were primarily justified through religion. In being so the 'holy' terrorist believed that terrorism could only be valid if it served some transcendent purpose which fulfilled the meaning of the universe (Rapoport, 1984, pp 659). So for the 'holy' terrorist the primary audience was (and arguably should still be) the deity (*ibid*, pp 660). Within this religious or theological domain, some faith expressions of terrorism were wholly spiritual; meaning that they had no seemingly tangible outcome other than outward violence. For example, in his examination on the genealogy of terrorism, Hoffman (2017) offers detail of Hindu *Thugs* between the 7th and 9th centuries who killed people as ritual sacrifices to the Goddess of Terror, *Kali*. Hoffman (2017) states that the *Thugs* killed as many as one million people over a period of 1,200 years (Hoffman, 2017, pp 85). In contrast to the *Thugs*, Muslim *Assassins* who operated in the middle ages between 1090-1275 CE had a distinct focus on effecting change in the temporal

realm as well as engaging in the spiritual realm (Rapoport, 1984, pp 664-665). Rapoport (1984) details the developments in the *Assassins* methodology and argues that they took their inspiration from the life of the prophet Muhammad and firmly believed that success could only be achieved by a return to the religious practices of the formative period of Islam (*ibid*, pp 667). Similar to the *Assassins*, Rapoport (1984) and Hoffman (2017) provide insights in to the *Zealot- Sicarrii*, an expression of Jewish terrorism which was prevalent against the Roman Empire between 66 and 73 AD. Rapoport (1984) argues that the *Zealots* were driven by a messianic vision regarding the Holy lands and utilised what is considered to be 'justified' terror in pursuit of their goals (Rapoport, 1984, pp 669). Just like their Muslim counterparts the spiritual and theological reasoning behind the *Zealots* campaign had a tangible temporal impact. Pressing further on the relationship between religion and violence Hoffman (2017) also offers contemporary examples of faith based terrorism in the form of radical fundamentalist movements from the Jewish, Sikh, and Christian faiths. In doing so he illustrates that monolithic world views in pursuit of theocratic governance structures are unafraid of inviting apocalyptic ends for the purposes of their perceived theological goals (Hoffman, 2017, pp 83-127). What these perspectives suggest are that expressions of terrorism have a distinct ethereal element which transgresses the construct of political activity. If anything, the use of religion to challenge inequality and injustice, perceived or otherwise, is rooted in religion and belief and predates the post enlightenment understanding of terrorism as a tool of 'political' influence (as detailed in section 2.2.1). For some the entire construct of violence is a religious engagement.

This sentiment is shared by Hoffman (2017) who states that for organisations like al-Qaedah the motive behind terrorism is primarily religious and religion is their defining characteristic (Hoffman, 2017, pp 84). To a degree, Hoffman (2017) challenges his own designation of terrorism: being the apprehension or threat of violence in order to influence political change.

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The focus of attention for organisations like al-Qaedah is not to influence political persuasion *per se*; rather it is to eliminate it and replace it with Allah's law, His *shariah*, in His lands. Feeding in to this opinion are the considerations raised by Gunning & Jackson (2011) who challenge the entire construct of the term 'religious terrorism' and argue that it distracts from the significance of faith and religion in the expression of terrorist violence (Gunning & Jackson, 2011, pp 369-370). They highlight the difficulties in attributing labels that effectively define religious terrorism and violence when there are profound overtones between the 'religious' and 'secular'. Gunning & Jackson (2011) detail the various academic perspectives that feed in to the discourse of religious terrorism (Hoffman (2006), Cavanaugh (2004), Esposito (1999), Sedgwick (2004), Wiktorowicz & Kaltner (2003), Juergensmeyer (2003) and Asad (2003).

However although these perspectives offer invaluable insight in to the relationship between religion and violence alongside the history and development of 'religious terrorism', they are not without consideration. For example, Jurgensmeyer (2003) has performed his analysis retrospectively and wholly detached from the spiritual phenomenon. He examines acts of 'religious' violence as case studies that are situated within their own cultural context and relative social and political environments. Although his approach is valuable in analysing how religious thought has been applied to different contexts over the course of time it is neither wholly reflective nor indicative of a religions overarching theological mandate. What I mean by this is that his assessment does not situate a case study against an overall purpose defined by the religion, faith or belief that is under scrutiny. To the contrary, it is an indictment of faith based upon the actions of those who profess to uphold belief in it. To a degree the content of his work is a reflection of this statement. For example, Jurgensmeyer (2003) details the development of a 'just war' theory engineered by St Augustine in the 4th century CE. St Augustine's development of this theory was a distinct breakaway from the

doctrine of Christian pacifism. It was conceived by him in order to maintain the Church's authority over its vast and conflicted territories (Jurgensmeyer, 2003, pp 25). Furthermore Jurgensmeyer's (2003) account of Michael Bray, an adherent of Christian Reconstructionist theology supported a violent perspective that was not shared by his co-reconstructionists. Therefore his killing of doctors and medical staff who worked at abortion clinics was condemned by Gary North who was a prolific ideologue of Reconstructionist Christianity (Jurgensmeyer, 2003, pp 29). What this evidences are deviations (in Brays case inter sect deviations) from an established theological principle; that being the sanctity of life. The fact that St. Augustine engineered a doctrine that was conducive to his needs in 4th century Europe and Bray adopted a perspective that enabled him to perform acts of terrorism in the mid 1980's does not suggest that religious imagination within Christianity is inherently supportive of violence. To the contrary, Jurgensmeyer's (2003) accounts suggest that faith practices are manipulated in pursuit of temporal objectives that are catalysed by personal drivers.

This contention is addressed by Cavanaugh (2009) who critiques the methodological approach of social scientists in the study of religion and 'religious' violence. He argues that religious violence is a Western myth engineered in the enlightenment period to position the 'secular' as the tame, rational and logical alternative to irrational religious fanaticism (Cavanaugh, 2009, pp 04-06). Cavanaugh (2009) challenges the very notion that religious ideology, or imagination as referred to by Jurgensmeyer (2003), is more supportive of violence than non religious models of governance (*ibid*, pp 13) when the very ideal of secularism was achieved (and continues to be so) through violence and conflict (*ibid*, pp 08). Critically he highlights the difficulty in a clinical separation of religion from state when firstly religion and politics were one inseparable entity prior to the enlightenment and secondly when certain faiths (for example Islam) do not make a distinction between what is

religious and political (*ibid*, pp 11). This assertion is supported by Faruqi (1995) who, as previously mentioned, argues that an Islamic state is in fact the application of *tawḥīd* (the declaration of Allah's oneness) at state and governance level (Faruqi, 1995, pp 143). Thus all endeavours are religious and theological, not political and secular (this will be addressed in greater detail in section 4.3.2).

Cavanaugh's (2009) contention supports the considerations raised by Asad (1993) who argues that the separation of religion from 'power' is a post reformation phenomenon predominant in Western society (Asad, 1993, pp 28-28). Asad (1993) raises an interesting point regarding 'power'. Cavanaugh (2009) also makes reference to the notion of power and cites John Bossy who argued that there has been a migration of the 'holy': from the church to state meaning that the state has assumed the historical position of religion in modern society (Cavanaugh, 2009, pp 11). These observations are profound as they feed directly in to the narratives espoused by militant *Islamist* organisations, and *Da'esh* in particular, who argue that secular democracy is idolatrous polytheism which needs to be eradicated. Based upon this belief and principle *Da'esh* have justified the killing and execution of thousands of people including fellow Sunni Muslims. This discussion will be picked up in greater detail in section 4.3.2.

However, Asad (1993) states that there has been a notable shift in 20th century anthropological scholarship from Victorian evolutionary ideas (Asad, 1993, pp 27). His assertion, arguably coupled with Cavanaugh's (2009) critique of his work, caused Jurgensmeyer (2013) to re-evaluate his position from that cited above. Jurgensmeyer (2013) makes reference to a development in social sciences in which researchers are focusing more on religion and religious worldviews; a methodological approach referred to as socio-theology (Jurgensmeyer, 2013, pp 940-943). Jurgensmeyer (2013) argues that there is now greater attention to the religious dimension in political science as there is a greater

prominence of religion or religious mantra in public affairs (*ibid*). Shakman-Hurd (2015)

supports this sentiment in making reference to the growing recognition of religion in

international politics. She states that the United States, for example, have afforded greater

considerations to religious freedoms in their stability operations and that USAID grants are

offered to faith based organisations. Furthermore, the US centric intelligence operations that

seek to establish democracy and political plurality do so with the support of 'moderate'

religion in order to overcome social ills (Shakman-Hurd, 2015, pp 03). Both Jurgensmeyer

(2013) and Shakman-Hurd (2015) value the 'insider' approach toward understanding the

social impact of religious phenomena (Jurgensmeyer, 2013, pp 944) as religion cannot be

clinically divorced from the secular phenomenon; rather religion permeates all aspects of

human life (Shakman-Hurd, 2015, pp 04-07). Furthermore, she asserts that religion or

religious belief is not a single entity that can be neatly juxtaposed against secular modernity;

rather it is diverse and embedded in all aspects of society (*ibid*, pp 10 & 19-20). Her analysis

challenges the research conducted by Gunning & Jackson (2011) who attempt to establish an

omnilateral understanding of religious violence. They endeavour to seek out a construct for

terrorism that fits all expressions of violence and conflict that are conceived in the name of

religion. In doing so they posit the post enlightenment construct of society as the base

against which expressions of theology, religion and belief need to be understood. Their

approach suffers from the dichotomous construct of 'realities' that Cavanaugh (2009) speaks

of. The balance is a fine one, as the absence of calculation in this space leads to narratives

which suggest that religious grievances with secular states that result in conflict are products

of inherently violent belief systems that are at odds with secular modernity; a proposition that

Gunning & Jackson (2011) themselves challenge despite their methodological approach. In

his later work, Jurgensmeyer (2018) further lends his support to the socio-theology thesis

founded by Peter Berger in 1971 in his epistemic worldview analysis of *Da'esh* (Jurgensmeyer, 2018, pp 29).

This section has provided a succinct overview of the debates surrounding 'religious' terrorism. It has highlighted the significance of reducing religious violence to an expression of political exclusivity and in doing so defined the point of analytical divergence between religious and political terrorism. Furthermore, it has highlighted the consideration prevalent in academic research that secular modernity in the post enlightenment period is not a clinical separation of religion from politics or political state activity. Rather in order to understand 'religious' violence it is necessary to understand religion but not as a contrast to Western secularism. Indeed the use of violence as a form of expressing discontent has a long history that is rooted in religion and religious belief and, as highlighted in this section, it is argued that modernity is the child of such violence. These belief structures predate the European enlightenment and American revolutions which have come to define 'western' and European societies as secular. However, there are polities and contexts across the world that continue to have religion and belief embedded within their social norms, social reality and governance structures; the Taliban being one such notable example from the contemporary period. So when such contexts or polities use their established models of religious governance for the purposes of resolving inter-state conflict is it reasonable to regard their engagement in this space as political? Similarly when individuals or groups who hold religious beliefs act upon them through an assumption of religious legitimacy are their engagements to be regarded as 'politically motivated' simply because a given context views the world through a very particular post enlightenment lens? These considerations are significant as they not only identify very different starting points of analysis but also influence the methodological approach utilised by researchers in the examination of terrorism and terrorist movements.

The following section will examine the literature on *Islamism* and political Islam.

2.2.3 Understanding Terrorism: Islamism.

Section 2.2.2 provided an overview of the historical relationship that religion has had with the use of violence in redressing inequality. In doing so it further challenged the narrative presented in section 2.2.1 that motions against the state in the form of violent protest are inherently political. In fact the respective section argued that in the pre modern era, all acts of 'terrorism' could only be conceptualised through a religious mandate (as cited by Rapoport: 1984). Thus the entire construct of terrorism was predicated upon faith, belief or religion; and for some this is the still the case. However, this discussion as laid out in section 2.2.2 was and remains incredibly broad. For the purposes of this thesis it is necessary to refine our focus to a specific strand of 'religious' terrorism in the form of militant *Islamism*. This is crucial in order to appreciate the debates within this space and to determine the positioning of this research within the broader context of research on militant Islam.

Foremost however, it is necessary to highlight that the term *Islamism* is not without contention. The origins of the term in the English lexicon date back to the 17th and 18th centuries where it was used to refer to the religion and practice of Islam (Kramer: 2003, Mozaffari: 2007). However, its prominence as a form of fundamentalist activism rose in French academia between the 1970's and 1980's to a point where it is now predominantly associated with militant political groups (Kramer, 2003, pp 65-77, Mozaffari: 2007). Francois Burgat argues that the term creates confusion between individuals who wish to kill people and between reasonable persons who believe in God (Gilbert, 1988, pp 153-154).[5] In attempts to clarify its ambiguity, Robert H. Pelletreau whilst addressing the Council of Foreign Relations in 1996 stated that the point of objection related to *Islamists* who preached intolerance and violence in national and international domains (Kramer, 2003, pp 65-77). However, the apparent fluidity with which the term has been utilised has created within it an

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[5] Referenced in *L'islamisme au Maghreb. La voix du Sud. L'Amerique de Bush le poids de l'heritage.* 1/89

indistinctness that makes it difficult to determine who the subject of the term is. Roussillon (2001) highlights this very dilemma by arguing that the entire construct of the term *Islamism* is an orientalist conception which reduces the discourse on Islam to its most marginal and radical components (Roussilon, 2001, pp 93-115). Marranci (2006) supports this premise highlighting the essentialist approach that some academics have utilised in their analysis on violence in Islam in the post enlightenment era (Marranci, 2006, pp 139-155). This consideration, as a religion vs. secular binary has been highlighted by Cavanaugh (2009) above in section 2.2.2. Therefore the term *Islamism* is used throughout this thesis with reservation and a full appreciation of the stigma that is attached to it. For this reason it will be presented through this thesis in an italicised format as I sit uncomfortable with its genealogy. However, in the absence of a viable alternative I use *Islamism* (in all its forms and conjugations) in reference to inherently violent organisations like *Da'esh* and al-Qa'edah.

Berman (2003) examines the *Islamist* phenomenon within the context of the Egyptian revolution during the 1970's. As with the contentions highlighted above, Berman (2003) presents a loose definition of *Islamism* as a belief that Islam should guide social, political and personal life (Berman, 2003, pp 257). She argues that the rise of revolutionary *Islamism* is due to the declining efficacy of nation states (*ibid*, pp 258-259). However, Crenshaw (1981) views the dynamic from a wider perspective and argues that *Islamist* terrorism is a product of a shared reality (Crenshaw, 1981, pp 389-390). It is indeed plausible that a shared reality referred to by Crenshaw (1981) is that of a significantly weakened and ineffective nation state that is argued by Berman (2003). In her later analysis on militant *Islamism* Crenshaw (2017) argues that jihadist ideology is intermingled with civil conflict (Crenshaw, 2017, pp 59). Marranci (2006) takes a completely different stance and argues from an anthropological perspective stating that the militarisation of jihad (what Crenshaw (2017) introduces as 'jihadism' being a strain of militant *Islamism*) is the hermeneutical product of a formed self

identity (Marranci, 2006, pp 1-17). Mustafa (2013) expands upon Marranci's (2006) theory and states that the Muslim self identity is globally intertwined through a theological construct of the *Ummah* (Mustafa, 2013, pp 11 & 19). So Crenshaw's (1981) thesis of shared reality, as developed by Marranci (2006) and Mustafa (2013) offers a platform to conceptualise an overarching cause of militant *Islamism* that reaches out to supporters all across the world. These perspectives feed directly in to the wider discussion on religious terrorism detailed in section 2.2.2. They support the assertion presented by Jurgensmeyer (2018) who endorses Heghammer's (2015) socio-cultural thesis; that there are a number of factors (including theology and religion) which knit individuals within a terrorist network together (Jurgensmeyer, 2018, pp 23). Keskin & Tuncer (2018) also support this position and present the 'ultimate' trigger thesis which is rooted in religious narrative (Keskin & Tuncer, 2018, pp 15). They reject essentialist assertions that Islam is the cause of violent extremism arguing instead that *Da'esh* misrepresent scripture by layering religious reference with Kharijite and neo-Kharijite rhetoric. Keskin & Tuncer's (2018) stance of misrepresenting religious scripture supports the assessment made by Weiss & Hassan (2016) which is also endorsed by Jacoby (2019) all of whom argue a decontexualised and misrepresented theological caldron which is made up of fringe opinions taken from different parts of the world (Weiss & Hassan, 2016, pp 221; Jacoby: 2019). However, as with the research presented thus far on 'religious' terrorism or violence there is an absence of understanding of what is meant by normative or mainstream Islam. Keskin & Tuncer's (2018) study suffers from a similar problem in that they position militant *Islamist* narratives against 'mainstream' Islam (*ibid*, pp 16) but do not define the 'mainstream' Islam that has been misrepresented.

Nevertheless, Berman's (2003) analysis leads to the deduction of two significant outcomes. Firstly that the denigration of social, political and economic stability within a state are incubators for *Islamist* militancy and secondly that faith inspired social responsibility is

always agenda driven; in the context of her research the agenda is the propagation of militancy. As a result there are two distinct considerations which follow from Berman's (2003) analysis. Firstly, the prevalence of instability within nation states is a factor in the development and growth of militant *Islamism*. However, Berman's (2003) perspective fails to appreciate the theological and eschatological drivers that are embedded within militant *Islamist* narratives. What I mean by this is that organisations like *Da'esh* would still pursue an agenda of establishing a caliphate even if the political, social and economic structures within a host state were stable, effective and favourable. This is due to the inherent differences with which the role and significance of faith and religion are viewed in social structures (especially relevant in relation to *Da'esh* who as stated previously have titled their former flagship publication *Dabiq* in recognition of apocalyptic eschatological hadith narrations). As will be elaborated upon in chapter 6, *Da'esh* specifically regard democracy as apostasy that is wholly in contravention of Allah's laws and His Oneness. So irrespective of how stable, accommodating and religiously plural a context maybe the fact that it does not implement a monolithic expression of Islam as per a given interpretation renders it liable to conquest. Wiktorowicz & Kaltner's (2003) research is supportive of this assessment. They offer a review of al-Qaeda's legal ruling for the justifications of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States. Wiktorowicz & Kaltner (2003) state that the jihadis' who argued in favour of killing Americans in their homeland are influenced by a desire to implement Divine will (Wiktorowicz & Kaltner, 2003, pp 83). This is despite the fact that convicted terrorist; Mahmud Abouhalima – who was convicted for the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Centre - stated that it was easier for him to be a 'good' Muslim in the United States compared to Egypt (Jurgensmeyer, 2003, pp 69). So in addition to Berman's (2003) assertion of social instability being an incubator for militancy, there is also an imperative theological consideration which propagates a particular worldview through violent means. This is where

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the socio-theological and 'insider' perspectives toward the understanding of militant *Islamism* differentiates itself a conventional social science methodology. Furthermore, in their examination of *Da'esh* Weiss & Hassan (2016) specifically stated how *Da'esh* engineered instability in order to create power vacuums which they filled. This, in essence, was the very manufacturing of social and political instability that Berman (2003) referred to. However, in the context of *Da'esh* and al-Qaedah before them, the instability was self-induced in order to create space for their jihad and caliphate; this will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 6.

However, the strategy of self-induced chaos is not exclusive to *Da'esh* or *Islamist* militancy. Evidence of a similar thought and concept is prevalent in militant Far Right ideology. For example, Linda Thompson [d 2009 CE], an attorney in Indiana and an affiliated general of the Unorganised Militia in the United States, argued that a New World Order was in play to disarm US citizens of their weapons and firearms. In order to do so, Thompson argued that the sitting government would create social instability by funding and financing conflicting organisations on divisive social issues such as abortion, gun control, homosexuality and race. Thompson's assertion was that the government wanted to incite sectarian conflict to such an extent that martial law would need to be implemented and a New World Order introduced to replace the old ineffective government (Rapoport, 1984, pp 17-33). Although Thompson wasn't advocating sectarian conflict in the same manner that *Da'esh* have applied it, her belief that the US government was engineering an environment conducive of conflict demonstrates its conceptual existence outside of militant *Islamism*.

The second consideration with Berman's (2003) analysis is a product of the broad interpretation of *Islamism* that she has adopted. There is an appreciation, as highlighted at the opening of this section, that the term is poorly defined leading to ambiguity over the actions which are considered to be *Islamist*. However Berman's (2003) assessment of the Muslim Brotherhood, and in particular their involvement in community aid projects, risks

criminalising as militant *Islamism* legitimate expressions of faith which have an impact in the social space (Berman, 2003, pp 261). Islam as a faith practice places a great deal of emphasis on social responsibility. Whether that is in the form of feeding the poor, looking after ones neighbours or removing detrimental objects from a communal path; social religious responsibility is a bonafide component of Islamic faith practice. So to imply that such expressions are driven by an *Islamist* agenda, underpinned by a desire for absolute religious monopoly is a reductive argument that misrepresents legitimate faith practice.

As much attention has been paid to the question of 'what' *Islamism* is, an equal amount of consideration has also been afforded to 'who' the *Islamists* are. Crenshaw (2017) makes reference to 'jihadism' and argues that it is a strain of violent, radical and exclusivist Sunni-ism (Crenshaw, 2017, pp 59). To a degree, Cresnshaw's (2017) supports Mozaffari (2007) perspective as he suggests that the vast majority of *Islamists* align themselves to the Sunni expression of Islam. But, he also argues that it is not a phenomenon exclusive to Sunni-ism (Mozaffari: 2007). Maher (2016) delves to a greater depth than Crenshaw (2017) and Mozaffari (2007) in his examination of Salafi jihadism (Maher, 2016, pp 13-17). From a broader perspective, Hoffman (2017) argues that the core characteristics of 'Islamic' terrorism, as we understand them in the contemporary period with the use of jihad, date back to the 1979 Iranian revolution (Hoffman, 2017, pp 91). Hoffman's (2017) assessment is supported by Kepel (2003) who also identified Ayatollah Khomeini as an instrumental figure in the development of contemporary *Islamism* (Kepel, 2003, pp 23). Similarly, Kramer (1998) conducted an analysis of religious developments in the Middle East during the 1980's and argues that prominent Shia cleric Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah reclassified the impermissibility of suicide warfare based upon the premise of exceptional and extenuating circumstances (Kramer, 1998, pp 131-157). So there is evidence to suggest that the use of jihad or *jihadism* (as referred to by Crenshaw: 2017) within *Islamist* operations is a

cross denominational phenomenon that is influenced by both Shia and Sunni adherents of Islam.

Crenshaw (2017) also asserts that *jihadism* is as much about national identity and imagined community as it is about religion and faith (Crenshaw, 2017, pp 60). Although this statement appears to be overtly paradoxical as militant *Islamism* disregards nationalism, it supports Cavanaugh's (2009) sentiment on the appropriation of the 'religious' by the state whilst also highlighting the debate over whether *Islamism* is a national or global proposition. Global *Islamism*, as Mozaffari (2007) states, advocates the expansion of Islamic rule throughout the world, unaffected by geographical boundaries (Mozaffari: 2007). Global *Islamism* sits in firm opposition to any expression or representation of nationalism or national identity. This is reflected within the narratives of organisations like al-Qaedah and *Da'esh* (Byman, 2016, pp 137) who promote the *Ummah* as a single unified Muslim identity. Their view of the *Ummah* is formed upon a monolithic understanding of the Quran and Hadith (as will be elaborated upon in greater detail in chapter 6). In contrast to the global proposition is national *Islamism*; referring to the operations of *Islamist* organisations within defined and recognised geographical boundaries; for example those of Iran and Kashmir. Ayatullah Khomeni [d 1989] and Mawlana Mawdudi [d 1979] were advocates and ideologues of regional and national *Islamism*. The willingness of *Islamists* to recognise and work within such geographical boundaries is intellectually perplexing. It presents a seeming compromise of the extent to which Allah's divine laws should be implemented and that compromise is determined by man-made geographical boundaries; for example within the context of Kashmir or Iran. However the dynamic is perhaps most aptly summarised by Mozaffari (2007) who states that *Islamism* is an embodiment of disparate nationalist and sectarian religious movements (Mozaffari: 2007). Add to this of course the religious element and the phenomenon is presented essentially as a melting pot in which multiple ideologies converge

as highlighted by Weiss & Hassan (2016) and Keskin & Tuncer (2018) above. Mozaffari's (2007) and Crenshaw's (2017) perspectives, alongside the overlaps with areligious models of terrorism cited in sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2, highlight the presence of an existential contradiction within militant *Islamist* thought. This raises a fundamental question regarding *Islamist* organisations; how important is religion or theology?

El-Badawy *et al* (2015) argue that theology is a key factor within the ideological make up and narrative construct of *Islamist* organisations. After analysing samples of material attributed to *Da'esh*, al-Qaedah and the *Jabahat al-Nusra*; they identify four key headings in the construct of what they refer to as Salafi-jihadi ideology. Each respective heading houses a number of themes which are used by organisations like *Da'esh* in their messaging. El-Badawy *et al's* (2015) analysis is valuable from a generic perspective and supports the argument that theology is an integral part of the *Islamist* phenomenon. Welch (2018) supports this perspective and argues that Islam cannot be separated from jihadist violence. Indeed, he argues that engagement in Islamic and jurisprudential justifications increased as *Da'esh* suffered operational setbacks and lost ground (Welch, 2018, pp 187). From a broader perspective, Wiktorowicz (2006) conducted a jurisprudential, theological analysis of al-Qaeda. He engaged with organisational propositions that justified the killing of fellow Muslims, attacks on civilian targets and how the theological justifications for such actions have developed since the time of *ibn Taymiyyah* [d 1328 CE]. His assessment places the *Islamist* phenomenon firmly within the religious and theological camp. Furthermore, his work is framed within the same context as his joint analysis with Kaltner (2003) and the research conducted by al-Badawy *et al* (2015); all of which were jurisprudential analyses. Spier (2018) analysed 22 volumes of *Dabiq* and *Rumiyyah* and identified six verses from various different chapters of the Quran through which *Da'esh* promoted an 'othering' narrative. Through this narrative Spier (2018) asserts that *Da'esh* created a feeling of

isolation which they addressed through unity in a shared identity (Spier, 2018, pp 559-565). These positions strongly suggest that *Islamist* organisations are constructed upon an inherently religious mandate; there is nothing more religious than the primary source of Islam itself, the Quran. Indeed Mozaffari (2007) states that actions undertaken by *Islamists* are considered by them as religious duties due to the dual nature of *Islamism* as a religious and ideological entity (Mozaffari: 2007).

However, there is an equal amount of research which suggests that *Islamist* organisations are operating in anything but the divine space. Kydd & Walter (2006) state that individuals often have personal interests in supporting *Islamist* organisations. For example many are motivated by revenge or financial incentives (Kydd & Walter, 2006, pp 52). Weiss & Hassan (2016) support this thesis as they detail the depravity from which supporters of *Da'esh* in Syria and Iraq are recruited. For such individuals supporting *Islamist* militancy is not about religious obligation, duty or virtue; rather it is an exercise in self preservation and supporting ones family (Weiss & Hassan, 2016, pp 42-43). Lister (2015) argues from a similar position when he states that *Sahwa* fighters in Iraq were transitioning to *Da'esh* as *Da'esh* were paying more than $300 per month (Lister, 2015, pp 14). Similarly Atwan (2015) argues that the families of *Da'esh's* fighters are given food, money and provisions (Atwan, 2015, pp 144) whilst in his most recent engagement with refugees who fled *Da'esh's* rule Jurgensmeyer (2018) states that individuals who joined *Da'esh* did so for personal gains; in order to secure employment, increase their social status or for political power (Jurgensmeyer, 2018, pp 21). So despite the positioning of organisational narratives as religious and theological, the underlying motivations of those who support such organisations brings in to question the legitimacy of these claims.

Pressing this contention further, Frissen *et al* (2017) suggest that 90% of the Quran does not feature within *Da'esh's* representation of Islam (Frissen *et al*, 2017, pp 495). Whilst

Jurgensmeyer (2003), commenting specifically on the topic of jihad, states that jihad is subject to a legislative framework that is not the purview of individuals for personal gain and is certainly not for arbitrary application (Jurgensmeyer, 2003, pp 81). Wiktorowicz (2006) supports Jurgensmeyer's (2003) assessment by stating that the arbitrary application of wanton violence by *Islamist* organisations is a product of an erosion of observance to theological jurisprudence (Wiktorowicz, 2006, pp 94). What these considerations collectively highlight are perspectives which challenge the notion that *Islamism* is an inherently religious construct. Examinations of *Islamist* organisations lead to oxymoronic propositions, akin to those of Crenshaw (2017) cited above in this section, who interlinks *Islamism* with nationalism.

The considerations raised in this section, as well as those raised in sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2, impact directly upon academic research that has been penned on both *Da'esh* and *Dabiq*. Thus the following section highlights these considerations, the methodologies utilised and subsequent gap in academic research that remains in relation to *Da'esh*.

2.2.4 Understanding Islamism: *Da'esh*.

An abundance of literature regarding *Da'esh*, authored from various disciplines, provides valuable insights into the organisation. So this section will offer an overview of some of the key research that has been conducted on both *Da'esh* and *Dabiq*. In doing so, it will refer to the previous sections in order to highlight the conceptual and methodological overlaps with the literature that has been reviewed in those respective sections.

Lister (2015) argues that *Da'esh* is a revolutionary organisation whose entire function is to project a goal of radical political and social change (Lister, 2015, pp 34). His assessment is supported by Ali (2018) who states that *Da'esh* have taken jihad as a theological construct and turned it in to a political weapon (Ali, 2018, pp 55). Lister's (2015) assessment is a 'typical' political science analysis and Ali's (2018) observation presents *Da'esh* in a secular

vs. religious dichotomy. These approaches have been critiqued by Cavanaugh (2009) as referred to above and feed in to the considerations raised previously in section 2.2.1 by Crenshaw (1981), Tilly (2004) and Hoffman (2017) on the construct of post enlightenment terrorism. Furthermore, Lister (2015) pays very little attention to *Da'esh's* theological propositions. He offers *Dabiq* but a mention in his research; which is perhaps reconcilable by the fact that his analysis of *Da'esh* was presented for public consumption in 2015 and *Dabiq* was not published until mid 2014. Saltman & Winter (2014) adopt a similar stance to that of Lister (2015) by offering perspectives on *Da'esh* through a political science lens. Saltman & Winter (2014) suggest that the purpose of *Dabiq* is to act as a recruitment tool for those who are interested in or sympathetic towards the crises unfolding in Syria by projecting an image of a utopic caliphate (Saltman & Winter, 2014, pp 38). The idea of a utopic caliphate is by no means a new proposition. Ali & Post (2008) state that Osama bin Laden drew upon the nostalgia of the *Khilāfah* (caliphate) as a solution to correct the wrongs that were deemed prevalent in society (Ali & Post, 2008, pp 622). But what both Ali & Post (2008) and Saltman & Winter (2014) fail to appreciate are the strong eschatological themes prevalent in the Quran and hadith which make reference to the reestablishment of a caliphate. So there is room to argue that the notion of a utopian caliphate is in fact a normative element of Muslim dogma. However, the political science approach affords little credence to religion and belief in the dynamic of *Islamist* terrorism. For example, Mello (2018) refers to the concept of the historical caliphate as a 'mythical' past (Mello, 2018, pp 152). This is a reductive sentiment which trivialises a key aspect of faith and belief and leads to research outcomes that are theologically hollow.

Mello (2018) analyses *Da'esh* through a social science lens utilising Focauldian theories on the use of violence in affecting attitudes and behaviours. Mello's (2018) research links in with the considerations raised by Byman (2016) regarding the widespread application of

capital punishment in the 'Islamic State' as a means of establishing legitimacy, fear and control (Byman, 2016, pp 138). Mello's (2018) analysis identifies a number of similarities between *Da'esh* and post colonial, separatist movements that were discussed above in section 2.2.1 (Mello, 2018, pp 142). Commenting specifically on *Da'esh's* brutality, Mello (2018) states that their savagery is nothing new. Its roots are embedded well within the al-Qaedah era of *Islamist* militancy and reflect the brutality of conflict during the Algerian revolution (Mello, 2018, pp 142; Byman, 2016, pp 142). Mello's (2018) assessment of *Da'esh's* savagery as a form of militancy inheritance is supported by Atwan (2015) who suggests that in the course of war and conflict governments have killed approximately 170m of their own citizens between 1917 and 1987 (Atwan, 2015, pp 153). These sentiments endorse the proposition put forth by Cavanaugh (2009) who stated that secular models of governance have and continue to remain equally brutal as their 'religious' counterparts. Friis (2018) also acknowledges that *Da'esh's* savagery is not a new phenomenon in the context of war. However what is unique is the manner in which they have brought their savagery in to public visibility thereby creating a public spectacle (Friis, 2018, pp 246-247). This assessment is supported by Weiss & Hassan (2016) who state that *Da'esh* had created media centres across Syria where they would actively show their executions to the general public. However, all of these analyses are positioned against what Mello (2018) refers to as an intended political outcome (Mello, 2018, pp 143). He argues that violence is used by *Da'esh* to form a collective Sunni identity in order to reshape the Middle East and rid the region of western influence (Mello, 2018, pp 153). Whether this is an intended organisational goal for *Da'esh* or mere rhetoric in order to galvanise support will become clearer as this investigation develops. But at this stage Mello's (2018) engagement with *Da'esh* is from political and social science perspectives. With it being so it relates back to the wider discussions on the use of violence for the purposes of social reform raised previously in section 2.2.1.

With regards to *Da'esh's* religious affiliations and designations, Weiss & Hassan (2016) highlight considerations of conflating generic Salafi-ism with *Da'esh*. They assert that conventional Salafi *wahabbi*-ism is in fact in contravention with *Da'esh's* operational practice (Weiss & Hassan, 2016, pp 216-217 & 222). This assertion is supported by Maher (2016) who, as stated previously in section 2.2.3, details the intricacies and developments of Salafi jihadism and in doing so adds a great deal of depth to Mozaffari's (2007) analysis and Crenshaw's (2017) perspective. Maher (2016) states that the term Salafi jihadism is not representative of a universal, monolithic terrorist body (Maher, 2016, pp 8-16). Rather there are fractures, some severe, in both theology and operation of defined Salafi terrorist groups operating in the Middle East. Weiss & Hassan (2016) support Maher (2016) and argue that *Da'esh's* theological positioning is based upon fringe opinions that they present as mainstream and puritanical (Weiss & Hassan, 2016, pp 219). Byman (2016) details the practical impact of the fractures within Salafi jihadism on the battlefield as he highlights the conflict *Da'esh* have had with other militant *Islamist* organisations over their use of violence and justifications for killing fellow Muslims (Byman, 2016, pp 133). Commenting specifically on their ideology, Byman (2016) states *Da'esh's* ideology is intertwined with multiple goals. Their operational pragmatism further makes it difficult to clearly understand their fundamental principles which lead to the organisation being viewed as incoherent and contradictory (Byman, 2016, pp 136). Jurgensmeyer (2018) supports Byman's (2016) assessment. He states that following his engagement with a number of *Da'esh's* supporters he was able to identify three distinct worldviews in *Da'esh's* narrative; (i) Sunni Arab empowerment, (ii) the global jihadi movement and (iii) an apocalyptic vision (Jurgensmeyer, 2018, pp 31). Some of these discussions will be elaborated upon in chapter 6 where I will present the findings from *Dabiq's* analysis. These studies challenege the legitimacy claims made by *Da'esh* and this is reflected in the open letter sent to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi from

prominent Muslim scholars and academics. The letter was published only a few months after the self proclaimed caliphate was announced but it sets out in broad and unrestreained terms the theological and methodological contentions that Muslim scholars and academics have with *Da'esh's* expression and application of Islam. The focus of the letter, although addressed to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, also attempts to reach out to *Da'esh's* supporters by commonly highlighting the 'problems' with *Da'esh's* theology.

However, despite the value of the aforementioned research perspectives in understanding *Da'esh* there is still a need to better comprehend *Da'esh's* theological propositions. Maher (2016) has engaged in detail with the theology of Salafi jihadist groups, of which *Da'esh* reportedly is one. However his focus has remained primarily upon the jurisprudential debate, as does the open letter to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The matter of *Da'esh's* theological objectives requires greater investigation beyond the jurisprudential discourse. *Da'esh* had an intricate media network through which they engaged with the general public. *Dabiq* was a prominent feature within their communications strategy and as a result has been the subject of a great deal of research and investigation. However as the following section will demonstrate, the current literature on *Dabiq* offers limited insights in to *Da'esh's* theological objectives.

2.2.5 Understanding *Da'esh*: *Dabiq*.

Frissen *et al* (2017) conducted a *Koranic* analysis of *Dabiq* and identified 700 verses used by *Da'esh* across the 15 volumes of *Dabiq*. They held that *Da'esh* severely decontextualised Quranic references by placing a disproportionate focus on select verses and 'mutilating' interpretations in support of their organisational objectives (Frissen *et al*, 2017, pp 491). Although Frissen *et al's* (2017) assessment is valuable in understanding the mechanics of how *Da'esh* have used Quranic references within the construct of their publication, there are

several methodological considerations with their research. For instance, Frissen *et al* (2017) have performed a 'cold', statistical and analytical examination of *Dabiq*. They have computed the words, verses and *surahs* of the Quran to provide an illustration of the verses and chapters favoured the most by *Da'esh* alongside the inter-*surah* relationships that appear across the publication. The fundamental consideration with this approach is that, despite claiming to be a qualitative study it relies heavily on a quantitative framework in order to understand a theological phenomenon. In doing so, they reduce the significance of the broader theological purpose of the Quran. For example, *surah al fatihah* (the very first chapter of the Quran) consists of 7 verses and 25 words which in comparison to the rest of the Quran is equivalent to 0.112% and 0.032% respectively. Yet *surah al-fatihah* is regarded within Muslim theology as the mother and foundation of the Quran (Ibn Abbas, 1999, vol.1, pp 101). It is given the name *aṣ-ṣalāh* (meaning the mandatory prayers) due to its recitation being deemed obligatory in all of the compulsory prayers (*ibid*). Furthermore prophetic narrations suggest that this *surah* is a treasure from beneath the very throne of Allah (Al-Suyuti, no date, vol.1, pp 41) and despite its briefness Dr Tahir ul-Qadri has penned an 800 page exegesis on it.[6] So the reduction of verses and chapters of the Quran in to statistical data as Frissen *et al* (2017) and Ingram (2016) have done, violates the deeper spiritual significance of the Quran in Islam which is necessary to regard in the study of this phenomenon. In addition, Frissen *et al* (2017) highlight that only 9.28% of the Quran is presented in *Dabiq* meaning that over 90% does not feature within *Da'esh's* portrayal of Islam (Frissen *et al*, 2017, pp 494). It is not clear what Frissen *et al* (2017) are alluding to here as *Dabiq* is not presented as a lecture series on Islam or an exegesis of the Quran that would necessitate the inclusion of each verse and chapter. *Da'esh* are communicating a very particular viewpoint through the lens of jihad and in order to do so they have refined their

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[6] See *Tafsir Minhaj ul-Quran* of *surah al-Fatiha* by Minhaj ul-Quran publishers.

Quranic referencing to sections of the Quran that best fit their theological propositions. Therefore Frissen *et al* (2017) have attempted to engage with the theological dimension of *Dabiq* but have failed to situate the publication in a theological framework in any meaningful manner.

Spier (2018) also analysed all of the volumes of *Dabiq* as well as *Rumiyyah* (the secondary publication which commenced in 2016 after the end of *Dabiq*). A total of 22 volumes were examined in order to identify which Quranic verses *Da'esh* referred to the most for the purposes of propagating their narrative. Spier (2018) identified six verses of the Quran from different *surahs* by which *Da'esh* establish unity through isolation and othering (Spier, 2018, pp 559-565). In a similar fashion, Welch (2018) also analysed the entire corpus of *Dabiq* and *Rumiyyah* but did so from a non-theological perspective. The absence of theological understanding is evident in Welch's (2018) statement where he argues that the religious arguments presented by *Da'esh* across the pages of *Dabiq* and *Rumiyyah* connect with its readerships devout beliefs in *Salafi* Islam (Welch, 2018, pp 190). The problems with this statement are twofold. Firstly is assumes that *Da'esh* are a single homogenous group of *Salafi's* contrary to the considerations raised by Maher (2016). The second consideration with Welch's (2018) statement is the suggestion that *Dabiq's* readership and in turn its support base are 'devout' (Welch, 2018, pp 190). Aside from a being an incredibly subjective term, chapter 7 will highlight that much of *Da'esh's* support base arguably do not possess the requisite level of religious understanding to be even regarded as devout. For example, a 2016 report carried by the Independent stated that two Britons purchased *Islam for dummies* and *Koran for dummies* before travelling to Syria and joining the Islamic State (Batraway, Dodds & Hinnant: 2016). The article further suggested that only 5% of *Da'esh's* soldiers actually had any credible understanding of Islam. Furthermore Byman (2016) asserts that many of *Daesh's* recruits are ideologically illiterate (Byman, 2016, pp 139) and

Jurgensmeyer (2018) depicts supporters of *Da'esh* as opportunists rather than 'true' believers (Jurgensmeyer, 2018, pp 22). So for Welch (2018) to suggest that *Da'esh's* supporters are devout Salafi's is problematic as media reports and academic research suggests otherwise. There is indeed a consideration here as to whether the illiterate and ignorant can in fact be devout; as devotion would suggest a degree of requisite knowledge of that which one devoting themselves to. This is a separate theological and philosophical discussion but at this juncture it is sufficient to argue that there is an evident lack in theological understanding among *Da'esh's* support base. Nevertheless, both Welch's (2018) and Spier's (2018) analyses share the methodological limitations that also relate to Frissen *et als* (2017) investigation. Even though they engage with the theological dimension their investigations fall short of establishing the organisations theological objective or placing it within an established theological framework.

Colas (2016) conducts a hermeneutical examination of *Dabiq* and states that *Da'esh* have a very narrow, single meaning understanding of divine texts. Where a religious text can have multiple interpretations, *Da'esh* hold that it can only ever have one single meaning (Colas, 2016, pp 175). Weiss & Hassan (2016) also argue that debating theology with *Da'esh* is an exercise in futility as they have all their answers pre-scripted and are unwilling to entertain alternative theological positions (Weiss & Hassan, 2016, pp 219). However, Colas (2016) identifies 10 broad themes upon which *Dabiq's* narrative is situated. He states that 31% of its narrative relates to overt religious discussion and descriptions of Islam and only 4% relates to both inciting violence against the West and emigrating to the caliphate (Colas, 2016, pp 177-178). The distinction that Colas (2016) makes between 'overt religion' and 'emigration' (in particular) is a curious one. As with much of the literature presented within this chapter thus far, investigations in to *Da'esh* and *Dabiq* have primarily been conducted from non theological disciplines or by virtue of methodologies which reduce the significance of

theology, religion, belief and spirituality. The reason why this is relevant is because Colas's (2016) distinction of 'overt' religion is reticent of the merits in considering the entire publication of *Dabiq* as an overt theological construct. Prophetic narrations make reference to the reward and regard of actions being in accordance to their intentions (Tirmidhi, no date, vol.6, pp 202). So when *Da'esh* are utilising *Dabiq* as a platform to communicate to the masses and invite a section of their intended audience toward their jihad (of which migrating to the caliphate is a part) then why would this not be considered as an 'overt' religious action?

Colas's (2016) initial assessment is endorsed by Jacoby (2019) who performs a theological examination of *Dabiq* and focuses on the Quranic references made within the publication. His analysis is jurisprudential in nature and provides invaluable insight in to the social contexts of some of the authorities who have been quoted by *Da'esh* in *Dabiq*. Jacoby (2019) argues that *Dabiq* utilises references which promote a very specific 'evidence' based narrative (Jacoby, 2019, pp 39-43). This consideration has already been highlighted by Weiss & Hassan (2016) who stated that *Da'esh* act upon fringe theological opinions in justifications of their actions (Weiss & Hassan, 2016, pp 221). However, Jacoby (2019) states that *Dabiq* is absent of the contextual understanding (cross *surahs*) that is necessary to properly understand the Quranic references cited in *Dabiq* (Jacoby, 2019, pp 39). This is a valuable assessment which embraces the insider and socio-theological approach advocated by Jurgensmeyer (2013 & 2018) and is sensitive to the considerations raised by Cavanaugh (2009). It also supports the methodological approach I will adopt in this investigation; the development of a theological framework against which *Da'esh's* theological propositions can be measured.

From a non-theological perspective, Ingram (2016) analyses nine volumes of *Dabiq* in order

to explore its strategic value in communicating *Da'esh's* message to western Muslims

(Ingram, 2016, pp 459). Ingram (2016) suggests that *Dabiq* has been pivotal in the increased

number of foreign fighters that have travelled to Syria in order to support the self proclaimed

Islamic State. This does not, however, suggest that *Dabiq* is a recruitment tool *per-se*, a

sentiment also shared by Colas (2016) but rejected by Kibble (2016) who argues that it is a

propaganda tool primarily for recruitment (Kibble, 2016, pp 138). Kibbles' (2016) initial

assessment feeds in to the work of Wilbur (2017) who examines *Dabiq* based upon the

strategies of corporate communications (Wilbur, 2017, pp 220). However, Kibble (2016)

focused more on proving two things: firstly that *Da'esh* is a religious problem for Muslims

thereby positioning himself alongside Crenshaw (1981) and Berman (2003) as detailed in

section 2.2.3. Secondly Kibble (2016) advocates that a *maqāsidī* approach to Islam will

perhaps resolve many of the issues that are presented by *Da'esh's* literalist interpretation of

sacred scripture (Kibble, 2016, pp 140-142). Furthermore, Ingram (2016) breaks down the

narrative construct of *Dabiq* in to two broad areas: identity crisis and solution constructs.

Discussions regarding identity crises and 'othering' throughout *Dabiq* have also been raised

by Spier (2018) as highlighted in this section and feed in to the wider 'Us v Them' narrative

debate. Croft & Moore (2010) argue that an 'Us v Them' narrative has been shaped by

Islamist groups in response to political discourse (Croft & Moore, 2010, pp 822). However

Baines *et al* (2010) argue to the contrary stating that *Islamist* media productions propagate the

'Us vs. Them' paradigm through a phenomenon of 'paralytic excitement' (Bains *et al*, 2010).

Their analysis feeds in to Ingram's (2016) assessment who goes on to assert that once

individuals have been polarised through such a narrative as presented by *Da'esh*, *Dabiq*

offers rational solution constructs in the form of jihad to the problems they've been exposed

to (Ingram, 2016, pp 474). Whether faith or faith action (particularly in the context of

Da'esh) can be described as rational is indeed a matter of debate. However Ingram's (2016) assessment is supported by Pittel & Rubbelke (2009) who refer specifically to suicide bombings as 'utility' functions in which the impact of action against the attainment of perceived rewards is analysed and calculated (Pittel & Rubbelke, 2009, pp 02).

Droogan & Peattie (2017) perform a thematic analysis of *Dabiq* and highlight the gaps within the current literature. As evident within this brief overview of the literature penned on *Dabiq*, Droogan & Peattie (2017) argue that attentions have been focused on the origins of *Da'esh* (Kilcullen: 2016, Stern & Berger: 2015), its organisation and structure (Weiss & Hassan: 2016), media communications strategies (Farwell: 2014, Williams: 2016, Winter: 2015) and state building ambitions (Gambhir: 2014, Schmid: 2015, Barrett: 2014) (Droogan & Peattie, 2017, pp 600 - 602). However, despite Droogan & Peattie's (2017) thematic analysis of *Dabiq* and as valuable as their research is toward understanding the multi faceted dynamic that is *Da'esh's* terrorism, an in depth theological narrative analysis remains absent. This is due to Droogan & Peattie's (2017) lack of focus on the theological imperative. For example, in their analysis of volume 2 of *Dabiq* titled 'The Flood' Droogan & Peattie (2017) state that this volume 'discusses theology for its own sake' (Droogan & Peattie, 2017, pp 603). What does this actually mean? Is one to regard the theological content of *Dabiq* as superfluous, insignificant to the organisations identity and irrelevant to those they attempt to reach out to? If so Droogan & Peattie's (2017) perspective sits in direct opposition to that of Kibble (2016) as has been highlighted above in this section. Furthermore they state that this volume is 'a densely theological text with deep reliance on religious narratives albeit used in an extreme manner unacceptable to the majority of Muslims' (*ibid*). However at no point in their examination have Droogan & Peattie (2017) established why the theological content of *Dabiq* is unacceptable to the majority of Muslims. So there is nothing to measure *Dabiq's* theological propositions against aside from presumption and sentiment. Indeed this is a

deficiency in the vast majority of studies which position *Da'esh* against 'moderate', 'mainstream' or 'normative' Islam. The terms are used with an assumption that the readership understands who this group of people are; and to a degree it can be argued that they are all those who are not *Da'esh*. However, in order to proceed with a meaningful theological examination of *Da'esh's* publication it is necessary to have a baseline understanding of agreed faith practices and principles within Sunni Islam. Only then can *Dabiq* be theologically deconstructed.

This section has highlighted the need to better engage with the theological content of *Dabiq* in order to better understand *Da'esh's* theological propositions. Although a great amount of research has been conducted on both the organisation and its publication the vast majority of it has been theologically hollow calling for a more in depth theological study.

2.3 Summary.

This chapter set out to provide an overview of the academic literature relating to *Da'esh* as an organisation and *Dabiq* as its former flagship publication. In doing so it positioned *Da'esh* within the broad and diverse field of terrorism literature.

The first section demonstrated an abundance of literature which impresses and challenges the narrative that terrorism is inherently political. In doing so it highlighted the distinct overlaps with areligious terrorist organisations and those who claim to be operating in the name of religion and belief, like *Da'esh* for example. These overlaps have raised significant questions regarding the role of faith within terrorism and terrorist movements which is evident in the political science analyses. However, political and social scientists, for example Wilkinson (1977), Crenshaw (1981) and Hoffman (2017) have scrutinised and investigated 'religious' and faith claimed terrorism from a post enlightenment perspective in which secular modernity

prevails. This is not to suggest that they have not engaged with 'religion' in their analyses, they have done so to a great degree. But the lens through which the 'religious' question has been examined is a post enlightenment one where the 'state' and 'church' are two distinct entities. As a result the phenomenon of 'religious' terrorism is forcibly reduced to a product of political influence. This in turn, leads to a reductive account for the significance of religion or belief within the construct of contemporary Faith Claimed terrorism. This consideration was raised primarily by Cavanaugh (2009) who challenged the binary of religious vs. secular and argued that social science investigations of religious phenomena need to better embrace religious and theological elements within their research. His position was supported by Jurgensmeyer (2013) under the label of socio-theology and Shakman-Hurd (2015). As I move forward through this thesis I will embrace Cavanaugh's (2009) methodology in performing a theological examination of an organisation which claims religious legitimacy and in doing so fill the gap identified in current literature.

The second section examined the phenomenon of 'religious terrorism' in greater detail. It highlighted the association of violence with a majority of the worlds' religions and suggested that what is considered 'terrorism' in the contemporary period was historically inconceivable without a religious mandate. The breadth of religious terrorism was refined further to focus on *Islamism* and what commonly appears in academic literature as political Islam. *Islamism* was highlighted as a contentious term, loosely defined as movements, violent or otherwise, that seek to challenge political governance through the paradigm of Islam. However, as detailed in this chapter, the 'political' dimension is contested within *Islamist* thought as the application of Allah's laws at 'state' level is not a political matter but a theological one intrinsically embedded within faith. Thus the third section reviewed literature which argued the culpability of *Islamism* to specific sects and denominations within Islam alongside its

defining characteristics. This review led in to the final two sections which focused on *Da'esh* and *Dabiq* respectively.

The literature review has highlighted that *Da'esh* is not a new phenomenon, neither in concept nor being. As an entity it evolved from *Islamist* organisations operating within the Middle Eastern context. The political science analyses offer incredible insight in to how this evolution took place, monitoring in great detail the trajectory of the group and its associated individuals. In addition, this chapter has established that political and religious terrorism share the same defining characteristic: violence. The point of contention however, rests upon how the expression of violence is interpreted. The dominance of the political and social science perspectives has directed the discourse on contemporary terrorism along a very particular areligious path. It is undeniable that non theological perspectives are crucial in order to holistically understand the challenges that *Da'esh* present; many of which are multi-dimensional and multifaceted. *Da'esh* have gone to great lengths to establish themselves as a religiously and theologically valid organisation (as will be detailed in chapter 6). Droogan & Peattie (2017) have highlighted this gap and argued that existing analyses of *Dabiq* have focused primarily on its publication, production and iconography (for example Gambhuir: 2014 and Kibble: 2016). Spier (2018) shares this sentiment stating that insufficient academic focus has been placed on scriptural references in extremist literature (Spier, 2018, pp 555). Alternatively, focused analyses have engaged in qualitative examinations at the detriment of understanding the narrative of *Dabiq* (for example Colas: 2016 and Ingram: 2016) (Droogan & Peattie, 2017, pp 593). Furthermore, those examinations which do engage with *Da'esh's* (or *Islamist* from the broader perspective) theology do so from a hard science perspective in which data is measured, quantified and analysed. The Quran and hadith are reduced to the interrogation of analytical tools which produce statistical reports; as though the theological element of faith and belief can be absolutely measured, manipulated and quantified. Such

investigations are void of theological spirit and reticent of the regard that faith seeks to impart upon its intended audiences. Alongside this there is an entire spiritual dimension to Islam; the resonance of temporal and material actions in the spiritual and metaphysical realm leading to theological success or failure. From a theological perspective, all human endeavours within this 'worldly' and temporal domain are positioned against a proverbial 'bigger picture'; the belief of resonance and accountability in another world that is to come.

In addition, many of the theological examinations in relation to *Islamism* that have been reviewed within this chapter have two distinct characteristics. Firstly, the focus of analyses have been retrospective based upon the temporal actions of militant *Islamist* organisations. As a result the measure of faith has been shoehorned in to a study of temporal consequence at the cost of appreciating potential theological ambitions and aspirations.

Secondly, the deconstructions are predominantly jurisprudential examinations; meaning that analyses have focused on the legal debate within *Islamist* theology which impacts upon this temporal world; the 'here and now'. This is an important distinction as a holistic theological deconstruction needs to focus equally on the metaphysical dimension (where the consequences of temporal actions will resonate) as much as it does on the jurisprudential dimension (being the temporal realm which is where such actions are conceived).

Although the number of studies which seek to better engage with *Da'esh's* theological dimension are increasing there is still a great deal of work which remains to be done in this area. Undoubtedly *Da'esh's* organisational narratives are layered in theological rhetoric but what is their intended theological objective beyond the confines of this temporal worldly realm? Jurgensmeyer (2003) makes reference to this sentiment and states that violence in Islam is positioned against a spiritual backdrop of non violence and peace (Jurgensmeyer, 2003, pp 80). However, in order to appreciate this sentiment and deconstruct *Da'esh* against

it, it is firstly necessary to appreciate what such a 'spiritual backdrop' may look like. What is the wider context in which *Da'esh* and militant *Islamist* organisations justify and legitimise their theological worldview and what are they intending or 'believing' to achieve as a result of it? Furthermore, how does their organisational theology relate to the individual theological needs of the operators who support them? Jurgensmeyer (2018) further suggests that *Da'esh* widely utilises religious paraphernalia in their publications so should we simply accept their claims and assume they have religious legitimacy? (Jurgensmeyer, 2018, pp 22). Beyond that, does this assumed religious legitimacy provide the necessary theological direction and support for the would be jihadis'?

In order to address these considerations and close the gap identified within the existing literature, this thesis moves forward in exploration of a single question:

- What is (are) *Da'esh's* spiritual and theological ambition(s)?

In doing so, this study contributes to the deep and rich intellectual heritage of terrorism studies with a specific focus on theologically deconstructing militant *Islamism*. It embraces the considerations raised by Asad (1993) and Cavanaugh (2009) in conducting a theological deconstruction of a 'religious' organisation. It moves forward with the current of literature which adopts the socio-theological methodology to build upon the works of Jurgensmeyer (2003), Maher (2016), Droogan & Peattie (2017), Keskin & Tuncer (2018) and Spier (2018).

The following chapter will detail the methodological approach utilised for this research investigation.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.

3.1 Introduction.

Da'esh's declaration as the Islamic State demonstrated a concerted effort on their part to position themselves as a religious organisation. Their rhetorical mantra, symbolic actions and iconography all was a concerted effort on their part to triangulate the legitimisation of their caliphate and in part gain support for it. (Droogan & Peattie, 2017) For example, the very reference to the term 'jihad' as a descriptor of *Da'esh's* activities suggested a theological endeavour; a premise supported by the content of *Da'esh's* publications which spoke of jihad as an act of worship (Dabiq, 2014, vol. 5, pp 38). Furthermore *Da'esh* announced the establishment of their caliphate in the month of Ramadhan, one of the holiest months within the Muslim calendar and also the month in which the prophet Muhammad fought his first ever military jihad against the *Quraysh* of Mecca. *Da'esh's* proclamation of the caliphate was made by their self declared *amīr al-muʾminīn* (leader of the believers) from the pulpit of the al-Nuri grand mosque in Iraq. These symbolisms were entrenched in historical theological reference; from *Da'esh's* overt and unapologetic claims of legitimacy to the date and locations from which they made them. And to a significant degree *Da'esh* were successful in convincing a number of Muslims from all over the world of their legitimacy. In February 2019 the Independent carried a report suggesting that approximately 900 people from the UK had travelled to Syria and Iraq in order to join *Da'esh* (Dearden & Hall: 2019). The UN suggested that approximately 40,000 terrorist fighters from 110 countries had potentially travelled to Syria and Iraq in order to join the conflict (United Nations: 2017). So *Da'esh's* recruitment drive was undeniably successful and centred at the heart of it was the need to perform jihad.

However, the manner in which *Da'esh* presented jihad (as will be detailed in chapter 6) was as a construct of immediate and absolute brutal violence. As the literature review has demonstrated, violence is an established practice of war and conflict; irrespective of whether the claimants have been the religious righteous, politically motivated or apolitical entities. The establishment of power is a bloody process. Yet as the literature review highlighted, detailed academic focus on *Da'esh's* theological propositions has been scant. Examinations that have engaged with *Da'esh's* theology have done so primarily from a jurisprudential perspective, with the exception of a few but they have suffered from methodological limitations. So this chapter sets out the methodological framework for identifying *Da'esh's* theological proposition. In order to do so the remainder of this thesis will concern itself with one fundamental research question:

- What is (are) *Da'esh's* theological goal(s)?

The research data was subject to a modified narrative analysis. This chapter details the research design for this investigation; its strengths, limitations, data analysis mechanism and validity. Thereafter chapters 4 and 5 will develop the conceptual framework which will underpin the research design.

3.2 Research Design.

This investigation sought to understand *Da'esh's* theological ambitions by deconstructing the narrative of one of its former flagship publications. In order to do so, it utilised the primary sources, reference points and relevant authorities of Sunni Islam to critically analyse the data. This method was wholly supportive in addressing the need identified in chapter 2 which called for more focused theological engagement with militant *Islamist* organisations. Thus the research engages with *Da'esh* through their own theological lens if not their specific

worldview. This approach departs from the conventional academic study of religion and religious movements (Gill, 2003, pp 20-22; Brown, 2008, pp 04-08) highlighting considerations regarding assumptions and confessional-ism (these will be addressed in sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 respectively). This approach is also conducive of the 'insider' perspective as advocated by Jurgensmeyer (2013) in understanding the social impact of religious phenomena (Jurgensmeyer, 2013, pp 944).

Examination of the data sources utilised a basic[7], qualitative method for an exploratory investigation. The basic research method enabled engagement with and understanding of *Da'esh's* literature. The exploratory approach offered the opportunity to understand the theological content that was outside of the five themes upon which *Dabiq* is formed but prominent within the conceptual framework established in chapters 4 and 5 (Goddard & Melville, 2004, pp 32, Jha, 2008, pp 42-46, Neuman, 2014, pp 27-37). More detail on the narrative analysis will follow in section 3.6.

Although the methodology was predominantly qualitative, elements of a quantitative approach were adopted, particularly in respect of data selection and focusing the data analysis on the theme established within the conceptual framework of chapters 4 and 5. As Bernard (2006) states, "a solid grounding in the logic of experiments is one of the keys to good research skills, no matter what kind of research you're doing" (Bernard, 2006, pp 109). Therefore, the investigation reflected a quasi-experimental approach which differed from the conventional five step experimental technique (*ibid*, pp 110) due to the absence of an initial hypothesis, intervention group and control group. The conventional experimental method or 'true' experiments in which subjects are randomly assigned to either the test or control groups are regarded to offer a high level on internal validity (*ibid*, pp 113). However the objective of this study was not to prove or disprove a hypothesis from the outset; rather it was to develop

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[7] An initial descriptive account of the data whilst reserving comments and theories.

one that could form the subject of future basic or applied research (Neuman, 2014, pp 27).

Therefore this study posited an exploratory investigation rather than a confirmatory one (*ibid*,

pp 38).

A consideration in development of the research design was that of the primary investigator.

Da'esh claims affiliation to Sunni Islam and also makes reference to established authorities

within Sunni theology; for example, the prophet Muhammad's companions, ibn Kathir, ibn

Hajar etc. As highlighted in chapter 2, Jacoby (2019) has already commented upon *Da'esh's*

subjective referencing in *Dabiq* of accepted Sunni authorities. Thus the researcher was able

to bracket the impulse to adopt a defensive or apologetic stance in favour of the authorities to

whom he had an affinity. Furthermore, with regards to the insider approach Kanuha (2000)

states that insider research (also referred to as native research) is not solely one in which the

researcher is situated geographically, traditionally or by virtue of 'inside experience' to the

investigation; but the researcher also has an investment in those factors (as well as others)

which informs the act of research itself (Kanuha, 2000, pp 441-442). Advocates of the

'insider-outsider' perspective have argued the merits, both for and against, of each respective

approach (Serrant-Green, 2002, pp 38). Dwyer & Buckle (2009) have retained middle

ground on the discussion suggesting that being an insider doesn't necessarily make one a

better or worse researcher, rather it simply makes a different type of researcher (Dwyer &

Buckle, 2009, pp 55). Therefore giving regard to Dwyer & Buckle's (2009) perspective, this

investigation, utilised the insider approach in order to engage with and deconstruct *Da'esh's*

theological propositions. This was much needed in a field dominated by political and social

science perspectives of an organisation that was claiming theological legitimacy. As chapter

2 has highlighted, a theological investigation of *Da'esh's* theology was necessary in order to

understand and unpick the organisations theological propositions. The existing research was

hollow on two accounts; (i) it was predominantly a political and social science engagement

with theology and (ii) a majority of the research suffered from the religion vs. secular binary highlighted by Cavanaugh (2009). Therefore the insider perspective applied in this studied resolved both of these issues and enabled the development of a modified *quasi* experimental methodology which was necessary to engage with *Da'esh's* non jurisprudential theology.

As highlighted in chapter 2, the most notable contribution on militant *Islamism* from a theological perspective has been made by Maher (2016) who examined the broad phenomenon of Salafi jihadism (to which *Da'esh* have been attributed). However Maher's (2016) examination of Salafi jihadist theology has been primarily from a jurisprudential perspective. In a similar vein Wiktorowicz & Kaltner (2003) and Jurgensmeyer (2003) also focused on jihadist jurisprudence. However, these perspectives with full regard of their academic value, have focused on actions in a temporal realm at the expense of understanding the broader theological and ethereal ambitions of militant *Islamists*. Indeed Islamic theology is concerned with the metaphysical as much as the material and this warrants greater consideration in academic research on militant *Islamist* movement. Adams (2017) states that the 'scale' of research focus has three distinct domains; (i) cosmic, (ii) middle distance and (iii) the local (Adams, 2017, pp 07). Therefore this research investigation necessarily also engages with the cosmic dimension as highlighted by Adams (2017). In order to do so it establishes the purpose of creation for which Allah made humankind and (as will be detailed in chapter 4) argues the imperative of theological accountability in a metaphysical 'other' worldly realm. By doing so the insider and theological perspective addresses the research gap identified in the deconstructions of militant *Islamist* organisations like *Da'esh*.

Furthermore, the body literature which has engaged theologically with *Dabiq* has suffered from methodological limitations. For example, Ingram (2016) and Frissen *et al* (2017) rely heavily on statistical analysis software (NVivo) in order to understand which verses and chapters of the Quran feature most prominently within the publication. Spier (2018) also

analysed *Dabiq* in order to identify the Quranic references which helped *Da'esh* propagate their narrative whilst Welch (2018) searched for verses and chapters that compounded an othering narrative. Although these perspectives are valuable from a research and knowledge contribution viewpoint they offer little benefit in establishing *Da'esh's* ultimate theological and spiritual goals; their reason for being. Furthermore the predominance of a 'hard science' methodology within these respective research projects has diminished the significance of spirituality in faith. Consequently, the researcher's engagement with the Quran is entirely surface level. It is analytical, structured upon an input vs. output examination of a document that Muslims believe is humanities guide to salvation. The notable recent exception to this research norm is Jacoby's (2019) study who has conducted a contextual analysis of Quranic exegetes referred to in *Dabiq*.

In addition, the vast majority of research which engages with the theological dimension of militant *Islamist* organisations has focused primarily on the macro level organisation. This is evident in the research pieces cited here above and referred to in the literature review. Therefore there is a need to focus on the micro level actors within militant *Islamist* movements from an analytical perspective which looks beyond the application of military jihad as a tool of political grievance, social apathy or economic impoverishment. The organisational proposition of jihad needs to be viewed and examined as an individual act of worship that is personal and relatable to the broader theological need(s) of the individual who is undertaking it. The expression of military jihad is the result of a spiritual covenant an individual has taken with their Lord and the responsibility of that covenant rests solely with the individual. This is the premise of accountability as highlighted above. So from a micro level perspective the focus of attention is no longer upon the organisation *per-se*, but also how militant organisations serve the theological and religious needs of their support base.

So the insider perspective within a modified *quasi* experimental methodology enabled the researcher to better engage with *Dabiq's* theological content. However, adopting the insider perspective mandated the acceptance of a number of assumptions, primarily relating to the evidential sources cited by the group; sources widely accepted within Sunni Islam. These assumptions will be highlighted in the following section.

3.2.1 Research Design: Accepting Assumptions.

The insider perspective mandates the acceptance of a number of assumptions relating to scriptural sources. For example, the prophet Muhammad has referred to the first three generations of Islam as the 'best' of generations. Imam Mālik records a hadith narrated by ʿImrān bin Ḥussayn in which the prophet Muhammad states that the best of you is from my time, then from those who succeed, then from those who succeed (Anas, 1991, vol.3, pp 295).[8] Elaborating on this narration Abu Walīd al Bājī asserts that the status of a nation within a time frame is determined by their actions and practices. It is for this very reason the prophet Muhammad distinguished the formative generations of Islam from the generations that were to follow as the latter would contain a people with ill and untrustworthy practices (Al Baji, 1913, pp 81). From this narration an inference can be drawn that the first three generations of Islam were considered theologically to be the 'best' because of their superior conduct. In addition, Muslim clerics in the field of hadith narration and transmission are of the unanimous opinion that the credibility of the prophet's companions, of whom ʿAbdullah Ibn ʿAbbās is one, is beyond reproach (Misri: 2010). This is due to the testimony of Allah in the Quran in which He states that He is pleased with them (referring to the prophets companions) and they are pleased with Him (Quran 9:100).[9] Looking beyond the formative generations of Islam, there are a number of works, texts and individuals who are regarded as

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[8] خير القرون قرني ثم الذين يلونهم ثم الذين يلونهم ثم يأتي من بعدهم قوم يشهدون ولا يستشهدون

[9] ﴿وَالسَّابِقُونَ الْأَوَّلُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُم بِإِحْسَانٍ رَّضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي تَحْتَهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ذَٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ﴾

authorities within Sunni Islam. For example, it is widely accepted that Imam Bukhari's and Imam Muslim's compilations of hadith are authentic and reliable just as scholars like Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn al-Jawzi and Ibn Hajar al-Askalani are also credible authorities. Sunni Muslim scholarship and indeed *Da'esh* regard these texts and individuals as authorities within Islamic theology. So for the purposes of engaging in a theological deconstruction of *Dabiq* assumptions relating to certain individuals and sources of Sunni Islam were accepted *prima facie* and utilised in this research project. Although the insider perspective in this regard provided the opportunity to fully engage and deconstruct *Da'esh's* theological narrative, it was not without the stigma of a confessional approach.

3.2.2 Research Design: Confessional-ism & Replicabitlity.

Recognition of the 'confessional' within academic research is arguably a product of the hard sciences imposing their methodological values upon the social sciences (Peachter, 1996, pp 82). However, prior to engaging in discussions regarding the confessional, it is firstly necessary to make absolutely clear that the researcher is not, nor has ever been associated with any expression of *Islamism*; violent or otherwise. The consideration is highlighted solely for the purposes of allaying concerns over the use of an insider methodology in which the researcher, as a Sunni Muslim, will engage with primary source theological material. This is a necessary distinction as Peatcher's (1996) research cited above as well as that of Foucault (1978) examines confessional-ism of practitioner based research (Peatcher, 1996, pp 75). The divergence here between Foucault (1978), Peatcher (1996) and this investigation is that this study was not conducted by a practitioner of *Da'esh* or affiliate of *Islamism* so it is not confessional in that regard. However the researcher self identifies as a Sunni Muslims which is as an inescapable factor that had the potential to influence research outcomes (Peatcher, 1996, pp 81-82).

Confessional-ism refers to a researcher's acknowledgement of his/her bias in an investigation with a conscious appreciation that such a bias may impact upon the results (Ball, 1990, pp 170; Peachter, 1996, pp 81). This is less of a consideration for the hard scientists who are able to monitor, record and control experimental variables with a great deal of precision thereby validating their research findings. However, in areas where the subject of investigation is a social, religious, political or cultural phenomenon validation of research findings is only possible through an understanding of the methodological approach used (Ball, 1990, pp 170). This consideration leads on to another discussion regarding the replicabitlity of this investigation. Peatcher (1996) argues that the exact reproduction of research findings within the social sciences is no longer possible and that the necessity to conduct research takes precedence over the ability to replicate it. (Peatcher, 1996, pp 81). Feldblum (1996) argues that entire concept of replicabitlity within qualitative research is flawed, led by a positivist approach, reticent of the intricacies that constitute qualitative research and which lead to reductionist outcomes (Feldblum, 1996, pp 1-2).

However this does not mean that the absence of replicabitlity leads to a lack of research validity; rather the measures by which reliability and validity are defined simply differ in qualitative investigations (Wolcott, 2005, pp 160). This is a principle also endorsed by Feldblum (1996) who argues that both qualitative and quantitative research methods have their respective problems but the solution lies within the discussion of research methods and not in pursuing replicabitlity (Feldblum, 1996, pp 3). Thus it is imperative to ensure that necessary measures are in place within the research design to inhibit potential threats to research validity. Maxwell (1996) highlighted several threats to the validity of a research study, some of which were relevant to this investigation and are therefore addressed below (Maxwell, 2013, pp 123).

3.2.3 Research Design: Control Measures.

Of the threats to research validity highlighted by Maxwell (2013), the following are most relevant to this study. As stated by Creswell & Miller (2000) it is necessary to demonstrate how these biases were suspended or controlled during the research (Creswell & Miller, 2000, pp 127).

1. **Researcher bias.**

    The researcher is a staunch opponent of *Da'esh*, of their theology and expression of Islam. He believes that they operate on a literal, non contextual understanding of both the Quran and hadith which they have utilised in pursuit of their organisational goals. He also holds the position that *Da'esh's* goals are more political, temporal than theological even though they present themselves as a religious organisation.

    Control Measures: The researcher biases were controlled through the following measures:

    - Reflexivity. These biases were acknowledged from the outset of the research so that the researcher was consciously aware of them. He also informed the readership of this thesis regarding his personal affiliation and theological disposition. The researcher further controlled these biases by bracketing and suspending them whilst engaged in the research (Creswell & Miller, 2000, pp 127). He achieved this by allocating periods of reflection within his research timetable, particularly when reading or engaging with an emotive piece of literature (Brackenridge, 1999, pp 403-404). In doing so the researcher increased the potential of writing from a cognitive domain and whilst minimising the emotive bias.

- Data samples. One of *Da'esh's* official publications (*Dabiq*) was selected for the analysis. It contained theological material that the organisation wanted to communicate to the world. Thus it was the 'official' word of *Da'esh* and not a third person account of what they considered *Da'esh* to propagate. In addition, this publication ran from 2014 until 2016 and totalled fifteen volumes consisting of 942 pages (a comprehensive analysis of *Dabiq* is presented in chapter 6). All of these publications were analysed. A conscious decision was made not to analyse *Da'esh's* second flagship publication, *Rumiyyah*, which started in 2016 when the publication of *Dabiq* ended. This was due to the fact that this study is not a comparative analysis between the theological propositions of *Dabiq* and *Rumiyyah*. Indeed there is scope for such an investigation to be undertaken as future research once this investigation is complete and a starting point against which *Rumiyyah* can be assessed is established. The data analysis of *Dabiq* provided the opportunity to engage with *Da'esh's* thought for almost a 2 year period. This within itself created a form of triangulation in validation of the research findings, something that will be discussed in greater detail in section 3.2.4.

2. **Interpretation & Theory Validity.**

The researcher developed a theoretical framework within chapters 4 and 5 from which a specific theme was established. This theme, being the seeking of Allah's pleasure, was then used as the analytical tool in review of *Da'esh's* publications (as detailed in section 3.5). The established theme argued that for any action to be theologically

valid it must fundamentally seek to harness the pleasure of Allah. This included the practice of jihad which *Da'esh* positioned as the foremost act of worship. The potential risk with this approach was twofold; firstly interpreting *Da'esh's* written material in a manner that was not a true reflection of what they were claiming (Maxwell, 2013, pp 89) and secondly, to manipulate the data (through analysis and interpretation) in order to create a theory that is conducive of the theme established in the conceptual framework (Lewis, 2009, pp 10).

Control Measures: The abovementioned threats to research validity have been addressed in bullet point 1 of section 3.2.3 above (reflexivity and data samples). The researcher was consciously aware of these threats to research validity and therefore adopted the validation mechanisms detailed below in section 3.2.4

3.2.4 Research Design: Validation.

The research credibility was ensured through the following measures:

1. Audit Trail: Azza (2013) has stated that an inquiry audit whereby an external auditor can review the research methodology and associated research processes creates credibility and offers the research external validation (Azza, 2013, pp 08). All of the research processes utilised for this investigation were documented and recorded within this chapter. They were reviewed by internal and external examiners the satisfaction of whom validated the research findings in a manner no different to an external audit (Lewis, 2009, pp 12). As Dey (1993) has stated, "if we cannot expect others to replicate our account, the best we can do is explain how we arrived at our results" (Dey, 1993, pp 259).

2. *Pseudo* Triangulation: Triangulation in qualitative research refers to the use of multiple evidential sources in validation of a concept or theme (Lewis, 2009, pp 11). As the data sample for this study was one of *Da'esh's* flagships publications, triangulation in the sense of multiple sources did not occur. However the number of volumes in the publication were so many and spread across such length of time that it created a *pseudo* triangulation. What this means is that analysis of the publications and the premise drawn from their review is directly supported by the narrative content of each individual publication over a 2 year period. Thus although the source in terms of medium may have been the same, the content of each publication was different thereby creating a *pseudo* triangulation of the findings validating the research results.

There are of course other methods of validating research findings within qualitative investigations; member checking, collaboration, peer review to name but a few. However the sensitive nature of this investigation (as detailed in the ethical considerations section 3.4) restricted the validation methods so the most appropriate were adopted.

3.3 Data Selection

The researcher chose deliberately to focus on one of *Da'esh's* flagship publications; *Dabiq*. One of the reasons for doing so was to make the research data pool manageable. In June 2014 the BBC suggested that *Da'esh* posted over 40,000 messages per day on social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook (BBC: 2014) in addition to content posted on their website which was managed by *al-Hayat* media centre (*Da'esh's* media production wing). The result of all the activity was a great volume of data that could potentially be analysed for the purposes of this study (Klaussen, 2015, pp 05-06). Therefore the decision was taken to refine the data pool to make the sources for review more manageable.

So focusing on one of *Da'esh's* official periodicals enabled the researcher to analyse the organisation's theological narratives over a period of approximately 30 months (the length of time for which the publication ran before it was replaced with *Rumiyyah*). *Dabiq* consisted of fifteen volumes and ran from the time the group announced their caliphate in March 2014 until October 2016. The length for which *Dabiq* ran also provided the opportunity to validate this study's research findings through the *pseudo* triangulation process as highlighted in section 3.2.4. A conscious decision not to examine *Rumiyyah* was made and has been detailed in section 3.2.3. This rationale was also reflected by Jacoby (2019) who conducted a exegetical examination of Quranic references in *Dabiq* as referred to above in chapter 2.

The data selection methodology provided an indicative and selective sample of *Da'esh's* narrative construct. It was fully appreciated that the selection process has its limitations and the researcher proceeded in recognition of them. The research limitations are addressed in the following section.

3.4 Research Limitations & Difficulties.

Due to the difficulties associated with conducting empirical research, the most effective research method was deemed to be a desk based narrative analysis of *Dabiq*. Attempts were made to gather first hand data from research subjects, convicted terror prisoners in this context, so that primary accounts of the impact of *Da'esh's* narrative could be obtained. However, the researcher spent approximately eight months negotiating access via the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) in order to interview convicted terror suspects after which the request for access was refused by NOMS.[10] Thus collecting primary data from UK research subjects was not possible. Similarly an application was also made to

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[10] Please see appendix 4 letter from National Research Council dated 18th May 2015.

the Federal Bureau of Prisons in the United States which was also refused.[11] Other

international contexts[12] were explored but dismissed due to financial and researcher access

constraints. Furthermore, a stipulated deadline for submission of this thesis meant that time

was also a constraining factor.

In addition, empirical data collected from interviewees would have only provided a

subjective perspective of an individual's engagement with this wider phenomenon. It would

not have necessarily captured the theology of the organisation; rather only an individual

subscribers interpretation of that theology. As this thesis will highlight (and as alluded to in

chapter 2) *Da'esh's* support base are not well versed with Islamic theology and arguably not

with *Da'esh's* theology. So their accounts would have been insufficient to build a credible

understanding of the organisations theological positioning. Therefore the most practical and

effective research method was to conduct a desk based analysis of *Dabiq*.

However, despite these considerations the research design presented the following limitations

and difficulties:

I. **Data sample**.

   As stated in section 3.3, this research focused on only *Dabiq*. Content on social

   media platforms like Facebook and Twitter was not reviewed primarily due its

   volume and an inability to authenticate its ownership. In the absence of this

   understanding, other forms of media were considered unreliable and removed from

   the data selection pool. So the study focused on one of the official publications

   aforementioned. Even though this was the most prudent course of action possible

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[11] Please see appendix 5 email from Jody Klein-Saffran dated 18th November 2014.

[12] The researcher travelled to Pakistan between December 2014 and January 2015 in order to assess the prospect of conducting field research. Although he had initially been promised access to convicted terror suspects the fatal events of 16th December 2014 in Peshawar changed the dynamic and revoked access.

data sources were excluded that may have contributed to the discussion or validation processes.

II. **The *Insider* Approach and Confessional Overtones.**

In order to deconstruct *Da'esh's* narrative, this investigation viewed the phenomenon through the theological lens of Sunni Islam. Therefore assumptions relating to theological and religious authorities were taken *prima facie* in order to theologically engage with *Dabiq*. Even though the researcher was consciously aware of these biases, the insider approach could be misconstrued as confessional. The manner in which these considerations were managed have been addressed in sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 respectively.

III. **Hypotheses Development.**

The research methodology and scope of this project did not enable for the developed hypothesis to be tested. As a result, the outcome of the investigation is not conclusive and subject to further testing.

The researcher understood the limitations of this research project and appreciated the subsequent impact of these limitations upon any conclusion drawn.

3.5 Ethical Considerations.

Ethical standards of research as determined by the University of Birmingham (University of Birmingham: 2017) were adhered to.

The research was a desk based investigation and therefore offered no physical risk to either the primary researcher or research supervisor. However there were the following considerations:

<u>Prohibited Publications:</u> Downloading and viewing some of the proposed material relating to *Da'esh* was contrary to S.58 (1) of the Terrorism Act 2000. However the Act provided a defence of *reasonable excuse*, S.58 (3)[13] of which academic investigation was one. This was evidenced in the following statement made by Judge Chapman in response to the ruling of the Court of Appeal in R v K (2008). Judge Chapman stated *"I regard myself as bound by the decision of the Court of Appeal in R v K and it seems to me that the only way I can interpret that, because it is plain and simple language, is that the effect is that the Crown must prove that possession was for a purpose to assist in the preparation or commission of an act of terrorism. It is a conclusion that has resonance in common sense. Otherwise, if the Crown's argument is correct, whilst it may be possible for someone to demonstrate a reasonable excuse to (sic) possession of such items on the basis of academic or political research, counter-espionage, law enforcement, it certainly would not cover in the ordinary way curiosity, and it might have this consequence that people engaged in non-terrorist activities, who were in possession of articles which were likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism, would be guilty of a terrorist offence. So we have the argument that a safe cracker reading his handbook on how to handle gelignite would be caught by a terrorist provision. The Court of Appeal seemed to be making it plain that a reasonable excuse for the purposes of this section of this Act encompasses not just the kind of excuse which would be a reasonable way of dealing with possession of an offensive weapon but extends to other activities which, of themselves, may infringe either criminal or civil law. The narrowing of the kind of documents caught by section 58 is no doubt designed to exclude*

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[13] See http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/11/section/58

things in ordinary circulation like maps, timetables, elementary books on chemistry, mobile

phones, use of the internet, that sort of thing which might or could be of use to someone

preparing to commit an act of terrorism, whether or not that was the intention. And the

narrowing of the definition at paragraph 13 in the case of R v K seems to me not only

common sense but what the Parliament must have intended."[14] This eliminated the risk to

both the researcher and his supervisor as well as being in line with point 2.1 of the University

of Birmingham's code of ethics which stated that *"members of Academic Staff have freedom*

within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and

controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their

job or privileges.[15]*"*

Failure To Disclose: S. 38(b) of the Terrorism Act 2000 provides an offence of failing to

disclose information which a person knows or believes might be of material assistance in

preventing an act of terrorism or in securing the apprehension, prosecution or conviction of a

person involved in an act of terrorism.[16] The researcher eliminated this risk by ensuring that

he communicated all concerns to the relevant persons through the appropriate channels.

Self Trauma Management: Some of *Da'esh's* promotional material is notoriously graphic.

There was a consideration regarding the researcher's mental health and well being as a result

of continuously viewing such material. This risk was reduced due to the researcher's

professional experiences as a police officer of thirteen years with the West Midlands Police.

As an operational officer he was diffusion trained to help him cope and deal with traumatic

and stressful incidents. As a result, he was able to self manage any stress associated with

reading or viewing *Da'esh's* material. The risk was further mitigated by only viewing

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[14] See http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200809/ldjudgmt/jd090304/rgrj-1.htm
[15] See https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/eps/documents/public/UOB-Code-of-Ethics-Final-Version-Revised-July-14.pdf
[16] See http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/prosecution/ctd.html

content that was necessary and taking regular breaks in order to prevent consistent exposure. This approach was supported by Brackenridge (1991).

3.6 Data Analysis.

The data was subject to a theological narrative analysis. This term requires some clarity in order to provide a definitive understanding of what it means. Narrative in this context refers to only the written text of *Dabiq* which was itself a product of *Da'esh's* world view; something that culminated as a result of their symbolic interactionism within their respective contexts. Reissman (2003) states that defining narrative in the fields of social history and anthropology is different to that of sociolinguistics and disciplines in which the narrative is restricted to topics, characters, settings and plots (Reissman, 2003, pp 01). Parish & Candon-Root Cellar (2012) state that narrative inquiry (also known as narrative analysis) is a way to understand the human phenomenon (human being *Da'esh* in this regard) (Parish & Candon-Root Cellar, 2012, pp 06). Polkinghorne (1995) states that 'narrative descriptions exhibit human activity as purposeful engagement in the world' (Polkinghorne, 1995, pp 05). Rice & Ezzy (1999) seem to develop Polkinghorne's (1995) understanding a little further by stating that 'telling a story about oneself (*Da'esh* in this context) involves telling a story about choice and action which have integrally moral and ethical dimensions' (Rice & Ezzy, 1999, pp 126). Therefore, in order to address the research question presented at the conclusion of chapter 2, a narrative analysis method was utilised to scrutinise the written content of *Dabiq*. Furthermore, as narrative research is interpretative at every stage, despite being analytical, (Josselson, 2006, pp 03), it facilitated engagement with *Da'esh's* publications in their raw form with minimal presuppositions. As Leech & Onwuegbuzie (2008) state, raw data provides naturally occurring information that allows researchers to increase their understandings of the phenomenon (Leech & Onwuegbuzie: 2008). The theological

dimension of the data analysis featured within the coding of the data and will be discussed in greater detail in section 3.6.1.

Although the data was analysed in its raw form, *Da'esh* had already structured *Dabiq* upon five themes:

(i)   *Tawḥīd* – propagation of Allah's oneness.

(ii)   *Hijrah* – migration.

(iii)   *Manhaj* – affiliation to a particular expression of Islam

(iv)   Jihad – understood as the force of arms and

(v)   *Jamāʿat*- the collective community.

However 'coding' the data as part of the theological narrative analysis was based upon a theme established within the conceptual framework of chapters 4 and 5 (details of how the data was coded will appear in the following section). An overarching theological premise was developed by examining the fundamental tenets of *ʿibādah* (designated acts of worship) in accordance with Sunni theology. From this examination a single and consistent theme regarding the discharge of the fundamental pillars of Islam was formulated. As highlighted in section 3.2, the insider perspective enabled the researcher to develop this theme by referring to Islamic sources and authorities accepted by *Da'esh* (as detailed above in section 3.2.1). The category established within the conceptual framework was that of Allah's pleasure; meaning that each of the fundamental pillars led to the acquisition of paradise solely by virtue of harnessing Allah's pleasure. Thus the data was coded against a single category of Allah's pleasure from which themes were identified within *Dabiq* that led to the acquisition of Allah's pleasure.

Hunter (2010) states that each researcher has their own style of narrative analysis (Hunter, 2010, pp 47). As stated in the paragraph above, the researcher developed a conceptual

framework in chapters 4 and 5 which established the pleasure of Allah as a basis for all religious and theological actions in Sunni Islam, including jihad. The researcher then analysed the narrative of *Da'esh's* publications based upon this category. This methodological approach differed somewhat from the conventional method of narrative analysis where investigators gather descriptions of events and organise them in to a plot from which stories and understandings develop (Polkinghorne, 1995, pp 12). However the seeming divergence in methodology is consistent with what Phillips (1994) refers to as 'flirtation'. 'Flirtation or flirting' with data is a process whereby researchers put aside what they know and question its legitimacy (Phillips, 1994, pp xii). From a methodological perspective, Parish & Candon-Root Cellar (2012) invite researchers to 'flirt' with their data. They cite the perspective of Mishler (1995) in respect of his typology whereby he cautions researchers from adopting an approach that is narrowly focused; advocating instead that alternative and more inclusive strategies should be adopted (Mishler, 1995, pp 117; Parish & Candon-Root Cellar, 2012, pp 198). Thus in respect of this investigation the conventional model of narrative analysis was modified, or indeed 'flirted' with, to scrutinise the content of *Da'esh's* publications against the theme established within the conceptual framework. Details of how the data was coded is discussed in the following section.

3.6.1 Data Analysis Method.

As described above in section 3.2, this investigation adopted a *quasi-experimental* research methodology. Thus elements of different research designs were adopted in order to conduct a theological narrative analysis; part of which was the coding process. Coding can be described as the 'understanding or interpretation of data which includes the formulation of concepts through to their explanation' (Böhm, 2004, pp 270). An integral part of the coding process is to identify a 'core' category, a permeating characteristic that resonates throughout the phenomenon under study. Böhm (2004) argues that the core category can often be

already present in the formulation of the research question (Böhm, 2004, pp 273). In respect of this investigation the 'core' category was established through the conceptual framework as being the pleasure of Allah. Therefore, selective coding was utilised to determine the presence of the core category in *Da'esh's* publications. Selective coding refers to the process a researcher adopts after a possible core variable has been identified (Holton, 2007, pp 280). The analysis of the data becomes much more focused on the core category and any data that is conducive to the establishment of it. However, in order to achieve this, a coding structure was required that could identify key themes within the content of *Dabiq*. Details of the coding structure are provided in the following section.

3.6.1.1 Selective Coding Structure.

In order to conduct the theological narrative analysis of *Dabiq*, selective codes were developed through which the relationship of *Dabiq's* narrative to the core category could be better understood. Unlike the conventional method of data coding that is synonymous with a grounded research methodology; the categories detailed in the table below were deduced from the core category itself. Thus, for this investigation there was almost a reversal of process meaning that in a conventional data analysis method the core category is developed from the open and selective coding stages. However, here the researcher 'flirted' with the conventional research design to deduce themes from the core category that was developed in the conceptual framework. In doing so the researcher created analytical tools whereby *Dabiq's* narrative was theologically analysed. A similar approach was utilised by Droogan & Peattie (2017) who developed analytical themes in the examination of *Dabiq* by making reference external academic research on *Da'esh*.

The table below illustrates the selective codes.

<u>Table 1. Selective Coding Structure.</u>

Core Category: Seeking Allah's Pleasure.	
Category: Direct reference.	**Category:** Indirect reference.
Description: Clear statements in which the seeking of Allah's pleasure is explicitly stated.	**Description:** Allah's pleasure is implied as a direct result of an action an individual has taken.
Examples of a Selective Code: • 'For the sake of Allah'. • 'So Allah is pleased' • 'Allah's pleasure is in this'	**Examples of a Selective Code:** • Forgiveness of sins. • Entry in to paradise. • Becoming closer to Allah. • Elevating the word of Allah. • Gaining spiritual reward. • Elevation of status in the hereafter. • Command of Allah in the Quran. • Implied reward/reprimand in hadith. • Prohibition/warning of Allah in the Quran.
Detail: The text is clear and unambiguous in respect of the relationship between an action and the pleasure of Allah. So if one does X then Allah will be pleased with them, or it contains the pleasure of Allah. The motivation and goal for undertaking the action is clear in the mind of the reader.	**Detail:** The text communicates an outcome that necessitates the pleasure of Allah but a direct reference to seeking Allah's pleasure is not made. So for example, if one does X then their sins will be forgiven, or they will be granted entry in to paradise. Although Allah's pleasure is not mentioned explicitly it is certainly implied within the narrative as forgiveness of sins or entry in to

	paradise is inconceivable unless the pleasure of Allah has been harnessed.

Application of the *selective* codes to the data was conducted in a line by line methodology. Although each line was not coded as per the conventional line by line model, every part of the narrative was read and subjected to the selective coding process. Only by doing so was it possible to conduct a thorough theological narrative analysis of *Dabiq* in order to examine the significance of Allah's pleasure within their literature.

3.6.2 Alternative Data Analysis Methods.

Alternative research designs were considered to be less effective in addressing the research questions. The purpose of this investigation was to examine the role of non jurisprudential theological content within *Dabiq's* narrative, something that could not be achieved through a purely quantitative research model which is typically hypothesis led (Jha, 2008, pp 48).

Other methods of analysis were considered, they are as follows:

Grounded Research Theory (GRT): A pure GRT model was not viable for this research project. The GRT requires minimal presuppositions and encourages the data analysis to form the themes, categories and theories organically from the data (Bernard, 2006, pp 492).

Narrative Theory: This was deemed to be unsuitable as it is primarily focused on the manner in which stories are told (Ohio State University: 2018). The researcher was less interested in how individuals or collective stories are told but more in the theology used to 'tell' that story.

3.7 Data Storage & Processing.

Although the data analysed was readily available on the internet, it was nevertheless prohibited as per S.58(1) of the Terrorism Act (2001). As a result it was necessary to ensure that the data sources were held securely. Therefore a secure electronic vault called Bluebear was provided by the University of Birmingham. Only the lead researcher and research supervisor had access to the vault which was protected by digital password. The use of an electronic vault was not standard practice in academic research; rather it was the product of necessity as the Terrorism Act (2006) prohibited the possession of publications affiliated to a proscribed organisation in electronic or hard copy.[17] Thus the electronic vault provided a safeguard in ensuring that prohibited material was not accessed by anyone unlawfully.

In addition, it was understood that the material being viewed was sensitive so all measures were taken to ensure that it was not seen by any third party, intentionally or otherwise within the university or outside of it. As a result of the above, segments of this thesis that contained sensitive material relating to the prohibited publications or associated links were also stored within the Bluebear electronic vault.

The information accessed for the purposes of this research will be disposed of in a manner that satisfies legal requirements and in accordance with the University of Birmingham's data management policies (University of Birmingham: 2018).

3.8 Summary.

This doctoral thesis conducted a theological narrative analysis of *Dabiq*. In order to do so a conceptual framework was developed in chapters 4 and 5 from which a core category of seeking Allah's pleasure was developed. Though a *flirted* research design model and a line

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[17] See https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-terrorism-act-2006

by line reading of all 15 volumes of the publication themes were identified which fed in to the pursuit of Allah's pleasure.

Chapters 4 and 5 will detail the development of the conceptual framework.

4.0 ISLAM: DEFINING THE PURPOSE OF LIFE.

4.1 Introduction.

'Prayer is an expression of mans' yearning for a response in the awful silence of the universe'.

(Iqbal, 1971, pp 92).

The thesis question sets out to better understand *Da'esh's* theological proposition; its goal(s) and ultimate theological objective(s). However in doing so it was argued necessary in chapter 2 (Shakman-Hurd (2015), Droogan & Peattie (2017), Keskin & Tuncer (2018) and Spier (2018)) to position the claims of the organisation against the wider backdrop of the faith imperative: how do we understand *Da'esh's* theological proposition against what Islam says? This is indeed an important distinction yet an incredibly difficult task to determine as Islam is not single body of practice; rather it is diverse and broad with differences of theological and scholastic opinion on every conceivable point of faith expression.

This chapter seeks to establish the core of Islamic faith practice that permeates all expressions and representations of Islam. It deliberately avoids jurisprudential and philosophical debates that are products of hermeneutical and *uṣūl* (theological principles) based differences. Instead it argues the point of theological accountability in the metaphysical realm for Allah's answerable creation; that all who believe in Him will be accountable to Him. The chapter argues paradise as the absolute measure of theological success in the metaphysical realm and that the human endeavour in the temporal worldly realm is to navigate the faith imperative in

attainment of paradise and ethereal success. This concept is referred to as *ʿibādah* (worship) which this chapter argues is principled upon a single theological theme: the pleasure of Allah (as detailed in chapter 3). The chapter argues that all actions which seek to discharge theological accountability in an attempt to attain metaphysical success must necessarily be solely for the sake of Allah. However, ensuring the pleasure of Allah at the time of conceiving an action and throughout its duration is entirely the result of profound self awareness which is argued as a product of the jihad *al-nafs* and *taqwāʾ*. These mechanisms are presented as the essential underpinnings of religious sincerity and ethereal validity for temporal actions. In arguing so, this chapter establishes a conceptual framework by which *Dabiq* will be analysed in chapter 6. As chapter 6 will detail, *Dabiq* presents itself in a religious and theological framing. The conceptual framework established in this chapter will provide the analytical tools to deconstruct *Dabiq's* narratives and better understand *Da'esh's* ultimate theological objective(s).

The conceptual framework argued in the chapter is itself a product of the insider approach as detailed in chapter 3. Therefore the conventional presuppositions regarding the study of religion are not abandoned here. Rather, this chapter engages wholly with the theological reference points that feature so prominently within *Dabiq* and *Da'esh's* mantra.

4.2 Islam & The Purpose of Creation.

Islam provides definitive clarity to its adherent on the purpose of existence for humankind. The 'reality' of the human experience in this transitory temporal worldly realm is focused upon accountability in the afterlife (Lange, 2016, pp38; Zakzouk, 2017, pp 39; Haleem, 2017, pp 49). In verse 56 of *surah al-Dhāriyāt* Allah states that He made His answerable creation

solely for His worship (Quran 51:56).[18] This proclamation is endorsed throughout the Quran

and narrations of the prophet Muhammad. In being so Islam positions Allah at the centre of

human existence as its primary cause and objective. This premise is supported by classical

scholarly and academic opinions. ʿAbdullah Ibn ʿAbbās [d 687CE] states that 'worship' in

the aforementioned verse refers to obedience to Allah (Ibn Abbas, 1999, pp 557). Faruqi

(1995) shares this sentiment and argues that the purpose of life is God. He states that God is

the final end upon which all avenues and nexuses meet and in being so He is the ultimate

object of all desire (Faruqi, 1995, pp 02-03). Mawdudi (1981) argues that the purpose of life

in this world is to actualise the state of unconscious submission (ʾislām) in which Allah

created humankind (Mawdudi, 1981, pp 19). Abd al-Raziq (1998) argues that Islam is a

religious call to God as a reformation for a certain type of people (Kurzman, 1998, pp 34).

Although he doesn't seem to define who this certain group is, Abd al-Raziq (1998) correlates

human existence with striving for Allah's proximity. These sentiments are also shared by

others (Murata & Chittick, 1994, pp 03; Endress, 1988, pp 22; Esack, 1999, pp 09).

However, a purposeful relationship with Allah is established and realised through a very

specific model of engagement referred to in the Quranic verse cited above as ʿibādah.

Details of ʿibādah will be elaborated upon in section 4.2.1, but at this juncture it is necessary

to appreciate the relationship of ʿibādah with the purpose of creation. The Quran stipulates

that effectively fulfilling the obligation of ʿibādah leads to theological success. For example,

in verse 30 of surah al Fajr Allah associates ʿibādah of Him with entry in to paradise (Quran

89:29-30).[19] Furthermore, in verse 20 of surah al-Ḥashr Allah states that the people of

paradise and the people of hell are not the same; the people of paradise are successful (Quran

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[18] وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

[19] فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي وَادْخُلِي جَنَّتِي

59:20[20]; Quran 5:83-87;[21] Quran 3:185).[22] Therefore, from a Sunni perspective the purpose of worship, despite the fact that Allah is the central object of worship, is to attain theological success which in absolute terms is paradise. This sentiment is shared by Wensinck (1965) who states that Islam is a mechanism of safeguarding oneself from hell (Wensinck, 1965, pp 22-23). So the construct of ʿibādah within the reality of human existence is for the purposes of attaining ethereal success which is the realisation of paradise. Anything else is simply theological failure the consequences of which are damnation to hell as referred to in the Quran.

This premise defines the significance of worship in Islam and is a sentiment is shared by Esposito (2016) who argues that Muslims have an individual responsibility to obey God's commands and realise His will. In doing so the Muslim consciousness is recognisant of impending eternal consequences that await on the last day (Esposito, 2016, pp 28-32). Similarly Schimmel (1992) details the theological beliefs across the different groups within Islam. She makes reference to a 'doomsday' in which the actions of all human beings will be reckoned and accounted for (Schimmel, 1992, pp 84). Therefore ʿibādah is central in the life of a Sunni Muslim and it permeates his/her existence. Assad (1975) echoes this feeling and states that the concept of worship in Islam is more than an expression of ritualistic faith practices; rather it extends throughout an individuals' practical life as well. Thus all human actions, even those considered to be trivial, must be performed as acts of worship (Assad, 1975, pp 05). Assad (1975) supports Iqbal's (1971) stance who argued that prayer is indicative of mankind's aspiration to realise essential unity as a fact of life by demolishing all barriers which stand between man and man (Iqbal, 1971, pp 94). The manner in which the

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[20] لَا يَسْتَوِي أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ وَأَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ

[21] وَمَا لَنَا لَا نُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَمَا جَاءَنَا مِنَ الْحَقِّ وَنَطْمَعُ أَنْ يُدْخِلَنَا رَبُّنَا مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الصَّالِحِينَ فَأَثَابَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِمَا قَالُوا جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُحَرِّمُوا طَيِّبَاتِ مَا أَحَلَّ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ

[22] كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ وَإِنَّمَا تُوَفَّوْنَ أُجُورَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَمَنْ زُحْزِحَ عَنِ النَّارِ وَأُدْخِلَ الْجَنَّةَ فَقَدْ فَازَ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ

responsibility of *ʿibādah* is interpreted and understood is a detailed and intricate discussion which is outside the remit of this investigation. For example, el Fadl (2007) details the differences in approach to *ʿibādah* between the 'puritans' and 'moderates': a literal application of Islamic scripture compared to a contextualised and reason based understanding of the faith (el-Fadl, 2007, pp 125-141). However, irrespective of how individuals and groups are labelled the structural components that lead to metaphysical success, as will be detailed throughout this chapter, apply equally to all. The 'puritanical' is subject to accountability just as much as the 'moderate' and vice versa. The difference between the two is their respective understanding of how the construct of worship should be engaged with in order to fulfil the divinely ascribed responsibility of worship. But the intended outcome for both groups of people is the same, ensuring theological success and preventing theological failure; i.e. being granted entry in to paradise and being saved from the torments of hell.

It is also necessary to appreciate that the outcome of inevitable theological accountability within Sunni Islam is majorly influenced by three key factors that impact upon an individuals' engagement with *ʿibādah*. Those are:

1. *Shayṭān* (the devil).

2. The individual *nafs* (self) and

3. Tests from Allah.

These three factors form the 'challenge of faith' that adherents of Islam need to navigate in order to fulfil their commitment to Allah. Throughout the Quran Allah warns His answerable creation to stay away from the path of *Shayṭān* declaring him to be an open enemy of humankind (Quran 2:168,[23] Quran 2:208,[24] Quran 6:142,[25] Quran 7:22,[26] Quran 12:5,[27] Quran

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[23] يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُلُوا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

[24] يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ كَافَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

[25] وَمِنَ الْأَنْعَامِ حَمُولَةً وَفَرْشًا كُلُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

36:60[28] and Quran 43:62).[29] *Shayṭān* is considered to be the first of Allah's creation to disobey Him for his refusal to prostrate to Adam after being by instructed by Allah to do so. As a result of his transgression the devil was cursed and deemed to be a rejecter of the faith (Quran 2:34; Ibn Abbas, vol.1, pp 07). The Quran states that *Shayṭān's* refusal to adhere to Allah's command was a product of his *nafs* (self). He considered himself to be better than Adam due to his creation being of fire and Adams being of clay (Quran 38: 76).[30] So his *nafs* fuelled rejection of Allah's command was the cause of his damnation leading to his expulsion from paradise. Thus an abandonment of *'ibādah* in its core elements is rooted in satanic disobedience which was catalysed by the *nafs*. In respect of the *nafs*, Allah warns His answerable creation of its wretchedness; describing it as a commander of vice (Quran 12:53).[31] Furthermore, Allah informs humankind that the path to paradise (which has been established as the measure of absolute theological success) is fraught with 'tests' to determine worthiness of this celestial reward (Quran 2:155,[32] Quran 2:214,[33] Quran 3:142,[34] and Quran 9:16).[35] This theological proposition, being the navigation of faith related 'challenges' in fulfilling the obligations of *'ibādah* against impending theological accountability, creates two distinct areas with which Allah's answerable creation interact. One is physical, the 'here and now' in which acts of worship are performed. The other is metaphysical, the 'afterlife' where God will judge His answerable creation based upon their actions in the physical realm. This discussion will be elaborated upon in greater detail in section 4.2.2, but at this juncture it is

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26 فَدَلَّاهُمَا بِغُرُورٍ فَلَمَّا ذَاقَا الشَّجَرَةَ بَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوْآتُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفَانِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وَرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ وَنَادَاهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا أَلَمْ أَنْهَكُمَا عَنْ تِلْكُمَا الشَّجَرَةِ وَأَقُلْ لَكُمَا إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَكُمَا عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

27 قَالَ يَا بُنَيَّ لَا تَقْصُصْ رُؤْيَاكَ عَلَى إِخْوَتِكَ فَيَكِيدُوا لَكَ كَيْدًا إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

28 أَلَمْ أَعْهَدْ إِلَيْكُمْ يَا بَنِي آدَمَ أَنْ لَا تَعْبُدُوا الشَّيْطَانَ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

29 وَلَا يَصُدَّنَّكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

30 قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ نَارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ طِينٍ

31 وَمَا أُبَرِّئُ نَفْسِي إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي إِنَّ رَبِّي غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

32 وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ

33 أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِكُمْ مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ مَسَّتْهُمُ الْبَأْسَاءُ وَالضَّرَّاءُ وَزُلْزِلُوا حَتَّى يَقُولَ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ مَتَى نَصْرُ اللَّهِ أَلَا إِنَّ نَصْرَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ

34 أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا مِنْكُمْ وَيَعْلَمَ الصَّابِرِينَ

35 أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُتْرَكُوا وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا مِنْكُمْ وَلَمْ يَتَّخِذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَا رَسُولِهِ وَلَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلِيجَةً وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

necessary to appreciate that the human experience in the physical form is connected to a spiritual 'reality' that will unfold in the metaphysical realm.

Thus if one is able to navigate the deviations of *Shayṭān* (the devil), tests sent by Allah and ones' own *nafs* (self) in the performance of *ʿibādah*, then absolute theological success in the form of paradise is the promised reward. The apparent consideration here is how does Allah's answerable creation navigate their way through these challenges?   What theological mechanism exists to assist humankind in dealing with a diverse set of challenges in support of their responsibility of *ʿibādah*? The immediate response to these considerations is *taqwā* and the jihad *al-nafs*. However, this is a detailed and intricate discussion that will be elaborated upon in sections 5.1 and 5.2 of chapter 5.

The discussion thus far has argued that Allah created humankind for the purposes of His worship (*ʿibādah*) which embodies a subjective reality that individuals are compelled to navigate. *Da'esh* argues that they are performing jihad in Allah's path (Dabiq, 2014, vol1, pp 05) which is an act of worship (*ʿibādah*). Therefore, in order to develop a conceptual framework with which *Dabiq* can be deconstructed and *Da'esh's* ultimate theological objective(s) better understood, it is necessary understand what is meant by the term *ʿibādah* in Sunni Islam. Thus the construct of *ʿibādah* needs to be examined with two key questions as a point of focus:

1. What are the essential components of *ʿibādah*?[36]

2. What is the underpinning characteristic/trait/virtue which permeates all such essential components?

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[36] Any action has the capacity to be regarded as *ʿibādah* but for the purposes of this discussion we are focusing upon its core and necessary components.

4.2.1 Defining ʿIbādah: Development of the Conceptual Framework.

The essential components of ʿibādah are detailed across several hadith narrations. Imam Tirmidhī [d 892CE] records a hadith on the authority of ʾIbn ʿUmar, in which the prophet Muhammad states that Islam is formed upon five pillars; testimony that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is His messenger, establishing the five daily prayers, the giving of zakat, fasting during the month of Ramadhan and performing Hajj (Tirmidhi, no date, vol 10, pp 84).[37] This message is reinforced in other narrations. For example the hadith of ʿAwf bin Mālik in which five daily prayers are specifically stated (Al Bayhaqi, 1989, vol. 3, pp 271),[38] the narration of Saʿīd bin Abī ʿArūbah in which the prophet Muhammad addressed a visiting delegation and after commanding them to worship Allah and abstain from ascribing partners to Him he instructed the delegation to establish prayers, give alms in charity and fast during the month of Ramadhan (Isbahani, 1996, vol. 1, pp 112).[39] The narration of Shaʿbī also states that when Muʾāḍ [d 639 CE] arrived in Yemen he instructed the people of Yemen to worship Allah (taʿbudū which is a derivative of ʿibādah), not ascribe any partners to Him (lā tushrikū which is a derivative of shirk), establish the five daily prayers, pay zakat (alms giving) and that verily Allah is one (Shaybah, vol. 13, pp 236).[40]

These narrations prescriptively detail the fundamental components of ʿibādah and in doing so provide clarity of what must be done in order to discharge the obligation which Allah has

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[37] عَنِ ابْنِ عُمَرَ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم بُنِيَ الإِسْلاَمُ عَلَى خَمْسٍ شَهَادَةُ أَنْ لاَ إِلَهَ إِلاَّ اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامُ الصَّلاَةِ وَإِيتَاءُ الزَّكَاةِ وَصَوْمُ رَمَضَانَ وَحَجُّ الْبَيْتِ وَفِي الْبَابِ عَنْ جَرِيرِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ. قَالَ أَبُو عِيسَى هَذَا حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ صَحِيحٌ وَقَدْ رُوِيَ مِنْ غَيْرِ وَجْهٍ عَنِ ابْنِ عُمَرَ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم نَحْوُ هَذَا. وَسُعَيْرُ بْنُ الْخِمْسِ ثِقَةٌ عِنْدَ أَهْلِ الْحَدِيثِ

[38] عوف بن مالك الأشجعي قال كنا عند رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم تسعة أو ثمانية و في حديث ابن الرواس سبعة أو ثمانية أو تسعة فقال ألا تبايعون رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم فردها ثلاث مرات فقدمنا أيدينا فبايعناه فقلنا يا رسول الله قد بايعناك فعلى ما نبايعك قال أن تعبدوا الله و لا تشركوا به شيئا و الصلوات الخمس و أسر كلمة خفية و لا تسألوا الناس شيئا قال : فلقد رأيت بعض أولئك النفر يسقط سوطه فلا يسأل أحدا يناوله إياه أخرجه مسلم في الصحيح من وجه آخر عن سعيد بن عبد العزيز

[39] ثنا سعيد بن أبي عروبة وحدثنا من لقي ذلك الوفد قال وحدثنا ذلك الوفد الذين قدموا على رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فقالوا يا رسول الله إنا حي من ربيعة وبيننا وبينك كفار مضر ولا نقدر عليك إلا في أشهر الحرم فمرنا بأمر نأمر به من وراءنا وندخل الجنة إذا نحن أخذنا به فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم آمركم بأربع وأنهاكم عن أربع اعبدوا الله لا تشركوا به شيئا وأقيموا الصلاة وآتوا الزكاة وصوموا رمضان وأعطوا الخمس من الغنائم وأنهاكم عن أربع عن الدباء والحنتم والنقير والمزفت

[40] عَنِ الشَّعْبِيِّ ، قَالَ لَمَّا قَدِمَ مُعَاذٌ إِلَى الْيَمَنِ خَطَبَ النَّاسَ فَحَمِدَ اللَّهَ وَأَثْنَى عَلَيْهِ ، وَقَالَ أَنَا رَسُولُ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ ، أَنْ تَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ لاَ تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا ، وَتُقِيمُوا الصَّلاَةَ وَتُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ ، وَإِنَّمَا هُوَ اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ وَالْجَنَّةُ وَالنَّارُ ، إِقَامَةٌ فَلاَ ظَعَنٌ , وَخُلُودٌ فَلاَ مَوْتَ

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placed upon His answerable creation. It is important at this juncture to highlight that the military expression of jihad is noticeably absent from these prescriptive lists. This challenges the assertions made by militant *Islamist* ideologues who have argued jihad as the 'sixth' pillar of Islam. Although military jihad gained greater prominence in latter hadith narrations it cannot be retrospectively argued as a fundamental component or a 'sixth' pillar of Islam. Wensinck (1965) argues this very point and states that the window of opportunity for the military expression of jihad to be included as an essential component of religious existence had closed (Wensinck, 1965, pp 27). Similarly, Tritton (1951) also rejects the presentation of jihad as the sixth pillar of Islam (Tritton, 1951, pp 29).

Furthermore, it is also necessary to highlight that the conceptual framework which will be developed throughout this chapter relates to the term *ʿibādah* as the core and fundamental components of worship (as established by the Qur'an and hadith narrations). This distinction is essential as we move through this thesis and engage with *Dabiq*. It creates a theological baseline against which all expressions of worship can be measured; be they designated, non-designated a fundamental pillar or otherwise. Thus when *Dabiq* positions their jihad as an act of worship then it necessarily becomes subject to the same theological framework as any of the other core or voluntary expressions of worship in Islam. This framework is both logically reasonable and theologically necessary.

So far this section has identified the core components of *ʿibādah* as the five pillars of Islam. If discharged effectively an individual fulfils their obligation of *ʿibādah* the consequence of which is the aspiration of paradise. However, what remains unknown at present is the construct of 'effective discharge'. Independent of the individual and personal challenges of faith that have been referred to in section 4.2, what determines whether an act of worship presented by an individual is worthy of paradise? Is the surface submission of an act of worship sufficient to warrant paradise or are there deeper considerations associated with this

dynamic? These deliberations lead in to broader discussions highlighted by el-Fadl (2007) on the differences between literal and contextual interpretations of Islam among puritanical and 'moderate' faith practitioners (el-Fadl, 2007, pp 125-141). Yet despite the hermeneutical variances between disparate Sunni Muslim groups (be they puritans or moderates) the intended theological destination and measure of absolute theological success is the same for all. Section 4.2 defined this as the acquisition of paradise which is inherently associated with accountability and *ʿibādah*. So in order to understand how *ʿibādah* can be effectively discharged and lead to paradise it is necessary to understand how Sunni Islam positions the acquisition of paradise. The attributes and qualities associated with its acquisition must necessarily be reflected within the embodiment of *ʿibādah* in order to attain ethereal success.

Therefore the following section provides an overview of a thematic analysis of paradise in the Quran, detailing the attributes associated with its acquisition.

4.2.2 Paradise in the Quran: A Thematic Overview.

Allah refers to paradise multiple times throughout the Quran. Lange (2016) suggest that paradise features (directly by reference in one of its conjugated forms or by inference) approximately 320 times throughout the Quran (Lange, 2016, pp 39). Analysing the verses in which paradise is explicitly mentioned reveals that its acquisition can be categorised in to 6 broad themes as listed below:

- *Taqwā* – God consciousness.
- *Aʿmāl aṣ ṣāliḥ* – righteous actions.
- *ʾĪmān* – faith.
- *Ridhwān al Allah* – Allah's pleasure.
- Forgiveness and

- Reward.

There is a distinct relationship between these themes in which Allah's answerable creation is rewarded by Him for their *ʿibādah*. As a dynamic it operates in two distinct areas; one relates directly to Allah's answerable creation and the other relates to Allah as the Creator and supreme Judge. These two areas work in synchronicity whereby the promise of paradise is made to those who fulfil the obligations of His worship. The first area consists of the following themes:

- *ʾĪmān* (belief in Allah).

- *Taqwā* (God consciousness).

- *Aʿmāl aṣ ṣāliḥ* (righteous actions).

The relationship between the themes in this area can be argued as sequential and continuous meaning that a latter theme is dependent upon the former. Indeed, the foundational theme, in this specific regard of how Allah relays the acquisition of paradise in the Quran, is that of *ʾīmān* upon which the themes of *taqwā* and then *aʿmāl aṣ ṣāliḥ* are built and developed. Figure. 1 below illustrates the relationship dynamic between the themes in this area.

Figure 1. Illustration of thematic interactions in the acquisition of paradise: Area ONE.
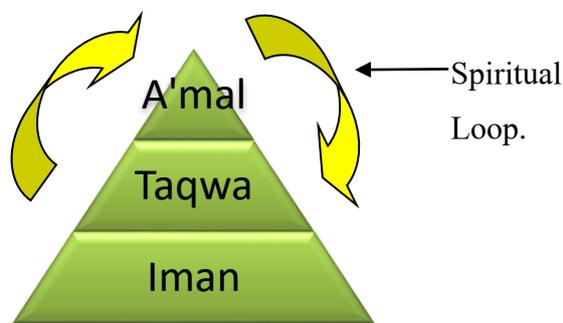
The illustration highlights how *'īmān* is the basis upon which the other two themes are situated as well as how *taqwā'* and *a'māl aṣ ṣāliḥ* feed in to each other. The relationship between *taqwā'* and *a'māl aṣ ṣāliḥ* is communicated throughout the Quran (Quran 2: 2-5).[41] There is also a persistent and continuous connection between the foundational theme of *īmān* and the successive themes of *taqwā* and *a'māl aṣ ṣāliḥ*. As we alluded to earlier above in section 4.2.1, *'ibādah* necessitates the perpetual safeguarding of *īmān* (faith) from *shirk* (polytheism) so the integrity of *īmān* must necessarily permeate through the other thematic points creating an inherent interconnectedness and 'spiritual loop'.

The second area relates to the themes associated with Allah; being:

- *Ridhwān al Allah* (pleasure of Allah).

- Forgiveness.

- Reward.

However this area is inherently different from its counterpart. Indeed Allah, by virtue of His being God, is not bound to any process, structure or accountability. He is omnipotent and does as He wishes (Quran 85:16).[42] However, throughout the Quran Allah also communicates His divine attributes of Mercy, Fairness and Justice (Quran 1:2, Quran 15:49[43] and Quran 18:49).[44] Thus, based upon Allah's divine attributes it is reasonable to deduce that when His creation has effectively engaged in their transaction with Allah, that Allah will reciprocate this engagement and open for them the pathway to success, which is understood in this context to mean paradise. Not only is this reasonable to deduce but it also the foundational premise of all faith practice within Islam.

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[41] ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِلْمُتَّقِينَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ

[42] فَعَّالٌ لِمَا يُرِيدُ

[43] نَبِّئْ عِبَادِي أَنِّي أَنَا الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

[44] وَلَا يَظْلِمُ رَبُّكَ أَحَدًا

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Furthermore, unlike His answerable creation, there are no stages of progression through which Allah is compelled to pass or indeed maintain. There is however a theologically informed opinion that of the themes mentioned here above, the first and foremost will be that of Allah's pleasure. What this means is that the themes of Forgiveness and Rewards, as identified above, are a natural consequence of attaining Allah's pleasure. It is inconceivable for Allah to be displeased with a member of His creation yet in the same token grant them the bounties of Paradise. This is evident from verse 100 of *surah al-Tawbah* in which Allah states that He will grant paradise to those whom He is pleased with (Quran 9:100).[45] So attaining Allah's pleasure becomes the single point focus for His answerable creation in order to acquire paradise. It is the critical conduit through which all the other themes in this area can be realised. This dynamic is illustrated in Figure 2. below.

Figure 2. Illustration of thematic interactions in the acquisition of paradise: Sphere TWO.
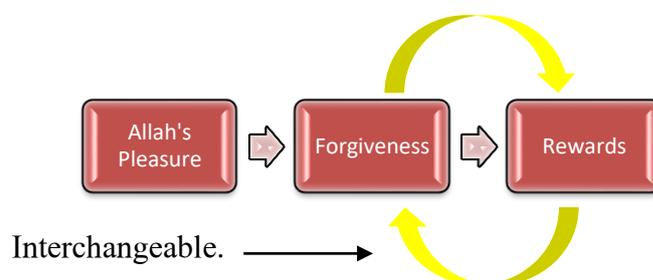
The meeting of the two independent set of themes (as illustrated in figures 1 & 2) is what I refer to as the Transactional Engagement Model. The full model is illustrated below in fig. 3.

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[45] وَالسَّابِقُونَ الْأَوَّلُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي تَحْتَهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

<u>Figure. 3. Transactional Engagement Model.</u>

Area **ONE**: Responsibilities imposed upon the creation

Area **TWO**: Promise of reward offered by Allah.

A'mal

Taqwa

Iman

Spiritual
Loop.

Interchangeable.

Allah's
Pleasure

Forgiveness

Rewards
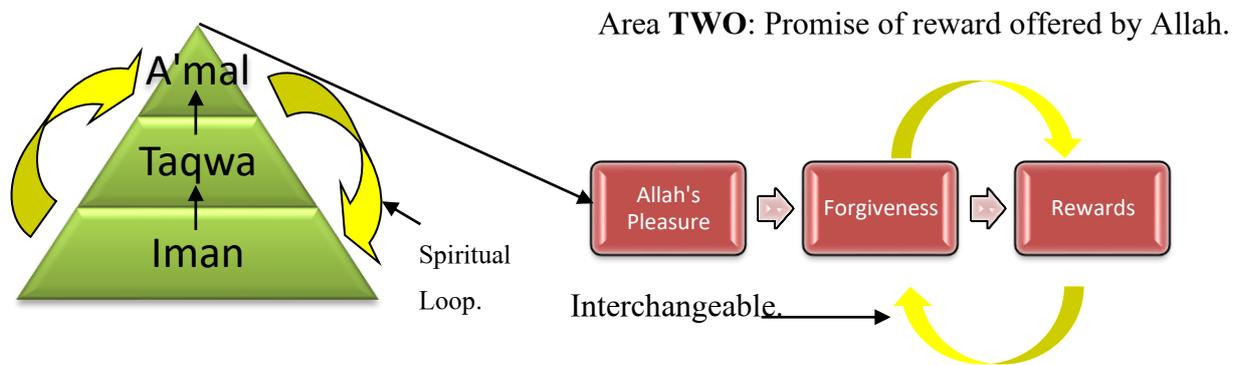
Figure 3 illustrates the how the responsibility of ʿibādah imposed by Allah starts with īmān

(faith) and the formation of tawḥīd (there is a deeper discussion to follow in respect of tawḥīd

which will be detailed in section 4.3). Thereafter an individual's consciousness of Allah

(taqwā) and righteous actions (aʿmāl aṣ ṣāliḥ) all necessarily need to be for the sake of

seeking Allah's pleasure which in turn opens the pathways to His forgiveness, rewards and

ultimately paradise. Esposito (2016) made reference to this concept as highlighted previously

in this chapter (Esposito, 2016, pp 28-32). Thus Allah's pleasure is the single foundational

theme for a Muslim seeking to achieve paradise and ultimate theological success. Therefore

it becomes evident that when Allah speaks of acquiring paradise in the Quran the entire

endeavour is contingent upon attaining His pleasure. Zakzouk (2017) makes reference to this

very principle in his examination of the path to paradise from an Islamic perspective. He

argues that the imperative of faith is to search for the 'face' of Allah and paradise is its

reward (Zakzouk, 2017, pp 39-40). Similarly Haleem (2017), in his analysis of Quranic

paradise, argues that paradise is the abode for those who do good deeds and believe in Allah

(Haleem, 2017, pp 50-55).[46] To an extent Zakzouk (2017) endorses the TEM in stating that paradise is available to those who believe in God and strive to do good deeds (Zakzouk, 2017, pp 45-46). What this means as far as a conceptual framework is concerned that the entire construct of *ʿibādah* is predicated upon the seeking of Allah's pleasure through which paradise is attained. So any act of *ʿibādah*, be it designated or otherwise, must solely and exclusively be performed for His sake. This forms the core category for the analytical examination of *Dabiq* that was referred to in section 3.6.1 of chapter 3.

At this juncture it is necessary to re-affirm the insider approach that is being utilised in the development of this conceptual framework. A number of assumptions regarding paradise have been accepted, for instance that it exists in some metaphysical reality and that it is a celestial abode for the righteous. In doing so, the conventional academic approach of critical engagement has been suspended. This means that considerations like those raised by Lange (2016) on the 'when' of the otherworldly dimension of paradise (Lange, 2016, pp 40) or Rustomji (2010) on the development of the doctrine of paradise between the 7th and 12th centuries CE (Rustomji, 2010, pp 166) will not be addressed here. The reason for this has been highlighted in chapters 2 and 3. *Da'esh* operate on a literal and reductive understanding of the Quran and hadith (Weiss & Hassan (2016); Jacoby (2019)) and often utilise decontextualised fringe opinions in support of their operational goals. Organisationally they are unconcerned with philosophical and theological debates on reality or genealogy of Islamic thought regarding paradise. For them, paradise exists and they utilise this accepted reality within Sunni Islam to communicate a particular narrative for a section of their intended audience.

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[46] There is a discussion here relating to who is eligible for paradise. Is it a privilege exclusively for Muslims or will other communities from previous nations also be granted entry. In addition there is a consideration regarding those who believe in Allah but have not been able to attain paradise; is punishment in hell eternal or temporary? This is addressed by both Zakzouk (2017) and Haleem (2017). However for the purposes of the conceptual framework the objective is to attain paradise without punishment or reprimand in hell first.

However, despite this 'insider' perspective there is a fundamental consideration regarding the principle argued above. How does one ensure their expressions of *ʿibādah* are genuinely for Allah's pleasure (in which paradise is rooted)? How does a person recognise if their intentions are corrupt i.e. seeking other than the pleasure of Allah and how does an individual correct or rectify their intentions? These considerations are focused upon discussions relating to the *nafs* (self); which as mentioned previously in section 4.2 is one of the challenge areas of faith practice in Islam. Allah refers to the *nafs* within the Quran as the commander to vice (Quran 12:53).[47] He states that its purification leads to success, which as detailed in this section is the acquisition of paradise. This means that the effective discharge of *ʿibādah* is underpinned by a command over one's self; the 'mastery' of which leads to the attainment of Allah's pleasure which translates as the acquisition of paradise. The challenges presented by ones' self are profound and its management is necessary at every stage within the first area of the TEM (*īmān* (faith), *taqwā́* and *aʿmāl aṣ ṣāliḥ* (righteous actions)) in order to retain the theological validity of *ʿibādah* (designated acts or otherwise). Failure to do so results in nothing more than transient expressions of temporal conduct which are disconnected from theological value and merit in the metaphysical and accountable realm. This assertion is supported by the Quran where Allah instructs His answerable creation not to invalidate their alms giving by recounting the favour upon those they have assisted or by boasting to others of their charitable donations (Quran 2: 264). Post (1988) also leans toward this sentiment as he presents a perspective which suggests that an 'egotistical' man (egotism used here as a synonym for *nafs* laden self focus) is unable to worship God (Post, 1988, pp 216). Similarly, Tosun (2012) argues that Allah's answerable creation has the ability to choose between right and wrong. But this is contingent upon their ability to make sacrifices and compromise individual wants and desires against the attainment of success and that cannot happen without

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[47] وَمَا أُبَرِّئُ نَفْسِي إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي إِنَّ رَبِّي غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

'self' regulation (Tosun, 2012, pp 117-120). Thus a command over one's self underpins the integrity of *'ibādah* which is the principle in chief of accountability for Allah's answerable creation.

However the challenges presented by the *nafs* (in addition to those posed by *shayṭān* and presented by Allah) are broad, varied and non prescriptive. These challenges, alongside their respective control mechanisms will be detailed to a much greater extent in sections 5.1 and 5.2 of chapter 5. But for the purposes of understanding the significance of the *nafs* in relation to the broader purpose of creation it is necessary to appreciate that in this temporal worldly realm the human experience of and engagement with *'ibādah* is littered with a plethora of challenges. So the solution, resolution and any subsequent self rectifying intervention necessarily needs to be as dynamic as the diverse set of challenges that answerable creation will face. Therefore the argument made in chapter 5 is that the constructs provided to address matters relating to the *nafs* are the jihad *al-nafs* and *taqwā´*. These mechanisms are posited as the apparatus to address the broad and varied self driven challenges faced by Allah's answerable creation in the discharge of their religious duties.

The chapter thus far has sought to establish the purpose of creation in Islam. This was necessary in order to develop a conceptual framework against which a theological deconstruction of *Dabiq* can be undertaken. The question being asked in this thesis is 'what is/are *Da'esh's* theological objective(s)?' In being so, it is necessary to have an understanding of the broader theological picture (as identified in chapter 2 and established in chapter 3) against which *Dabiq's* content can be analysed. Thus far it has been argued that the purpose of creation in Sunni Islam is to worship Allah. The principles of worship are defined by the core tenets of Islam (being the five fundamental pillars) and its duty is undertaken in this temporal worldly realm. The outcome of such a reality is inevitable accountability for Allah's answerable creation where the measures of absolute success and

failure are paradise and hell respectively. So the purpose of worshipping Allah is to succeed in accountability and attain paradise. However, the Transactional Engagement Model which was developed following a thematic analysis of paradise in the Quran, revealed that in order to attain paradise the pleasure of Allah is absolutely essential; without it paradise is unobtainable. Yet attaining the pleasure of Allah and ensuring its continuity through the course of material action is solely a product of the jihad *al-nafs* and *taqwā*. These mechanisms preserve the theological integrity of temporal actions for them to have a positive and valuable resonance in the afterlife. Furthermore they are the regulators of the *nafs* as humankind traverses the plethora of faith related challenges (in the form of *Shayṭān* – the devil, the *nafs* – ones' self and tests presented by Allah) associated with *ʿibādah*. Therefore ultimately the endeavour for humankind, the reason for which they were created, is ultimately to secure Allah's pleasure in this world and this cannot be achieved without the jihad *al-nafs* or *taqwā*. Thus the conceptual framework for analysing *Dabiq* is centred on the core category Allah's pleasure in which the construct of *taqwā* and the jihad *al-nafs* are embedded. The dynamic of *ʿibādah*, as discussed in this chapter so far, is illustrated in the figure below as a 'top down' representation.

Figure.4 The Dynamic of *ʿibādah.*
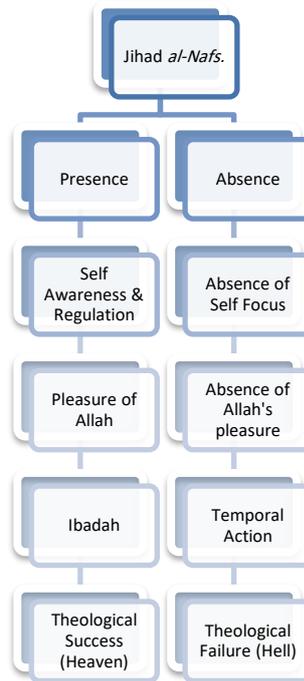
Discussions thus far has been focused on *ʿibādah*; its components and ensuring its integrity. However, *ʿibādah* has also been regarded as synonymous with *tawḥīd* - the active propagation of Allah's Oneness - (Ibn Abbas, 1992, pp 557) and this is a term which features prominently throughout *Dabiq*. Thus the following section will focus on the concept of *tawḥīd*, its relationship with *ʿibādah* and relevance to *Da'esh*.

4.3 *Tawḥīd.*

The concept of *tawḥīd* is connected to Islam's philosophical and historical developments. For example, *tawḥīd* has presented a number of philosophical challenges for Muslims; particularly in respect of what are considered abstract themes such as Allah's form, presence, knowledge and pre destination. These challenges led to the development of speculative theology (*ʿilm al-kalām*) which was the product of philosophical discourse relating to how such abstract themes were interpreted and understood in Muslim consciousness (Nasr & Leaman, 1996, pp 78-79). Furthermore, as Islam encountered European philosophy a more

concerted effort was made in the development of *'ilm al-kalām* (Leaman, 2015, pp 06) resulting in greater literary prominence from the 9th century CE (*ibid*, pp 05-06). However, the purpose of engaging in discussions on *tawḥīd* here is not to analyse these developments rather it is to better understand the concept of *tawḥīd* and its relationship with *'ibādah*.

Abdullah ´ibn 'Abbās argues that *'ibādah* is the expression and manifestation of *tawḥīd* (Ibn Abbas, 1992, pp 557). His opinion is shared by Muqātil bin Sulaymān [d 772 CE] and Yaḥya bin Ziyād al Farrā [d 822 CE] (Sulayman, 2002, pp 133; Al Farra, 1983, pp 89). The prophetic narration cited previously in section 4.2.1[48] suggests that *tawḥīd* permeates all actions which constitute *'ibādah* in such a manner that every expression of faith is held to be a declaration of *tawḥīd*. This premise positions Allah; His oneness, at the forefront of all religious endeavours. This sentiment is shared by Esposito (2016) who argues that the purpose of life in Islam is not simply to affirm belief in God but also to actualise and realise His will (Esposito, 2016, pp 92). Similarly Assad (1975) states that humankinds' notion of Allah's Oneness must be reflected within their endeavours (Assad, 1975, pp 06) and Murata & Chittick (1994) refer to it as turning the Quran 'in to flesh and blood' (Murata & Chittick, 1994, pp 09). Mawdudi (1981) supports these perspectives and argues that *tawḥīd* centralises Allah within Islamic creed as the only agent, object of worship and reality (Mawdudi, 1981, pp 58). Faruqi (1995) argues that *tawḥīd* is the identity of Muslim civilisation and the foundation of all piety and religiosity in subservience to Allah (Faruqi, 1995, pp 17-19). Thus *tawḥīd* centralises Allah as the point of focus for all theological endeavours. *'Ibādah* is the manifestation of *tawḥīd* meaning that the physical acts of worships are in fact affirmations of His absolute Oneness. This dynamic centralises Allah in the physical world of Islam as much as the concept of *tawḥīd* centralises Him in the metaphysical world. This relationship between the temporal and metaphysical realms is what Hillenbrand (2015) refers to as the

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48 عَنِ ابْنِ عُمَرَ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم بُنِىَ الإِسْلاَمُ عَلَى خَمْسٍ شَهَادَةُ أَنْ لاَ إِلَهَ إِلاَّ اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامُ الصَّلاَةِ وَإِيتَاءُ الزَّكَاةِ وَصَوْمُ رَمَضَانَ وَحَجُّ الْبَيْتِ

duality of faith practice in the temporal and spiritual domains (Hillenbrand, 2015, pp 89). It was also alluded to by Schimmel (1992), Murata & Chittick (1994) and Esposito (2016), as highlighted previously, in their detail of the accountability construct in Islam. Sayyid Qutb also made reference to this duality by arguing that *tawḥīd* connects the heavens and the earth (Qutb, 2006, pp 102). Most poignantly, *tawḥīd* validates material action as *ʿibādah*. This is a fundamental point of consideration as it directly challenges the militant *Islamist* position on *tawḥīd* which will be detailed in section 4.3.1.

The notion of duality leads in to a further discussion regarding the impact of *ʿibādah* in the temporal realm. An expression of the fundamental components of *ʿibādah*, as detailed in section 4.1, results in a neutral or positive temporal impact. For example, the offering of zakat has a positive physical impact in the temporal domain by removing individuals from absolute poverty. This transition in circumstance, whether momentary or longer lasting, is the intended positive consequence of performing an act of *ʿibādah*. So not only does the receiver of zakat benefit in the temporal and physical realm but so does the giver of zakat in the metaphysical and spiritual realm; hence the duality of faith practice referred to by Hillenbrand (2015). The temporal and metaphysical realms are connected but in such a manner that the observance of faith practice in the physical realm is not detrimental to its context. Indeed mandated acts of worship which appear to only have metaphysical benefits as in the case of fasting, obligatory prayers or bringing faith, do not have any apparent adverse impact upon the contexts in which they are performed. So the discharge of *ʿibādah* which is the manifestation of *tawḥīd* is either impact natural or impact positive. Therefore any expression of worship must necessarily follow the same vein as that established by the essential components of *ʿibādah* and lead to neutral or positive outcomes in the temporal domain. This assertion is supported by Murata & Chittick (1994) who argue that Islam set out to build cohesive societies by harmonising peoples activities (Murata & Chittick, 1994,

pp 09). In a similar vein, Ruthven (2012) also states that the spread of Islam (its practice and

expression) was a largely peaceful phenomenon. The argument that Islam is inherently

violent is a reductive narrative that is unappreciative of the length and breadth of Muslim

civilisation (Ruthven, 2012, pp 02-03). Furthermore, throughout the Quran Allah states that

He sent messengers to recite His verses on to the masses, so that they may purify the masses

(purging of the *nafs* referred to as *tazkiyah*) and educate people on both scripture and wisdom

(Quran 2:151). Commenting on this particular verse ʹIbn ʿAbbās suggests that self

purification (as mentioned by Allah) is achieved through not only *tawḥīd* but also through

compulsory and voluntary alms giving; that being zakat (obligatory alms donations) and

ṣadaqah (voluntary alms giving) (Ibn Abbas, 1992, vol. 1, pp 2). A particular point of

interest from ʹIbn ʿAbbās's commentary on this verse is his association of *tazkiyah* (self

purification) with *ṣadaqah* (voluntary alms giving). This sentiment strongly suggests two

things: (i) that self development is linked to a concept of social religious responsibility and

(ii) that social religious responsibility in the form of alms giving is evidence of the neutral or

positive consequences of faith expression in the temporal realm. Indeed the obvious

challenge to this principle of neutral or positive faith outcomes is the concept of military

jihad; which in recent years has gained a great deal of notoriety as a tool of terrorism.

However, despite the nature of conflict which is embedded within the military expression of

jihad, Bonner (2006) cites the works of al-Farabi who states that a jihad can only be 'just' if it

seeks to establish the well being of a virtuous city. A war in which conquest and bloodshed

is foremost cannot be 'just' (Bonner, 2006, pp 5). Although al-Farabi was discussing the

doctrine of just war theory in Islam the principle he refers to is the very same argument that is

made regarding the neutral or positive impact of *ʿibādah*. So military jihad is subject to the

same considerations as the other acts of worship, despite its potential for conflict and death.

In addition, Jacoby (2019) states that the references to conflict and violence in Quran need to

be measured against its broader narrative and messaging; jihad is not simply absolute violence (Jacoby, 2019, pp 29-43). The relevance of discussions regarding the neutral and positive temporal impact of *'ibādah* are necessary in order to highlight its characteristic and differentiae *Dabiq's* narratives from 'normative/mainstream' Islam that is being argued in this chapter. As will be detailed in chapter 7, *Da'esh* has a distinct disregard for the temporal impact of their operations which they position in *Dabiq* as *'ibādah*. El-Fadl (2007) touches upon this contention and suggests that the puritanical application of faith wholly disregards its impact in the physical space (el-Fadl, 2007, pp 136-141).

The discussion thus far has positioned *tawḥīd* centrally within the Muslim consciousness and made clear its relationship with *'ibādah*. However, it has failed to offer a prescriptive understanding of the term; suggesting only that *tawḥīd* refers to Allah's Oneness. Although there is merit to this understanding, *tawḥīd* is also a composition of several theological elements that require elucidation which will be detailed in the following section.

4.3.1 *Tawḥīd*: Appreciating its Construct.

The principles of *tawḥīd* have been established by Allah within the Quran. In *surah 'ikhlāṣ* Allah states that He is one, omnipotent, neither created nor with partner and there is no equal to Him (Quran: 112).[49] The chapter title, *'ikhlāṣ*, translates to mean sincerity; suggesting that true sincerity in Islam cannot be achieved unless accompanied by a sincere acceptance of Allah's absolute oneness. Similarly in *surah al-Ḥashr* Allah details His exclusive attributes (Quran 59:22)[50] as He does is in *surah al-Baqarah* (Quran 2:255).[51] These prescriptive references within the Quran create an exclusivity for Allah where He alone is the absolute

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[49] قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ

[50] هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ السَّلَامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيْمِنُ الْعَزِيزُ الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ هُوَ اللَّهُ الْخَالِقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

[51] اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ

omnipotent authority: in every sense of the term He is the One God. The vast majority of Sunni Muslim scholars agree upon these prescriptive tenets of *tawḥīd* (Hanifah, 1923, pp 04; Al-Dawsari: 1982; Al-Khamis: 1998 and Al-Tamimi: 2002). This is not to suggest however, that there are no differences of opinion among Sunni scholars on how Allah's absolute divinity is interpreted and understood. Al-Fawzan's (2013) developments of two distinct branches of *tawḥīd* is an example of the inter-Sunni perspectives on the matter. One branch refers to *tawḥīd al-rubūbiyyah* meaning the oneness of Allah as the creator and sustainer. The other branch refers to *tawḥīd al-ulūhiyyah* meaning the oneness of Allah as the supreme deity (Al-Fawzan, 2013, pp 22). Al-Fawzan suggests that the convergence of both of these respective branches results in the conceptualisation of absolute *tawḥīd* in Islam. Similarly, Schimmel (1992) details some broader creedal differences across the disparate sects of Islamic theology as well as development of *ʿilm al-kalām* (Schimmel, 1992, pp 73-91).

However, irrespective of these differences in understanding the construct, the overarching principle of Allah's absoluteness and exclusivity is agreed upon by all Muslims. *Tawḥīd* is an affirmation consisting of several components which, when aligned in perfect synchronicity, form the centrepiece of all faith expressions in Islam. As a term it is commonly used to describe the Oneness of Allah but as a concept it is far more detailed and intricate than this simple one word translation would suggest. As highlighted above, *tawḥīd* is the nucleus of Muslim civilisation and the hallow ground upon which the foundations of paradise are set. The Transactional Engagement Model detailed that those foundations (in the form of *ʿibādah*) are necessarily situated within the tenet of *īmān* (faith) which is embedded in the principle of *tawḥīd*. So without *tawḥīd* there simply is no conceptualisation of *ʿibādah* rather there are but temporal actions which are wholly disconnected from theological value in the metaphysical realm. However, the conceptualisation of *tawḥīd* is not contingent upon the actions of *ʿibādah*. This distinction is entirely necessary if *tawḥīd* is to be regarded as the

nucleus of Islam as argued above by Mawdudi (1981) and Faruqi (1995). The conceptual divinity of Allah and His centrality within Muslim consciousness cannot be submissive to human engagements in temporal acts of worship. What I mean by this is that Allah is and always will be One in Islamic theology, irrespective of whether His answerable creation worships Him.

This is an important distinction to highlight as militant *Islamism* engages with *tawḥīd* from a very different perspective. The following section will detail some of these perspectives in order to facilitate a better deconstruction of *Dabiq*.

4.3.2 *Tawḥīd*: An Islamist Perspective.

Tawḥīd features prominently across militant *Islamist* narratives. It is presented as the imperative driving force behind military jihad which is argued as necessary in order to establish absolute *tawḥīd* in this temporal world (Dabiq, 2014, vol.1, pp 05). The centrality of *tawḥīd* within militant *Islamism* is evident by the names with which *Islamist* organisations identify themselves, for example Jamat al-Tawhid wal Jihad; the names they choose for their media and publication wings, for example Minbar al-Tawhid wal Jihad or indeed the foundational themes upon which their publications are produced, for example one of *Dabiq's* foundational themes is *tawḥīd*. However despite their affinity to the concept, militant *Islamist* organisations have a very different understanding and engagement with *tawḥīd* from that established in the previous section.

Maher (2016) offers a detailed overview of *tawḥīd* in Salafi jihadist thought. Referencing the works of Ibn Taymiyyah, Mawdudi, Azam, ibn Abdul Wahhab and Qutb; Maher (2016) describes how Salafi jihadists position absolute *tawḥīd* as a union between belief and action. Thus failure to worship Allah in the required manner constitutes a rejection of His *tawḥīd* as

the supreme deity (Maher, 2016, pp 145-150). Maher (2016) identifies three aspects of *tawḥīd* communicated by Salafi jihadist ideologues; being *tawḥīd al ʾulūhiyyah* (oneness of divinity), *tawḥīd al rubūbiyyah* (oneness of lordship) and *tawḥīd al ṣifāt wal ʾasmāʾ* (oneness in divine attributes and names). These components of *tawḥīd* in principle do not appear to be any different from the construct of *tawḥīd* that was highlighted in section 4.3.1; with the exception of *tawḥīd al ṣifāt wal ʾasmāʾ*. However where the Salafi jihadi proposition of *tawḥīd* diverges is in its vulnerabilities to violation as a result of human inaction. For example, an individual claims to believe in Allah as the one true lord and professes belief in His divine names and attributes. However, that individual fails to worship Allah despite acknowledging the obligation of worship. In such a scenario the militant *Islamist* perspective on *tawḥīd* renders the entire claim to faith invalid due to an absence of necessary action in validation of *tawḥīd* (Maher, 2016, pp 149-150).

The abstract nature of what may or may not constitute an invalidator of *tawḥīd* has created a great deal of subjectivity within jihadist discourse on how the integrity of *tawḥīd* is maintained. For example, Maher (2016) cites bin Baz's opinion regarding an individual whose faith is invalidated due to their failure to offer obligatory prayers (despite acknowledging their obligation) or failure to learn about his/her religion (Maher, 2016, pp 150). Maher (2016) also makes reference to bin Laden's opinion who states that failing to oppose a tyrannical Muslim leader is an invalidator of faith (*ibid*, pp 153). Furthermore, Faraj (1981) argues that pledging allegiance to the caliph is an obligation upon all Muslims (Faraj, 1981, pp 04) which when measured against bin Baz's opinion on the preservation of *tawḥīd* through material action suggests that anyone who fails to pledge allegiance to the caliph compromises their *tawḥīd* due to their failure to fulfil a religious obligation. *Da'esh* act upon these principles in the justification of killing fellow Sunni Muslims.

Similarly, ibn Abd al-Wahhab (no date) provides a brief list of ten nullifiers of Islam (which are now understood as nullifiers of *tawḥīd*) of which one is to consider another model of governance better than the shariah. In illustration, he provides an example of an individual who prefers the rule of a *ṭāghūt* (which is argued by ibn Abd al-Wahhab as everything that is 'worshipped' other than Allah (ibn Abd al-Wahhab, no date, pp 15)) over that of Islam as someone who has apostosised (ibn Abd al-Wahhab, no date, pp 03). Contextualising this claim against *Da'esh's* self proclaimed legitimacy as the caliphate, ibn Abd al-Wahhab's position would suggest that affinity to *Da'esh* is necessary for all Muslims in order to preserve the integrity of their *tawḥīd*. Failure to do so or to consider the application of shariah lesser than that of democracy; which is held as the idolatrous *ṭāghūt*, is to breach *tawḥīd* and specifically *tawḥīd al rubūbiyyah* (oneness of lordship) thereby nullifying ones Islam. Faruqi (1995) adds an additional perspective in arguing that *tawḥīd* underpins social governance in the form of Islamic Law. He suggests that the notion of an 'Islamic State' is removed from classical understandings of Islamic governance and that Islamic rule over a given context is in fact the Ummah realising sovereignty and implementing *tawḥīd* as Allah's vicegerents on earth (Faruqi, 1995, pp 143). The moment that Islamic law is not applied within a context is the moment that a Muslim community loses its Islamic privilege and makes itself prime for revolution which then becomes an obligation (*ibid*, pp 92). This proposition is an interesting one as it appears to be the *Islamist* counterpart of the considerations raised by above in chapter 2 by Cavanaugh (2009) who cited John Bossy's notion of power. Bossy argued that there has been a migration of the 'holy': from the church to state meaning that the state has assumed the historical position of religion in modern society (Cavanaugh, 2009, pp 11). As will be detailed in chapters 6 and 7, *Dabiq* dismisses the idea of a modern state and interpret adherence to its democratic imperatives as the 'worship' of other than Allah which is clear apostasy. So they appear to have taken Faruqi's

(1995) concept regarding the absence of shariah at state level and combined it with ibn Abd al-Wahhab's (no date) sentiments on *ṭāghūt* and *shirk* (polytheism) to argue that an affinity toward non shariah based structures of governance are expressions of *shirk*, worship of *ṭāghūt* and invalidators of *tawḥīd*.

So from these perspectives a failure to offer obligatory prayers, to stand against a tyrant, pledge allegiance to the caliph or the absence of shariah at state level represent the absence of adherence to Allah's commands. This in turn is indicative of an absence of *tawḥīd al rubūbiyyah* (oneness of lordship) which in turn invalidates *tawḥīd*. Thus the component of *tawḥīd al rubūbiyyah* is arguably a sliding scale of subjectivity within militant *Islamist* thought. Its actualisation not only mandates the active performance of designated acts of *'ibādah* but it is entirely vulnerable to compromise from any number of actions or inactions thereby undermining the entire construct of *tawḥīd*.

Tawḥīd in militant *Islamist* thought appears to have two distinct characteristics. Firstly it is totalitarian: it must necessarily permeate all facets of existence, private, public, religious and what is now considered in the post enlightenment world as 'political'. Secondly, *tawḥīd* is indivisible; all three of its components must work in synergy to create a perpetual loop of unity of Allah's oneness. And the integrity of this perpetual loop is most vulnerable to compromise through *tawḥīd al rubūbiyyah* (oneness of lordship) which appears to be vulnerable to negation by action, inaction, belief and sentiment. The development of *tawḥīd* to such a degree is arguably far removed from idolatrous polytheism of 7th century Arabia that conceptual *tawḥīd* was conceived to challenge. But as Maher (2016) states, *tawḥīd* has evolved, under the auspices of bin Laden and al-Zawahiri, in to a tool of political emancipation for *Islamists* (Maher, 2016, pp 154). His assessment is supported by the sentiments shared within in this section. *Tawḥīd*, or the absence thereof, has evolved from a

primarily theological phenomenon to a catalyst for social revolution; a consideration raised by Faruqi (1995) regarding the absence of *tawḥīd* at state level.

However, the militant *Islamist* propositions regarding *tawḥīd* are not uncontested. Thus the following section will detail some of the challenges that the militant *Islamist* construct of *tawḥīd* presents.

4.3.3 Difficulties Navigating the Islamist Perspective on *Tawḥīd*.

The vast majority of Sunni Muslim scholars agree, or do not disagree, with the categorisations of *tawḥīd* presented above; *tawḥīd al rubūbiyyah* (oneness of lordship), *tawḥīd al ʿulūhiyyah* (oneness of divinity) and *tawḥīd al ṣifāt wal ʿasmāʾ* (oneness in divine attributes and names). But over the years, scholars have debated, agreed and disagreed regarding the invalidators of *tawḥīd*. So the starting point of this discussion is to highlight that the militant *Islamist* position on *tawḥīd al rubūbiyyah* is not an absolute one despite the fact that it may share references and overlaps with Salafi and non Salafi understandings of the concept.

Differences of opinion on *tawḥīd* lead to profound differences in outcome. This is evident in instances where *Da'esh* and like organisations have apostatised and killed people on the determination of *kufr* (disbelief) where as others either take in to account their Islam or are reserved in their designation of apostasy. This is best illustrated in the example cited previously by Maher (2016) who referenced bin Baz's opinion regarding an individual who does not offer obligatory prayers despite acknowledging their obligation in Islam. Bin Baz stated that such an individual is an apostate and has left the fold of Islam (Maher, 2016, pp 149-150). However, other jurists from across the major schools of jurisprudence within Sunni Islam do not share this sentiment. Al-Halbi (1985) argues from a Hanafi perspective and states that an individual who fails to offer their obligatory prayers is still a Muslim (Al-

Halbi, 1985, pp 70). This sentiment is shared by Ali [d 1656 CE] (Ali, no date, vol. 1, pp 464) and Nizam (Nizam, 1991, vol.1, pp 50) as well as scholars of classical Islam from other schools of jurisprudence (Al-Adawi, no date, vol.1, pp 304; al-Qarafi, 1994, vol.2, pp 482). The clerical opinion in respect of an individual who wilfully rejects a fundamental tenet of Islam is absolutely definitive; they hold no valid claim to the faith and their *tawḥīd* has been compromised. Some classical scholars also hold the opinion that such an individual should be the subject of corporal punishment (Al-Qarawi, no date, pp 50; al-Qarafi, 1994, vol.2, pp 482). But in respect of an individual who fails to pray yet still believes in the obligation of prayer the opinion is greatly divided. Scholars argue from the point of proving disbelief and the implementation of capital punishment through to the preservation faith privilege and the application of summary justice (Abdul Barr, 2000, vol. 1, pp 235; Al-Gharnati, no date, pp 34). But even those scholars who advocate for corporal punishment do so from the perspective that it is a penalty due to a religious misdemeanour and not due to apostasy and disbelief. So there is an evident reluctance among classical Muslim scholarship to openly apostatise; rather they prefer to cast judgement whilst preserving the privilege of faith. Thus when such debates exist within jurisprudential discourse regarding an essential tenet of Islam such as obligatory prayers, how can the integrity of *tawḥīd* so definitively be denigrated by arguably lesser practices such as pledging allegiance to a self declared caliphate?

Furthermore, the theological arguments presented by militant *Islamist* ideologues are logically weak. For example, bin Baz argues that it is not sufficient to merely utter belief in God rather belief needs to be demonstrated with physical action. If mere utterances were sufficient, then hypocrites would also be Muslim because they recite the declaration of faith despite not believing in it (Maher, 2016, pp 150). However, bin Baz fails to understand that this is the basic definition of hypocrisy; to profess belief in something that one does not believe in (Cambridge Dictionary: 2019). Imam al-Suyuti offers a commentary on verse 2 of

sural al-muʾminūn in which he cites a statement of the prophet's companion Abu Bark. Abu Bakr reports that he heard the prophet say 'seek refuge in Allah from hypocritical humility'. The companions asked the prophet what this meant and he replied 'humility of the body yet hypocrisy of the heart' (Al-Suyuti, no date, vol. 7, pp 184).[52] So it is entirely possible for an individual to claim *tawḥīd*, perform the obligatory actions yet still harbour disbelief in his/her heart especially if the consequences of failing to pray (for example) are execution and death. So how has material action removed hypocrisy and proven the integrity of faith? Conversely, there may be an individual who harbours genuine belief but does not offer the obligatory prayers despite acknowledging their obligation in Islam. In this case bin Baz would argue disbelief based on material inaction yet validate the claim to faith of a disbeliever based on material action. This is despite the non practitioner also claiming faith and professing *tawḥīd*. So the militant *Islamist* engagement with *tawḥīd* is incredibly reductive. Furthermore, it is wholly unappreciative of the individual tests that people face as they navigate their way through *ʿibādah* (as highlighted above in section 4.2).

The militant *Islamist* proposition of *tawḥīd* is complicated in its seeming simplicity. It breaks down a concept of belief in to distinct categories but then cements its validity on a sliding scale of ambiguity in the form of *tawḥīd al rubūbiyyah*. In doing so militant *Islamism* arguably compromises the very integrity of the *tawḥīd* they are seeking to establish. Therefore as I proceed with the theological deconstruction of *Dabiq*, I align myself with the opinion of classical scholars regarding *tawḥīd* as established in sections 4.3 and 4.3.1: that the faith privilege is preserved unless confronted by an outright act or declaration of disbelief.

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[52] عن أبي بكر الصديق قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم تعوذوا بالله من خشوع النفاق قالوا يا رسول الله وما خشوع النفاق؟ قال خشوع البدن ونفاق القلب

4.4 Summary.

This chapter sought to identify the purpose of creation in accordance with Sunni Islam. In doing so it has argued that Allah created humankind for the purposes of His worship which is principled upon the belief of impending accountability in a metaphysical other world. Success in accountability is measured by the acquisition of paradise where as hell is the measure of theological failure. The Transactional Engagement Model (TEM) detailed the manner in which Allah has communicated the acquisition of paradise in the Quran. It defined the pleasure of Allah as the *a priori* standard and single unifying component necessary in all acts of worship; designated or otherwise. Therefore the human endeavour in the temporal world is to live a life of adherence to Allah's commands whereby all acts of worship (designated or otherwise) are undertaken exclusively for His sake. Failure to do so renders an act of worship theologically impotent and disconnected from the metaphysical realm in which they are needed. This was the embodiment of the duality of faith practice referred to by Hillenbrand: 2015 and the turn of scripture in to 'flesh and blood' as argued by Murata & Chittick: 1994.

However, establishing and preserving the integrity of actions for the sake of Allah is a product of self awareness. The task is further complicated by the influence of *Shayṭān*, plethora of tests presented by Allah and indeed the lure of ones' wretched *nafs*. So the argument was made in favour of the jihad *al-nafs* and *taqwā* as mechanisms to regulate unbridled emotive human impulses and desires. The concept of the jihad *al-nafs* will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 5 but its positioning in this chapter gives the concept centrality in the wider purpose of *ʿibādah*. Thus the sum of human existence from the perspective of Sunni Islam is predicated upon the jihad *al-nafs*; one's ability to effectively manage their self in order to secure the pleasure of Allah.

Discussions regarding the responsibility of *ʿibādah* also highlighted its relationship with *tawḥīd* and how the construct of *tawḥīd* establishes a theological connection between the temporal and metaphysical realms. Indeed the metaphysical realm, the court of Allah, is where the value of temporal acts of worship will be realised; or not. And *tawḥīd* is the construct which gives theological value to transient material acts of worship. However, the militant *Islamist* perspective on the relationship between *tawḥīd* and *ʿibādah* presented considerable challenges from both theological and logical perspectives. As a result, the opinion of classical scholars regarding the validity of *tawḥīd* despite non adherence to faith practice was adopted.

In the development of a conceptual framework, this chapter has established the following:

1. That the core category against which the narrative of *Dabiq* will be analysed is the pleasure of Allah. The pleasure of Allah is the single conduit to paradise, salvation and success in accountability as communicated by the Quran.

2. That the jihad *al-nafs* is positioned as the 'essence' of *ʿibādah*; the necessary characteristic which ensures that all temporal acts of worship have and retain the theological currency they need to be of value in the metaphysical realm.

3. The neutral or positive impact of *ʿibādah* upon the temporal contexts in which it is performed. From a theological perspective, the worship of Allah was legislated for the betterment of society, not its detriment.

Thus the broader picture against which *Dabiq's* contents and *Da'esh's* actions need to be measured is the pleasure of Allah. This is the 'reality' of human existence in Sunni Islam: to live a life in which His pleasure is sought through the rubric of *ʿibādah* and with the support of the jihad *al-nafs* and *taqwā*. Therefore Allah's pleasure becomes the core category against which *Dabiq* will be examined. From this category themes will be identified which *Dabiq*

suggests lead to the pleasure of Allah and they will be reflected against the broader picture of Islam as established in this chapter and highlighted in the 3 points above.

However, the jihad *al-nafs* has been afforded a great deal of prominence in this chapter. It is a theological position that *Da'esh* fervently challenge; arguing instead in favour of its (Friis, 2018) military expression. Therefore the following chapter will examine the concept of jihad in Sunni Muslim thought, its application as a tool of violence and propositions as a mechanism of self rectification.

5.0 JIHAD.

5.1 Introduction.

'A mujāhid is one who performs jihad against his nafs [self]'

(Al-Tirmidhī, vol.6, pp 357).[53]

Chapter 4 summarised that the jihad *al-nafs* underpins the pleasure of Allah. It was argued as the essence of faith practice in Sunni Islam and the mechanism which preserves the theological integrity of temporal acts of worship. Worship in the form of *ʿibādah* is the purpose for which Allah created humankind and this purpose leads to an inevitable and impending accountability in a metaphysical other world. This entire faith proposition is successfully fulfilled through a single faith component of Allah's pleasure which is the core category against which *Dabiq's* narrative will be examined. However, the core category itself is a product of conscious self awareness and an endeavour against ones *nafs*; hence the prominence of the jihad *al-nafs*.

This chapter will detail the concept of jihad in Sunni Islam beyond the conflict and violence based connotations with which it has become synonymous. It will argue that the jihad *al-nafs* is not a hollow or apologetic term developed in order to obfuscate the military objectives of jihad. Rather it is a bonafide principle of Islamic doctrine established through the Quran and *ṣaḥīḥ* hadith from the very inception of Islam.

As a concept the jihad *al-nafs* has distinct and defining overlaps with the construct of *taqwāʾ*. So this chapter will detail the shared characteristics between *taqwāʾ* and the jihad *al-nafs*

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[53] فَضَالَةَ بْنِ عُبَيْدٍ يُحَدِّثُ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم أَنَّهُ قَالَ كُلُّ مَيِّتٍ يُخْتَمُ عَلَى عَمَلِهِ إِلاَّ الَّذِى مَاتَ مُرَابِطًا فِى سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّهُ يُنْمَى لَهُ عَمَلُهُ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَيَأْمَنُ مِنْ فِتْنَةِ الْقَبْرِ وَسَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَقُولُ الْمُجَاهِدُ مَنْ جَاهَدَ نَفْسَهُ قَالَ أَبُو عِيسَى وَفِى الْبَابِ عَنْ عُقْبَةَ بْنِ عَامِرٍ وَجَابِرٍ وَحَدِيثُ فَضَالَةَ بْنِ عُبَيْدٍ حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ صَحِيحٌ

arguing that both constructs are inherently interconnected. Their function is to provide the critical realignment necessary for Allah's answerable creation to navigate the challenges of faith and tests that were highlighted in section 4.2 of chapter 4. Some of the abstract discussions regarding the challenge of faith practice or ʿibādah will also be contextualised in this chapter. So this chapter asserts that the jihad *al-nafs* and *taqwā´* are the foundational characteristics that permeate all expressions of ʿibādah (of which military jihad is one) in order to secure and retain the pleasure of Allah and fulfil theological accountability to Him.

This chapter also discusses the understandings of violence that are associated with the term jihad in Sunni Islam. When performed 'correctly' military jihad becomes the pinnacle of faith practice and one of the most righteous actions after bringing faith in Allah. But in order to achieve this station, the claim of jihad as the application of violence must necessarily be for the pleasure of Allah. It must contain the 'essence' of all faith worship and the core category as defined in chapter 4 in order for it to be theologically valid; and that essence is jihad *al-nafs*.

In the establishment of an 'essence' for ʿibādah this chapter necessarily forces the focus of analyses upon the individual actor and not exclusively upon *Da'esh* as a single entity. As chapter 2 highlighted, theological analyses of *Dabiq* and *Da'esh* have predominantly been framed around the organisation as a whole. For example, 'what does *Da'esh* want or what are they hoping to achieve?' However within such examinations the consideration for micro level individual is all but lost. It is subsumed within wider debates that deconstruct organisations at a macro level but overlook the individual components that constitute that organisation. This is critical when the endeavour is positioned as an act of worship because the construct of ʿibādah within Islam is one of individual accountability not collective accountability. Thus the success or failure of Allah's answerable creation is determined by their individual (in)action; not by alignment to a wider group or organisation. There is no

concept of collective salvation within Sunni Islam. Therefore it is imperative that within the examination of militant *Islamist* organisations that focus is also placed upon the individual stakeholders who are engaged in this act of assumed worship: how do the organisational goal(s) relate to the required theological goals of the individual? This chapter adds the much needed human dimension to the temporal experience of military jihad.

Furthermore, this chapter also differentiates between the jihad *al-nafs* and the 'greater' jihad as two distinct narratives. It argues that the jihad *al-nafs* is an established theological concept supported by the Quran and authentic narrations of the prophet Muhammad whereas the concept of the 'greater' jihad is evidentially weak. As a result of this distinction it is argued that the jihad *al-nafs* cannot be subsumed within the narratives and criticisms levelled against the 'greater' jihad; they are two different entities.

5.2 Jihad *al-nafs*: Understanding its Construct.

Foremost it is necessary to distinguish between the terms jihad *al-nafs* and jihad *al-akbar* (greater jihad). The concept of a 'greater' jihad has been the subject of a great deal of speculation amid claims that the hadith narrations which appear to evidence it are either weak in authenticity or fabricated. For example, Ibrahim bin Abu Alqamah [d 681 CE] referred to the struggle of the self (nafs) as the greatest 'jihad' (Rajab, 1987, pp 196). But the chain of narration through which it has been reported is designated as weak (*ibid*).[54] Similarly ´Ibrāhīm bin ´Abi ʿAbalah is recorded to have stated to a delegation returning from battle that they have returned from the 'lesser' jihad to the 'greater' jihad. When asked what the 'greater' jihad was he replied that it was the struggle an individual undertakes against his

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[54] وقال بقية بن الوليد أخبرنا إبراهيم بن أدهم قال حدثنا الثقة عن على بن أبي طالب قال أول ما تنكرون من جهادكم أنفسكم وهو جهاد النفس والهوى فإن جهادها من أعظم الجهاد كما قال النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم المجاهد من جاهد نفسه في الله وقال عبدالله بن عمر لمن سأله عن الجهاد ابدأ بنفسك فجاهدها وابدأ بنفسك فاغزها

desires (Rajab, 1987, vol.21, pp 36).[55] Yet, Ali bin Nayef al-Shahouz argues that this

narration is fabricated and there is no credible origin for it from the prophet Muhammad

(Nayef, no date, pp 62). These contentions are also vigorously argued by the *Islamist*

ideologue ibn Nuhaas in his treatise on the subject of jihad. He states that the sources which

claim the 'greater' jihad are evidentially weak and furthermore that battling ones desires on

the battlefield is far greater than battling them off the battlefield (Ibn Nuhaas, no date, pp

173-180).

However, the purpose of this section is not to argue the validity of a 'greater' jihad in order to

establish its primacy over a 'lesser' jihad (if such a dynamic exists). I distinguish between

the jihad *al-nafs* and the 'greater' jihad as two distinctly separate constructs and theological

propositions. I accept the evidential criticisms levelled against the concept of the 'greater'

jihad and do not propose to challenge them in order to prove its validity. Indeed the jihad *al-
nafs* is a valid theological construct which was established during the Meccan period of Islam

through several verses of the Quran. Picken (2015) argues that multiple verses were revealed

(prior to the revelation which authorised the use of force) that instructed individuals to

perform jihad against their self and desires. Meaning that the jihad *al-nafs* is established by

the authority of the Quran (Picken, 2015, pp 128). Abu Bakr al-Jazairi comments on verses 1

to 6 of *surah al-ʿankabūt* that are offered by Picken (2015) as evidence of his claims. Al-
Jazairi states that these verses were revealed in relation to ʿAmmār bin Yāsir and Bilāal bin

Ribāh who, as will be highlighted in section 5.3, were the subject of persecution during the

Meccan period of Islam prior to the migration to Medina (Al-Jazairi, no date, vol. 3, pp 191).

In verse 7 of the same *surah*, Allah defines the attributes of the jihad *al-nafs* through two

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[55] Some categorise this hadith is regarded as *daʿīf* (weak). This narration is also reported through a second chain on the authority of *Jābir* but that is also regarded as a weak chain of transmission. See *Jāmiʿ al ʿulūm wal ḥikam*, vol.21, pp 36 for details.

broad themes: belief in Him and the performance of righteous actions (Quran 29: 6-7).[56]   As a result of this jihad, being the adherence of belief in Him and performance of righteous actions, Allah states that He will 'forgive' His answerable creation and grant them a better reward. As detailed in the Transactional Engagement Model in section of 4.2.2 of chapter 4, 'forgiveness' is one of the attributes that Allah has associated with the acquisition of paradise. Thus when Allah forgives His answerable creation it is not only a pathway to paradise which is the measure of absolute ethereal success but it also indicative of securing Allah's pleasure. The Quranic depiction of jihad in this manner creates within it discernible overlaps with the concept of *taqwāʾ* that was referred to in area one of the TEM.

Taqwāʾ features extensively throughout the Quran and its attributes are defined by Allah in the opening verses of the second chapter. Broadly speaking Allah states that the *muttaqīn* (God conscious) are those who bring faith in Him and perform righteous actions;[57] no different to attributes of the jihad *al-nafs* as described above in *surah al-ʿankabūt*. Allah decrees the *muttaqīn* as the rightly guided and the successful (Quran 2:1-5). Further on the in the same *surah* Allah again lists the specific attributes of the *muttaqīn* but on this occasion He includes patience in the face of difficulty and hardship, declaring these attributes as a proof of faith (Quran 2: 177)[58] and a means of attaining success. As established in chapter 4, absolute success in the metaphysical and spiritual realm is the acquisition of paradise which is earned through seeking Allah's pleasure. So *taqwāʾ* is more than a simple consciousness of Allah, rather it is a cognitive intervention which directs adherence to Allah's commands when personal emotions, affinities or inclinations deviate an individual toward a course of action

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56 وَمَنْ جَاهَدَ فَإِنَّمَا يُجَاهِدُ لِنَفْسِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَحْسَنَ الَّذِي كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

57 ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِلْمُتَّقِينَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ أُولَئِكَ عَلَى هُدًى مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

58 لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَآتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَى وَالْيَتَامَى وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ

which is in contravention of Allah's decree.[59] So the concepts of *taqwā´* and the jihad *al-nafs* are characteristically interlinked within the Quran. They share the same attributes and lead to the same theological outcome: success and paradise in the afterlife.

Furthermore, references to the jihad *al-nafs* and its attributes are also littered across hadith narrations and sayings of the prophet Muhammad's companions. For example, Imam Tirmidhī records an authentic hadith on the authority of Fadhālah bin 'Ubayd in which the prophet Muhammad states that a *mujāhid* (an individual who performs jihad) is one who performs jihad against the *nafs* (self) (Al-Tirmidhī, no date, vol.6, pp 357).[60] Similarly, the prophets companion Alī is reported to have stated that the very first jihad which people will abandon will be the jihad *al-nafs* (Rajab, 1987, vol.21, pp 36)[61] and when 'Abdullah bin 'Umar was asked about jihad he instructed those asking him to begin with their self and fight against it (Rajab, 1987, vol.1, pp 196).[62] In addition, Abu Bakr advised 'Umar in respect of the self when he appointed 'Umar as his successor. Abu Bakr stated that a continual jihad against his *nafs*, desires and the devil, observed with patience, was necessary in order to for him ('Umar) to be a successful and noble commander of his *self* (Rajab, 1987, vol.1, pp 196). Interestingly the advice offered by Abu Bakr to Umar was regarding the challenges of faith that were identified in section 4.2 of chapter 4; being the *shayṭān*, the *nafs* and faith related tests.

So the jihad *al-nafs* as a concept of self rectification is established through the absolute theological authority of the Qur'an as well as an authentic hadith narration of the prophet

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[59] Verse 2: 177 referenced above relates to a change of *qiblah* (the direction faced during ritual prayers) from Jerusalem to Mecca. The instruction was difficult for some from among the Muslim community to understand hence the revelation of this specific verse.

[60] أَنَّ عَمْرَو بْنَ مَالِكٍ الْجَنْبِيَّ أَخْبَرَهُ أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ فَضَالَةَ بْنَ عُبَيْدٍ يُحَدِّثُ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم أَنَّهُ قَالَ كُلُّ مَيِّتٍ يُخْتَمُ عَلَى عَمَلِهِ إِلاَّ الَّذِى مَاتَ مُرَابِطًا فِى سَبِيلِ اللهِ فَإِنَّهُ يُنْمَى لَهُ عَمَلُهُ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَيَأْمَنُ مِنْ فِتْنَةِ الْقَبْرِ وَسَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ -صلى الله عليه وسلم يَقُولُ الْمُجَاهِدُ مَنْ جَاهَدَ نَفْسَهُ قَالَ أَبُو عِيسَى وَفِى الْبَابِ عَنْ عُقْبَةَ بْنِ عَامِرٍ وَجَابِرٍ وَحَدِيثُ فَضَالَةَ بْنِ عُبَيْدٍ حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ صَحِيحٌ. Also categorised as *ṣaḥīḥ* by Ibn Hibban.

[61] حدثنا الثقة عن على بن أبي طالب قال أول ما تكنون من جهادكم أنفسكم

[62] قال عبدالله بن عمر لمن سأله عن الجهاد ابدأ بنفسك فجاهدها وابدأ بنفسك فاغزها

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Muhammad. In addition, both *taqwā´* and the jihad *al-nafs* share similar characteristics which feed in to the mechanism of self rectification. Collectively, both constructs ensure one's self interests do not undermine the credibility of *'ibādah*; the performance of which is necessary in preparation of the impending theological accountability that Muslims believe they are destined to face. This is only achievable when one has a command over the *nafs* as established by Allah within the Quran (Quran 79:40-41).[63]

As detailed in chapter 4 and highlighted here above, paradise is understood as the benchmark of absolute ethereal success. But it can only be harnessed through the pleasure of Allah, which is a product of self containment resulting from *taqwā´* and the jihad *al-nafs*. Professor Tariq Ramadhan makes this very argument stating that the jihad *al-nafs* is central to the existence of Muslim life and without it any other reality can simply not be conceived (Ramadhan: 2015). Similarly, classical jurist Mufti Taqi Usmani also cites verse 69 of *surah al-'ankabūt* and states that the principle of the jihad *al-nafs* is to makes oneself a better person in all aspects of existence (Usmani, no date, vol. 2, pp 228). Usmani (no date) leans in to the opinion and sentiments of ´Ibn 'Abbās who also offers an exegesis on verse 69 of *surah al-'ankabūt* and states that through this expression of jihad Allah guides an individual towards His path and blesses them with righteousness and obedience of Him (Ibn Abbas, 1991, vol.1, pp 421). Mohammed (1985) speaks of the 'spirit' of jihad and states that its essence consists of true and sincere faith the object of which is Allah. One is devoted to such an extent that everything else seems insignificant and if need be, an individual is happy to sacrifice for the sake of Allah (including ones life). Simply fighting is contrary to the spirit of jihad (Mohammed, 1985, pp 386). Esposito (2016) makes reference to the concept of *taqwā´* as a means of self protection against the wrath of God who has commanded His answerable creation toward subservience of Him (Esposito, 2016, pp 29-30). Murata &

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[63] وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَى فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَى

Chittick (1994) describe *taqwā´* in similar terms to Esposito (2016) as a mechanism of protection from Allah's wrath. Furthermore, Afsaruddin (2013) details the 'excellence of patience and forebearance' whilst striving in the path of God. She defines the attribute of *ṣabr* (patience) as a constant in the performance of all faith related actions (including the military expression of jihad) (Afsaruddin: 2013). Her perspective supports the classical opinion of al-Minawi (1971) who argues that the military expression of jihad is inconceivable until an individual has contained their *nafs* (Al-Minawi, 1971 , vol.6, pp 341). Although Afsaruddin (2013) focuses on *ṣabr* the argument that is presented in this section and chapter is that *ṣabr* itself is a product of the the jihad *al-nafs* and *taqwā´*. Without these critical components, *ṣabr* is nothing more than a conceptual idealism. Nevertheless, all of these perspectives endorse the significance of the jihad *al-nafs* and *taqwā´* as mechanisms designed to equip individuals navigate their duties of *ʿibādah* in fulfilling the purpose of their creation.

So *taqwā´* and the jihad *al-nafs* are intertwined sharing the same characteristics in order to serve the same purpose for the same intended theological outcome: spiritual and metaphysical success. Both of these concepts enable individuals to fulfil their obligations of *ʿibādah* and whatever the juristic differences of opinion may be in how that is done; the overarching principle remains the same that *ʿibādah* must be exclusively for the sake of Allah. So anything which undermines this overarching principle must necessarily be resolved or removed. But as detailed in chapter 4, there is an inescapable human reality attached to the dynamic of *ʿibādah* and accountability. The 'tests' faced by Allah's answerable creation (which run parallel with the influence of *shayṭān* and the deviance of the *nafs*) are incredibly diverse. Verse 155 of *surah al-baqarah* acknowledges this reality and positions the human experience within the rubric of *ʿibādah*. It highlights the thematic nature of challenge to faith practice suggesting that tests will be of a physical, financial and emotional persuasion (Quran 2: 155). For example, in verse 28 of *surah al-anfāl* Allah refers to children as a *fintah* (test)

(Quran 8: 28)[64] and in verse 9 of *surah al-munāfiqūn* He warns His answerable creation of children being a means of distraction from His remembrance (Quran 63: 9).[65] Al-Jazairi (no date) comments on these verses and states that children can be a means through which Allah's answerable creation disobey Him. He argues that there are indeed great rewards for those who uphold their covenant of *ʿibādah* with Allah, obey Him and observe *taqwāʾ* of Him irrespective of the deviations that the love of one's children may cause (Al-Jazairi, no date, vol.2, pp 38). However, the manner in which a child can present a faith related challenge for his/her parents is also incredibly diverse. For example parents in the 'developing world' who lose children due to famine and poverty are in a different dynamic compared to parents in the 'developed world' who have lost children due illness or a freak accident. And both of these dynamics are different from those parents who have lost children due to war, conflict or natural disaster. So despite their emotional 'test' of losing a child being of the same genus, the manner in which each of them has been affected is fundamentally different. What is also different is the manner in which each of those parents responds to that grief; whether they remain steadfast upon Allah's commands or rebel and reject faith. This is an inevitable product of their individual backgrounds; social, economic and political contexts which have affected those individuals and shaped their responses. There are also wider considerations in respect of individuals who are battling their own personal 'demons'. For instance, some maybe battling substance abuse, dealing with self harm issues, trying to overcome gambling addictions, fornication or have a problem with egotism. Although such matters are not recognised as faith tenets akin to the pillars of Islam, they are however sins that risk impeding upon one's commitment to the established tenets of *ʿibādah*. Murata & Chittick (1994) make reference to sins as a disregard of shariah and a disobedience to Allah (Murata & Chittick, 1994, pp 25-26). Similarly Esposito (2016) refers

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[64] وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ

[65] يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُلْهِكُمْ أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ

to sinning as disobedience and refusal to submit to Allah's will which is an absence of *taqwā´* (Esposito, 2016, pp 28-29). So the practice of faith and expressing *ʿibādah* is surrounded by an array of challenges. And it is these challenges that Allah's answerable creation must effectively navigate in order to attain success and paradise. Indeed the Quran makes it clear that that the acquisition of paradise is by no means an easy fete (Quran 2: 214).[66] Commenting on this particular verse, ibn Kathir (1999) states that tests will include illnesses, hardships, difficulties and similar tribulations (Ibn Kathir, 1999, vol.1, pp 571). Imam al-Suyuti [d 1490 CE] refers to them as *fitan*, a generic non prescriptive term indicative of difficulties and testing times (Al-Suyuti, no date, vol.1, pp 489). What becomes evident from this discussion is the broad nature of assessment for Allah's answerable creation. But irrespective of the test, challenge or lure of sin that is presented upon an individual the requirement to uphold the covenant of *ʿibādah* with Allah remains unchanged. Theologically His answerable creation is still obliged to worship Him, obey Him and adhere to all of His commands with sincerity and exclusively for His sake. This is the 'test' of faith that Allah refers to in the Quran and effectively navigating these tests are products of the jihad *al-nafs* and *taqwā´*.

Thus the breadth of faith related challenge calls for a dynamic support mechanism. This means is that the constructs of *taqwā´* and the jihad *al-nafs* cannot be wholly prescriptive in their embodiment of how to deal with faith related challenges that humankind will face. To be so would be reductive of the diversity of human experiences with Islam. For instance, are the challenges of faith faced by Muslims who live in 21st century Britain the same as those who lived in medieval Arabia? Do individuals from middle and upper class suburbia have the same lifestyles, lived experiences and coping mechanisms as those from working class inner city backgrounds? Are the differences between medieval and contemporary social

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[66] أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِكُمْ مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ مَسَّتْهُمُ الْبَأْسَاءُ وَالضَّرَّاءُ وَزُلْزِلُوا حَتَّى يَقُولَ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ مَتَى نَصْرُ اللَّهِ أَلَا إِنَّ نَصْرَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ

conditions at all relevant in how people respond to the spiritual and theological challenges

they face in the contemporary period? If the answer is yes then the proposition of a single,

utilitarian mechanism of self rectification, self focus and overcoming theological tests is

entirely plausible. However, prophetic narrations argue to the contrary (Hibban, 1994, vol.8,

pp 295)[67] and evidence a regard for the individual; their backgrounds and personal

dispositions. The faith imperative does not advocate a single solution to the challenges faced

by the diversity within Allah's answerable creation.

So having understood this, one begins to appreciate the complexities of developing an

absolute and prescriptive model for either *taqwā´* or the jihad *al-nafs*. Furthermore, any

construct which addresses the faith related challenges highlighted in this section will also

necessarily need to be valid from the time of the prophet Muhammad until the day of

judgement. This creates an incredibly broad time spectrum in which communities,

generations, nations and indeed civilizations are all different from one another; facing

different challenges and responding to them in ways that are arguably unique to them. So to

prescribe definitive instructions that cater for every faith related problem across this broad

and varied spectrum is counter intuitive and contrary to the prophetic methodology referred

to above in this section. This is not to argue however, that *taqwā´* and the jihad *al-nafs* do

not have specific attributes. They do indeed as detailed in this section previously. However,

both of these dynamics are blueprints on how to navigate faith related challenges presented

by Allah; they cannot be exhaustive and absolutist guides. Thus the jihad *al-nafs* is posited

as a non prescriptive framework to address the multiplicity of human challenges that stand in

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[67] عن أبي هريرة قال قال رجل يارسول الله هلكت قال ويحك قال وما ذاك قال وقعت على امرأتي في يوم من شهر رمضان قال أعتق رقبة قال ما أجد قال فصم شهرين متتابعين قال ما أستطيع قال أطعم ستين كسكينا قال ما أجد قال فأتي رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم بعرق فيه خمسة عشر صاعا من تمر فقال له تصدق به قال على أفقر من أهلي ما بين لابتي المدينة أحوج من أهلي فضحك رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم حتى بدت أنيابه وقال خذه واستغفر الله وأطعمه أهلك قال شعيب الأرنؤوط إسناده صحيح على شرط البخاري

the way of Allah's answerable creation discharging the responsibility of *ʿibādah*. As Professor Ramadhan stated, it is the actualisation of Muslim reality (Ramadhan: 2015).

Having appreciated the significance of the jihad *al-nafs*, it becomes evident that the validity of outward theological action is contingent upon an inward facing theological correctness. That correctness, as established in section 4.2.2 of chapter 4, is the pleasure of Allah. All material endeavours that seek His proximity must necessarily feed in to that one theme in order for them to be theologically valid and spiritually valuable. Individuals who perform or claim to perform military jihad are also subject to this overarching theological principle that situates Allah in the centre of Muslim consciousness. Indeed, scholars of classical Islam hold the position that the jihad *al-nafs* is the essence of military jihad. Al-Minawi [d 1621] states that it is inconceivable to raise arms against any physical outward enemy until one has resolved the inner conflict of the self (al-Minawi, 1971, vol.6, pp 341). Other scholars have also expressed the same sentiment in respect of the jihad *al-nafs* (Mubarakpuri, no date, vol.5, pp 206; Al-Nayef, no date, vol.2, pp 243; Al-Tabraizi, 1979, vol.1, pp 287).

Therefore individuals who undertake military jihad are obliged to ensure that they have a command over their self prior to raising arms. That they are fighting for the pleasure of Allah and not for a desire to seek revenge for lost loved ones, blood lust or indeed a longing for fame and glory within the jihadi fraternity. The exclusive mechanisms through which this is possible are the jihad *al-nafs* and *taqwāʾ* and both are the essence of not just military jihad as asserted by al-Minawi (1971) but also the essence of all faith practice in Islam. A failure or inability to rectify one's *nafs* renders the expression of military jihad nothing more than temporal violence that is disconnected from the spiritual realm. This statement is supported by a hadith of the prophet Muhammad in which he states that from among the dwellers of hell will be that individual who was martyred fighting in the path of Allah. Allah will condemn him on the day of judgement for no other reason except that he fought solely for

public gratification and so that people would speak highly of him (Muslim, no date, vol.6, pp 47).[68] Thus an absence of the jihad *al-nafs* renders any claim to military jihad not only invalid but also spiritually catastrophic.

This section sought to define the jihad *al-nafs*. In doing so it has established three key arguments. Firstly, the jihad *al-nafs* cannot be quantified through an exhaustive list of prescribed attributes. The Muslim civilisation originates from a diverse spectrum which spans over 1400 years at the present moment in time. The plurality of their diversity demands a dynamic support mechanism that is applicable and relevant across the spaces and ages in which it is required. Secondly, the jihad *al-nafs* is the essence of all faith practice, including military jihad. Without the jihad *al-nafs* any claim of military jihad is naught but temporal violence that is disconnected from theological value in the metaphysical realm and is instead potentially a means of metaphysical failure. Finally, the jihad *al-nafs* is synonymous with *taqwā*; sharing the same characteristics and attributes for the same intended theological outcome. As a result, the practice of the jihad *al-nafs* has necessarily been the underpinning of ʿibādah from the very inception of Islam in the Meccan period. Its dynamic has been unaffected by the revelations which introduced the construct of military jihad. In order to better appreciate this statement the following section will detail the context of faith practice in the Meccan period (prior to the migration to Medina) and how the application of to *taqwā* and the jihad *al-nafs* are evident in that period.

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[68] حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ حَبِيبٍ الْحَارِثِيُّ حَدَّثَنَا خَالِدُ بْنُ الْحَارِثِ حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ جُرَيْجٍ حَدَّثَنِي يُونُسُ بْنُ يُوسُفَ عَنْ سُلَيْمَانَ بْنِ يَسَارٍ قَالَ تَفَرَّقَ النَّاسُ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ فَقَالَ لَهُ نَاتِلُ أَهْلِ الشَّامِ أَيُّهَا الشَّيْخُ حَدِّثْنَا حَدِيثًا سَمِعْتَهُ مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ –صلى الله عليه وسلم– قَالَ نَعَمْ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ –صلى الله عليه وسلم– يَقُولُ « إِنَّ أَوَّلَ النَّاسِ يُقْضَى يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عَلَيْهِ رَجُلٌ اسْتُشْهِدَ فَأُتِيَ بِهِ فَعَرَّفَهُ نِعَمَهُ فَعَرَفَهَا قَالَ فَمَا عَمِلْتَ فِيهَا قَالَ قَاتَلْتُ فِيكَ حَتَّى اسْتُشْهِدْتُ. قَالَ كَذَبْتَ وَلَكِنَّكَ قَاتَلْتَ لأَنْ يُقَالَ جَرِىءٌ. فَقَدْ قِيلَ ثُمَّ أُمِرَ بِهِ فَسُحِبَ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ حَتَّى أُلْقِيَ فِي النَّارِ وَرَجُلٌ تَعَلَّمَ الْعِلْمَ وَعَلَّمَهُ وَقَرَأَ الْقُرْآنَ فَأُتِيَ بِهِ فَعَرَّفَهُ نِعَمَهُ فَعَرَفَهَا قَالَ فَمَا عَمِلْتَ فِيهَا قَالَ تَعَلَّمْتُ الْعِلْمَ وَعَلَّمْتُهُ وَقَرَأْتُ فِيكَ الْقُرْآنَ. قَالَ كَذَبْتَ وَلَكِنَّكَ تَعَلَّمْتَ الْعِلْمَ لِيُقَالَ عَالِمٌ. وَقَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ لِيُقَالَ هُوَ قَارِئٌ. فَقَدْ قِيلَ ثُمَّ أُمِرَ بِهِ فَسُحِبَ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ حَتَّى أُلْقِيَ فِي النَّارِ. وَرَجُلٌ وَسَّعَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَعْطَاهُ مِنْ أَصْنَافِ الْمَالِ كُلِّهِ فَأُتِيَ بِهِ فَعَرَّفَهُ نِعَمَهُ فَعَرَفَهَا قَالَ فَمَا عَمِلْتَ فِيهَا قَالَ مَا تَرَكْتُ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ تُحِبُّ أَنْ يُنْفَقَ فِيهَا إِلاَّ أَنْفَقْتُ فِيهَا لَكَ قَالَ كَذَبْتَ وَلَكِنَّكَ فَعَلْتَ لِيُقَالَ هُوَ جَوَادٌ. فَقَدْ قِيلَ ثُمَّ أُمِرَ بِهِ فَسُحِبَ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ ثُمَّ أُلْقِيَ فِي النَّارِ

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5.3 Jihad *al-nafs*, *Taqwā´* and the Meccan Period of Islam Prior to the Medinan Migration.

This section will argue that practices of *taqwā´* and the jihad *al-nafs* were prevalent during the Meccan period of Islam. It is necessary to prove its prevalence during this period in order to establish theological consistency for what is being argued as the essence of faith practice in Sunni Islam. A brief overview of the social conditions during the Meccan period of Islam against the imperative of *ʿibādah* will highlight two points. Firstly that the practice of *taqwā´* and the jihad *al-nafs* are evident during the Meccan period and secondly that these mechanisms feed in to the same intended theological outcome: being *self* rectification for the purposes of fulfilling the responsibility of *ʿibādah* in order to harness Allah's pleasure and ultimately His paradise.

The advent of Islam in 610 CE ushered in the Islamic enlightenment (Peters, 1953, pp 03) and brought an end to an era commonly referred to as the *jāhiliyyah*. This period was considered in Islamic theology as one of ignorance and inter-tribal conflict, in which tribal kinship coupled with the pursuit of wealth, power and primacy were the principal catalysts for sectarian unrest (Mubarakpuri, 2015, pp 29). The cultural norm within Arabia during the *jāhiliyyah* period was to resort to violence in the absence of a mutually agreeable outcome (Kirazli, 2011, pp 35). Bonner (2006) shares these sentiments and states that Islam developed in a context in which armed warfare and organised conflict was a part of normal life (Bonner, 2006, pp 07). So conflict and retribution, whether on an individual basis or between tribes was common place during the *jāhiliyyah* period and it was within the *ʿaṣbiyyah* (familial tribes) where support could be found. However, the safety and protection offered by tribal chieftains was contingent upon creedal affiliation. Deviance from the established 'order', in this case challenging polytheistic dogma as the prophet Muhammad did, led to individuals being persecuted by their former patrons. Al-Dhahabi (2004) details

an account relating to the first 'martyr' of Islam, Sumayyah bint Khayyāt, who was killed at the hands of Abū Jahal. Guillaume (1955) records how Banū Makhzūm, the former tribe of Sumayyah, would march her out with her husband, Yasir and son, 'Ammār, in to the baking desert heat and cause them to swelter. In a similar fashion, Bilāl bin Ribāh was also forced to lie on the burning sands of the Meccan desert whilst a large rock was placed upon his chest. His persecutor, Umayy bin Khalf, would say to Bilāl that his torment would only end if he denounced Islam (Guillaume, 1955, pp 144). The persecution experienced by Muslim's during this Meccan period became more focused and sustained in the 5th year of prophethood; when the Quraysh began to see a greater response to the prophet Muhammad's call to Islam (Mubarakpuri, 2015, pp 75). Al-Dhahabi (2004) states that Muslims were tortured by metal instruments which pierced their bodies and caused the flesh to separate from the bone and records how craniums of living individuals were split by saw like objects (Al-Dhahabi, 2004, vol.1, pp 113). In addition, the Quraysh introduced a full economic and social boycott of Banī Ḥāshim and Banī Muṭṭalib in an attempt to curtail support that the prophet Muhammad was beginning to build (Guillaume, 1955, pp159). The boycott pushed the respective tribes out of Mecca and in to a neighbouring valley where they resided for approximately three years. Mubarakpuri states that the impact of the boycott was so profound that those affected by it were reduced to eating tree leaves and carcass skins in order to survive (Mubarakpuri, 2015, pp 75). This treatment of the newly formed Muslim community by the ruling Quraysh tribes only increased in severity as the years passed by. The height of maltreatment reached a climax in the 13th year of prophethood when the Quraysh plotted to assassinate the prophet Muhammad. This became the catalyst behind the Muslim community's migration to Medina in 622 CE.

However, throughout the Meccan period and amid the difficulties the Muslim community faced, the prophet Muhammad did not take up arms against his oppressors and neither did he

permit others to do so. Rather he stated that the Muslim community was ordered to observe patience, abstain from retaliation and endure the difficulties associated with practicing faith. This passiveness was against the backdrop of a social context in which conflict, violence and warfare were established social norms. Laher (2006) comments upon these difficulties and the abstinence of the early Muslim community from raising arms (Laher, 2006, pp 68). Indeed adherence to prophetic instruction was adherence to the will of Allah and an explicit act of 'ibādah. This principle is established within the Quran where Allah states that obedience of the prophet is obedience to Allah (Quran 4:80).[69] So abstinence from retaliation in the face of sustained and perpetual persecution, despite individual inclinations to the contrary, is argued here as the product of taqwā´ and the practice of the jihad al-nafs. Muhammad (1985) shares a similar sentiment in making reference to the 'spirit' of jihad. He suggests that this 'spirit' consists of true and sincere faith the object of which is Allah. He presses further to suggest that jihad existed within the Meccan period in a non military capacity (Muhammad, 1985, pp 385-386). Esposito (2003) also suggests that a form of jihad existed within the Meccan period before migration to Medina. This is based upon the prophet Muhammad's call to make society better and fairer (Esposito, 2003, pp 27-28). But Esposito stops short of ascribing the term 'jihad', be that a military or non military expression of it, to those reformations and endeavours. Bonner (2006) suggests that elements of the 'internal jihad', as he refers to them, were already present at the beginning of Islam. He argues that the Quran is a manifestation of this struggle as well as the challenges posed by internal and external enemies (Bonner, 2006, pp 14).

This brief insight in to the context of Mecca alongside the practice of Islam within that context is evidence in support of the claim that the jihad al-nafs was practiced throughout the Meccan period. The prophet Muhammad's instructions to remain passive during this era,

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[69] مَنْ يُطِعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ وَمَنْ تَوَلَّى فَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا

despite the existential threats they faced and despite that practice being in contravention to their social norms, was an expression of *ʿibādah*. In doing so, the proponents of passive faith expression put aside their personal dispositions in order to adhere to Allah's commands as communicated by His prophet. This dynamic is the essence of *taqwā´* and the jihad *al-nafs* that was argued in section 5.2. It becomes evident that consciousness and mastery of one's self is the essence of *ʿibādah*, irrespective of the inclinations that social, political or cultural circumstance may delineate towards. Allah's pleasure is contained within temporal actions and inactions that are exclusively for His sake as established during the Meccan era of Islam. The prophetic practice during this period evidences the constructs of *taqwā´* and the jihad *al-nafs* from the very inception of Islam. Indeed these characteristics were and remain the essential underpinnings of faith practice; preserving the theological integrity of *ʿibādah* in order to discharge accountability in the metaphysical realm.

However, several objections are raised to the assertions made in this section which argue in favour of the jihad *al-nafs* during the Meccan period. These will be detailed in the following sections along with their respective rebuttals.

5.4 Objection One: Scarceness of Hadith Narrations Relating to the *Greater Jihad.*

The principle of the jihad *al-nafs* is partially based upon the hadith recorded by Imam al-Tirmidhi: 'a mujāhid is one who performs jihad against the *nafs´* (self). However, this hadith is the only authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) narration in which the prophet Muhammad makes explicit reference to the jihad *al-nafs*. All other narrations which allude to or make mention of the 'greater' jihad are either statements of the prophet's companions or weak in their chain of transmission. The obvious consideration here is that if we are to accept the centrality of the jihad *al-nafs* in the domain of Islam then why does its reference appear so sparingly across

the corpus of hadith literature? Cook (2005) picks up on this contention and argues that the entire concept of the 'greater' jihad is a product of reduced military activity at the end of the 8th and beginning of 9th century *hijra*. This clearly undermines the argument made in the above section which stated that the jihad *al-nafs* was evident from the inception of Islam. Cook (2005) suggests that the narrations attributed to the prophet and his companions do not appear in the major corpus of hadith literature in the same way one finds narrations pertaining to prayer, fasting or hajj for example. Rather they are recorded by 8th and 9th century *hijra* ascetics like ´Ibn Mubārak [d 797CE] and Ibn ´Abī Dunyā [d 894CE] some two hundred years from the time of the prophet Muhammad (Cook, 2005, pp 30-37).

5.4.1 Response to Objection One: Scarceness of Hadith Narrations Relating to the *Greater* Jihad.

Cook (2005) appears to raise a valid objection regarding the scarceness of hadith narrations regarding the 'greater' jihad. The majority of narrations that make reference to it are reported by a handful of scholars 200 years after the death of the prophet Muhammad. For example, Imam al-Ṭabarī, who died in 310 *hijra*, makes reference to the 'greater' jihad but cites it as a principle rather than a narration attributed to the prophet Muhammad or his companions (Tabari, no date, vol.3, pp 160). Similarly Ibn Rajab, who died in 795 *hijra*, refers to both the jihad *al-nafs* and the jihad *al-qalb* (jihad of the heart) but presents narrations that have been categorised as *daʿīf* (weak in transmission) by the scholars of hadith (Ibn Rajab, 1987, vol. 21, pp 36). Cook's perspectives and criticisms are also shared by *Islamists* ideologues. For example, Ibn Nuhaas (no date) challenges the concept of the 'greater' jihad arguing that the narrations which make reference to it are either weak or fabricated (Ibn Nuhaas, no date, pp 173-176). He asserts that jihad *al-nafs* in the battlefield is far greater than jihad *al-nafs* outside of the battlefield as the *mujāhid* has many other things to contend with as well as

his/her desires and the influence of *shayṭān* (devil) as was argued in chapter 4. So from a purely rational perspective the 'greater' jihad is the jihad of the battlefield and not some other concoction of it (*ibid*, pp 179). Similarly, Faraj (1981) also dismisses the concept of the 'greater' jihad citing the lack of authentic narrations in support of it. He argues that jihad consists of categories and not stages. He asserts this as an objection to the argument that jihad has three distinct stages which are sequential; being jihad against one's *nafs*, against the devil and then against the non believers and apostates (Faraj, 1981, pp 19). He suggests that the stages of jihad can all be acted upon together and it is not necessary to progress from one stage to another in a sequential manner (*ibid*). As a result the concept of the 'greater' jihad is open to the criticisms levelled against it by Cook (2005), Faraj (1981) and Ibn Nuhaas. It is prudent to note here that although Faraj (1981) dismisses the concept of the 'greater' jihad he appears to accept the concept of the jihad *al-nafs*. So he also makes the distinction between the two constructs as we have highlighted above in section 5.1; even if he attaches little significance to the latter.

This distinction made by Faraj (1981) between the 'greater' jihad and the jihad *al-nafs* is the counter argument to the contentions raised above. The two are separate entities which are validated and supported by different sets of narrations. The jihad *al-nafs* cannot be subsumed within the narrative of the 'greater' jihad and neither is the argument being made here that the jihad *al-nafs* is by any measure 'greater' than any other form or expression of jihad (as argued by ibn Nuhaas). Rather the point argued in this chapter and in chapter 4 relates to the centrality of *taqwā'* and the jihad *al-nafs* in ensuring theological validity for all acts of worship. And this is a principle that both Faraj (1981) and Ibn Nuhaas agree upon. For example, Ibn Nuhaas (no date) touches upon sincerity of intentions regarding the performance of military jihad and clearly states that Allah does not accept the jihad of a *mujāhid* with insincere intentions (Ibn Nuhaas, no date, pp 99). Similarly, Faraj (1981) states

that sincerity of intentions whilst performing military jihad is profound. He argues that in order to be sincere one must ensure that the motivation behind performing jihad is to exclusively seek closeness to Allah (Faraj, 1981, pp 29). So despite both Faraj (1981) and Ibn Nuhaas acknowledging the imperativeness of maintaining sincere intentions in the exercise of military jihad they dismiss the prominence of the jihad *al-nafs* in their works. In particular, Ibn Nuhaas's perspective on the alternative conceptualisations of jihad is presumptuous. The prevalence of jihad *al-nafs* in the battlefield is not being denied here. What is being contested is the dismissal of the concept as an integral part of faith expression; be that in a preparatory setting or during the performance of an act. The significance of jihad *al-nafs* is to ensure the theological validity of an act of worship. As detailed in sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 of chapter 4, a consciousness of intentions is paramount in order to ensure that temporal actions have a positive resonance in the metaphysical realm. Section 5.2 above argued that the mediums through which this positive resonance is achieved are *taqwā´* and the jihad *al-nafs*.

Furthermore, the ability to self reflect and rectify is not something that everyone is proficient at, rather it is a product of religious self awareness. Faraj (1981) alludes to this principle in stating that missions which further the cause of Islam cannot be undertaken by weak individuals as they will collapse under the pressure and demands of conflict. Rather the privilege is for the strong, ready and able (Faraj, 1981, pp 31). The deliberation here is that if it is necessary for the physical being to be strong and ready in order to perform jihad then is this not also a requirement for the spiritual being? If the entire narrative regarding the importance of the jihad *al-nafs* is reduced to insignificance based upon the assumption of fabricated and weak hadith then how will the necessary spiritual preparation take place? Indeed, the spiritual being is far more important than the physical being when ethereal success and failure are being considered as the entirety of accountability rests upon it. *Nafs*

laden motivations at the time of performing any act of worship (of which military jihad is one) leads to spiritual failure even if it appears as physical and material success. The narration of the prophet Muhammad cited in chapter 4 regarding the *mujāhid* who will be condemned to hell is evidence of this. So with respect to the considerations raised by Faraj (1981), the matter, again, is not to argue whether military jihad is sequential to the jihad *al-nafs* rather it is in the acknowledgement that the jihad *al-nafs* is the essence of military jihad and all other acts of *ʿibādah*. If that means the jihad *al-nafs* requires attention ahead of the other categories of jihad then that is a necessary preparatory action to be undertaken by an individual prior to engaging in military jihad. A failure to do so would be a disregard for one's theological wellbeing and spiritual success.

The significance of this position is shared by al-Bani [d 1999 CE] who suggested that military jihad should be halted and a more passive approach to faith practice adopted as was done by the prophet Muhammad during the Meccan period of Islam (Maher, 2016, pp 36). The purpose of highlighting al-Bani's perspective is not to argue the juristic (in)validity of contemporary military jihad. Rather it is to allude toward a sentiment within *Islamist* thought that there is theological merit in reflecting upon the Meccan period of Islam when navigating jihadi discourse. This is precisely the point that is made in section 5.3 but as chapter 6 will demonstrate it is a consideration dismissed in *Dabiq*.

Furthermore as detailed in section 5.2 previously, the jihad *al-nafs* is also established through the authority of the Quran. The duality it shares with *taqwāʾ* means that its attributes feature extensively throughout the Quran. For instance, references to *taqwāʾ* in the Quran alone, in its various conjugated forms, appear across 53 different *surahs*. So 46% of the *surahs* in the Quran reference the jihad *al-nafs* by attribute in their direct and explicit communication of *taqwāʾ*. In addition, with specific reference to the hadith relating to the jihad *al-nafs*, the narration recorded by Imam al-Tirmidhī is subject to a hermeneutical principle that holds

texts are to be interpreted in their general, unqualified nature unless otherwise directed (Mubarakpuri, 1984, vol.6, pp 244; Al-Subuki, 1991, vol.2, pp 138). So the 'when' of when the hadith regarding the jihad *al-nafs* was communicated becomes irrelevant as a general, unqualified *ṣaḥīḥ* hadith of the prophet Muhammad exists in validation of the jihad *al-nafs*; and that is sufficient from a Sunni theological perspective. Incidentally this position is unaffected by the doctrine of abrogation. To argue abrogation of the jihad *al-nafs* based upon the verses of military jihad is tantamount to arguing for the abrogation of *taqwā'*. It is inconceivable to argue that a mechanism of self regulation has been abrogated by a revelation permitting military jihad which itself requires self regulation in order for it to be theological validity.

There is also a logical explanation that accounts for the greater prominence of alternative understandings for the term jihad in the post Meccan period. Ye'or (1996) argues that the religious rhetoric of jihad issued by the prophet Muhammad seemingly mandated the pre Islam practice of nomadic Arab tribes to raid and loot smaller towns and villages (Ye'or, 1996, pp 39-41). Bonner (2006) is more reserved than Ye'or (1996) in that he abstains from the use of pejorative terms to describe pre Islamic Arabian social practice. He does however argue that Islam developed in a context where armed warfare and organised conflict were part of regular life (Bonner, 2006, pp 7). Bonner's (2006) assertions support Bonney's (2004) sentiments who adopts the position that the spread of Islam appears to have had little to do with propagation of Islam itself rather it was a form of Arab imperialism in a time where self preservation was achieved through military victories (Bonney, 2004, pp 54-55).

So conflict, whether for the purposes of expanding the Islamic empire, self determination or self preservation, was a social norm in Arabia prior to the advent of Islam. Despite the polemical narratives of Muslim ideologues, elements of pre Islamic practices remained after the arrival of Islam in the peninsula and filtered their way in to the practice of military jihad.

For example, the practice of military jihad is governed by laws and regulations which are intended to safeguard the lives of innocent individuals and non combatants. Indeed the verse of *surah al-Ḥajj* which permitted the use of force explicitly stated that authority to raise arms was granted for the purposes of combating oppression (Quran 22: 39).[70] However, Laher (2006) highlights prophetic narrations where the prophet Muhammad rebuked one of his companions for killing a woman on the battle field; someone who is supposed to be safeguarded from violence. The prophet stated that she had not been fighting so she should not have been killed. In other narrations Laher (2006) highlights the prophet Muhammad's prohibition against the killing of women and children as he sent a delegation after his companion (Khalid) to inform him that he was not to kill women and children (Laher, 2006, pp 64-65). In a similar fashion, a hadith narrated by Imam Muslim on the authority of ´Ibn ´Abī Shaybah reports how the prophet Muhammad rebuked ´Ibn ´Abī Shaybah several times for killing a man who had declared faith (Muslim, no date, vol. 1, pp 67).[71] What these examples demonstrate is that the killing of innocent people who were supposed to be safeguarded from random violence also occurred at the very beginning of Islam when military jihad was first mandated. The argument that I present here is that the prominence of the term jihad *al-nafs* in the post Meccan period was reactionary, in response to the needs of the developing Muslim community. As cited here above, conflict as a means of preservation and expansion was common place in Arabia prior to Islam. It has also been suggested that military jihad was utilised to propagate Arab imperialism, which on occasion claimed the lives of innocent people. In addition to this, the metaphysical rewards communicated by the prophet Muhammad for undertaking military jihad and attaining martyrdom in Allah's path

70 أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَاتَلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ظُلِمُوا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ

71 حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو خَالِدٍ الْأَحْمَرُ ح وَحَدَّثَنَا أَبُو كُرَيْبٍ وَإِسْحَاقُ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَنْ أَبِي مُعَاوِيَةَ كِلَاهُمَا عَنِ الْأَعْمَشِ عَنْ أَبِي ظَبْيَانَ عَنْ أُسَامَةَ بْنِ زَيْدٍ وَهَذَا حَدِيثُ ابْنِ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ قَالَ بَعَثَنَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ –صلى الله عليه وسلم– فِي سَرِيَّةٍ فَصَبَّحْنَا الْحُرَقَاتِ مِنْ جُهَيْنَةَ فَأَدْرَكْتُ رَجُلاً فَقَالَ لاَ إِلَهَ إِلاَّ اللَّهُ. فَطَعَنْتُهُ فَوَقَعَ فِي نَفْسِي مِنْ ذَلِكَ فَذَكَرْتُهُ لِلنَّبِيِّ –صلى الله عليه وسلم– فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ –صلى الله عليه وسلم– أَقَالَ لاَ إِلَهَ إِلاَّ اللَّهُ وَقَتَلْتَهُ قَالَ قُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنَّمَا قَالَهَا خَوْفًا مِنَ السِّلاَحِ. قَالَ أَفَلاَ شَقَقْتَ عَنْ قَلْبِهِ حَتَّى تَعْلَمَ أَقَالَهَا أَمْ لاَ فَمَازَالَ يُكَرِّرُهَا عَلَيَّ حَتَّى تَمَنَّيْتُ أَنِّي أَسْلَمْتُ يَوْمَئِذٍ. قَالَ فَقَالَ سَعْدٌ وَأَنَا وَاللَّهِ لاَ أَقْتُلُ مُسْلِمًا حَتَّى يَقْتُلَهُ ذُو الْبُطَيْنِ. يَعْنِي أُسَامَةَ قَالَ قَالَ رَجُلٌ أَلَمْ يَقُلِ اللَّهُ (وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لاَ تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ كُلُّهُ لِلَّهِ) فَقَالَ سَعْدٌ قَدْ قَاتَلْنَا حَتَّى لاَ تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَأَنْتَ وَأَصْحَابُكَ تُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تُقَاتِلُوا حَتَّى تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ.

are both profound and numerous.[72] The risk was, and still remains, that individuals (both old

in respect of the early Muslims of Mecca and new in respect of those who converted to Islam)

disregard the framework by which the expression of military jihad is governed and fall back

in to a pre Islamic mode of practice in pursuit of metaphysical rewards. So the terminology

utilised by the prophet Muhammad and his companions to manage this risk was the affiliation

of a now popular term and sought after spiritual achievement (jihad) with the fundamental

'essence' of all *ʿibādah* (that being selflessness for the sake of Allah). Evidence of this

practice is found throughout the prophet Muhammad's hadith. For example, al-Shaʿbī

narrates a hadith in which the prophet Muhammad states that a *muhājir* (one who performs

hijra or migration) is that individual who abstains from sins (Hibban, 1993, vol.1, pp 424).[73]

This understanding of *muhājir* is clearly different from its commonly understood meaning

which refers to physical migration. In the same narration the prophet Muhammad states that

a Muslim is an individual from whose hand and tongue others are safeguarded (*ibid*). In this

statement the prophet Muhammad makes no reference to the 'pillars' of Islam which are

commonly understood as its foundations; rather he suggests something completely different.

In another example the prophet Muhammad refers to a 'just' word in front of a tyrannical

ruler as the greatest expression of jihad (Tirmidhi, no date, vol. 4, pp 471) [74] yet in other

hadith narrations he refers to military jihad as the pinnacle of faith (Tirmidhi, no date, vol. 9,

pp 202). [75] Ibn Hajar [d 1449 CE] has commented on this apparent contradiction in terms

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[72] See hadith narrations containing the virtues of jihad.

[73] أخبرنا أحمد بن يحيى بن زهير الحافظ بتستر قال حدثنا محمد بن العلاء بن كريب قال حدثنا أبو معاوية قال حدثنا داود بن أبي هند عن الشعبي قال سمعت عبد الله بن عمرو

ورب هذه البنية يعني الكعبة يقول: سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول: المهاجر من هجر السيئات والمسلم من سلم المسلمون من لسانه ويده

19 حدثنا القاسم بن دينار الكوفي حدثنا عبد الرحمن بن مصعب أبو يزيد حدثنا إسرائيل عن محمد بن جحادة عن عطية عن أبي سعيد الخدري : أن النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم قال

إن من أعظم الجهاد كلمة عدل عند سلطان جائر قال أبو عيسى وفي الباب عن ابي أمامة وهذا حديث حسن غريب من هذا الوجه قال الشيخ الألباني صحيح

75 كُنْتُ مَعَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي سَفَرٍ حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ أَبِي عُمَرَ حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ مُعَاذٍ الصَّنْعَانِيُّ عَنْ مَعْمَرٍ عَنْ عَاصِمِ بْنِ أَبِي النَّجُودِ عَنْ أَبِي وَائِلٍ عَنْ مُعَاذِ بْنِ جَبَلٍ قَالَ

فَأَصْبَحْتُ يَوْمًا قَرِيبًا مِنْهُ وَنَحْنُ نَسِيرُ فَقُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَخْبِرْنِي بِعَمَلٍ يُدْخِلُنِي الْجَنَّةَ وَيُبَاعِدُنِي عَنِ النَّارِ قَالَ لَقَدْ سَأَلْتَنِي عَنْ عَظِيمٍ وَإِنَّهُ لَيَسِيرٌ عَلَى مَنْ يَسَّرَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ تَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ وَلَا

تُشْرِكُ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَتُقِيمُ الصَّلَاةَ وَتُؤْتِي الزَّكَاةَ وَتَصُومُ رَمَضَانَ وَتَحُجُّ الْبَيْتَ ثُمَّ قَالَ أَلَا أَدُلُّكَ عَلَى أَبْوَابِ الْخَيْرِ الصَّوْمُ جُنَّةٌ وَالصَّدَقَةُ تُطْفِئُ الْخَطِيئَةَ كَمَا يُطْفِئُ الْمَاءُ النَّارَ وَصَلَاةُ الرَّجُلِ مِنْ

ثُمَّ قَالَ أَلَا أُخْبِرُكَ بِرَأْسِ الْأَمْرِ كُلِّهِ وَعَمُودِهِ وَذِرْوَةِ سَنَامِهِ قُلْتُ بَلَى يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ رَأْسُ الْأَمْرِ الْإِسْلَامُ جَوْفِ اللَّيْلِ ثُمَّ تَلَا تَتَجَافَى جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ حَتَّى بَلَغَ يَعْمَلُونَ

evident across hadith narrations and states that the hadith have a distinct regard for context (Hajar, no date, vol. 10, pp 313). This relates back to the consideration raised in chapter 4 regarding the individual human experiences in which the practice of Islam features. It also validates the argument made above in section 5.2 that Allah's answerable creation does not face a single challenge of faith practice. Rather their challenges are diverse, broad and reflective of the times and contexts to which individuals are associated. So the mechanisms which address such challenges also need to be equally as broad and dynamic. Thus ibn Hajar's argument is that the seeming contradictions in hadith narrations are a product of this diversity.

Relating this discussion back to the jihad *al-nafs*, it is therefore credible to argue that the term gained greater prominence as a result of the spiritual challenges that the formative Muslim community faced. In order to address those challenges the prophet Muhammad and his companions made reference to jihad as a mechanism of self rectification in order to reaffirm the imperative of rectifying ones *nafs*; a practice already established through the construct of *taqwā´*.

This section has evidenced that the concept of the jihad *al-nafs* is established through several verses of the Quran as well as authentic narrations of the prophet Muhammad. It has been reported by several prominent hadith collators firmly establishing it in both theological and academic understandings as a bonafide concept. The considerations levelled against it are often a result of conflating the term with the greater jihad and a product of disregarding the characteristics it shares with *taqwā´*.

وَعَمُودُهُ الصَّلَاةُ وَذِرْوَةُ سَنَامِهِ الْجِهَادُ ثُمَّ قَالَ أَلَا أُخْبِرُكَ بِمَلَاكِ ذَلِكَ كُلِّهِ قُلْتُ بَلَى يَا نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ فَأَخَذَ بِلِسَانِهِ قَالَ كُفَّ عَلَيْكَ هَذَا فَقُلْتُ يَا نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ وَإِنَّا لَمُؤَاخَذُونَ بِمَا نَتَكَلَّمُ بِهِ فَقَالَ

ثَكِلَتْكَ أُمُّكَ يَا مُعَاذُ وَهَلْ يَكُبُّ النَّاسَ فِي النَّارِ عَلَى وُجُوهِهِمْ أَوْ عَلَى مَنَاخِرِهِمْ إِلَّا حَصَائِدُ أَلْسِنَتِهِمْ

قَالَ أَبُو عِيسَى هَذَا حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ صَحِيحٌ

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5.4.2 Objection Two: Jihad Essentially Means Violence.

Cook (2005) argues that the push to present jihad as a non violent construct is most prominent among western scholars of *Sufism*, interfaith practitioners and Muslim apologists who try to depict Islam as innocuous. He states that western writers on the subject matter understand the term as violence (Cook, 2005, pp 165-166). Cook's (2005) assessment supports Ye'or's (1996) perspective who argues that jihad is a military activity. She suggests that religious rhetoric issued by Muhammad mandated the practice of nomadic Arab tribes who would raid and loot smaller towns and villages (Ye'or, 1996, pp 39-41). The positioning of jihad as a construct of violence is shared by Phares (2005) who expresses surprise that jihad can be proposed to mean anything other than violence. Phares (2005) states that the post 9/11 era saw a rush by academics, journalists and policy makers to establish the term jihad as a non violent construct. He argues that this is in contradiction to how communities around the world understand the term jihad (Phares, 2005, pp 19). Furthermore he suggests that the proponents of a non violent interpretation are apologetics who risk obfuscating the real dangers of jihad from public view (*ibid*, pp 19-22). Rubenstein (2010) argues that jihad is a tool for the global conquest of Islam and that presenting the term in any other manner distracts from its military objectives (Rubenstein, 2010, pp 11-13 & 36). Rubenstein's (2010) sentiments are echoed by Christie (2018) who defines jihad as a 'holy war' (Christie, 2018, pp 250). All of these perspectives are wholly supported by *Islamist* ideologues such as Abdullah Azam (Azzam, no date, pp 27) and ibn Nuhaas (Ibn Nuhaas, no date, pp 40) as well as evident across the volumes of *Dabiq*. Wiktorowicz (2006) highlights the origins of radical Islam and states that Sayyid Qutub [d 1969] argued against established legal opinions that jihad was primarily against ones *nafs* (self) (Wiktorowicz, 2006, pp 79 & pp 83).

5.4.3 Response to Objection Two: *Challenging the Absolutist View.*

Phares's (2005) argument that jihad has a definitive understanding of violence is unfounded. In 2002 Gallup conducted a poll of over 10,000 Muslims across eight different countries. The vast majority of those polled interpreted jihad as a non violent construct (Burkholder: 2002). This clearly undermines Phares's (2005) statement and challenges Cook's (2005) position. In addition to this, academic opinion also sits uncomfortably with an essentialist view on the meaning of jihad. For example, Keskin & Tuncer (2018) detail how the term has been misrepresented within both academic literature and *Islamist* discourse. They argue that the focus has been on the concept as something inherently violent which has disregarded the plurality within its meaning (Keskin & Tuncer, 2018, pp 20-21). Bonner (2006) highlights the difficulties of identifying the 'core' meaning of the term jihad and suggests that there are so many different dynamics involved that pinning down an essential meaning rests against a backdrop of its development and redevelopment (Bonner, 2006, pp 04). He further argues that the concept of jihad in the Quran was not primarily about fighting and warfare (*ibid*, pp 22). This perspective supports Lewis (1988) who states that although a great number of classical theologians and jurists view jihad in a military sense some have argued for a more spiritual understanding of the construct (Lewis, 1988, pp 72). Furthermore, Mohammad (1985) argues that a form of jihad existed within the Meccan period and cites verses from the Quran that relate to engaging with non Muslims non militarily. He suggests that jihad is situated against the wider backdrop of spreading belief in Allah and ending polytheism (*ibid,* pp 385); which is similar to the considerations raised by Bonner (2006). This sentiment feeds in to the argument made in chapter 4 and as highlighted by Jacoby (2019), that there is a wider theological backdrop against which the evidences utilised in support of the use of military jihad need to be positioned against. So the proposition of a conventional wisdom and obviousness regarding the meaning of jihad is challenged by empirical research and academic opinion.

In addition, during the formative period of Islam the term jihad was not used exclusively by Muslims to communicate an inherently violent expression of faith. Rather the Quran has referenced the term in a non violent manner and attributed its 'ownership' to a non Muslim. For example in verse 8 of *surah al-ʿankabūt* Allah states that if parents make jihad against their believing children, compelling them to ascribe attributes to Allah that are not befitting of Him then those children are not obliged to listen to their parents (Quran 29:8).[76] Sulayman (2000) comments on this verse and states that it was revealed in relation to Sʿad ibn ʾAbī Waqqās whose mother refused to eat or drink anything in protest of her son's acceptance of Islam. She stated that she would maintain her fasting until Sʿad refuted his Islam (Sulayman, 2000, vol. 3, pp 30). There are three notable points of interest in respect of this account. Firstly, this incident took place in the early years of Islam during the Meccan period prior to the Quranic revelation which associated the term jihad with the force of arms. Secondly, at the time of this incident Sʿad's mother was a non Muslim and thirdly her protest was not in any way violent. So the term jihad was used to communicate the pacifist protest conducted by a non Muslim at a time when jihad was not in any way associated to violence. Picken (2015) lends further support to this argument by stating that verse 69 of *surah al-ʿankabūt* communicates a non violent understanding of jihad (Picken, 2015, pp 128). This verse has already been cited previously in section 5.1 in which the imperativeness of the jihad *al-nafs* was established. Furthermore, Imam al-Shawkani [d 1834] (who is also referenced as an authority by *Da'esh* in *Dabiq*) comments on this verse of *surah al-ʿankabūt* and states that here jihad refers to an endeavour to seek the pleasure of Allah (Al-Shawkani, 2007, p 1126). Murata & Chittick (1994) comment on the diversity of jihad and how it relates to a continual endeavour of submission to Allah's commands. So from their perspective there can be no Islam without jihad (Murata & Chittick, 1994, pp 21). However, this does not mean a violent

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[76] وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حُسْنًا وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ لِتُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

endeavour rather they are referring to self control in order to actualise the mandated practices resulting from belief in Allah. Espositio (1991) also makes reference to the essence of jihad as mentioned by Murata & Chittick (1994). He suggests that the term relates to an exertion of one's self in realising God's will and leading a virtuous life (Esposito & Piscatori, 1991, pp 93). So academic opinion, supported by empirical research and theological perspectives challenge the narratives that press an essentialist view of jihad as a construct of absolute outward violence.

However, this is not to suggest that the label of jihad is completely divorced from violence nor has it ever been associated with it. Much to the contrary, jihad as a force of arms is an established theological construct within Islam that features throughout the Quran and hadith. Lewis (1988) makes this clear when he takes his position cited above. Although the development of military jihad is not the remit of this thesis and neither are discussions in respect of its jurisprudential framework it is worthwhile, however, to take a moment in order to acknowledge the relationship between jihad and the use of force.[77]

Ibn Kathir argues that verse 39 of *surah al Ḥajj*[78] was the first to be revealed permitting the use of force. He cites the opinions of the *salaf* (Islamic scholars most commonly from the first three generations of Islam) who assert that the use of force legislated for in this verse is jihad (Ibn Kathir: 1999). Military jihad forms a substantial part of Muslim history in the post Meccan period and is afforded a great deal of attention in both the domains of jurisprudence and spiritual theology (referring to the virtues and spiritual benefits of military jihad). Some scholars have argued that military jihad developed from Meccan pacifism. For example, Mohammad (1985) speaks of an evolution in jihad (Mohammad, 1985, pp 391) and classical jurist al-Sarakhsī, writing in the 5th century of *hijra*, details the revelation of Quranic verses

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[77] Some of the jurisprudential works on *Da'esh* and military jihad have been cited in chapter 2.

[78] أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَاتَلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ظُلِمُوا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ

that demonstrate an escalation in how the Muslim community responded to prevailing threats; from abstinence (Quran 15:85)[79] through to pursuing the enemy (Quran 9:5).[80] From a wider perspective, Bonney (2004) also alludes to an evolution within jihadi thought as he maps out its historical developments (Bonney, 2004, pp 53-62). Furthermore, a great number of works have been penned detailing the origins and developments of 'political' jihad (Keppel: 2003) as well as those which examine organisations and groups who claim militancy as a legitimate expression of jihad (Gerges: 2009, Cockburn: 2015, Weiss & Hassan: 2016, Maher: 2016 and Neumann: 2016). So there is no attempt here to suggest or infer that jihad has nothing to do with violence. But equally it is erroneous to assert that the current incarnation of jihad expression, in the form of militancy is the only or essential form of jihad expression established in the Quran and hadith.

Another factor which feeds in to the perception of jihad as a construct of violence is the manner in which it has been depicted within the public space. For instance, the term jihad has received a great deal of public attention following 9/11 and the subsequent 'War on Terror'. Stimson (2010) cites an address that former US president Barrack Obama held for students at St. Xavier's College, Mumbai where he was asked about jihad. He argued that in the post 9/11 era mainstream media platforms have inadvertently supported the rhetoric of *Islamist* organisations who wish to depict jihad as a vehicle of violence. He stated that between 2001 and 2010 the term jihad, as a construct of violence, had featured on average 6,000 times per year across television and radio programmes in the US. In some years it had been as high as 12,000 times (Stimson: 2010). On average this is a total of 54,000 references to jihad as a construct of violence over a 9 year period. Comparatively speaking, the non violent understanding of jihad was presented across similar media channels a total of only 56 times over a 9 year period (*ibid*). The disparity is overwhelmingly evident. For every one

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[79] وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَآتِيَةٌ فَاصْفَحِ الصَّفْحَ الْجَمِيلَ

[80] فَإِذَا انْسَلَخَ الْأَشْهُرُ الْحُرُمُ فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ وَخُذُوهُمْ وَاحْصُرُوهُمْ وَاقْعُدُوا لَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْصَدٍ فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَخَلُّوا سَبِيلَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

association of jihad to non violence there were approximately 964 associations of it to violence. A large proportion of this is arguably due to media networks reporting events or attacks performed by militant jihadi organisations. However, Barack Obama conceded that the presentation of jihad in such a manner had reinforced the assumed link between Islam and terrorism (*ibid*). Mohammad (1985) writing on the subject of jihad in the mid 80's stated that there was a great deal of confusion in the 'West' regarding the term jihad and it seems to have acquired a pejorative meaning (Mohammad, 1985, pp 381).

5.4.4 Objection Three: Patience In The Face of Futility Is No Patience At All.

Section 5.3 argued that the Muslim community during the Meccan period of Islam (prior to migrating to Medina) contravened their established social norms by not resorting to violence amid oppression and persecution; rather they observed patience upon Allah's commands. It was argued that this observance was the embodiment of *taqwāˊ* and the jihad *al-nafs*.

However, it is important to recognise that those who were persecuted in Mecca, despite tribal affiliation or the loss thereof, were often the weakest and most vulnerable members of society. Sumayyah was formerly a slave to Abū Ḥudhayfah, leader of the Banū Makhzūm tribe (Guillaume: 1955). As a female ex slave, stripped of tribal protection, living within a patriarchal society at the very inception of Islam, Sumayyah had neither the social status nor resource to challenge oppressions against her and her family. In much the same way Bilāl, being an Abyssinian slave and considered to be on the lowest rung of the social order, was also unable to challenge the persecutions carried out against him. Similarly ʿUmar bin al-Khaṭṭāb was also compromised as a result of his Islam. Mubarakpuri (2015) relates an incident in which ʿUmar was visited by al-ʿĀṣ bin Wāˊil and ʿUmar speaks to al-ʿĀṣ regarding the *Quraysh's* dissent against him upon his accepting Islam. ʿUmar was reportedly

concerned for his welfare but was reassured by al-ʿĀṣ bin Wāʾil that none from the *Quraysh* would harm him as he had taken ʿUmar under his protection (Mubarakpuri, 2015, pp 71). Therefore, stripped of *ʿaṣbiyyah* protection as a result of his Islam, ʿUmar was arguably as vulnerable to persecution as Bilāl, this is despite ʿUmar's social status prior to his accepting Islam (Mubarakpuri, 2015, pp 70). Indeed the difference between ʿUmar and Bilāl was that ʿUmar had recourse to tribal support through affiliations that predated his Islam. In fact the prophet Muhammad ministered under the protection of his non Muslim uncle, ʿAbdul Muṭṭalib, and the very first Muslim migration to Abyssinia was to beseech the Christian Negus for refuge and protection against the tyranny of the *Quraysh* (Guillaume, 1955, pp 150). It can therefore be argued, with a great degree of merit that the Muslims in Mecca who suffered abuse and maltreatment as a result of their faith did not in fact choose to endure; rather it was the unavoidable consequence of their social poverty. In this regard, the matter no longer remains one of religious observance nor spiritual submission to Allah's commands; rather it is one of capitulation to the prevailing ruling order and coerced submission to social dominance.

5.4.5 Response to objection three: Patience, Jihad al-Nafs & the Meccan Period.

The credibility of this argument is undermined by historical events during the Meccan period. Ibn Hisham (2000) records an incident in which Sʿad bin Abī Waqqās fought some of the *Quraysh* in Mecca as the fledgling Muslim community used to meet at the *Dār al Arqam* (Ibn Hisham, 2000, pp 52). His incident is recoded in Islamic history as the very first bloodshed in Islam and it occurred during the Meccan period before migration to Medina and prior to the revelation of the verses which permitted the use of force. This evidences that tensions during the Meccan period had the potential to spill over in to retaliatory violence but such

outbursts were few in number. Furthermore, the incident of S'ad bin Abī Waqqās supports the argument made in section 5.2 above regarding the diverse nature of faith related challenges that Allah's answerable creation face. For instance, S'ad bin Abī Waqqās faced a challenge in adhering to the command of patience during the Meccan period whereas Bilal faced a very different challenge in his persecution by the *Quraysh*. Indeed patience (Quran 15:85)[81] and passiveness (Quran 15:94)[82] were commanded by Allah and irrespective of how difficult or unpalatable that may have been it was a divine command (*'ibādah*) that required observance.

In addition to this, some members from the early Muslim community fled Mecca and its hardships. The first migration to Abyssinia was authorised by the prophet Muhammad in the 5th year of Islam on account of the *Quraysh's* persecution of the Meccan Muslims (Guillaume, 1955, pp 150). A second migration to Abyssinia followed in the 6th year of Islam when after receiving false reports from Mecca many Muslims returned prematurely to renewed persecution and aggression. However, the returning Muslims learnt of this news whilst on route back to Mecca and although some chose to flee back to Abyssinia others chose to continue on to Mecca (Mubarakpuri, 2015, pp 64-65). Furthermore the objection raised above in section 5.4.4 evidences that alliances were sought out by Muslim converts which offered them protection from the Quraysh. They actively sought out opportunities and pathways to protect themselves from persecution and on occasion even retaliated, despite their social frailty, in order to seek refuge from oppression whilst practicing their faith.

So the decision of Meccan Muslims to stay in Mecca and remain passive as instructed by Allah amid the adversity they faced was their engagement with *'ibādah*. It was a cognitive decision and not something solely borne out of social impoverishment and vulnerability,

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[81] وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَآتِيَةٌ فَاصْفَحِ الصَّفْحَ الْجَمِيلَ

[82] فَاصْدَعْ بِمَا تُؤْمَرُ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

although that may certainly have been the case for some. However, as much as the social frailty narrative can be argued there is an equal amount of evidence to suggest that the passiveness of Meccan Muslims during the formative period was indicative of their pursuit of Allah's pleasure in accordance with theological principles established in section 4.2 of chapter 4. It is indeed a point of reflection to consider that *Dabiq* dismisses the Meccan period of Islam as a historical event disconnected from the contemporary challenges that Muslims face. In doing so they dismiss the significance of *taqwā'* and the jihad *al-nafs* during that period and how those attributes form the basis of faith practice in Islam.

The previous three sections have responded to challenges regarding the constructs of *taqwā'* and the jihad *al-nafs*. In doing so their principles are established from the formative period of Islam and evidenced as the essence of *'ibādah* as argued in the conceptual framework which was established in chapter 4. However, sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.3 of chapter 4 also discussed in brief the concept of *tawḥīd* in militant *Islamist* thought. The following section will elaborate upon some of these considerations in greater detail; in particular the relationship between military jihad and *tawḥīd*.

5.5 Jihad and its Relationship with *Tawḥīd* in Militant *Islamism.*

As detailed in section 4.3.2 of chapter 4, militant *Islamist* ideologues argue that the realisation of absolute *tawḥīd*, with its three distinct branches, is an exclusive product of military jihad. Without raising arms and eradicating the structures of disbelief that affront the divinity of Allah, true *tawḥīd* can never be realised and if there is no true *tawḥīd* then there is no true Islam. So from the militant *Islamist* perspective military jihad is the necessary precursor to the establishment of Allah's absolute divinity and oneness.

This belief regarding the establishment and preservation of Allah's *tawḥīd* through the military expressions of jihad was conceptualised and theorised by Ibn Taymiyyah. Doran

(2002) states that Ibn Taymiyyah tailored Islamic justifications in support of resistance against Mongol rule during the 13th century CE. Ibn Taymiyyah argued that the Mongols had evidenced their apostasy through their affiliation to Mongolian non Islamic practices (Doran, 2002, pp 178-180). In his *fatāwā*, ibn Taymiyyah asserts that it was obligatory to fight the Mongols due to their practices, actions and conduct against the Muslim community. This was despite the Mongols proclamation of Islam (Ibn Taymiyyah, 2004, vol. 28, pp 501-507). Jacoby (2019) has added to this analysis by stating that organisations like *Da'esh* have decontextualised ibn Taymiyyah's *fatāwā* for their own operational benefit (Jacoby, 2019, 39-43).

Habeck (2006) offers an overview of Qutb's assessment regarding the absence of 'true' Islam in the world and how Allah's sovereignty (*tawḥīd*) needed to be restored through a violent uprising in order to re-establish the 'Islamic State'. Qutb engineered the concept of modern day *jāhiliyyah* (ignorance) which, like its historical counterpart, was devoid of *tawḥīd* and thus prime for challenge through jihad (Habeck, 2006, pp 64-66). *Jāhiliyyah* appears across *Islamist* literature and refers to the period of religious ignorance conventionally associated to the pre Islamic enlightenment era (Ibn Manzur, pp 129). Kepel (1994) also details Qutb's centrality in the development of *the jāhiliyyah* principle in order to describe leaders and political regimes (in particular that of Gamal Abdel Nasser's Egypt) who did not apply the rulings of the Holy Quran at state level. Qutb's opinion was that true Muslims were required to break away from such regimes (Kepel, 1994, pp 19-20) and he was such a staunch advocate of this belief that even prior to his execution in 1966 he stated that a war was to be waged in the name of Islam (Taheri, 1987, pp 34). Ali & Post (2008) highlight how Qutb shared an affinity with other Sunni revivalists like Mawlana Mawdudi, Abd al-Salam Faraj and Abdallah Azam; all of whom asserted the need for change shaped through a narrative modelled on Qutb's stance of modern *jahiliyyah* (Ali & Post, 2008, pp 622 - 624). However

these principles of *jahiliyyah* and challenging perceived irreligosity share a distinct affinity with the *khawārij* sect. The *khawārij* have a longstanding history in Sunni Islam dating back to the time of the fourth caliph Ali. Indeed they revolted against Ali, declaring him an apostate (Ali: 2016) for his agreement to arbitrate with Muawiyah in the midst of battle.[83] The *khawārij* considered arbitration to a deviation from Gods legitimacy and that 'rule' only belonged to Allah (Zubaidah & Zulkifli, 2016, pp 4247). Thus they exited from Ali's caliphate resulting in the label *khawārij*, which literally means to exit.

So the sentiments presented by Qutb, Mawlana Mawdudi, Abd al-Salam Faraj and Abdallah Azam have a synergy with the historical *takfīrī* excommunicative practice of the *khawārij*. Although these positions are in stark contrast to classical theological opinion (as will be detailed further on this this chapter) and support the assertions made by Wiktorowicz & Kaltner (2003), Jurgensmeyer (2018) and Jacoby (2019) regarding a decontextualised interpretation of Islamic source material; they nevertheless offer critical currency for militant groups to regard of Muslims and indeed the Muslim world as 'apostate'. This determination is a necessary precursor in order to (re) establish *tawḥīd* through the construct of military jihad as jihad provides an avenue to forcibly remove challenge and opposition. However, military jihads' centrality within this dynamic has changed how militant *Islamists* view the relationship between jihad and *tawḥīd*. Maher (2016) comments on this in his examination of jihadist ideology and states that *Islamist* ideologues argue that jihad is the dimension of *tawḥīd* which requires manifestation through practical agency unlike the other acts of worship which are 'safer' ways of realising God (Maher, 2016, pp 161). This is evident in the viewpoints of individuals like Abdullah Azam, who was an influential ideologue during the Afghan and Arab alliance against the Soviets. Azam held the belief that only military jihad could offer a full appreciation of *tawḥīd al ʿulūhiyyah* (oneness of divinity). So those

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[83] Referred to as the battle of Siffin

individuals who did not participate in jihad were deficient in faith and belief (Maher, 2016, pp 158). Similarly, Abu Qatada argued that only jihad could realise the true purpose of creation by challenging disbelief and the practices which offend the divinity of Allah (*ibid*, pp 34). Thus the narrative describing the relationship between *tawḥīd* and jihad has developed from one of challenging apostasy to an absolutist validation of *tawḥīd*. The understanding of this relationship in contemporary jihadi discourse is that the principles of faith cannot be realised unless individuals take to the battlefield and prove their commitment to Allah in order to establish His divinity (Maher, 2016, pp 157).

However, these theories are neither uncontested nor unproblematic. Thus the following section will detail some of the considerations associated with the militant *Islamist* proposition of *tawḥīd*.

5.5.1 Navigating the Militant *Islamist* Proposition of *Tawḥīd.*

Fundamentally the impact of the arguments made in section 5.5 are evident upon the Transactional Engagement Model established in chapter 4. The purpose of creation from a Sunni Muslim perspective is the worship (*ʿibādah*) of Allah; the foundations of which were detailed in chapter 4 as the fundamental pillars of Islam. *Islamist* thinkers have endeavoured to establish military jihad as the sixth pillar of Islam or indeed an integral tenet of faith. For example, Abdullah Azam held the opinion that jihad was an act of worship no different to any of the other pillars. So the imperative nature of jihad meant that is it was not something that could feature transiently within the life of a Muslim; rather it required prominence and repetition (Maher, 2016, pp 34). Similarly, Ibn Nuhaas regarded jihad as the missing tenet of faith (Maher, 2016, pp 33) and as stated in the previous section Abu Qatada held the opinion that only jihad enabled an individual to realise the true purpose of creation. Whether or not jihad holds status of the 'missing pillar' has been discussed in section 4.2.1 of chapter 4 and

my position on the matter has been made clear there. But all acts of worship, designated or otherwise, are the subject of a regulatory framework which seeks paradise through attaining the pleasure of Allah. This mechanism is underpinned by the concepts of *taqwā'* and jihad *al-nafs* which are the essences of all faith practice (as established in this chapter). Thus when military jihad is a component within this mechanism then so too is it subject to the same theological and operational framework as all of the other acts of worship; it does and cannot sit outside of this dynamic.

However, the jihadist proposition drastically changes this dynamic. It argues that military jihad is necessary in order to establish absolute *tawḥīd* and 'true' Islam ('true' Islam as detailed in section 4.3.2 of chapter 4). When this proposition is positioned against the designation of *ʿibādah* as prescribed in the Quran, then the entire theological endeavour for humankind becomes one of fighting in order to establish Allah's divinity and discharge the purpose of creation. So in essence when Allah states in the Quran that he created humankind for the purposes of *ʿibādah*; according to the jihadist proposition this would necessarily have to mean that He created humankind to fight because without fighting His divinity can never be realised. So the pathway to absolute ethereal success, measured as the acquisition of paradise which is harnessed through His pleasure, is embedded within conflict and warfare in the militant jihadist mindset. Although no one from classical or contemporary militant *Islamism* (with the exception of Abu Qatadah) appears to have openly made such a direct statement, the outcome of their engagement with the subject of *tawḥīd* leads to this inevitable outcome and the outcome is not without its contentions.

Foremost, the permissibility to take up arms as an expression of jihad was not legislated until the 13th year of Islam. The prophet Muhammad established *tawḥīd* in Mecca without the use of military jihad. He was the very first Muslim who accepted Islam in the cave of *Hira* through embrace and affirmation, not by taking up arms. Thereafter his practice in the

Meccan period, accompanied by all those who responded to his call over a 12 year period did so without the use of violence (with full appreciation of the considerations raised previously in section 5.4.4). Although prophetic narrations refer to the practice of military jihad as one of greatest expression of faith (Bukhari, 1987, vol.2, pp 553)[84] but they do not refer to it as its definition, core, essence or reason for existence. If indeed military jihad validates *tawḥīd* then why was it absent from Islam for over half of the prophet Muhammad's prophethood? Furthermore, if the legislation of military jihad in the 13th year of Islam had such a profound impact on *tawḥīd's* validity then why was this not mentioned by the prophet Muhammad when detailing the tenets of Islam as mentioned in section 4.2.1 of chapter 4? In addition, Quranic exegeses on verse 39 of *surah al-Ḥajj*, which introduced the military dimension of jihad in the 13th year of Islam, mentions nothing of a change or shift in the purpose of creation that was established as *ʿibādah* in verse 56 of *surah al-Ḍhāriyāt* (Ibn Abbas, vol.1, pp 351; Sulayman, vol.2, pp 396, Ibn Kathir, 1999, vol.5, pp 433-436). This suggests that the objective of *ʿibādah* remained the same after its revelation as it was before. To argue to the contrary would necessitate that *tawḥīd* either had an incremental implementation that was completed with the revelation of military jihad (which no one, including the militant *Islamist* ideologues, has argued) or that the practice of the prophet's companions in the first 12 years of Islam was theologically deficient. The latter statement is indeed a bold one and theologically it is difficult to reconcile against the faith imperative. However, the positioning of *tawḥīd* in such a manner causes these deliberations and highlights the theological implausibility of determining the validity of *tawḥīd* upon the practice of military jihad.

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84 حدثنا عبد العزيز بن عبد الله حدثنا إبراهيم بن سعد عن الزهري عن سعيد ابن المسيب عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه قال سئل النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم أي الأعمال أفضل ؟
قال إيمان بالله ورسوله قيل ثم ماذا ؟ قال جهاد في سبيل الله قيل ثم ماذا ؟ قال حج مبرور

Furthermore, military jihad is conflict and conflict is ultimately a product of failure (Carter, 1908, pp 23).[85] This sentiment is echoed by Mohammad (1985) who cites the opinion of Ibn Khaldoun [d 1406 CE] in explanation of the decline in military jihad during the 12th and 13th century CE. Ibn Khaldoun stated that the decline in conflict was indicative of the Muslim community transitioning from warfare in to a more civilised stage of development (Mohammad, 1985, pp 392). In addition, as stated in section 4.3 of chapter 4, the expression of military jihad shares the same characteristics as any of the other designated acts of worship regarding its intended temporal impact (that it ought to lead to some sort of material betterment to the context in which it is applied). It would appear that this sentiment was to a degree also considered by Al-Maqdisi who raised concerns that the excessive promotion and use of 'suicide' bombings tarnished the image of Islam (Wagemakers, 2011, pp 150). This is suggestive that even within the mind of a militant *Islamist* ideologue like al-Maqdisi there was an appreciation that religion and religious constructs are intended to be beneficial to humankind.

Furthermore, the prophet Muhammad stated to his companions that they should not wish to meet their enemy but if they happen to do so then they should observe patience (Bukhari, 1987, vol.10, pp 225).[86] Commenting on this narration al-ʿAynī [d 1451 CE] cites the opinion of ʾAbū Bakr who stated that he would rather be granted wellbeing by Allah for which he can make thanks to Him over being afflicted through which he would need to observe patience (Al-Ayni, 2006, vol.22, pp 88). Al-ʿAynī offers an explanation of this narration and suggests that war presents difficulties in which people find they do not have the resolve to endure. As a result some have taken their own lives from injuries they have sustained and difficulties they have faced. Hence the prophet Muhammad instructed his

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[86] عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ لَا تَمَنَّوْا لِقَاءَ الْعَدُوِّ فَإِذَا لَقِيتُمُوهُمْ فَاصْبِرُوا

people not be eager to meet and fight an enemy due to the spiritual risks that it poses (Al-Ayni, 2006, vol.22, pp 88). This direction by the prophet Muhammad is uncharacteristic of all the other practices of *ʿibādah* meaning that their practice is not constrained or avoided. So war by all accounts is the product of failure, irrespective of how it s packaged.

Arguably the most troublesome consideration with the manner in which militant *Islamists* have constructed *tawḥīd* is in understanding how its integrity is preserved. Section 4.3.3 of chapter 4 highlighted that the preservation of *tawḥīd* was a sliding scale of subjectivity. Some of the considerations associated with this assertion were detailed in section 4.3.3 of chapter 4. However, there are contemporary considerations regarding militant *Islamism's* relationship between *tawḥīd* and military jihad that are pertinent to discussions here. For example, Faraj has stated in his seminal works; Jihad: The Absent Duty that the establishment of the caliphate is a religious obligation on Muslims and if that meant fighting is necessary to establish it then fighting also becomes a religious duty (Al-Faraj, 1981, pp 04). He further argues that pledging allegiance to the caliphate is an obligation on every Muslim. Failure to do so renders the death of such a Muslim as a death of ignorance (*ibid*). Applying these principles to the contemporary context, how does one rationalise *Da'esh's* grievances with other jihadi organisations operating in the Syrian and Iraqi space. These are well documented throughout the volumes of *Dabiq* however their conflict with *Jabahat al Nusra*, which was headed by a former *Da'esh* soldier Abu Muhammad al-Jawlani, led to a civil war resulting in the death of 3,000 jihadi fighters from both sides (Saltman & Winter, 2014, pp 30). The obvious question here is which side were 'Muslim' actually performing jihad? Each party held the belief (assumedly) that they were performing jihad in order to establish or indeed take control of an assumed caliphate. Each party also believed they were acting legitimately and fighting, as advocated by Faraj, in order to establish or rectify the Islamic State with which *tawḥīd* is claimed to be embedded. So were the claims of jihad and

tawḥīd by such individuals legitimate or not and in the absence of the necessary allegiance to the caliphate (which *Da'esh* claimed with absolute religious legitimacy) are the religious efforts of such individuals in opposition of a self declared caliphate of any material substance? This is arguably despite them having honoured all three aspects of *tawḥīd* as per the militant *Islamist's* mandate of *tawḥīd* detailed in section 4.3.2 of chapter 4. Or does the association of validating *tawḥīd* through the construct of jihad create a dynamic in which those who are in conflict with *Da'esh* are still required to pledge allegiance to the caliphate in order to validate their beliefs and legitimise their jihad? This is whilst fighting against the very same caliph from whom they were attempting to usurp power. This would suggest that the preservation of *tawḥīd* can exist within a self destructive dynamic where concerted efforts are being made (with an absolute claim of religious legitimacy) to overthrow the very individual upon whom the temporal integrity of *tawḥīd* has been hinged. In such a dynamic it is curious to know who from the conflicting parties is theologically correct. Who is going to paradise and who is going to hell? Perhaps, more fundamentally, it is curious to know whether any of the parties to the conflict took time to stop and reflect over the theological implications of taking a fellow Muslim's life. This consideration relates back to the principle established in chapter 4 regarding the temporal impact of acts of worship, in this case military jihad.

This section has highlighted the theological and intellectual challenges posed by the proposition that military jihad gives birth or an existential wholeness to *tawḥīd*. In doing so it cements *tawḥīd* as a standalone construct and validates the position I have taken in respect of it as detailed in chapter 4.

5.6 Conclusion.

This chapter has argued in favour of the jihad *al-nafs* as the essence and underlying principle of *ʿibādah* in Sunni Islam. It has argued that the jihad *al-nafs* is not a hollow or apologetic term developed in order to obfuscate the military objectives of jihad. Rather it is a bonafide theological principle established through the Quran and *ṣaḥīḥ* hadith from the very inception of Islam. The arguments which position jihad as a construct of inherent and absolute violence are reductive and unappreciative of the wider backdrop against which all expressions of human faith practice are situated. As established in chapter 4, the theological proposition of Islam states that humankind is destined for inevitable accountability in the court of Allah. In order to succeed in this accountability Allah's answerable creation are religiously obliged to fulfil their obligations of *ʿibādah*. This chapter has established that the military expression of jihad is indeed a component that feeds in to the wider rubric of *ʿibādah* but it is not the defining essence of Islam or the reason for which Allah created human kind. Therefore military jihad is subject to the same theological framework as any other act of worship. Furthermore, as section 4.2 of chapter 4 highlighted, the human experience with *ʿibādah* is subject to a plethora of challenges, tests and deviations. Military jihad is simply not capable of addressing these challenges. For example, how is military jihad able to resolve the desire of an individual who loves to kill people and is performing 'jihad' for blood lust as opposed to an act of worship? How can it address the thirst of an individual who desires fame and notoriety as a *mujāhid* or the rage and anger of an individual who is seeking revenge for lost loved ones? The resolution to these challenges, which present an existential threat to spiritual success, are neither the purview nor privilege of military jihad. Indeed Islam has catered for the preservation of theological integrity through dedicated mechanisms of self awareness, regulation and rectification. These have been established within this chapter as the constructs of *taqwāʾ* and the jihad *al-nafs*. So jihad does indeed

become the centre of the human theological endeavour, but not the military expression of it as the militant *Islamists* argue. Rather it is the liturgical struggle that all of Allah's answerable creation are decreed to face.

This chapter has established the validity of *taqwā* and the jihad *al-nafs* and thereby solidified their relationship with the construct of *ʿibādah* as detailed in the Transactional Engagement Model. This model will be utilised to theologically deconstruct *Dabiq* in pursuit of the research question.

Chapter 6 follows with a detailed examination of all 15 volumes of the *Dabiq*.

6.0 EXAMINING *DABIQ.*

6.1 Introduction.

This chapter provides a detailed examination of *Dabiq*. It utilises the conceptual framework established in chapters 4 and 5 in order to perform a theological deconstruction of *Dabiq's* content.

The examination reveals that *Dabiq* places a great deal of thematic focus on the constructs of violence as the pathways to Allah's pleasure. As the chapter will detail, 43% of *Dabiq's* thematic focus is placed on the proposition that Allah's pleasure in attained through some expression of 'warfare' ('warfare' being a category which contains conflict based themes identified through the examination of *Dabiq*). In comparison, only 3.48% of *Dabiq's* thematic focus related to 'self' (*nafs*) matters. *Dabiq* actively dismisses all arguments which associate the term jihad with constructs of non violence, despite utilising non-violent applications of the term within the publication. *Dabiq's* focus on violence as a gateway to Allah's pleasure coupled with an absence of focus on the 'self' creates spaces within *Dabiq* for competing temporal interests to encroach upon a theological act of worship. However, this appears to be less an outcome of consequence and more a construct by design as *Dabiq* seemingly advocates conflicting temporal interests in pursuit of operational objectives. Yet the publication is conspicuously silent on the broader theological goal(s) for *Da'esh's* supporters.

Furthermore, the publication is not intended for an exclusively Muslim audience rather it reaches out to several different audiences at the same time. In doing so it becomes more a journal of disparate narratives as opposed to a focused medium of recruitment; although recruitment is unquestionably one of the publications intended objectives. Nevertheless,

prior to engaging in *Dabiq's* examination, it is prudent to refresh upon the methodological framework utilised which is attached in appendix. 1. Appendix 6 contains the full results of *Dabiq's* theological narrative analysis.

6.2 Dabiq: General Overview.

Dabiq was one of *Da'esh's* flagship periodicals and as a publication it ran for approximately two years. The first edition was released in Ramadhan 1435 *hijra* (28th June 2014 CE) and the final edition was released in Shawwal 1437 *hijra* (July 2016 CE). Its official launch in the month of Ramadhan is perhaps an intentional act of symbolism with the prophet Muhammad's very first military jihad at *Badr*, which also occurred in the month of Ramadhan (Mubarakpuri, 2015, pp 259). Across the fifteen volumes a total of 942 pages of literature were produced with each volume containing an average of 63 pages. The shortest was the fifth volume (titled 'Remaining and Expanding') which had only 40 pages whereas the longest was the seventh volume (titled 'From Hypocrisy to Apostasy') which had 83 pages. Each volume was given a unique name, details of which are provided below:

1. Volume 1:   The Return of Khilafah.
2. Volume 2:   The Flood.
3. Volume 3:   A Call to Hijrah.
4. Volume 4:   The Failed Crusade.
5. Volume 5:   Remaining and Expanding.
6. Volume 6:   Al-Qaidah of Waziristan: A testimony from within.
7. Volume 7:   From Hypocrisy to Apostasy: Extinction of the grayzone.
8. Volume 8:   Shariah Alone Will Rule Africa.
9. Volume 9:   They Plot and Allah Plots.

10. Volume 10: The Laws of Allah or the Laws of Men: Is waging war against the khilafah apostasy?

11. Volume 11: From the Battle of Ahzab to the War of Coalitions.

12. Volume 12: Just Terror.

13. Volume 13: The Rafidah from Ibn Saba to the Dajjal.

14. Volume 14: The Murtadd Brotherhood.

15. Volume 15: Break the Cross.

Broadly speaking the title of each publication can be divided in to one of three categories:

a) Those with an overtly 'religious' connotation.

b) Statement titles (whether factually correct or not).

c) Those titles that straddle spheres (a) and (b).

The division of titles across these three categories is as follows:

- Category 1: Religious contains eight volumes consisting of the following:
    - Volume 1, Return of the Khilafah.
    - Volume 2, The Flood.
    - Volume 3, A Call to Hijrah.
    - Volume 7, From Hypocrisy to Apostasy.
    - Volume 9, They Plot and Allah Plots.
    - Volume 10, The Laws of Allah or the Laws of Men: Is waging war against the khilafah apostasy?
    - Volume 13, The Rafidah from Ibn Saba to the Dajjal.
    - Volume 15, Break the Cross.

- Category 2: Statements contains four volumes consisting of the following:

- o   Volume 5, Remaining and Expanding.

- o   Volume 6, Al-Qaidah of Waziristan.

- o   Volume 12, Just Terror.

- o   Volume 14, The Murtadd Brotherhood.

- • Category 3:Combination contains three volumes consisting of the following:

- o   Volume 4, The Failed Crusade.

- o   Volume 8, Shariah Alone Will Rule Africa.

- o   Volume 11, From The Battle of Al-Ahzab To The War of Coalitions.

In respect of its content, *Da'esh* set out five principle themes upon which *Dabiq's* narrative was constructed. This was made clear in the very first volume of *Dabiq* and are as follows:

1. *Tawḥīd*.

2. Jihad (assumed here as the use of force).

3. *Manhaj* (methodology).

4. *Hijra* (migration) and

5. *Jamāʿat* (unity).

Within this framework each periodical of *Dabiq* held the following six broad areas:

1. Foreword or Introduction.

2. Proposition to readership.

3. IS reports.

4. Feature of the publication.

5. In the words of the enemy.

6. IS news and testimonies.

From the above listed areas, 'IS Reports' and 'In the Words of The Enemy' are most embedded within *Dabiq*. They appear in all of the volumes with those headings, either as a combination or independently of each other whereas the other headings are either titled as such or contain headings and content that *Da'esh* considers relevant in its place.

Dabiq was released regularly as opposed to monthly. Although the editions appeared more regularly than not at monthly intervals, the first two editions were released in the month of Ramadhan 1435 *hijra* but then a publication for the month of *dhul qʿadah* was omitted. Similarly, editions for the months of *safar* 1436, *jamādī al-awwal* 1436, *rajab* 1436, *shawwāl* 1436, *dhul ḥijjah* 1436, *muḥarram* 1437, *rabī al-awwal* 1437, *jamādī al-awwal* and *jamādī al-ākhar* 1437, *shaʿbān* 1437 and *Ramadhān* 1437 all did not feature. This is perhaps due to the context from which *Dabiq's* content was derived. Although the publication itself does not detail how it was formed (its editorial process(es), methods of contributions or version/quality controls) it becomes evident, as will be detailed, that the volumes respond to current affairs as much as they intend to communicate *Da'esh's* worldview. Thus the publication is as much a war chronicle as it is a political commentator and 'religious' document. With it being so it is reasonable to assume that publications may have been delayed for organisational/operational benefit; be that perceived or otherwise.

An overview of the content of each volume is presented in Appendix 2.

6.3 Dabiq: Structural Review and Content Analysis.

This section will focus on two distinct areas; (i) an examination of the structural presentation of *Dabiq* and (ii) an analysis of its contents. In respect of this examination, the review and analysis will be presented in respect of all 15 volumes collectively, not each publication individually.

The analysis will begin with a structural review of *Dabiq*.

6.3.1 Dabiq: Structural Review.

Each volume of *Dabiq* is presented as an independent publication and can be engaged with as such. It does not necessitate that for a reader to benefit from a given volume that they need to have read previous volumes in the series. Although doing so would be advantageous, as *Dabiq* makes references to certain concepts and propositions that feature within other volumes. An example of this is the very first volume titled 'Return of the Khilafah'. In this volume *Da'esh* specifically tender the methodological approach (*millah*) of the prophet *Ibrāhīm* (Abraham), citing the sacrifices that he made in order to establish justice within his time. As a result of *Ibrāhīm's* actions Allah granted him leadership (*imāmah*) from which *Da'esh* draw parallels in order to propose their own religious legitimacy. In doing so they attempt to establish the concept of *imāmah* for themselves as the caliphate; asserting that *imāmah* covers both religious and political/state level leadership (*khilāfah*) (Dabiq, 2014, vol.1 pp 21-29). *Da'esh* spends time in this dialogue to establish their claim and in doing so they straddle several of the themes upon which *Dabiq* is conceived as highlighted in section 6.2. However, the detailed discussion in respect of the *millah* of *Ibrāhīm* ends in this volume although the imposition of the legitimacy of their proposition as the caliphate (which was formed through this discussion) is found throughout the rest of *Dabiq* even if references to this particular volume are not made. Thus there is very little immediate connection between individual volumes and a reader's knowledge doesn't necessarily increase in a linear trajectory in any one of the themes upon which *Dabiq* is formed.

The mild disconnect between volumes is further evident in the titling of each volume. For example, volumes 1 and 2 do not follow the chronological order of Noah and Abraham. Abraham is considered a descendant of Noah from the lineage of Noah's son, *Shem* (Genesis:

10-11). According to Islamic theology, Abraham was given prophethood some 1,143 years after the death of Noah (Al-Ayni, 2006, vol.23, pp 196). In volume 1, titled 'The Return of the Khilafah', *Da'esh* utilises the example of Abraham, who although chronologically came after Noah, as the mechanism by which *Da'esh* argue leadership for themselves. This is a necessary component when intending to hold the world to religious account which is why the parable of Abraham and his *millah* is presented first. In volume 2 of *Dabiq*, titled 'The Flood', *Da'esh* position themselves as the purifiers of the world by cleansing it from apostasy and polytheism and returning it to an assumed natural order, an intended consequence of global catastrophic floods that occurred in Noah's time. *Da'esh* assert that Noah did not give his people a choice to live in apostasy deviant of God's commands; rather the proposition he put forth was simple: they should follow him and adhere to God's commands or face His wrath (Dabiq, 2014, vol.2, pp 5-8). *Da'esh* situate themselves as the 'reset' button that was utilised by God during Noah's prophethood. They are His wrath or indeed His divine justice upon the perceived sinners and wrong doers of the world. And just as Noah's prophethood sought to hard reset humanity, then so too do *Da'esh* endeavour to return the world to its natural and default state of subservience to God. So although there may not be compliance to chronological sequences in the titling of volumes, there does certainly appear to be a thematic synergy from title to title. Indeed volume 3, titled 'A Call to Hijra', is a product of volumes 1 and 2. *Hijrah* relates to both a command of the Quran as well as the hadith of the prophet Muhammad. In verse 97 of *surah al-Nisā* Allah speaks of those who have wronged themselves claiming to have been oppressed. Allah rejects their claims instead asking them rhetorically that were His lands not vast enough for them to emigrate elsewhere? (Quran 4:97).[87] In relation to this verse, Imam *al-Qurtubī* holds the opinion that it relates to a group of Muslims who, in the time of the prophet Muhammad, failed to make *hijra* with him to

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[87] إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَوَفَّاهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ ظَالِمِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ قَالُوا فِيمَ كُنْتُمْ قَالُوا كُنَّا مُسْتَضْعَفِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا أَلَمْ تَكُنْ أَرْضُ اللَّهِ وَاسِعَةً فَتُهَاجِرُوا فِيهَا فَأُولَئِكَ مَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا

Medina. Thereafter upon the battle of *Badr* they were compelled by the *Quraysh* to march out against their Muslim brethren, hence the claims by them of oppression and duress (Al-Qurtubi, vol.5, pp 328). Thus *Da'esh's* call to *hijra* is evocative of what they consider to be an obligation upon Muslims, as stipulated in the Quran, to travel to a land that *Da'esh* regards as *dārul* Islam (the land of Islam). On the surface, their ultimate purpose is to deliver jihad in accordance to their understanding of it and in doing so they determine *hijra* to be a fundamental and necessary part of the process (Dabiq, 2014, vol.3, pp 27-28). The matter of whether *hijra* to modern day Syria or Iraq was obligatory upon Muslims is indeed a question of jurisprudence which sits firmly outside of the remit of this thesis. However, titling their third publication 'A Call to Hijrah' clearly communicates not only overt religious symbolism but also a progressive evolution within their titles from volumes one and two.

So *Da'esh* makes a statement in volume one that the *Khilafah* has been established, they reject the notion of choice and plurality in volume two, citing the prophetic methodology of Noah and then in volume three they compel their readership to make *hijra* to *Da'esh's* state in fulfilment of a religious obligation and personal, spiritual safeguarding. Within this developmental journey there are also volume titles that are reactive to mainstream media reports. For example, volume 4 of *Dabiq* (which straddles both categories one and two) was released on 25th September 2014 and speaks of *Da'esh's* expanding territory and continuing military achievements (Dabiq, 2014, vol.4, pp 23-26). However, shortly prior to the release of this volume, on the 3rd September 2014, the BBC carried a report suggesting that US airstrikes had halted *Da'esh's* advance across northern Iraq and impeded its progression in to Kurdistan (BBC: 2014). *Da'esh* carried this theme through to its *Muharram* 1436 (October 2014) edition titled 'Remaining and Expanding'. Where the BBC reported 'Islamic State crisis: Kurds recapture key Kobane hill*'* (BBC: 2014); *Dabiq* was celebrating the 'liberation' of Kurdish villages and out rightly rejected media reports that Kobane had been recaptured by

Kurdish fighters (Dabiq, 2014, vol.5, pp 12-26). The climax of this progressive journey in respect of *Dabiq's* titles comes to rest at volume fifteen, titled 'Break the Cross'. All of the titles within this series, whether they sit in categories one, two or three (as highlighted previously in section 6.2) have led up to the final edition which is themed in 'religious' terms. 'Break the Cross' refers to a hadith of the prophet Muhammad in which he speaks of the second coming of Jesus son of Mary. He states that the final hour will not be established until Jesus has returned in order to break the cross, exterminate the swine and disband the *jizyah* (a protective tax that is paid by non Muslims to the Islamic government when living under their rule) (Bukhari, 1987, vol.2, pp 875).[88] Thus the thematic propositions at the beginning and end of Dabiq appear to meet; being an establishment of the *Khilāfah* and the inescapable reality of the end of times. Interestingly the introduction of volume fifteen ends with the statement *"And have no doubt that the war will only end with the black flag of Tawhid (Islamic monotheism) fluttering over Constantinople and Rome, and that is not difficult for Allah"* (Dabiq, 2016, vol.15, pp 07). This statement is significant as in September 2016 *Dabiq* was replaced as *Da'esh's* feature publication by their newest title *Rumiyyah* (which is *Da'esh's* reference for not only Rome but wider Christian Europe).

Perhaps then it was no coincident that the number of terrorist attacks by militant *Islamists* also increased in 2016 compared to previous years. The European Union produced a Terrorism Situation and Trend Report which stated that thirteen *jihadist* attacks were conducted across Europe in 2016 of which ten were completed (Europol, 2017, pp 22). This was a 53% increase compared to 2015 in which only seven *jihadist* attacks were reported (Europol, 2016, pp 22). Thus *Da'esh* replacing *Dabiq* with *Rumiyyah* was arguably a symbolic gesture that their jihad would no longer be focused in Syria and Iraq, rather the

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[88] حدثنا علي بن عبد الله حدثنا سفيان حدثنا الزهري قال أخبرني سعيد بن المسيب سمع أبا هريرة رضي الله عنه عن رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم قال لا تقوم الساعة حتى ينزل فيكم ابن مريم حكما مقسطا فيكسر الصليب ويقتل الخنزير ويضع الجزية ويفيض المال حتى لا يقبله أحد

fight would be brought to the streets of Europe by *Da'esh* operatives and this is something that *Da'esh* fervently advocate in their publications. This sentiment is shared by Jurgensmeyer (2018) who argues that the publication of *Rumiyyah* is indicative of *Da'esh's* intent to retain focus on Europe (Jurgensmeyer, 2018, pp 22). The recent attacks in London by Usman Khan in 2019 and Sudesh Ahmed in 2020 are certainly evidence of this.

On a mild deviation from discussions relating to *Dabiq's* structure, the propositions put forth by *Da'esh*, of either accepting their worldview or being killed at their hand are reticent of the global developments of the Muslim community. For instance, in 2017 the Pew Centre for Research carried a report in which they forecast the global Muslim population to increase by 70% between 2015 and 2060. Currently at 1.8bn Muslims, Pew predict that by 2060 the Muslim population will have increased to almost 3bn (Lipka & Hackett: 2017). Although Pew attributes the increase to demography and social norms; in 2011 the BBC highlighted that between 2001 and 2011 over 40,000 individuals in the UK alone converted to Islam (Nye: 2011). Though these numbers may seem to suggest a vitality within the growth of Islam globally, from *Da'esh's* perspective the matter is not one of numbers rather it is one of creed; their creed (Dabiq, 2014, vol. 2, pp 23). So if adherents of Islam are not upon what they refer to as the 'correct' creed then they are no different in their culpability to apostates, deviants and the *kuffār*. Furthermore, *Da'esh's* analogising with the prophet Noah, and specifically with the punishment that fell upon his people, is overwhelmingly reticent of the cross theological perspective that Noah invited his people toward God for over six hundred years before seeking Gods intercession (Genesis: 7). Although Islamic theology doesn't expressly make mention of when Noah prayed to Allah for help, *Ibn Kathīr* records that Noah sought God's intercession (as detailed in verse 27 of *surah Nūḥ*)[89] after having invited his people to Allah's message for over 950 years (Ibn Kathīr, 1999, vol. 8, pp 237). *Da'esh*

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[89] إِنَّكَ إِن تَذَرْهُمْ يُضِلُّوا عِبَادَكَ وَلَا يَلِدُوا إِلَّا فَاجِرًا كَفَّارًا (27) رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِمَن دَخَلَ بَيْتِيَ مُؤْمِنًا وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَلَا تَزِدِ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا تَبَارًا

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however are not as generous nor patient as the authorities they refer to in their rationale and writings.

Another curious observation in respect of the *Dabiq's* structure is a statement made by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi that is 'religiously' repeated across all volumes of *Dabiq*. Al-Zarqawi's statement, 'the spark has been lit here in Iraq, and its heat will continue to intensify – by Allah's permission – until it burns the crusader armies in Dabiq' can be found at the opening of every edition of *Dabiq*. Aside from this one consistent, the subjects and topics contained within *Dabiq* appear to be sporadic as conversations straddle multiple themes in any given volume. An example of this is evident in volume two titled 'The Flood'. This volume consists of 44 pages yet only 4 pages are directly related to the prophet Noah and the floods that occurred during his time with another 3 pages allocated to drawing parallels between the respective societies of Noah's time and *Da'esh's* time. The rest of the publication, despite its title, relays information on operations within the Islamic State, discussions on creed, the importance of jihad and *hijrah* and analogies of the flood through various other theological concepts (for example *mubahalah* – a practice that invites debate based upon each party taking an oath that whoever is wrong be cursed by Allah). This almost seems to be a construct by design as it is a feature that runs throughout the published series. For example, volume 13 titled 'The Rafidah' consists of 56 pages yet only has 13 pages dedicated to discussions on the *Rafidah*. The rest of the publication is a rebuttal of other Islamic ideologies, military reports within the regions, interviews, testimonials from western opposition and advice for *Da'esh's* female supporters. Thus the title heading, if not strategically selected in order for it to be central to a thematic narrative, appears to occupy contributory placement within the wider discourse of the publication.

However, although from a user perspective each volume, specifically, and the publication, generally, can appear to be fractured all of *Dabiq's* content relates to the underpinning

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principles upon which it was conceived, as mentioned in section 6.2. Thus it is authored with clarity, vision and a decisive message even if the document appears to fall over itself. Although *Da'esh* don't make the claim themselves explicitly, there is room to argue that they have structured the publication in a manner that simulates the structure of the Quran. For example, *Da'esh* have structured *Dabiq* on five broad themes which is the same number of themes that the Quran is also argued to be structured upon (Abdul Rahim, 2008, pp17-18). *Dabiq* has a distinct incoherence in its structure which is also an observation that has been made of the Quran based upon its non chronological presentation (Schimmel, 1992, pp 30; Esposito, 2016, pp 19). Advocates supporting the structure of the Quran argue that it was recorded in the manner it was revealed; depending upon the needs of the Muslim community and in order to strengthen their faith. This is established by the Quran in response to objections that were raised by the *Quraysh* regarding the scattered nature of revelation unlike that which came to Moses (Quran 25:32;[90] ibn Abbas, 1999, vol.1, pp 379). And this may well also be true in respect of *Da'esh* who have authored *Dabiq* as not only an educational guide but also a war chronicle. Thus the content of their publications is perhaps a response to the needs, threats and concerns they as an organisation were facing on the ground at the time.

Whatever the case maybe, there is room to argue that in the formation of their publication, *Da'esh* has attempted to emulate the structure of the Quran. This is significant because it points towards a theological underpinning that would permeate *Da'esh's* mindset in production of their public material; in other words everything they have written in *Dabiq* is theological by their measure. Contrast this perspective against studies which examine *Dabiq* and *Da'esh* through political or social science lenses. For example Colas (2017) has argued that 31% of *Dabiq* makes reference to overtly religious material (Colas, 2017, pp 178). This is in stark contradiction to the alternative theological perspective presented here which

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[90] وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْآنُ جُمْلَةً وَاحِدَةً كَذَلِكَ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ وَرَتَّلْنَاهُ تَرْتِيلًا

suggests that the entire document can be viewed as a theological construct, overt or otherwise. There is indeed evidence found within Islamic discourse to suggest that apparent non theological actions can be regarded as 'religious' and therefore theological simply by the intention upon which they are conceived. For example, in a hadith narrated by 'Umar bin al-Khattāb he reports that the prophet of Allah stated that all actions are in accordance to their intentions and verily for an individual is that what he has intended (Tirmidhi, no date, vol.6, pp 202).[91] Commenting on this hadith, Mubarakpuri (1984) states that from among the various meanings that 'intention' holds within the context of this narration, is the determination of whether an action is for the sake of Allah and the hope of spiritual rewards based upon such an intention (Mubarakpuri, 1984, Vol. 1, pp 34). What we understand from this is that in order for an action to be theologically rewarding it need not necessarily be overtly religious or religiously prescribed (this was detailed in section 4.2.1 of chapter 4 regarding non designated acts of worship). Therefore if *Da'esh* have conceived the production of *Dabiq* for the sake of Allah, then the entirety of it is necessarily a religious piece of work and should therefore be engaged with as such; irrespective of whether its apparent content would suggest otherwise. This is where the insider approach detailed in chapter 3 proves valuable. It facilitates engagement with the publication in a manner not offered by conventional academic methodologies for the study of religion.

However, the obvious question is how are we able to determine with which intention *Dabiq* has been penned? Although we cannot definitively state what *Da'esh's* theological intentions were, the content of *Dabiq* communicates a concerted effort to project theological legitimacy and sincerity. For instance, the opening statement of every edition, and even the transition

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[91] عَنْ عُمَرَ بْنِ الْخَطَّابِ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّةِ وَإِنَّمَا لِامْرِئٍ مَا نَوَى فَمَنْ كَانَتْ هِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَإِلَى رَسُولِهِ فَهِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَإِلَى رَسُولِهِ وَمَنْ كَانَتْ

قَالَ أَبُو عِيسَى هَذَا حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ صَحِيحٌ وَقَدْ رُوِيَ عَنْ مَالِكِ بْنِ أَنَسٍ وَسُفْيَانَ الثَّوْرِيِّ وَغَيْرِ وَاحِدٍ مِنْ الْأَئِمَّةِ هَذَا هِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى دُنْيَا يُصِيبُهَا أَوْ امْرَأَةٍ يَتَزَوَّجُهَا فَهِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى مَا هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِ

عَنْ يَحْيَى بْنِ سَعِيدٍ وَلَا نَعْرِفُهُ إِلَّا مِنْ حَدِيثِ يَحْيَى بْنِ سَعِيدٍ الْأَنْصَارِيِّ قَالَ قَالَ عَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنُ مَهْدِيٍّ يَنْبَغِي أَنْ نَضَعَ هَذَا الْحَدِيثَ فِي كُلِّ بَابٍ

from one narrative to another within the same edition, begins with the following phrase 'All praise is due to Allah; and may Allah send blessings and peace upon His messenger'. In a hadith narrated by Abū Hurayrah the prophet Muhammad is reported to have said that all actions begun without the remembrance of Allah are void of blessings and mercy (Ibn Hibban, 1993, vol. 1, pp 173).[92] It is for this reason, a theological reason, that each new section of *Dabiq* opens with the remembrance of Allah. Although these characteristics are not indicative proofs of *Da'esh's* theological intent at the time of commissioning this publication, it is certainly worthy of consideration that *Da'esh* may have done so. Their physical and material efforts, in the form of the jihad that they propagate, is claimed for a theological purpose. So based upon the above, it is not unreasonable to contend that the publication which supports their material efforts is also viewed and examined as a theological publication.

That being said, if the blueprint for the production of *Dabiq* was the Quran itself then there is a notable divergence between the opening of the Quran and the opening of each volume of *Dabiq*. The Quran begins with the name of Allah and then proceeds to cite two of His most profound attributes; those of *al-raḥmān* (the most merciful) and *al-raḥīm* (the most benevolent). In fact every chapter of the Quran begins in this manner, highlighting the aforementioned attributes of Allah. *Dabiq*, however, opens with the statement of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, mentioned above in this section, where he states that the spark which has been lit in Iraq will intensify and burn the crusader armies at *Dabiq*. This passage is the opening statement of every volume and thus sends *Dabiq* along a very different trajectory to

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عن أبي هريرة قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: "كل أمر ذي بال لا يبدأ فيه بحمد الله فهو أقطع جاء في رواية أخرى، فإنه روى على أوجه "بذكر الله"، "بسم الله"، "بحمد الله"، قال: وهذا الكتاب كان ذا بال من المهمات العظام، ولم يبدأ فيه بلفظ الحمد بل بالبسملة. انتهى. والحديث الذي أشار إليه أخرجه أبو عوانة في "صحيحه"، وصححه ابن حبان أيضاً، وفي إسناده مقال، وعلى تقدير صحته فالرواية المشهورة فيه بلفظ "حمد الله" ، وما عدا ذلك من الألفاظ التي ذكرها النووي وردت في بعض طرق الحديث بأسانيد واهية. ومع ذلك فقد حسنه ابن الصلاح والنووي، وصححه السبكي في "طبقات الشافعية

that of the Quran. Where the opening of the Quran invokes mercy, the opening of *Dabiq*

invokes disaster. This lack of empathy is overwhelmingly evident through the pages of

Dabiq and within its narrative construct. It further permeates throughout the organisations

operations as will be detailed in section 6.5.4 of this chapter. As an organisation which

purports to operate in the 'religious' space, their disregard for compassion, mercy and

empathy solidifies the contentions raised against them in section 4.3.3 of chapter 4. Although

the narrative will be analysed in greater detail in section 6.3.2, *Da'esh* equally appear to revel

in the prospect of an apocalypse as much as they lack compassion and mercy. An example of

this is evident in volume 15 where *Da'esh* present a feature titled 'By the Sword'. In it they

clearly state that they are holding firm to the laws of Allah, laws that were part of Christian

and Jewish theology but have been abandoned by the Christians and Jews. In a chilling

statement *Da'esh* states that they would not have any hesitation in dropping another nuke on

Japan and would deal with post pubescent Jewish males in a manner that would make the

holocaust look like a bedtime story (Dabiq, 2016, vol. 15, pp 80).

Furthermore, the articles presented within *Dabiq*, under anyone of the six broad areas

highlighted above in section 6.2, appear to be tailored primarily for men; with occasional

focus on women appearing in latter editions. *Dabiq* emphasizes a strong sense of

masculinity, through its narrative construct and iconography. There are innumerable

references to the soldiers of the 'Islamic State' as lions (Dabiq, 2014, vol.1, pp 47-48; Dabiq,

2014, vol.2, pp 42) and images of *Da'esh's* alleged soldiers either on the battlefield engaged

in conflict or preparing for combat. It is evident that *Dabiq* has been penned predominantly

for a male readership and the inclusion of women within their editions is arguably a

reactionary response to operational needs they experienced on the ground. For example,

volume 7 of *Dabiq* contains an interview with Umm Basīr al-Muhajirah, the wife of a

deceased *Da'esh* operative. She beseeches her 'sisters' to be supportive of their husbands,

brothers and fathers (assumedly to support *Da'esh* in whatever capacity they are able to) and not to be an obstacle of difficulty. She impresses upon the readership, specifically the example of Pharaohs wife ʿĀsiyah, who relinquished the materialism of the world in pursuit of the afterlife (Dabiq, 2015, vol. 7, pp 50-51). Although this segment is titled 'To Our Sisters', it also serves as a catalyst for the men folk to encourage their women to be more like Umm Basīr al-Muhajirah who, in this day and age, has made the sacrifices that she did assumedly for the sake of Allah and the 'Islamic State'. In a similar fashion, volume 12 presents an article authored by Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirah in which she advocates the merits of polygamy stating that the women of the Islamic State are falling foul of jealousy and becoming deviant of the permissibility within Islam for men to have more than one wife (Dabiq, 2015, vol. 12, pp 19-22).

A review of *Dabiq's* structure has not revealed anything which other religious or non religious groups and organisations haven't already done. It is a document that caters more for the Muslim male readership in its early volumes and transitions to focus specifically on women in later volumes. However, this is arguably a product of organisational need and tactical responses to some of the field challenges they faced. *Dabiq* is layered with theological symbolisms and these have been placed across its 15 volumes in a manner which suggests that it is more than mere coincidence. *Dabiq's* construct appeals for religious legitimacy which endeavours to present its narrative as religiously bonafide in turn demanding support from the global Muslim community. Thus the following section will examine the content of *Dabiq* in greater detail.

6.3.2 Dabiq: Content Analysis.

As a regular publication, *Dabiq* is laden with content that straddles multiple spheres. It is not simply a document of theological justifications for the propagation of a very particular

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religious world view. Rather it is a chronicle that boasts *Da'esh's* 'achievements' in a

military and non military capacity. It is a continuum, one which whilst looking forward to

the utopia of a proposed future also forces its readership to look back at the idealistic

religious standards of yesteryear. It is a 'medicine man', offering cures to the illnesses that

have supposedly riddled the Muslim nations across the world. It is a political commentator

that provides a worldview insight of current international affairs. But most interestingly, as a

publication it is not a violent extremist recruitment tool *per-se*. This assessment is shared by

Colas (2017) who suggests that *Dabiq* is primarily a tool to establish boundaries and

challenge western policies against ISIS (Colas, 2017, pp 178). Kibble (2016) however,

argues that *Dabiq* is in fact a tool for recruitment; citing the numerous accounts of *Da'esh's*

soldiers, both living and fallen, that are contained within the publication. Kibble (2016)

suggests that these accounts are utilised as currency to recruit future jihadists (Kibble, 2016,

pp 138). Although there is a degree of merit to what Kibble (2016) argues, there are more

effective methods of recruitment. Sageman (2004) argues that social networks are the

facilitators of recruitment in to radicalisation (Sageman, 2004, pp 29). In a similar vein, the

RAND Corporation produced a report which attributed the sharp rise in *Da'esh's* foreign

fighters to the use of social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram and Facebook (Bodine-

Baron *et al*, 2016, pp 1). In addition, *Dabiq's* content has not been authored sequentially

meaning that one does not necessarily need to read volume one in order to fully understand

volume two (as stated previously in section 6.3.1). From a pragmatic perspective this makes

absolute sense if the sole purpose of *Dabiq* was to radicalise and recruit its readership.

However, *Dabiq* is wrapped in an abundance of content much of which requires additional

background reading in order to understand.[93] The additional content, from a practical

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[93] See for example volume 6 of *Dābiq* where *Da'esh* highlight the flaws of al-Qa'idah in great detail. Similarly
volume 15 of *Dābiq* goes in to great detail in its rejection of Darwinism and the validity of other faith scriptures
such as the bible. These articles require a large degree of theological and evolutionary understanding in order to
fully appreciate the arguments that *Da'esh* are making.

perspective, arguably inhibits the effectiveness of the publication as a recruitment tool. However, although there may appear to more effective platforms for radicalisation and recruitment than *Dabiq* and more productive methodologies than the manner in which its contents is presented, there is an undeniable focus within the pages of *Dabiq* to recruit support. This is evident by the way in which *Da'esh's* narrative in respect of their supporters, fighters and 'martyred' comrades is structured. Thus *Dabiq's* content can perhaps best be analogised with that of items on a shopping list. Although collectively those items may not produce a dish of any culinary excellence they are nevertheless key ingredients in recipes that are producing content elsewhere, for example the social media platforms of Twitter and Instagram.

Furthermore, *Dabiq's* content is not averse to contradicting either itself or *Da'esh's* operational methods. The frequency with which this appears to occur warrants closer inspection and will be examined in greater detail in the following section.

6.3.2.1 *Dabiq*: Fractures within its Content.

Fractures and apparent contradictions within *Dabiq* present themselves in two distinct formats. One are intra-text displacements; where content within the volumes of *Dabiq* appears contradictory. The second are inter-text and operational displacements; whereby the operational functions of *Da'esh* appear to be in stark contradiction to what *Da'esh* mandates within *Dabiq*. To illustrate these displacements across *Dabiq*, a number of examples from both formats of contradiction will be presented below.

Volume two of *Dabiq* was released in June 2014. In it *Da'esh* stated that they were not oblivious to the condition of Gaza and that they would do everything within their power to strike down the apostates who stood as obstacles on their path towards Palestine. Interestingly they stated that their actions would speak louder than their words (Dabiq, 2014,

vol. 2, pp 04). However, in March 2016, almost 2 years after their declaration of support for the Palestinian 'cause', the Times of Israel carried a report in which *Da'esh* stated that the Palestinian issue did not take precedence over any other jihadi struggle. Rather the liberation of the holy mosques and the implementation of *shariah* in Arabia was a greater priority (Lieber: 2016). This is despite the fact that Israel has been a supporter of the coalition in the fight against *Da'esh* since 2014 (Freeman: 2014). Their lack of action in the Palestinian arena sits in direct conflict with their own position where they advocate for violence against countries who support the war on terror (Dabiq, 2014, vol. 4, pp 09). In a similar fashion, in volume six *Da'esh* states that knowledge precedes action and that seeking knowledge of jihad is imperative (Dabiq, 2014, vol. 6, pp 07). However, they then go on to suggest that when taking action against the 'enemy' (framed as jihad in with *Da'esh's* worldview) one should not consult with anyone; rather they should simply go out and do it (*ibid*). The apparent contradiction appears obvious; that being *Da'esh* call for individuals to take up arms against the enemy and that this endeavour requires knowledge to underpin the action. Yet the seeking of that knowledge is curtailed by *Da'esh* against the risk that those who are asked may suggest an alternative course of action. Thus it is better not to ask in respect of jihad; so seek knowledge but not too much. In the same volume, a contribution put forth by Abu Hamza al-Muhajir[94] implores *Dabiq's* readership to exercise caution when pronouncing *takfir* (excommunication). However, the pages of *Dabiq* are full with claims that Muslims (at either individual or state level) have apostosized, become *murtadd* (disbelievers) and are no longer Muslim. Hence not only is it permissible to pronounce their *takfir* (excommunication) but it is also permissible to kill them as any responsibility towards them has been lifted (Dabiq, 2015, vol. 8, pp 28). The discussions on *tawḥīd* in militant *Islamist* thought have

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[94] Also known as Abu Ayyub al-Misri. He was the leader of AQI following the death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in 2006. He was killed in 2010 following a joint American and Iraqi military operation.

been detailed in sections 5.1 and 5.5.1 of chapter 5. The implications of *Da'esh's* subscription to this particular ideology will be detailed to a greater extent in chapter 7.

Furthermore, Abu Hamza al-Muhajir continues to offer his treatise in volume seven in which he states that the leaders of the Islamic State and its operatives need to exercise grave caution to ensure that they do not spill blood unjustly (Dabiq, 2015, vol. 7, pp 12). Contrast this statement against an interview *Da'esh* recorded with Abu Muqatil al-Tunisi who called upon Muslims in the west to randomly kill any *kāfir* (non Muslim) however they are able to using whatever means they have at their disposal (Dabiq, 2015, vol. 8, pp 62). Abu Hamza al Muhajir continues to instruct *Da'esh's* leadership not to be so harsh that they become repulsive (Dabiq, 2015, vol. 7, pp 15). Yet within the very same volume *Da'esh* presents a feature piece on the Jordanian pilot, Mu'adh Safi Yusuf al-Kasasibah, whom they burnt alive whilst he was locked in a cage (Dabiq, 2015, vol. 7, pp 5-8). Not only was the graphic detail of the execution recorded in *Dabiq* but *Da'esh* also uploaded a video of the incident to the internet making it a spectacle for the world to see.[95] There is indeed a vibrant discussion regarding what *Da'esh* consider to be 'just' blood and how it is at variance with other Islamic theological understandings. In fact in volume six of *Dabiq*, *Da'esh* are incredibly critical of al-Qaedah and label them as deviant for not taking a firm enough stance against nationalism and other sects they consider to be deviant (Dabiq, 2014, vol. 6, pp 44).

These examples highlight some of the displacements found within *Dabiq's* narrative. But irrespective of these fractures, it is undeniable that *Dabiq* endeavours to impose a very particular worldview upon its readership in order to impress a section of their intended audience toward supporting their 'jihad'. Thus all avenues lead to a single intended outcome. *Dabiq* endeavours to present *Da'esh* in a prophetic light as the divine agents of change. This was evident from their second volume where they positioned themselves as God's wrath

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[95] See http://video.foxnews.com/v/4030583977001/?#sp=show-clips for uploaded content.

upon humankind and the hard 'reset' that occurred in Noah's time. Therefore irrespective of these contradictions and fractures, *Dabiq* is incredibly clear and focused upon the message it communicates.

The discussion thus far has provided an overview of *Dabiq*; the structure of the publication, its content and fractures. The following section will provide a detailed thematic examination against the conceptual framework established in chapter 4 and 5.

6.3.2.2 *Dabiq*: Identification of Themes.

When engaging with *Dabiq's* text it was necessary to differentiate a 'call to action' from the rest of the content within *Dabiq* as one could comfortably argue that *Dabiq*, in its entirety is *Da'esh's* call to action. This assertion holds greater substance when the publication is viewed through a theological lens and one remains recognisant of the considerations raised above in section 6.3.1, that the entire publication is a theological construct.

The line by line reading identified themes through which the pleasure of Allah was purportedly attained. The coding structure was further divided in to two sub categories, 'direct' and 'indirect', in order to differentiate content that explicitly defined the seeking of Allah's pleasure from that in which it was implied or an inevitable consequence of undertaking an action. Full details of the themes identified are contained in appendix 6.

From a broad perspective, 30 individual themes were identified in the analysis of *Dabiq*; they are listed in table 2 below:

Table 2: Themes Identified through the Line by Line Reading of Dabiq.

Hijrah	*Khalīfah*	Allegiance to the caliphate	Territory	Defence of Islam
Unity	Killing	Death	Fighting	Martyrdom
Jihad	*Ribāt*	Killing Copts	Patience	Courage
Truth	Forgiveness	Sincerity	Religiosity	Sacrifice
Shariah	None adherence to a *madhab*	Prophets companions	Forced conversion	*Takfīr*
Conversion	*Al-aalā wal barā'a*	Enrage the *kuffār*	None hesitance	Support

Dabiq proposes or implies that Allah's pleasure is harnessed through anyone of the aforementioned themes. However, there are clear overlaps in some of the themes listed above; for example, 'killing', 'death' and 'fighting' all embody combat and warfare just as 'forgiveness', 'sincerity' and 'religiosity' embody faith practice. As a result, each of the independent themes were categorised in to one of the following five broader headings:

  a. Caliphate.

  b. Warfare.

  c. The Self.

  d. Religion.

  e. Miscellaneous.

The individual themes (as listed in table 2 above) and the respective headings to which they are categorised are presented in table 3 below:

Table 3: Categorisation of Themes in to Broader Headings.

Caliphate	Warfare	The Self	Religion	Miscellaneous
Hijrah	Killing	Patience	Shariah	Enrage the *kuffār*
Khalīfah	Death	Courage	None adherence to a *madhab*.	None Hesitance
Allegiance to the caliphate	Fighting	Truth	Prophets companions	Support
Territory	Martyrdom	Forgiveness	Forced conversion	
Defence of Islam	Jihad	Sincerity	*Takfīr*	
Unity	*Ribāt*	Religiosity	Conversion	
	Killing Copts	Sacrifice	*Al- walā wal barā´a*	

At this juncture, it is necessary to re assert that the individual themes were developed based upon the narrative as it was presented in *Dabiq*; which is why there appear to be thematic overlaps. The obvious consideration relates to what the differences are between seeming convergent themes. For example, if we examine the 'Warfare' heading, it contains the themes of 'jihad', 'fighting', 'martyrdom', 'death' and 'killing'. One could argue that 'death' and 'killing' are one and the same, if not of oneself then of the proposed enemy; just as 'death' and 'martyrdom' of oneself are indeed the same. So why is there a need to differentiate using multiple themes for the same outcome? The response to this is that *Da'esh* have presented their call to action in such a manner. In certain places they encourage individuals to 'fight' in the path of Allah (Dabiq, 2014, vol. 5, pp 16) with no outcome of that engagement detailed (perhaps assumed but not detailed in the narrative). However, in other places *Da'esh* encourage the 'killing' of their enemies (Dabiq, 2014, vol. 4, pp 10); a call to action in which there is not only an activity but also an intended consequence listed and attributed to that activity. Although the prospective outcome has the potential of being the same (in both 'fighting' and 'killing'), *Da'esh* utilise both the medium (fighting) and the

intended outcome (killing) within the narrative construct of their call to action. This thematic differentiation is crucial otherwise one could relegate all of the themes identified within this heading down to simply 'jihad'. If we were to adopt the reductive approach then we would not be able to differentiate between the different practices within the rubric of jihad. For example, understanding the relationship of *ribāt*, which is a reconnaissance duty where there is no 'fighting' nor 'killing', in the context of *Da'esh's* call to action. So the categorisation of themes in to broader headings provides greater insight in to *Da'esh's* theological proposition.

Another valuable outcome from the categorisation of themes as detailed above in table 3, is that we can differentiate between headings that appear to be more prominent as well as decipher those headings in which there is a greater or lesser degree of thematic convergence. For example, the headings of 'warfare'*,* 'the self' and 'religion' contain the most individual themes (seven themes per heading). However, 'the self' heading contains themes with lesser thematic convergence, followed by 'religion' which converges upon the theme of 'conversion'. 'Warfare' retains the most thematic convergence with 'killing', 'fighting', 'death', 'martyrdom', 'killing Copts' and 'jihad' all straddling the sphere of interchangeable meanings. So despite the fact that 'warfare' also has seven individual themes listed under its heading (no different to 'the self' and 'religion' headings), it is undeniably more significant as a heading as it appears to have much more focus on its intended outcome. All of the individual themes under this heading suggest that Allah's proximity can be harnessed through the application of violence and force. Compare this with 'the self' heading in which Allah's proximity is advocated through the themes of 'patience', 'courage', 'truth' and 'forgiveness'. Although these themes lead to the same outcome (God's pleasure) the pathways are very much different between individual themes within this heading. That is not the case with the 'warfare' heading where all the themes in that categorisation have the same intrinsic quality

of violence. Thus in terms of narrative potency 'warfare' pushes and promotes a particular call to action above beyond the themes found within the other headings. A review of the frequency with which each of the themes detailed in tables 1 and 2 are repeated across *Dabiq'* supports this assessment. In total, the themes identified above were repeated a total of 86 times across the 15 volumes of *Dabiq*. Of these repetitions, 37 fell under the 'warfare' heading and were attributed to the various themes that it contains. From a purely statistical point of view, this means that 43% of the content that *Dabiq* contains, pertaining to seeking the pleasure of Allah, is proposed through violence and the use of force.

Matters associated with the caliphate are also given a great deal of focus. 31% of the narrative construct across *Dabiq* suggests that Allah's pleasure is harnessed by acting upon the themes presented within its heading. A detailed overview of the frequency with which each of the themes are presented is provided below in table 4.

Table 4: Frequency of repetition for the identified themes.

Heading	Individual Theme	Direct Reference	Indirect Reference	Total Direct	Total Indirect	Overall Total	Percentage Feature
Caliphate	Hijrah	2	10	2	25	27	31%
	Khalīfah		2				
	Allegiance to the caliphate		7				
	Territory		1				
	Defence of Islam		1				
	Unity		4				
Warfare	Killing	2	8	4	33	37	43%
	Death		1				
	Fighting		7				
	Martyrdom		4				
	Jihad	2	11				
	Ribāt		1				
	Killing Copts		1				
The Self	Patience		1	0	9	9	10%
	Courage		1				

	Truth		1				
	Forgiveness		2				
	Sincerity		1				
	Religiosity		1				
	Sacrifice		2				
	Shariah		2				
	None adherence to a *madhab*		1				
	Sahabah		1				
Religion	Forced Conversion		1	0	10	10	12%
	Takfīr		1				
	Conversion		1				
	Al-walā wal barā´a		3				
	Enrage *Kuffār*	1					
Miscellaneous	None hesitance		1	1	2	3	3%
	Support		1				

It is clear that the 'warfare' category has the most thematic focus with 43% of its references suggesting that the pleasure of Allah is attained through violent means. Ranking the individual themes based upon recurring frequency also illustrates how much focus *Dabiq* places upon the each theme within the broader headings. Table 5 illustrates the ranking of themes from most to least referenced.

Table 5: Ranking of individual themes based on frequency of repetition.

Position	Theme	Heading	Total References	Direct	Indirect
1	Jihad	Warfare	13	2	11
2	*Hijra*	Caliphate	12	2	10
3	Killing	Warfare	10	2	8
4	Fighting	Warfare	7	0	7
	Allegiance to the caliphate	Caliphate	7	0	7

5	Martyrdom	Warfare	4	0	4
	Unity	Caliphate	4	0	4
6	*Al-walā wal barā´a*	Religion	3	0	3
7	*Khilafah*	Caliphate	2	0	2
	Forgiveness	The Self	2	0	2
	Sacrifice	The Self	2	0	2
	Shariah	Religion	2	0	2
8	Territory	Caliphate	1	0	1
	Defence of Islam	Caliphate	1	0	1
	Death	Warfare	1	0	1
	Ribāt	Warfare	1	0	1
	Killing Copts	Warfare	1	0	1
	Patience	The Self	1	0	1
	Courage	The Self	1	0	1
	Truth	The Self	1	0	1
	Sincerity	The Self	1	0	1
	Religiosity	The Self	1	0	1
	No *madhab*	Religion	1	0	1
	Sahabah	Religion	1	0	1
	Forced Conversion	Religion	1	0	1
	Takfīr	Religion	1	0	1
	Conversion	Religion	1	0	1
	Enrage *kuffār*	Misc	1	1	1
	None hesitance	Misc	1	0	1
	Support	Misc	1	0	1

Table 5 highlights that the most frequently recurring theme in *Dabiq* is Jihad. It recurs on 13 occasions; 2 direct and 11 indirect meaning that it assumes over 15% of *Dabiq's* thematic focus regarding the attainment of Allah's pleasure. Table 6 below demonstrates how jihad is positioned against Allah's pleasure in *Dabiq* (as established in the research methodology).

Table 6: The association of jihad with the attainment of Allah's pleasure.

Vol.	Page	Dabiq's Narrative
3	5	There is no real jihād in Iraq except with the presence of the muhājirīn, the sons of the generous ummah, those who have left their tribes, those who bring victory to Allah and His Messenger (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam)
3	31	"Perform jihād fī sabīlillāh, for it is a gate of the gates of Jannah by which Allah repels worry and sorrow from the souls" [sahīh – reported by Imām Ahmad and al-Hākim
6	6	Allah has guaranteed the one who performs jihād in His path, having left his home for no reason other than to perform jihād in His path out of belief in His words, that He would enter him into Jannah or return him back home with what he has attained of reward or ghanīmah
7	10	"Allah has guaranteed the one who performs jihād for His cause, having left his home for no reason other than to perform jihād for His cause and to affirm the truth of His words, that He would enter him into Jannah or return him back home with all the rewards he has attained or the ghanīmah he has acquired.
7	17	We affirm what he came with, pronounce takfīr upon those who refuse this affirmation, and wage jihād against them.
10	29	Therefore, O you who remains sitting back from jihād even as the mujāhidīn march out day after day in this blessed month to face the legions of kufr gathered to wage war against Allah's religion, do not allow another Ramadān after this one to pass you by except that you have marched forth to fight for Allah's cause
11	20	"We perform jihād so that Allah's word becomes supreme and the religion becomes completely for Allah.
11	35	Tawbah: 111
11	54	If one is held back from hijrah for whatever reason, he is not excused from performing jihād against the enemies of Islam near him. {O you who have believed, fight those adjacent to you of the disbelievers and let them find in you harshness. And know that Allah is with the righteous} [At-Tawbah: 123].
12	33	And this Khilāfah would not be safe if not for those Allah chose to guard its frontlines.

		May Allah reward the murābitīn, muqātilīn, and shuhadā' with great good in both the Dunyā and Ākhirah.
12	47	The answer is that nothing has changed except that the opportunity for reward from Allah is now greater.
13	29	{So fight in the cause of Allah; you are not held responsible except for yourself}.' And for this reason, it is incumbent on every believer to wage jihād, even if he has to do so alone.
13	29	{So fight in the cause of Allah; you are not held responsible except for yourself. And encourage the believers [to fight].

Interestingly, *Dabiq* affirms premise of accountability of Allah's answerable creation (Dabiq, 2015, vol.13, pp 29) as established in chapter 4. This was the broader backdrop of faith practice argued in chapter 4; that acts of *ʿibādah* in the temporal worldly realm are positioned against an inevitable accountability that is to follow in the metaphysical realm. The conceptual framework established paradise as the absolute measure of ethereal success; which is a premise also affirmed by the contents of *Dabiq* (Dabiq, 2014, vol.3, pp 31; Dabiq, 2014, vol.6, pp 06; Dabiq, 2015, vol.7, pp 17). Furthermore, the understanding that all temporal actions must be performed exclusively for the sake of Allah is also endorsed by *Dabiq* (Dabiq, 2014, vol.6, pp 06; Dabiq, 2015, vol.7, pp 17). Therefore *Dabiq's* content validates the conceptual framework that was theorised in the chapters 4 and 5. Thus the analysis is no longer one of subjective interpretation rather it is an assessment of faith proposition based upon criteria that is mutually agreeable. Yet despite this affirmation *Dabiq's* thematic focus is primarily upon conflict and warfare as a means of attaining Allah's pleasure with the individual theme of jihad compromising over 15% of that thematic attention. The publications focus on mastering the *nafs* as a conduit to Allah's pleasure attracts far less thematic attention as will be detailed further on in this chapter.

In second position, after jihad, is the theme of *hijra* which recurs 12 times; 2 direct and 10 indirect assuming 13.95% of *Dabiq's* thematic focus. The theme of jihad falls under the 'warfare' category whereas the theme of *hijra* falls under the 'caliphate' category. Indeed the

top five themes within *Dabiq* straddle these two categories making them the most prominent in respect of thematic focus. These results support the broader narrative within the volumes of *Dabiq*. The publication compels a section of its intender readership to perform what they regard as jihad and to support the caliphate. In the earlier volumes of *Dabiq* that support was communicated in the form making *hijra* to the 'Islamic State'. Volume 3 of *Dabiq* was titled 'A Call to Hijra' which laid out the religious obligations for individuals to make this journey. This imperative continued in volumes 8 and 10 where *Dabiq* encouraged (particularly in volume 8) women to perform the *hijra*. If individuals were unable to make this journey then according to volume 11 of *Dabiq* they were obliged to pledge allegiance to the caliphate. This is reflected within the themes of 'allegiance to the caliphate' and 'unity' which occupy joint fourth and fifth positions respectively with the themes of 'fighting' and 'martyrdom' (part of the 'warfare' category). As thematic constructs, it becomes apparent that the headings of 'warfare' and the 'caliphate' seamlessly complement each other. The publication pushes a hard narrative of fighting (through the themes identified in tables 4 and 5) in order to secure Allah's pleasure. This fighting is for the purposes of establishing, preserving and expanding the caliphate to which *hijra* is a necessary obligation. *Dabiq* states that the caliphate is a land for the Muslims in which everyone is united and not separated by creed, colour, nationality or manmade constructs of division. It was therefore worth fighting for and travelling to in order to fulfil the obligation of faith and realise its beauty. In the event that individuals were unable to make this migration, they were still obliged to offer their fealty to the caliphate and fight in their respective lands to repel the forces of disbelief which purportedly opposed it.

Furthermore, of the top five themes within *Dabiq*, the 'warfare' category is the most dominant with the themes of 'jihad' taking first place, 'killing' taking third place and 'fighting' and 'martyrdom' taking joint fourth and fifth place respectively. From the 43% of

overall thematic focus which has been attributed to the category of 'warfare' 39.5% of it is derived from the aforementioned four themes (jihad, killing, fighting and martyrdom). *Dabiq's* narrative is thematically structured to communicate the imperative of violence. The individual themes under the 'warfare' category, despite sharing similarities in frequency with none 'warfare' designated themes, combine together under the broader category to offer greater potency to *Dabiq's* theological propositions. Thus it is clear that in *Da'esh's* world the path to finding Allah's pleasure is predominantly a violent one. This is not surprising as *Da'esh* originate from an organisational heritage that embeds *tawḥīd* in jihad (as highlighted in chapters 2, 4 and 5). The absence of distinction between these two constructs has a profound impact on *Dabiq's* theological propositions; this will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 7.

Another consideration regarding *Dabiq's* thematic presentation is its use of 'indirect' referencing. As detailed in chapter 3, indirect referencing refers to any call to action presented by *Dabiq* in which the pleasure of Allah is implied or is a natural consequence of performing an action. Of the 86 themes identified, 79 were indirect references and only 7 were direct references. This means that 92% of the references within *Dabiq* that invite an individual to seek the pleasure of Allah through an action they propose were implied as opposed to explicit. The most obvious question here is why? This consideration is more profound when one considers two key factors; (i) *Dabiq's* role in recruiting supporters and inspiring individuals to perform acts of violence (as discussed in section 6.3.2) and (ii) the backgrounds from which some of *Dabiq's* readership hails. For example, in 2018 The Guardian carried a report regarding Umar Haque who was convicted of terror offences after attempting to radicalise children as young as 11 by showing them IS propaganda material. The Guardian stated that Umar Haque was teaching Islamic studies despite having no formal education in the subject area (The Guardian: 2018). Similarly Sally Jones, infamously known

as the 'White Widow' and carrying the pen name of Umm Hussain al-Britani, was a former singer and guitarist in a punk band during the 1990's. According to The Guardian she was radicalised by her former husband shortly after accepting Islam. She then joined her husband in Syria in 2013 where she became the face of *Da'esh's* recruitment campaign; despite this gaping hole in her religious credibility (The Guardian: 2017). So *Da'esh's* respondents are arguably not the most religiously literate or qualified yet they are being invited toward one of the 'greatest' acts of worship according to militant *Islamist* mantra. It is indeed curious to observe that *Dabiq* has communicated the pleasure of Allah within their 'call to action' through indirect referencing when there was an opportunity to be direct and unambiguous. *Dabiq* has been unapologetically brash about other jihadi operators in the area, opinionated on the decadence of the Muslim world and prescriptive of the ills of wider/western society in general. So they are not the type of organisation to hide behind any form of political correctness, diplomacy or tact; they are flagrant and loud. So the only plausible explanation that accounts for the disproportionate use of indirect referencing is that *Da'esh* were unconcerned in securing the pleasure of Allah through their jihad. The focus for the organisation was to recruit individuals in support of their tactical and operational needs. The manner in which *Dabiq* presents and engages with the construct of jihad will be discussed in the following section.

6.4 Thematic Analysis: *Dabiq's* Presentation of Jihad.

Da'esh does not speculate regarding the meaning of the term jihad. From the very first volume, *Dabiq* communicates jihad as a construct of violence and despite acknowledging that there is diversity within its meaning, the publication progresses to actively dismiss non-violent propositions of the term (Dabiq, 2015, vol.7, pp 20). Arguably the reason behind this is because the organisations primary and almost exclusive focus is the establishment and

preservation of their caliphate which they advocate is only possible through violent jihad. So presenting alternative understandings of a concept that is critical to their operational success is counter intuitive. The only occasions upon which *Dabiq* entertains non-violent propositions of the term is when it appears to support *Da'esh's* organisational and operational objectives. This will be highlighted further on in this section.

So *Dabiq* unreservedly presents jihad to their audiences as the deliberate force of arms. The very first volume of *Dabiq* contains a statement made by the founder of modern day *Da'esh*, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, in which he speaks of the expansion of jihad from Iraq to *Sham* (modern day Syria) (Dabiq, 2014, vol.1, pp 5). This statement features consistently at the beginning of each volume of *Dabiq* and with no uncertainty, it impresses upon it's readership that jihad is nothing but the use of violence. Less subtle references to this proposition also feature throughout *Dabiq*. For example, volume 1 of *Dabiq* states that the purpose of their jihad is to fight in order to establish the caliphate or die as martyrs in doing so (Dabiq, 2014, vol. 1, pp 35). In this example, *Dabiq* aligns the theme of jihad with the theme of 'martyrdom' and in volume 3 *Dabiq* aligns the theme of 'jihad' with the themes of 'sincerity', religiosity' and 'truth' of faith (Dabiq, 2014, vol. 3, pp 26). So not only is jihad presented as a construct of violence and conflict but it is also depicted as the 'reality' for the other themes which lead to the pleasure of Allah.

Furthermore, the term jihad featured a total number of 687 times across the 942 pages of *Dabiq*. This equates to an average of 46 references in each volume, or one mention after every one and a half pages. More interestingly, when we examine this total in terms of 'violent' and 'non violent' designations for the term, we find that on 646 occasions the term jihad was presented in a manner indicative of or associated to violence. 'Violence' was defined as any usage of the term which:

a. Directly promoted violence.

b. Suggested or implied violence through the wider narrative.

c. Supported an understanding of violence through its iconography (for example, images of guns, tanks, aftermath of suicide operations or executions of the 'enemy') and

d. Was a statement made by or referenced to individuals or organisations who use violence termed as jihad.

For example, the direct promotion of violence (a) is found within the very first volume of *Dabiq* where *Da'esh* asserts that its jihad is a fight to establish the caliphate or die as martyrs in this endeavour (Dabiq, 2014, vol. 1, pp 35). Similarly the (b) context of discussions, (c) iconography and (d) statements made by notable individuals can be found in volume 10, page 15, volume 6, pages 6 and 42 and volume 6, page 41 respectively.

The consequence of presenting jihad in such a manner was that 94% of the references to jihad within *Dabiq* were either related to or suggestive of conflict. Volume 12 contained the most combined references of jihad with a total of 86 whereas volume 2 retained the least with a combined total of 13. Volume 12 contained the most references of jihad categorised under the 'violent' heading whereas volume 2 contained the least with only 13 references. In respect of the 'non violent' designation (which comprised the remaining 6% of jihad references), volume 11 contained the most references with 10 and volumes 2, 5, 6, 8, 10 and 13 all contained the least with 0 references to non violent jihad. The results of the analysis are presented below in table 7.

Table 7: Analysis of how the term *jihad* is used within *Dabiq*.

Volume	Violence	Non Violence	Overall Total
1	18	2	20
2	13	0	13
3	38	4	42
4	22	3	25
5	28	0	28
6	27	0	27
7	52	5	57
8	49	0	49
9	54	3	57
10	70	0	70
11	41	10	51
12	78	8	86
13	53	0	53
14	69	5	74
15	34	1	35
Totals	646	41	687
	94%	6%	

Dabiq's presentation of jihad in this vein supports the position of Abdullah Azzam, ibn Nuhaas and Sayyid Qutb (as detailed in chapter 5) all of whom argued in favour of a military understanding of the term. *Dabiq* emboldens the perspectives put forth by Phares (2005), Cook (2005), Rubenstein (2010) and Christie (2018) who presented an essentialist view of jihad as a conflict laden expression of holy war. In doing so, *Dabiq* has positioned the understanding of jihad in firm opposition to the views of Keskin & Tuncer (2018) who argued that that the term has been misrepresented in *Islamist* literature (Keskin & Tuncer, 2018, pp 20-21). It also sits in contradiction to Bonner's (2006) assessment who argued that the concept of jihad in the Quran was not exclusively or primarily about fighting and warfare (Bonner, 2006, pp 22) as well as Jacoby (2019) who argued the need for greater contextualisation of evidences that supported the narratives of military jihad (Jacoby, 2019, pp39-43). These considerations are cited with full recognition of the military component of jihad that exists within Sunni Muslim theology as detailed in section 5.4.3 of chapter 5.

However the contention relates to the reductive nature with which *Dabiq* presents jihad. This is despite the publications recognition that alternative understandings of the term are valid and legitimate as well as the necessity to perform military jihad for the sake of Allah (as established in section 6.3.2.2). For example, 41 references to the term jihad (the 6% referred to above in table 7) were categorised as 'non violent'. Indeed, volume 11 of Dabiq, titled 'From the Battle of Ahzab to the War of Coalitions', contains a feature authored by Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirah in which she specifically speaks about non violent jihad (Dabiq, 2015, vol. 11, pp 40). Similar examples can also be found in which *Dabiq* state that the acquisition of knowledge or a just word in the court of an unjust ruler are also expressions of jihad (Dabiq, 2014, vol. 4, pp 16, Dabiq, 2014, vol. 7, pp 18 respectively). So *Dabiq* acknowledges that the term holds a diversity within its meaning yet, for reasons that can only be assumed as the advancement of organisational objectives, *Dabiq* impresses a very particular understanding of the term. In some respects this would not be such an issue if the publication defined a broader theological goal(s) for its readership. However, as table 6 has highlighted, the proposition of military jihad is positioned against narratives like 'bringing victory to Allah and his messenger' (Dabiq, 2014, vol.3, pp 05) or performing jihad 'so that Allah's word becomes supreme (Dabiq, 2015, vol.11, pp 20) and the religion becomes completely for Allah' (Dabiq, 2015, vol.11, pp 20). These kinds of superlatives appear to centralise Allah and His religion at the forefront of the jihadi endeavour. However, the publication fails to situate the individual contributor (or jihadi if you will) in to that dynamic beyond the rhetoric of obligation and duty. What I mean by this is that *Dabiq* acknowledges a wider accountability that Allah's answerable creation is destined to face but is fails to define what that accountability is, how individuals need to prepare for it and how the practice of jihad features within it. Rather the publication asserts that jihad will lead to paradise which is established as the measure of absolute theological success in the metaphysical realm.

In doing so, it necessarily proposes that military jihad (putting aside for a moment that manner in which *Da'esh* performs it) leads to Allah's pleasure, Forgiveness and Paradise (the themes associated with the acquisition of paradise in the Quran as established in the Transactional Engagement Model).

In respect of *Da'esh's* broader theological goals, *Dabiq* offers very little detail in this area. It is unclear as to whether the elevation and supremacy of Allah's 'word' is an organisational objective, an individual objective or a combination of the two. Kydd & Walter (2006) make reference to the 'goals of terrorism' and how terrorist organisations are often in pursuit of more than one goal. For example, (i) territorial change in order to secure (ii) regime change (Kydd & Walter, 2006, pp 52-53). But *Dabiq* does not communicate any parallel theological 'goal' or 'vision' regarding their 'jihad' until volume 6; which was released in December 2014 some six months after publication of the first volume. Prior to this, jihad features as a tactical tool in order to restore lost honour and dignity (Dabiq, 2014, vol.1, pp 07), establish the thematic structure of *Dabiq* (Dabiq, 2014, vol. 1, pp 20 & pp 38; Dabiq, 2014, vol. 4, pp 05 & pp 08; Dabiq, 2014, vol. 5, pp 37), as a mechanism to expand the 'Islamic State' (Dabiq, 2014, vol. 1, pp 19) or to dispute the claims of other operational jihadi organisations (Dabiq, 2014, vol.4, pp 07). This reflects the considerations raised by Byman (2016) regarding the absence of clarity on *Da'esh's* operating principles (Byman, 2016, pp 136). But this ambiguity has greater implications when measured against the relationship between the individual and organisation. For instance, are the theological goals of the individual achieved by simply aligning oneself to the organisation? On many occasions *Da'esh's* supporters have given their lives for the organisation and its cause. But in doing so, from a theological perspective with regard to the broader context discussions raised in chapters 4 and 5, it is wholly questionable as to what they have achieved (or were intending to achieve) as a result of their actions. For example, on the 13th November 2015 three suicide bombers

detonated themselves in Paris as France competed against Germany in an international

football friendly match. However, the bombers were unable to gain access to the stadiums

that were their intended targets so they detonated themselves outside of them (BBC: 2015).

The match between France and Germany continued for another 70 minutes after the first

explosion and only after the game had ended did people realise that there had been a terrorist

incident (Weiss & Hassan, 2016, pp 301). The consideration here is why the suicide bombers

chose to detonate themselves when their attacks had little to no immediate impact? Were

their suicides simply to escape capture from the authorities or was their mindset to kill

themselves irrespective of whether their attacks delivered against organisational objectives?

In either case did the individuals have the presence of mind to assess and re assess their

situation 'in the moment' in order to determine the theological validity of their actions and

prevent their 'jihad' being reduced to temporal violence? It is arguably undeniable that the

November 2015 suicide attacks in France did not meet *Da'esh's* organisational goals of

making the 'Muslim world' more unified, or returning a lost honour or glory. They certainly

did not contribute to the preservation of the caliphate. What this suggests is that *Da'esh* were

primarily (if not entirely) fixated on tactical gains for the organisation which were focused on

the temporal realm. The theological wellbeing of their supporters and the impending

metaphysical accountability they are to face was but a distant consideration. How else is one

able to rationalise the absence of critical clarity in a fundamental act of worship?

From a utility perspective, three suicide bombers offered their lives in this attack yet were

'only' able to claim the life of one person between them; and that individual was an

incidental casualty. Al-Maqdisi raised these very concerns over the indiscriminate use of

suicide bombings that kill only one or two people. He argued that due to the value of the

resource suicide operations should be used sparingly (Wagemakers, 2011, pp 150). Al-

Maqidsi attributed the use of wanton violence to a lack of religious and practical knowledge

of jihad which caused him to question the 'purity' of contemporary jihadi efforts. According to al-Maqdisi a 'sincere' jihad with strategic focus has been rare (*ibid*, pp 149-150). Al-Maqdisi's consideration regarding a 'sincere' jihad supports the position adopted by al-Bani as cited in section 5.4.1 of chapter 5 regarding the suspension of military jihad. It also feeds directly in to the argument made throughout chapters 4 and 5 regarding the centrality of the jihad *al-nafs* in ensuring the theological integrity of temporal actions. So in respect of *Dabiq's* readership and *Da'esh's* supporters what does participation in and support of *Da'esh's* jihad mean for the individuals who have been a part of that process? Are their theological goals met simply with alignment to the organisation and are they met at a micro level even if the organisation fails to achieve them at a macro level? *Dabiq* remains unclear around these critical issues and to further cloud the matter the publication promotes the pursuit of operational goals that have evident competing temporal interests.

The examination thus far suggests that the depiction of jihad in this manner is a construct by design within *Dabiq*. Indeed the presentation of jihad as a theme and the 'warfare' category to which it belongs (which also included the themes of 'killing', 'death', 'fighting', 'martyrdom', '*ribāt*' and 'killing Copts') results in a 43% thematic proposition that the pathway to Allah's pleasure is through the apprehension of violence. The juxtaposition of jihad against 'warfare' (as discussed in section 6.3.2.2) suggests that on average after every 15 references to jihad as a violent construct there is a reference to 'warfare' as a means of attaining Allah's pleasure. Again from a tactical perspective this makes absolute sense as it meets the organisational needs whilst also feeding the 'religious' sentiment that jihad has been presented to embody. But as stated in chapter 4, all acts of worship - of which military jihad is one by *Dabiq's* own admission (Dabiq, 2014, vol. 5, pp 38) - are subject to a regulatory framework which is principled upon the constructs of *taqwā'* and the jihad *al-nafs*. This is a 'reality' that *Dabiq* has accepted and communicated in its publication as stated here

earlier. However, when the imperative of self regulation and rectification is contrasted against the presentation of military jihad, conflict and 'warfare' it is overwhelmingly evident that that *Dabiq* affords minimal attention to the *nafs*. Therefore the following section will detail how the publication engages with matters of *nafs* regulation and rectification.

6.4.1 Thematic Analysis: *Dabiq's* Focus on Self Rectification.

Of the 30 themes identified in *Dabiq* (as detailed in section 6.3.2.2) only one reference is made to 'sincerity'. *Dabiq* presents this theme through the account of unjust rulers suggesting that sincerity of faith is necessary to attain paradise (Dabiq, 2014, vol.7, pp 10). The proposition is supported by the references to sincerity made in the performance of jihad, as was detailed in the previous section. However, as a standalone theme independent of any other call to action 'sincerity' as a means of attaining Allah's pleasure only appears once. It is important to highlight that sincerity in this context is being understood as the management of ones' *nafs* to such an extent that acts of *'ibādah* are performed only for Allah. Indeed the manner in which sincerity is presented with the acquisition of paradise (the benchmark of theological success as established in the TEM) supports this understanding.

As an individual theme, 'sincerity' constitutes 1.16% of *Dabiq's* thematic proposition in the attainment of Allah's pleasure. Comparatively speaking, the theme of 'jihad' constitutes over 15% of *Dabiq's* thematic focus. The disparity between the two themes is evident and highlights exactly where *Dabiq's* efforts are being focused. Furthermore, unlike the 'warfare' category, the other themes in the category of 'the self' do not share a similar permeating attribute like those themes in the 'warfare' category. For example, the theme of 'religiosity' impresses the virtue of selflessness in service of fellow Muslims; a product of good individual character and devotion to the *shariah* (Dabiq, 2015, vol. 7, pp 15). The imperative here is one of selflessness as it is in the theme of 'truth' which *Dabiq* states is a

word of truth in front of an unjust ruler (Dabiq, 2015, vol.7, pp 18). The other themes within

this category do not impress the imperative of self mastery; rather they are battle field

accounts of individuals presented as role models who have made sacrifices for the jihadi

effort (Dabiq, 2015, vol.8, pp 30 & 36; Dabiq, 2015, vol.9, pp 30; Dabiq, 2016, vol.12, pp

47). Interestingly, the 'truth' theme is also used as proof for the non-violent expression of

jihad as was highlighted in the previous section. This suggests that the non-violent

proposition of jihad is also a means of attaining Allah's pleasure and a pathway to paradise

despite *Dabiq's* efforts to trivialise its significance. Figure 5 below illustrates the themes

within 'the self' category.

Figure 5: Themes contained in 'the self' category.

Heading	Individual Theme	Direct Reference	Indirect Reference	Total Direct	Total Indirect	Overall Total	Percentage Feature
The Self	Patience		1	0	9	9	10%
	Courage		1				
	Truth		1				
	Forgiveness		2				
	Sincerity		1				
	Religiosity		1				
	Sacrifice		2				

However, the themes of 'truth', 'sincerity' and 'religiosity' which fall under 'the self'

category have a collective thematic impact of 3.48%. So 3.48% of *Dabiq's* thematic

proposition on the attainment of Allah's pleasure is focused upon the *nafs* (self related

matters). Comparatively speaking, the 'warfare' category has a thematic impact of 43%

which more than twelve times that of 'the self'. Therefore just as there was an evident

disparity in individual themes between 'jihad' and 'sincerity' so too is there a great deal of disparity between the categories to which they belong.

Dabiq's lack of focus on self rectification that has been highlighted in this section is based upon its positioning as a means of attaining Allah's pleasure. Broadly speaking, *Dabiq* communicates narratives that highlight the importance of sincere intentions. For example, *Dabiq* cites narrations that the prophet Muhammad would not perform jihad for the purposes of acquiring war booty rather he would perform it so that the word of Allah would be the highest (Dabiq, 2014, vol. 4, pp 11). Although these narratives appear to impress the importance of sincere intentions they are presented as accounts rather than imperative actions which instruct individuals to centralise Allah in their material efforts (as highlighted in the conceptual framework). Furthermore, they are not presented as the critical pathways toward Allah's pleasure and certainly not with the same veracity that violence and conflict based themes are. In addition, as section 6.3.2.1 has highlighted, there are clear contradictions throughout the volumes of *Dabiq* and sincerity of intention is one area that is also affected. For example, across other sections of the publication *Dabiq* propagates the seeking of revenge from its enemies (Dabiq, 2014, vol. 4, pp 09; Dabiq, 2014, vol. 6, pp 27; Dabiq, 2015, Vol. 7, pp 30). Revenge is a competing, '*nafs* driven temporal interest that compromises the theological integrity of an endeavour being solely for the sake of Allah. This principle has been established on the authority of the Quran and prophetic narration as detailed in chapters 4 and 5. Although presented as a religious endeavour and an act of worship, the consideration remains of an individual who is catalysed by revenge as to whom s/he is actually fighting for. Are they fighting exclusively for the sake of Allah, which is the necessary requirement of theological validity as per the TEM, or are they fighting as a product of subjugation to their human desires? The presence of such a narrative within *Dabiq* is indicative of an absence of focus on the intended theological objective associated

with worship and jihad. The fixation on violence as a means of harnessing Allah's pleasure accompanied by temporally focused motivations and the minimal attention afforded to self regulation and betterment is a matter of grave theological concern. *Da'esh* are transacting in the afterlife which means they are trading in and advocating for, the sale of temporal life in exchange for proposed metaphysical bliss. The manner in which they operate leaves very little room for theological error. What I mean by this is that once *Da'esh's* 'jihad' operation is performed and lives have been taken or lost as a result of it, they are physically unable to revisit their actions and 're-offer' them in order to correct their intentions and make their 'jihad' theologically valid. The taking of life in the name of jihad is not like paying zakat or offering obligatory prayers wherein if intentions are corrupt the supplication can be offered again. So the way in which *Da'esh* operates ought to emphasise the importance of ensuring that all temporal endeavours posited as jihad are exclusively for the sake of Allah. This was the very argument stated in chapter 5 regarding the primacy of the jihad *al-nafs*. Without a conscious awareness by the individual of the state of their religious submission to Allah the entire proposition of military jihad as an act of worship becomes unstable. However, this is part of broader discussion which will be detailed in chapter 7.

6.5 Summary.

As a publication *Dabiq* attempts to reach out to multiple audiences at the same time. Be they Muslims whom *Da'esh* are trying to recruit, 'western' policy makers who they're trying to challenge (and perhaps also impress with their tales of tactical gains) or co-jihadists with whom they have contentions. The contents of such discussions are relatable to the foundational themes upon which *Dabiq* was conceived. But the consequences of such an endeavour is that each publication presents itself as a long piece which appears more fractured than focused. As a recruitment tool *per-se*, it is arguably ineffective as first time

readers require a great deal of background knowledge in order to understand and appreciate the claims and statements that *Dabiq* makes. For example, *Dabiq's* engagement in theological discussions which require a level of background knowledge or their commentaries on inter jihadi organisational conflict which requires proficiency in understanding the political and historical landscape. But perhaps this is how *Da'esh* intended the publication to be received. *Dabiq* is *Da'esh's* word and in it being so it is their authority *communiqué* to the world at large. As evidenced throughout this chapter and in the literature review, the authority of militant *Islamist* organisations is one not for challenge. Rather *Dabiq's* readership should accept its content and irrespective of whether they fully understand it they are obliged to agree with it and mandated to act in support of it.

The theological analysis of *Dabiq's* content revealed five prominent headings in addition to the themes upon which *Da'esh* structured the publication. These headings contained a total 30 individual themes that *Dabiq* proposed as the conduits towards Allah's pleasure. A clear focus on violence and warfare was evident throughout the publication as 43% of its thematic focus associated the acquisition of Allah's pleasure with a form of violence which *Dabiq* packaged as the virtuous obligation of military jihad. In doing so, *Dabiq's* narrative aligns itself to the theological and intellectual heritage of its militant *Islamist* forefathers in defining the purpose of creation as military jihad. Despite the diversity of the term that was established in chapter 5 and affirmed by the publication itself, *Dabiq* avoids discussions on the plurality of jihad's meaning. Instead it chooses to push an understanding of the term that is conducive to *Da'esh's* material goals.

Chapters 4 and 5 formed the conceptual framework which established the principle that in order for acts of worship to have value in the metaphysical realm they must necessarily be exclusively for the pleasure of Allah. This assertion was also endorsed by *Dabiq* as evidenced in this chapter. The absence of Allah, albeit His pleasure, in human endeavours

posited as *ʿibādah* reduces potential acts of worship to nothing more than temporal actions that are void of theological value. The jihad *al-nafs* and *taqwāʾ* are the components which preserve the theological privilege and validate human actions as *ʿibādah*. The military expression of jihad is no exception to this rule. Yet as illustrated in section 6.4.1, *Dabiq* only affords 1.16% of its thematic focus towards the theme of 'sincerity' and a total of 3.48% of thematic focus when the other themes within the category are also considered. Broader references to the concept of self regulation and rectification are sporadic and sketchy throughout *Dabiq*; lacking the necessary detail, focus and support required for *Da'esh's* supporters to better manage their *nafs*. The absence of attention to this critical detail alongside the (un)intended consequence of positioning Allah's pleasure with violent jihad as *Dabiq* has done supports the assessment made by Ali (2018) who stated that *Da'esh* have a taken a theological construct and turned it in to a political weapon (Ali, 2018, pp 55). This is in full recognition of the considerations regarding the religious vs. secular binary that were raised in chapter 2 as well as Byman's (2016) assertions of organisational ideology interwoven with multiple goals (Byman, 2016, pp 136).

Chapter 7 will examine the impact of *Dabiq's* thematic propositions on the purpose of creation as established in the conceptual framework. It will also focus on the temporal impact of *Da'esh's* jihad in light of what they set out to achieve as stated in *Dabiq*.

7.0 DISCUSSION.

7.1 Introduction.

The theological narrative analysis of *Dabiq's* content revealed that a great deal of thematic focus was afforded to the theme of 'jihad' and the broader 'warfare' category. This chapter will discuss how these findings impact upon the conceptual framework that was established in chapters 4 and 5 with a particular focus on the concept of *tawḥīd* and the construct of *ʿibādah*. It will also examine the temporal impact of *Da'esh's* jihad.

The chapter argues that the absence of thematic attention on the *nafs* is reflected within *Da'esh's* operational practice. The temporal impact of their 'jihad' has been profound, leading to the degradation of millions of people across the world. *Dabiq* advocated and *Da'esh* adopted a methodology in the form of *tawaḥḥush* and *tawaḥḥush al-fard* that sacrificed its very own people: Sunni Muslims living in the caliphate. These were the very people that *Da'esh* vowed to support, protect and offer dignity through the caliphate. Yet the thematic focus of their publication coupled with their practice of jihad has been the antithesis of their own operational mandate.

The chapter closes with a summary of discussions.

7.2 The Consequence of *Dabiq's* Thematic Focus on the Constructs of *Tawḥīd* & *ʿIbādah*.

The conceptual framework established that *ʿibādah* is the purpose of creation or 'reality' in Sunni Islam for humankind in the temporal worldly realm. This premise is supported both by academic and theological opinion (Lange, 2016, pp 38; Zakzouk, 2017, pp 39; Haleem, 2017,

pp 49; Quran 51:56).[96] *ʿIbādah* is the consequence of belief in Allah. Classical scholars have

regarded *tawḥīd* as the manifestation of *ʿibādah* meaning that *ʿibādah* is a product of *tawḥīd*

and not vice versa (Ibn Abbas, 1992, pp 557; Sulayman, 2002, pp 133; Al Farra, 1983, pp

89). The intended consequence of this dynamic is the centrality of Allah in all human

endeavours that are posited as expressions of worship (Mawdudi, 1981, pp 58; Endress, 1988,

pp 22; Murata & Chittick, 1994, pp 03; Faruqi, 1995, pp 17-19; Esack, 1999, pp 09; Esposito,

2016, pp 92). This conceptual framework established a core theological baseline for all acts

of worship in Sunni Islam including the military expression of jihad.

However, the manner in which *Dabiq* has presented military jihad is in absolute

contravention to the conceptual framework referred to here and established in chapters 4 and

5. *Dabiq* stated that military jihad is necessary in order to establish *tawḥīd* (Dabiq, 2014,

vol.1, pp 05). This assertion has been highlighted in sections 4.3.2, 5.5 and 6.4 of chapters 4,

5 and 6 respectively. *Dabiq's* theological proposition situates its narrative firmly in the camp

of other militant *Islamist* organisations who have argued the same. The considerations

associated with such a theological proposition were also raised in section 4.3.3 and 5.5.1 of

chapters 4 and 5 respectively.

However, one of the greatest consequences of *Dabiq's* thematic focus on military jihad (as a

theme as well as the category of 'warfare' more generally) is the manner in which seeks to

redefine the theological purpose of creation in Sunni Islam. As chapter 6 has detailed, *Dabiq*

infers with a great deal of fervour that the reality of Islam is unobtainable without military

jihad. What this suggests, as asserted by Abu Qatada in chapter 5, is that the primary

objective for humankind is to raise arms in the performance of what they regard as military

jihad as all other realities are contingent upon it. Without jihad there is no *tawḥīd* which

means there can be no *ʿibādah* which the reason why Allah created humankind. So in order

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[96] وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

to establish the indivisible construct of *tawḥīd*, military jihad is necessary to give a space in this temporal world for the *ʿibādah* of Allah to be realised so that His answerable creation can fulfil their theological obligation and attain paradise which is the measure of absolute theological success. Thus an invitation to jihad in *Dabiq's* worldview is not simply the apprehension of violence; rather it is the realisation of Allah's absolute Divinity in this temporal realm. It is the conduit toward the formation of an essential union between the physical and metaphysical realms, the ultimate purpose of which is to discharge the divinely ascribed responsibility of *ʿibādah* in order to succeed in ones' impending theological accountability and thereby attain paradise. *Dabiq's* theological proposition is illustrated in figure 6.

Figure 6: *Dabiq's* depiction of the construct of *ʿibādah.*


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┌─────────────┐
│  Military   │
│   Jihad     │
└─────────────┘
       │
┌─────────────┐
│   Tawhid    │
└─────────────┘
       │
┌─────────────┐
│    Islam    │
└─────────────┘
       │
┌─────────────┐
│   Ibadah    │
└─────────────┘
       │
┌─────────────┐
│  Paradise   │
└─────────────┘
```
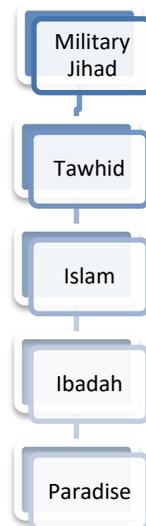
But *Dabiq* is not bold enough to make such a claim openly within the publication. This is arguably understandable due to the fact that it sits in contravention to all established theological opinion (classical and contemporary) as well as academic understandings of the religious imperative within Sunni Islam. However, manner in which *Dabiq* has positioned military jihad across its volumes speaks for itself. 43% of *Dabiq's* thematic focus was associated with violence as a means of attaining Allah's pleasure. The category of 'warfare'

contained a number of themes all of which were embedded in an expression of violence and conflict and all of which were presented as a form of military jihad. The term 'jihad' itself was depicted almost exclusively as a construct of violence with 96% of its references referring to a military or violent understanding of the term. The accumulative impact of positioning jihad in this manner becomes *Dabiq's* unspoken claim of military jihad as the 'essence' of Islam and purpose of creation. For this reason *Dabiq* impresses such an importance to the continuity of *Da'esh's* jihad. Organisationally *Da'esh* embedded processes to ensure their militancy would continue beyond the fall of their caliphate. This will be discussed in greater detail in sections 7.4.1 and 7.4.2 of this chapter.

Nevertheless, it is evident that *Dabiq's* theological propositions are part of a broader revolutionary theological movement that was purportedly conceived by ibn Taymiyyah (with full appreciation of the considerations raised by Jacoby: 2019) and which has been bolstered by ideologues such as Qutb, Mawdudu, Faraj and Azzam (as detailed in chapters 4 and 5). Appreciating these discussions, particularly in respect of *tawḥīd* and *ʿibādah*, enables for the differentiation between *Da'esh's* theological proposition and that of 'moderate' or 'mainstream' Muslims. Indeed, one of the considerations raised in chapter 2, was the absence of understanding what constitutes 'mainstream' or 'moderate' (el-Fadl: 2007; Shakman-Hurd: 2015). Although academic research and policy papers made reference to such terms, appreciating why and how militant *Islamist* ideology was divergent from normative Sunni faith practice (beyond hermeneutical interpretations and jurisprudential differences of opinion) was absent. The theological examination of *Dabiq* in the manner conducted has made this differentiation possible and provided the broader faith context against which all actions of *ʿibādah* are necessarily positioned.

The sum of human existence in the temporal world is one principled upon *tawḥīd*, *ʿibādah* and the belief in an inevitable theological accountability (Wensinck, 1965, pp 22-23;

Schimmel, 1992, pp 84; Esposito, 2016, pp 28-32). The principle in chief, as established by the conceptual framework, for the attainment of success in the metaphysical 'other' world is the pleasure of Allah. This single theme and characteristic permeates all expressions of *tawḥīd* and *ʿibādah* in order for them to retain theological validity. And this endeavour is not removed from the mechanisms of *taqwāˊ* and the jihad *al-nafs*. These concepts validate temporal actions as legitimate expressions of *ʿibādah* and create a meaningful connection with the metaphysical world where *ʿibādah* will be rewarded. Without *taqwāˊ* and the jihad *al-nafs*, Allah's answerable creation are engaging in nothing more than temporal 'worldly' actions; as proven in the hadith previously cited regarding the *mujahid* who will be condemned to hell. Irrespective of how such actions are packaged and presented they are devoid of theological value and religious merit. So the minimal amount of focus that *Dabiq* affords to *taqwāˊ* and the jihad *al-nafs* is truly curious. This will be discussed in greater detail in the following section.

7.3 The Absence of Focus on *Taqwāˊ* & the Jihad *al-Nafs*.

Chapters 4 and 5 argued that the essential underpinnings for all faith practice in Sunni Islam are the constructs of *taqwāˊ* and the jihad *al-nafs*. The hadith narrated by Abu Hurayrah referred to in section 5.2 of chapter 5, in which he states that the prophet Muhammad stated that Allah will condemn a *mujāhid* (person who performs jihad) to hell for insincere intentions is evidence of this. It is therefore difficult to understand how and why *Dabiq* only afforded 1.16% of its thematic focus of the theme of 'sincerity' and 3.48% to the broader themes within 'the self' category. This consideration becomes more profound when the backgrounds of some of *Da'esh's* supporters are better understood.

Byman (2016) stated that broadly speaking *Da'esh's* support base is religiously illiterate (Byman, 2016, pp 139). In 2017 the BBC carried a report suggesting that *Da'esh* supporters

had little or no theological understanding of Islam yet actively participated in *Da'esh's* jihad or worked to recruit others in support of it (BBC: 2017). A further report presented by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ISCR), suggested that 58% of *Da'esh's* Saudi fighters had only a basic[97] understanding of Islam (Al-Saud, 2019, pp 35). These are fighters from a context in which religious learning is an integral part of the education system. So the consideration in respect of *Da'esh's* fighters who are new Muslims or from contexts where Islamic education is not embedded within mainstream learning raises important questions as to the absence of prescriptive focus in this area. Indeed in later volumes of *Dabiq*, *Da'esh* adopted a position where they advocated for their supporters to carry out attacks in their respective homelands and not to travel to the caliphate (Dabiq, 2014, vol. 4, pp 09). In doing so, *Da'esh* revoked any opportunity for individuals to work upon their '*nafs*'; opportunities that perhaps only existed within the 'Islamic State'. This is due to the fact that *Da'esh* advised their supporters not to seek advice from third parties ahead of performing what they considered to be jihad (Dabiq, 2014, vol. 6, pp 07). Coupled with this, are the considerations of competing temporal interests across the volumes of *Dabiq* that were raised in chapter 6. For example, Atwan (2015) related an account provided Abu Baraa al-Hindi who stated in an online recruitment video that there was no cure for depression like the honour of coming for jihad. Others have commented on how ordinary life is boring and jihad, which they describe akin to fighting in a video game, offers excitement (Atwan, 2015, pp 177-178). Such accounts evidence competing temporal interests; are individuals fighting to cure depression, thrill seeking or to attain the pleasure of Allah with which theological success is embedded? So *Dabiq* instructed individuals not to seek advice ahead of performing their 'jihad' but at the same time theologically compromised them through inadequate direction on managing the *nafs* whilst advocating competing interests within the

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[97] 'Basic' is not defined by *Da'esh*. However it is suggestive of a rudimentary understanding of Islam at a level that precedes *intermediate*.

volumes of *Dabiq*. Thus although individual terrorist cells outside of the caliphate appeared to be ideologically connected to *Da'esh*, they were however physically and spiritually disconnected from the 'Islamic State'.

Furthermore, despite the importance that selflessness has in underpinning all acts of worship, there is a concerted effort across *Dabiq* to actively discredit all perspectives that associates the term jihad with anything other than violence. This goes beyond defining the term or adopting an organisational position which promotes jihad as conflict and militancy above any other understanding. Rather *Dabiq's* endeavour has been to cement militancy as the exclusive and essential meaning for jihad. For example, in the footnotes of volume 7 *Da'esh* claim that pacifism was introduced by the *Ahmedi* sect with support of the British crusaders. They argue that non violent expressions of jihad are modernist interpretations which seek an abandonment of violence and terrorism contrary to the puritanical view they represent (Dabiq, 2015, vol.7, pp 20). Furthermore, they reject the argument that the Meccan era of passive Islam is relatable to the contemporary context. This rejection is in stark contrast to the discussions detailed in section 5.3 of chapter 5 where the centrality of *taqwā´* and the jihad *al-nafs* were argued from the very inception of Islam. Indeed mastery over ones *nafs* is the theological imperative of Islam irrespective of whether that was during the Meccan period of Islam prior to the revelations permitting military jihad, post revelation or within the contemporary period. Accepting the premise argued in chapter 5 establishes theological consistency across Islam's continuum. Arguing to the contrary suggests that the contemporary practice of Islam is somehow theologically unrelatable to its genealogy. Perhaps more prominently it suggests that a jurisprudential revelation (in the form of military jihad) can replace the theological imperative of *nafs* management which underpins the entire construct of *'ibādah*. *Dabiq* makes it clear that the days of non violent pacifism have passed

and the revelation of military jihad has ushered in a 'new' age where violence can lead to salvation and success.

Although these considerations follow from *Dabiq's* position on the Meccan period, 'sincerity' in the context of jihad is a theme which features in *Dabiq* (in the context of jihad). *Da'esh* states that whoever fights 'sincerely' is indeed fighting for the sake of Allah (Dabiq, 2015, vol. 7, pp. 10). But *Dabiq* fails to support its readership working toward the attainment of 'sincerity' which is itself a product of managing ones *nafs*. The manner in which *Dabiq* has been constructed, be that the repetitive nature of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's statement or the academic nature in which they engage with certain theological aspects (for example *Da'esh's* rebuttal of Christian theology in volume 15); greatly reduces an argument of oversight by *Da'esh*. *Da'esh's* obsession with jihad as an inherently violent construct permeates the volumes of *Dabiq* to such an extent that they reduce discussions regarding the jihad *al-nafs* to the footnotes and commentaries of the publication; it is not discussed in the main body. As a result across the 942 pages of *Dabiq* there is not a single reference to the jihad *al-nafs* as a vehicle for achieving Allah's pleasure despite its centrality in the framework of *'ibādah* as established in chapters 4 and 5. Rather *Da'esh* positions the pleasure of Allah within an expression of jihad that is rooted in violence and conflict. However, as mentioned in chapter 5, al-Minawi (1971) stated that jihad as the expression of violence is inconceivable without the jihad *al-nafs*: until one has an established control over one's 'self'. Thus *Da'esh's* unrelenting position on the centrality of conflict and warfare has superseded their regard for the theological wellbeing of their individual supporters.

Furthermore, despite *Dabiq's* superlative narratives, the support that *Da'esh* harnessed from local communities was not based solely upon religious imperatives. For example, Byman (2016) suggests that *Da'esh's* support from the Sunni community in Iraq was as a result of *Shi'ī* governmental persecution against the Sunni majority community. Therefore, in 2014

more than 80 Iraqi tribes agreed to side with *Da'esh* against the ruling Iraqi government (Byman, 2016, pp 134). This suggests that the motivation behind these tribes supporting *Da'esh* was not to establish a caliphate, rather it was the product of a failed government and political apathy as argued by Crenshaw (1981) in the literature review. This assertion is supported by Saltman & Winter's (2014) analysis who argued that *Da'esh* created so much instability that people preferred their rule as it created a degree of stability within the region (Saltman & Winter, 2014, pp 33). They further argued that just because individuals and groups have aligned themselves to *Da'esh* it doesn't mean they are supportive of the organisation as a whole (*ibid*, pp 35).

It is necessary to highlight here that these assertions are made solely based upon an analysis of *Dabiq*. It is entirely possible that *Da'esh* may have catered for theological wellbeing of its support base through other areas of their operation, for example online chat rooms or in the physical 'caliphate'. Indeed, Lister (2015) states that a series of interviews with IS fighters between December 2013 and August 2014 revealed that all IS fighters were responsible for securing *tazkiyah* (a form of self purification) from existing IS members. Induction in to the group lasted several weeks and consisted of religious training (Lister, 2015, pp 27-28). However what that *tazkiyah* looked like is unknown and there are a great number of variables that are unaccounted for. For example, what was the standard set for *tazkiyah* and how was it determined whether an individual had attained it? Was this process compromised due to the challenges of operating in a war and conflict zone and are new recruits who have little to no understanding of faith best positioned to choose someone themselves for such an important task? Weiss & Hassan (2016) suggest that new recruits were given lessons in shariah and their religious knowledge was 'tested' (Weiss & Hassan, 2016, pp 216-217). However, this appears to be centred on jurisprudential matters and not upon the self. Furthermore, the practice of *tazkiyah* was exclusive to the geographical territory of the caliphate so how did

the organisation cater for the needs of their international operatives who they advised to not travel to the caliphate (Dabiq, 2014, vol.4, pp 09)? Although there is perhaps an argument that these considerations were addressed through other mediums but that argument needs to be balanced against the logic of abandoning an integral aspect of theological preservation yet including content of lesser importance.

One of the key observations regarding the absence of self related focus across the volumes of *Dabiq* relates to the considerations raised in section 4.2 of chapter 4. As detailed there, the human experience of *ʿibādah* in this temporal world is littered with faith related challenges; be they from Allah, the devil or one's *nafs*. Indeed these challenges in the midst of war and conflict are arguably even more prominent as individuals navigate their way through the domain of war in pursuit of Allah's pleasure (assumedly so). This was the very argument made by ibn Nuhaas when he rejected the concept of the 'greater' jihad by arguing that any challenges which an individual faces outside of the battle field are compounded and magnified within the battlefield setting. So simply by this understanding the military expression of jihad is the 'greatest' (ibn Nuhaas, no date, pp 173-176). Appreciating these perspectives alongside the varied levels of theological literacy which *Da'esh's* supporters retain, the imperative of the jihad *al-nafs* and *taqwā'* appears to be even more profound. *Dabiq's* failure to embed this construct more centrally within its publication has arguably removed Allah's primacy from *Da'esh's* jihadi endeavours. As chapters 6 and 7 have demonstrated thus far, material efforts have been compromised by competing temporal interests. Individuals have been directed toward the pleasure of Allah through almost exclusively violent means and the essential mechanisms which ensure the integrity of *ʿibādah* are afforded minimal, indirect references within the organisations flagship publication. The accumulative impact of this failure is evident in the manner in which *Da'esh* advocate and perform what they consider to be jihad. As chapter 4 detailed, there is a discernible temporal

impact for all acts of worship and the military expression of jihad is no exception. Therefore the following section will examine the temporal impact of *Da'esh's* jihad and measure the outcome of their actions against what they advocated across the volumes of *Dabiq*. In particular it will argue that an absence of focus on the jihad *al-nafs* and *taqwā'* has impacted upon the temporal consequence of *Da'esh's* jihad.

7.4 The Temporal Impact of *Da'esh's* Jihad

Chapter 4 highlighted that the expression of *'ibādah* has a neutral or positive impact upon the contexts in which it is performed. Theological and academic opinion supported the premise that Allah's worship was legislated for the betterment of society (Ibn Abbas, 1992, vol. 1, pp 2, Murata & Chittick, 1994, pp 09; Ruthven, 2012, pp 02-03). The temporal impact of *Da'esh's* jihad is measured in this section against *Dabiq's* own standard. In volume 1 of *Dabiq Da'esh* argued that the caliphate was necessary in order to restore, among other things, Muslim dignity (Dabiq, 2014, vol.1, pp 07).

The Quran provides a theological standard against which any iteration of 'dignity' is to be measured. In verse 70 of *surah al-'Isrā'* Allah states that He has awarded the children of Adam a station and dignity that He has not afforded to any other from His creation (Quran 17:70).[98] Similarly in verses 10 – 12 of *surah al-ḥajarāt* Allah refers to His answerable creation as brothers of one another. He instructs them not to belittle each other, consider the other to be of a lesser status nor refer to one another in derogatory terms. He further instructs His answerable creation not to fall in to speculation regarding their brothers, not to speak ill of them behind their backs and to maintain *taqwā'* of Him (Quran 49: 10-12).[99] Furthermore, verse 32 of *surah al-Ma'idah* is well cited in impressing the value and sanctity of life in Islam (Quran 5: 32). The overarching principle in these verses is that of respect and

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[98] وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُم مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَىٰ كَثِيرٍ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا

[99] يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرْ قَوْمٌ مِّن قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِّن نِّسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ بِئْسَ الِاسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ وَمَن لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

preserving the rights that Allah has bestowed upon His creation irrespective of individual circumstance or social status (Al-Jazairi, no date, vol.4, pp 123). The imperative of honour and dignity in Islam impresses further the primacy of preserving the constructs of physical dignity; for example the existential needs of food, clothing and shelter. This is an important distinction as will become evident in this section because *Da'esh* not only wilfully disregards this principle but actively creates conditions which remove people from a position of dignity to a position of deprivation. Equally it is necessary to highlight that the concept of 'dignity' in Islam is associated with *taqwā´* (as illustrated in verses 10-12 of *surah al-ḥajarāt*) suggesting that it is associated to ones' *nafs* and an integral part of faith preservation. Thus affording dignity to ones religious peers is a cognitive theological function driven by established rights and privileges that cannot be subdued by emotive personal biases. This is the essence of *taqwā´* and the jihad *al-nafs* as was argued in chapters 4 and 5 and Allah has stated in the Qur'an that the principle of dignity is embedded within it.

Furthermore, Ali (2018) also touches upon the concept of human dignity within Islam arguing that it existed from the very inception of Islam and is rooted within its code, legal system and ethics (Ali, 2018, pp 60-61). Kamali (2002) argues that dignity is a universal right in Islam irrespective of an individual's status, religious practice or religious affiliation (Kamali, 2002, pp 01-05). Kamali's (2002) sentiments are shared by Sachedina (2009) and Muftugil (2017) who argue that all humankind, irrespective of race, nationality or gender are afforded the privilege of dignity according to Islam. Thus dignity is a composition of honour, preference, elevation, abundance and freedom from want (Sachedina: 2009; Muftugil, 2017, pp 159-160). Although Kamali (2002), Sachedina (2009) and Muftugil (2017) endeavour to establish a universal and unbiased principle of human dignity, it is not entirely relevant when engaging with *Da'esh's* theological worldview. *Da'esh* did not argue the establishment of a caliphate in order to preserve the dignity of non Muslims. Rather they were clear that the

immediate beneficiaries of their jihadi efforts would be Muslims who have no respect, dignity or leadership in their current polities. This is a necessary distinction to make as although there is merit to what Kamali (2002) and Mufutgil (2017) argue, Ali (2018) states that ISIS believes that dignity is preserved only for the 'true' believers of Islam (Ali, 2018, pp 65). *Da'esh's* worldview renders much of the world as apostate, meaning generally speaking many Muslims are not eligible for any form of respect or dignity. So when *Da'esh* creates an operational caveat among the Muslim cohort depriving them of dignity to argue its merits in favour of non Muslims is an exercise in futility.

Ahead of examining the temporal impact of *Da'esh's* jihad it is prudent to highlight that *Dabiq* contains a dedicated section within chapter 4 that makes reference to investments made in the 'caliphates' infrastructure. There are details of cancer treatment facilities, social security benefits, provisions for the aged and disabled as well as details of investments in to the redevelopment of towns and cities. Perhaps *Dabiq* communicates these narratives in order to present an image of 'normality' within the caliphate to a section of its intended audience. But the fact that they are present within the publication is indicative of *Da'esh's* consideration and regard for the 'temporal impact' question. However, as the following assessment will detail, their contributions to the (re)development of their caliphate are far outweighed by the consequences of their actions within the same space.

However, as established above, the preservation of life is one of the greatest expressions of dignity in Islam. Yet since the start of the conflict in Syria and Iraq, an accurate death toll has been all but lost. The Washington Post carried a report suggesting that the Pentagon could not quantify with any degree of precision how many people had been killed as a result of the war against ISIS (Sonne: 2018). Impact figures from 2016 held the death toll at 470,000 people (Specia: 2018) where as Human Rights Watch reported a figure of 511,000 as of March 2018 (HRW: 2019). The Guardian also carried a report stating that there was a

42% increase in civilian casualties in 2017 compared to 2016 (McVeigh: 2018).

Furthermore, at the time of writing the final draft of this thesis tensions in Idlib, Syria had

escalated with increased conflict and greater civilian casualties. The UNHCR issued an

urgent ceasefire appeal to offer safety for 900,000 civilians who fled Idlib (UNHCR: 2020).

The vast majority of the causalities across both Syria and Iraq would have been Sunni

Muslims (World Population Review: 2019) who *Da'esh* vowed to protect. Although it can't

be conclusively argued how many of the deaths are attributable directly to *Da'esh*, what is

certain is *Da'esh's* centrality in the conflicts that have resulted in this mass scale loss of life.

As will be detailed the following sections, *Da'esh* employed a policy of indiscriminate

violence and actively used the practice of *tawaḥḥhush* (savagery) as part of their militancy.

They wilfully sacrificed Sunni Muslims in order to incite sectarian conflict with the Shia

community whilst also attacking state structures in order to draw 'apostate' regimes into

protracted conflict. So the first point of consideration relates to the hundreds and thousands

of Muslims who have been killed, directly or indirectly, as a result of *Da'esh's* jihad and

militancy. How did the self proclaimed caliphate provide or even preserve the dignity of

those Muslims?

For those who have survived and lived through the years of conflict the situation was and

remains no better. Taking Syria as an example, the country once had a population of over

21.3m people in 2010 (World Population Review: 2019). By 2019 that population count had

fallen to just over 17m people with over 13m of them (77% of the population) in need of

some sort of humanitarian aid and assistance (UNHCR: 2019). Furthermore, 6.6m Syrians

have been internally displaced (multiple times) and are now designated as Internally

Displaced Persons (IDP) living in IDP camps across Syria. 5.6m Syrians fled the conflict and

attempted to seek refuge in countries like Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan whilst some others

attempted to cross the Mediterranean and Aegean seas in order to reach European shores.

This perilous journey became the focal point of international attention when the body of 3 year old Ayan Kurdi washed ashore the Greek Island of Kos; a product of desperation as refugees on inadequate and overcrowded crafts attempted to escape the conflict in Syria (Withnall: 2015). Conditions inside the IDP camps have been equally as grim. For example, in al-Hol Camp, Syria the population is almost 100% above capacity, there are inadequate resources & facilities and infant mortality has been a grave area of concern for UN agencies during the winter periods (UN OCHA: 2019; UN News: 2019). The UNHCR reports that Syrian children were vulnerable to early forced marriages, leading to commercial sexual exploitation and forced labour (UN HRC: 2019). Furthermore, in 2018 Amnesty International released a report stating that hundreds of Iraqi women living in IDP camps across Iraq had been sexually abused and exploited (Amnesty International: 2018). These sorts of realities are replicated throughout other displacement camps which litter the landscape of Syria, Iraq and the Middle East.

Similarly the Independent carried a report suggesting that *Da'esh's* siege of Mosul, Iraq had reduced its population to eating cats and scavenging for food as *Da'esh* blocked aid in to the city (Roberts: 2017). Yet despite the deprivation and scarceness of resources *Da'esh* were reported to have actively killed hundreds of civilians as they attempted to flee western Mosul (BBC: 2017). Where at one point they would have issued a fine and forced individuals and families to return home, reports suggested that *Da'esh's* approach became much more hard lined when they began to lose territory to opposition forces (Roberts: 2017). The motivations behind *Da'esh* adopting such a position (specifically in relation to Mosul but also more broadly throughout their militancy) was not to safeguard the religious wellbeing of those who were attempting to flee the caliphate nor was it to preserve a 'dignity' that was unavailable to them outside of the 'Islamic State'. Rather it was a tactical decision to ensure they retained a military advantage. *Da'esh* forced people to remain in Mosul despite the humanitarian

conditions. They then used those very same people, fellow Muslims living in the caliphate, as human shields to curb the advance of the joint military operations against them. Evidence of this was found in the UN Security Council's response to reports that *Da'esh* were using civilians as human shields as they defended against Iraqi and Kurdish military offences (US News: 2016). The realities that have unfolded as a result of *Da'esh's* jihad, be that directly or indirectly, are irreconcilable against the intended consequence of *'ibādah*. *Da'esh's* tactical use of Muslim life for the preservation of the caliphate as a land mass, is reflective of the *Dabiq's* temporal focus; as highlighted in chapter 6. Indeed as chapter 6 highlighted, *Da'esh's* ultimate theological goal(s) and objective(s) are undefined and ambiguous. So it is difficult to understand how some of the practices referred to above have supported *Da'esh* and its fighters in facing their impending theological accountability. For instance, how has killing besieged Muslims attempting to flee violence and conflict brought *Da'esh's* operatives any closer to Allah's Pleasure, Forgiveness or Paradise.[100] How has it helped to establish *tawḥīd* in this temporal realm or make the word of Allah 'supreme'? How have the millions of Muslims who are now living in displacement camps across the Middle East been afforded 'dignity'? And how is their present state of protracted depravation, which *Da'esh* has wholly and wilfully engineered, a means of attaining Allah's pleasure for either the organisation or its supporters? *Da'esh's* primacy of the 'temporal' over the 'spiritual' and 'metaphysical' imperative is evident in *Dabiq* and reflected within their material operations. There is an undeniable absence of *taqwā'* and the jihad *al-nafs*, in both the literary and practical sense, which has resulted in *Da'esh's* Frankensteinian application of theologically justified violence.

Furthermore, all of the considerations raised above are framed within a window of the past 10 years. The long term impact is even more profound when psychological, emotional and

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[100] These were the attributes associated with the acquisition of paradise as communicated in the Quran. Please see figure 2 in chapter 4.

social wellbeing factors are taken in to account. The consequence of *Da'esh's* jihad has touched multiple generations. For instance, parents who are living as refugees in displacement camps across the world are unable to work to provide for their families. Families who have managed to return home do so to contexts that are economically damaged and lack the infrastructure for self sustainability. Furthermore, children have been deprived of education and the opportunity of self development; inhibiting their ability to secure employment in the future and eliminating their opportunity to contribute to the redevelopment of Syria. So the temporal impact of *Da'esh's* jihad within the context of the Middle East has created a cross generational dependency on aid. The following section will argue that this was indeed the intended consequences of *Da'esh's* jihad and militancy. But in doing so, the central question remains; how have *Da'esh* preserved the dignity of its fellow Sunni Muslims as they advocated in *Dabiq*? The evident response is that *Da'esh* have unequivocally failed. They have failed to not only provide 'dignity' but have been instrumental in removing 'dignity', the sanctity of life and respect that millions of Muslims enjoyed prior to their jihad and attempts to establish a caliphate. So the temporal impact of *Da'esh's* perceived act of worship has resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people alongside the displacement, exploitation and humiliation of millions more. It has been the antithesis of their own mandate.

However, *Da'esh's* efforts have not been confined to the Middle East rather they have advocated, endorsed and championed attacks across the world. As detailed in section 6.5, from volume 4 onwards *Da'esh* actively encouraged their support base to conduct terrorist attacks in their home lands (Dabiq, 2014, vol.4, pp 09; Dabiq, 2016, vol.15, pp 39 & pp 69). The replacement of *Dabiq* with *Rumiyyah* as *Da'esh's* feature publication coincided with an increase in terrorist attacks across Europe. Simplistic attacks with an increased likelihood of execution were advocated for (even if that meant a smaller number of fatalities) over

sophisticated attacks that were more likely to fail. For example on 7[th] January 2016 a man

was shot dead outside of a metro store in Paris after wielding a machete. Reports suggest that

he had a sketch of an ISIS flag on his person and had pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr al-

Baghdadi[101] (Lister *et al*: 2018). Similarly on 13[th] June 2016 Larossi Aballa killed a police

officer and his former partner whilst pledging allegiance to ISIS (*ibid*). However, some of

the attacks inspired and conducted by *Da'esh* were 'successful' in claiming a number of

lives. For instance on 14[th] July 2016 Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel killed 84 people as he

drove a truck in to a crowd celebrating France's national day (*ibid*). Similarly, Salman Abedi

managed to kill 22 people and injured approximately 800 when he detonated himself at the

Manchester Arena on 22[nd] May 2017 (BBC: 2018). *Da'esh's* intention from orchestrating

such attacks in Europe and across the world, despite the limited material impact of some of

the operations, was to psychologically terrorise the public and cast them in to a state of fear

(Dabiq, 2016, vol.15, pp 28). And this is something they were arguably successful in

achieving as a temporary state of public distress, panic and terror follows in the immediate

aftermath of an attack.

But these attacks also had a discernible impact on public opinion regarding Islam and

Muslims throughout Europe and the 'western' world. For example, a survey of 100,000

respondents across 10 European countries conducted by Chatham House asked whether

immigration from Muslim majority countries in to Europe should be stopped. Overall 55%

of the respondents said 'yes'; with percentages as high as 71% in Poland, 65% in Austria,

53% in Germany, 51% in Italy and 47% in Great Britain (Goodwin *et al*: 2017). Some of the

factors which contributed to these results were terrorism and the influx of Muslim refugees;

which is one of the consequences of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East that *Da'esh* are

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[101] His name is significant as it supports the broader claim for religious legitimacy that *Da'esh* appear to fighting
for. Abu Bakr was the name of the prophet Muhammad's closest companion and first caliph after Muhammad's
death. Indeed the prophet is recorded to have stated that if there would have been a prophet after him
(Muhammad) then it would have been his companion Abu Bakr.

involved in. Beyond perception and ill feeling, sentiments have spilt over in to violent Islamophobic attacks. In 2018 the Independent carried a report suggesting that following the Manchester Arena attacks in 2017 there was a 700% surge in anti Muslim street attacks and only two weeks after it Darren Osborne drove a van in to worshippers who were congregated outside of a mosque in Finsbury Park. He killed one person and injured several others (Dearden: 2018). The Huffington Post carried a report suggesting that in Germany Islamophobic attacks against immigrants from Muslim majority countries increased by 239% between 2015 and 2016 (Ahmed: 2017).

The rise of Islamophobic hate crime and supremacist movements are arguably the inevitable temporal consequences of *Da'esh's* militant worldview and operational practice. For example, Bailey & Edwards (2017) make reference to 'microradicalisations'; being micro level individual responses to the actions of an organisation like *Da'esh*. These 'microradicalisations' feed in to the dynamic of reciprocal radicalisation whereby the very existence and actions of a group like *Da'esh* invites challenge from other (in this case the Christian far right) organisations thereby cementing the polar extreme (Bailey & Edwards, 2017, pp 273-277). The cohesion of opposition to *Da'esh*, particularly in the form of white supremacist movements who possess their own militant world view (Wilson, 2017, pp 425-430), creates the very conflict that *Da'esh* write about in their texts; the Crusader armies that *Da'esh* claims to defend Islam against. Thus *Da'esh* position themselves as fire fighters, protecting the Muslim nation from the flames of *kufr* and disbelief. Yet at the very same time they hold a pack of matches and a large canister of fuel in their hands; continually feeding the fire they allege to protect Muslims against. But irrespective of what the organisation intends to achieve, the temporal impact of their jihad and militancy has had a discernible impact on the safety and security of Muslims across the world. So the consideration in respect of *Dabiq's* mandate of 'dignity' remains the same. Not only has *Da'esh* removed it from

Muslims currently living in the caliphate space but they have also unsettled the social dynamic for Muslim communities across the world.

Beyond discussions of the physical and emotional impact that *Da'esh's* jihad has had upon Muslim dignity, there are also widespread considerations regarding the financial consequences of their militancy. For instance, the Centre for Research on Globalisation has estimated the cost of the wars in Syria, Iraq as well as Afghanistan to reach $5.9 trillion (Crawford: 2018). Ianchovichina & Ivanic (2014) examine the broader economic effects of the Syrian war with the spread of *Da'esh* across the Levant region. They argue that cost of war is more than just the immediate financial loss during the course of conflict; rather losses are incurred and suffered by many of the subsidiary industries affected by conflict as well as the collapse of international trade agreements. Ianchovichina & Ivanic (2014) stated that that Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt were all in inter-trade agreement negotiations prior to the conflict in Syria (Ianchovichina & Ivanic, 2016, pp 11). The war resulted in a collapse of these trade agreements and destruction of economies (certainly within the regions of Iraq and Syria) but also a knock on effect within the other nations who lost trade and also received refugees. So the real time financial impact of the war has not been felt by simply the Syrians or the stake holding nations in the war on terror. Rather the economic costs of the war within the Levant region have been far more widespread especially when one considers trade integration and related losses (*ibid*, pp 28). The economic impact of war feeds in to *Da'esh's* operational model of *tawaḥḥush* (as will be detailed in the following section) and was also a tactic championed by al-Qaeda. Osama bin Laden expressed a vision of bleeding America to the point of bankruptcy; something which he felt was quite possibly achieved through prolonged military engagement.[102] The financial question also aligns itself to research conducted by Hegghammer (2006) who refers to an anonymous publication which

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[102] See interview of Osama bin Laden - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7habqwFFmkc

suggests that the only way to force America's withdrawal from Iraq would be through the economic cost of occupation (Hegghammer, 2006, pp 29).

So the 'reality' it would seem was that there never was a safe haven for Muslims in the form of a caliphate. Its erection was littered with death and wilful destruction that compromised the very lives, safety, security and 'dignity' of Muslims in the immediate areas of Syria and Iraq. Furthermore the economic impact of *Da'esh's* militancy significantly damaged local, national and international economies to the point that self sustainability was inconceivable. The ripple effect of *Da'esh's* jihad has been felt all across the world and its consequences will continue to remain long after the dust has settled on the organisation.

Throughout this section reference has been made to a practice referred to as *tawaḥḥush* (self defined by *Dabiq* as savagery). *Tawaḥḥush* is referred to in the very first volume of *Dabiq* as a necessary means to lay the foundations for their jihad (Dabiq, 2014, vol.1, pp 32). The manner in which *Da'esh* has applied this principle across the Middle East is of great relevance to the temporal impact of their 'jihad'. Therefore this concept, its application and consequences will be discussed in greater detail in the following section.

7.4.1 The Temporal Impact: *Da'esh's* Practice of *Tawaḥḥush*.

Dabiq details a roadmap to the establishment and preservation of a caliphate which utilises the practice of *tawaḥḥush* (Dabiq, 2014, vol.1, pp 32). *Tawaḥḥush* is translated by *Da'esh* as 'savagery'. It relates to a form of guerrilla warfare that aims to destabilise nation states by destroying civic society and communal infrastructure (Atwan, 2015, pp 157). Militants actively target health facilities, educational institutions and any structure affiliated with government; for example, the police and military. It has been adopted by *Islamist* organisations much earlier than *Da'esh*. Abu Bakr al-Naji wrote a treatise on the subject of *tawaḥḥhush* titled *'Idāratu al-Tawaḥḥush* (The Management of Savagery) which was

published approximately 8 years before the formation of *Da'esh* as a standalone group. However, *Da'esh* appear to have wholly embraced this practice as al-Naji's treatise on *tawaḥḥush* was disseminated widely among *Da'esh's* soldiers upon enlistment. It is questionable whether the distribution of *'Idāratu al-Tawaḥḥush* offered any practical support for *Da'esh's* personnel who, as detailed in the previous chapter, had a limited understanding of Islam. But despite this, the publication was utilised in order to justify beheadings as actions recommended by God (Weiss & Hassan, 2016, pp 45).

However, *Da'esh* regard the practice of *tawaḥḥush* as a necessary precursor to the establishment of a caliphate (Dabiq, 2014, vol.1, pp 32). It is interesting to observe that although the concept has a great deal of prominence within *Da'esh's* operations it does not feature within *Dabiq's* thematic focus as an independent theme (as detailed in chapter 6). Perhaps this is due to its understanding being subsumed within the broader category of 'warfare' the themes of which are all conflict and violence laden. Nevertheless, *Da'esh's* application of *tawaḥḥush* is further evidence that the contradictions prevalent within the volumes of *Dabiq* are prevalent within *Da'esh's* operations. Byman (2016) highlights how *Da'esh* built a state by providing basic infrastructure; healthcare, policing and court systems etc (Byman, 2016, pp 141) and *Dabiq* goes to great lengths to demonstrate the investment it put in to developing the infrastructure of the Islamic State (see appendix 2, volume 4). But these are the very aspects of society they actively destroyed as part of their *tawaḥḥush* campaign. Beyond destroying social infrastructure *Da'esh's* militancy was also focused on creating social insecurity and sectarian unrest. Lister (2015) argued that *Da'esh's* entire military strategy was to provoke sectarian conflict and incite Shia attacks on Sunnis so *Da'esh* can position themselves as the Sunni saviours (Lister, 2015, pp 28-29). This assessment is shared by Atwan (2015) and Weiss & Hassan (2016) who argued that *Da'esh*

kept the conflict alive by using violence to instigate sectarian conflict among the Sunni and Shia communities (Atwan, 2015, pp 155; Weiss & Hassan, 2016, pp 61-65).

Although *Dabiq* advocates *tawaḥḥush* and *Da'esh* utilised it during their operations, the publication does not set out a prescriptive framework for *tawaḥḥush*. It does not define its boundaries nor offer any detail on what is considered 'acceptable' as savagery from what is not. Rather much like the militant *Islamist* approach toward *tawḥīd al-ʿulūhiyyah* the entire concept appears to be acutely subjective. This has created not only a great deal of ambiguity but the opportunity for individuals and groups to justify *nafs* driven actions as religiously legitimate mandates. For example, Abu Musab al- Zarqawi (the founder of modern day *Da'esh*) was content in sacrificing the most vulnerable individuals in society for the purposes of his *tawaḥḥush*. In 2005 he used two mentally disabled girls aged 3 and 13 as Improvised Explosive Device's (IED) to blow up a police recruitment line (Weiss & Hassan, 2016, pp 47). Similarly, in 2018 the New York Times carried a report of a 10 year old girl named Nour who was living in an orphanage in Mosul. Nour lost 19 members of her family to one of *Da'esh's* suicide bombers as they attempted to flee the besieged and battle ridden city of Mosul. As her family made their way toward the Iraqi army a suicide bombers ran toward Nour and her family and detonated himself, killing 19 of her uncles, aunties and cousins. Nour managed to survive the blast but was seriously injured (Coker: 2018). In another account, the Telegraph carried a report of one year old Hamoudi, who had been used by *Da'esh* as a human shield. They placed him on a pile of rubble and as Iraqi military personnel attempted to rescue him *Da'esh's* snipers would pick them off. Hamoudi was attacked by a stray dog and ultimately lost one of his arms as a result of it (Ensor: 2018). Alongside vulnerable individuals, *Da'esh* were equally content with sacrificing fellow Sunni Muslims. Prior to the establishment of the 'caliphate', on the 15th August 2011, Zarqawi's administration coordinated 34 bombings in one hour across Iraq (Lister, 2015, pp 16). His

targets were not simply the Shia, occupying US forces or the United Nations but also fellow Sunni Muslims. The rationale in justification for killing Sunni Muslims was to incite sectarian conflict between Sunni's and Shia's for the purposes of destabilising civic society. The roadmap to the caliphate deemed this as necessary in order to facilitate an uprising against existing powers and establish a caliphate (Weiss & Hassan, 2016, pp 48).

So Zarqawi's, and thereafter *Da'esh's*, application of *tawaḥḥhush* was broad and indiscriminate; offering no protection to anyone except to those who supported their mission. This was principally the result of a number of factors. Firstly *Dabiq* offers no direction on the practice of *tawaḥḥhush*; its framework or boundaries. That is not to suggest that *Da'esh* were completely silent on the matter. To the contrary as this section has highlighted *Da'esh* provided a copy of *'Idāratu al-Tawaḥḥush* to new recruits who joined the Islamic State. But, as cited above, the religious literacy of *Da'esh's* soldiers was a point of concern raising a valid consideration as to how much they would understand from the publication. Secondly, as detailed in chapters 4 and 5, the jihad *al-nafs* is the essential underpinning of all faith practice. *Dabiq* as the flagship publication for *Da'esh* was silent on both of these key matters. It offers very little attention to the development of self regulation and no attention to the parameters of *tawaḥḥush*. Furthermore as *Dabiq's* narrative transitioned from making *hijrah* to the Islamic State toward carrying out attacks in home countries the opportunities to better understand the practice of *tawaḥḥush* were entirely lost. These factors arguably facilitated the indiscriminate and unbridled use of *tawaḥḥush* which resulted in the sorts of practices highlighted in this section.

However, *Da'esh's* use of *tawaḥḥush* is not uncontested, even among militant *Islamist* circles. Saltman & Winter (2014) offer details of the *Jaysh al-Mujahidin* who, despite fighting alongside, *Da'esh* considered them to have a distorted view of the *shariah* (Saltman & Winter, 2014, pp 35). Byman (2016) highlights the inter Islamist conflict regarding

Da'esh's use of violence and justification of killing fellow Muslims (Byman, 2016, pp 133). Frissen *et al* (2017) make reference to 'mutilations' within the doctrine of jihad for personal objectives (Frissen *et al*, 2007, pp 491) which is a sentiment shared by Ali (2018) who argues that al-Baghdadi had created his own form of Islam that he was applying across Syria and Iraq (Ali, 2018, pp 59). Al-Qaeda; the former parent group of *Da'esh*, advised Zarqawi to stop the rampant killing sprees and protect the Sunni community (Weiss & Hassan, 2016, pp 61-65; Mozaffari: 2007). But their refusal to heed al-Qaeda's advice and insistence upon militant brutality led to a public divorce in 2014 between al-Qaeda and what is now referred to as *Da'esh*. Early volumes of *Dabiq* suggest that *Da'esh* were conscious to the criticisms of indiscriminate brutality that were being levelled against them. For instance, in volume 1 of *Dabiq*, *Da'esh* staunchly rebuked any claims that Sunni Muslims were killed as a result of their activities; rather they attributed the loss of Sunni lives to fake news propaganda and *Rafidhi* militia attacks (Dabiq, 2014, vol.1, pp 35). But this position changed drastically by volume 2 in which *Da'esh* took a definitive stance regarding who they consider to be Muslim. In essence whoever did not pledge allegiance to the 'Islamic State' had apostosized according to *Da'esh* so it was permissible to kill them (Dabiq, 2014, vol.2, pp 24-26).

It is necessary to remind ourselves that the application of *tawaḥḥush* is positioned against an endeavour to establish the caliphate which *Dabiq* stated was necessary to preserve Muslim might, rights and leadership (Dabiq, 2014, vol.1, pp 07). So the caliphate was depicted as a land of salvation for Muslims from all across the world. However that salvation was being built upon the corpses of innocent young children and fellow Muslims across Syria and Iraq. The proposition of *tawaḥḥush* as a component of jihad (whether preparatory or a facilitator) positions it firmly within the body of non designated acts of worship (as detailed in section 4.2.1 of chapter 4). As a result it is subject to the same conceptual framework as any other act of ʿibādah; all of which are underpinned by the constructs of *taqwā´* and the jihad *al-nafs*

and all of which are subject to the neutral or positive material impact principle. The absence of focus on the theological remit of *tawaḥḥush*, the temporal impact of its application and the centrality of *nafs* management within the reality of human existence has all had profound impact on the overall material consequence of *Da'esh's* jihad.

This broad discussion regarding *tawaḥḥush* has highlighted the depths of *Da'esh's* 'savagery'. *Tawaḥḥush* is a Frankensteinian construct that feeds off *Da'esh's* belief regarding the relationship between military jihad, *tawḥīd* and *ʿibādah*. Therefore jihad needs to be established no matter the cost of human life as without jihad there simply is no true reality of Islam. For *Da'esh* Islam is the religion of the sword (Dabiq, 2015, vol.7, pp 21) which harbours neither mercy nor a regard for human life. The most chilling reminder of this was evidenced in a segment contained within volume 15 of *Dabiq* titled *'By the Sword'*. In it *Da'esh* stated that they would have no reservations in dropping another nuke over Japan and would unleash a slaughter upon the Jewish community of Europe that would make the holocaust look like a bedtime story (Dabiq, 2016, vol.15, pp 80). These statements are in complete contrast to the objective of Islam that was highlighted in chapter 4 and at the beginning of this section (being the betterment of society). This raises the question that if the expression of *ʿibādah* in the form of military jihad is not being undertaken to make the world a better place then why is it being undertaken? The significance of this consideration highlights the impact and consequence of *Da'esh's* failure to define their broader theological goal(s). At this juncture the organisation appears to be engaging in violence and conflict (with all the considerations raised above in this chapter) for the purposes of preserving their territorial gains. The primacy of Allah, His pleasure and His cause appear to be all but lost as *nafs* laden narratives within *Dabiq* coupled with unimaginable operational practices remove the centrality of Allah from their jihad. This assessment supports Mello's (2018) analysis of

al-Naji's treatise on *tawaḥḥush*. Mello (2018) stated that *tawaḥḥush* is not about religious or ideological justification, rather it is a strategic imperative (Mello, 2018, pp 143).

In respect of strategic planning, *Dabiq* tells us that the vision of a global caliphate is not to be framed within a given moment in time. They have made their intentions clear to cascade their jihad down to subsequent generations who will work to sack Europe for the 'Islamic State' (Dabiq, 2014, vol.4, pp 37). This imperative supports the assessment made regarding the centrality of violence in *Da'esh's* worldview. As it is the core of their theological identity they have sought to embed its understanding in future generations in order to preserve the continuity of their jihad. The manner in which they have conducted their affairs across the Middle Eastern context in particular suggests that they have not left this to chance, rather they have developed the practice of *tawaḥḥush* in order to succession plan for future generations. This is evident in the amount of focus they have placed on the provision of second and third generation militants to continue their jihad. Throughout the volumes of *Dabiq* the enslavement of women featured repeatedly alongside reports from the ground that *Da'esh* were using women as sex slaves. The assertion made here is that *Da'esh's* soldiers' forcibly impregnated women in order to sustain their militancy and ensure its longevity well in to subsequent generations. This premise will be discussed in greater detail in the following section.

7.4.2 *Tawaḥḥush*: Ideological Succession Planning & Ensuring Jihad for the Future.

Da'esh recognised that their desire to conquer Rome and 'Christendom' would perhaps not be achieved by them as the organisation which gained notoriety between 2014 and 2018. So as a form of ideological succession planning, from the earliest volumes of *Dabiq, Da'esh* began to make reference to their jihad being continued by not only their children but also

their grandchildren (Dabiq, 2014, vol.4, pp 05). Volume 8 of *Dabiq* referenced the development of future jihadis, their education and training (Dabiq, 2015, vol.8, pp 20). Atwan (2015) commented on how *Da'esh* featured children in extra judicial killings; presenting them with severed heads and even using children as executioners (Atwan, 2015, pp 153). Citing a report authored by the Quilliam Foundation, the Independent reported that children living under *Da'esh's* rule were indoctrinated with *Da'esh's* radical ideology as part of a 'normative' upbringing. They were desensitised to *Da'esh's* brutal violence as they were encouraged to play football with decapitated heads, told stories of martyrdom and given military training (Cowburn: 2016). So the focus of *Da'esh's* intent was clear; to prepare subsequent generations for the continuation of their jihad.

However, ideology is taught and not biologically inherited. So the fall of the caliphate resulted in the loss of *Da'esh's* 'ideological classroom' in which their theological proposition was twinned with material practice as a complete system of immersive indoctrination. Thus the consideration is how *Da'esh* intended to continue their jihad through future generations and realise their ambition of sacking Rome when the mechanism through which that was to be achieved no longer exists? What I argue in this section is that over the course of their militancy, *Da'esh* developed the practice of *tawaḥḥush* from state level application and refined down to individual level application. I refer to this development as *tawaḥḥush al-fard* (individual savagery) and argue that it is an engineered state of deprivation which affects each individual at a micro level. *Tawaḥḥush al-fard* is the product of a series of factors strategically orchestrated by *Da'esh* in order to destabilise individuals to such an extent that they become wholly receptive to *Da'esh's* ideology and worldview.

The development and sustainability of *Da'esh's* future jihad is contingent upon three essential components:

     i.   Numbers

    ii.   Ideology and

   iii.   A conducive environment.

The following section will argue that combined with *tawaḥḥush al-fard*, *Da'esh* has catered for all of these components through a programme of ideological indoctrination, enslavement, rape and impregnation.

7.4.2.1 Ensuring the Continuity of Jihad: *Da'esh's* Enslavement of Women & Children.

From the earliest volumes, *Dabiq* has expressed an interest in the enslavement of women and children. As table 8 below highlights, *Dabiq* made direct references to the enslavement of women and children, either as an intended organisational goal or in order to cite the theological authenticity of this practice, a total of 27 times across the 15 volumes of *Dabiq*. This was part of a wider strategy to ensure the continuity of their jihad.

Table 8: References to the enslavement of women and children across Dabiq.

Volume	Page	Context
2	26	Reference to the prophet Muhammads approach in engaging in war and enslaving women.
3	36	Account of Barrack Obama where he speaks of operations he authorised in Iraq due to Da'esh. Enslavement of Yazidi women referenced here.
4	5	Enslavement of 'crusader' women in Europe. If *Da'esh* can't then their children & grandchildren will.
4	8	As above
4	10	Explanation of a hadith 'provision under spear'. Used as justification to enslave women.
4	15	Enslavement of Yazidi women by *Da'esh*. Distribution to Sinjar fighters and 1/5 allocation to the state.
4	14	4 references to enslavement of women and religious justifications for it.

		Reference to the Nigerian fighters in the Philippines who enslaved Christian women.
4	37	Al-Adnani's statement for Da'esh to enter Europe and enslave their women
6	19&20	2 references to riddah wars where Abu Bakr fought those who refused to pay zakat. Justification used by Da'esh for enslaving the women of disbelievers
7	7&18	2 references, as above
8	14	Praise of *Jamāʿh ahlis sunnah lid dʿawah* in West Africa who enslaved hundreds of Christian girls.
8	45&46	2 references to Abu Bakr and his riddah war.
9	44	Dedicated segment on the enslavement of women, its permissibility. Authored by Umm Sumayah al-Muhajirah.
9	45	5 references to enslaving women and children from the prophets *sīrah*
9	46	Support for the enslavement of women and children, rebuttal to objections raised against *Da'esh*.
10	52	Rebuttal on the objection against the enslaving women.
15	24	Reference to the prophetic practice of enslaving women and stating that is an act of *fitrah*.

Dabiq's focus on the enslavement of women and children served one distinct purpose across a dual time continuum. What I mean by this is that children were enslave, recruited, indoctrinated and trained for the purposes of immediate combat and warfare which *Dabiq* has positioned as the necessary jihad in order to establish Allah's *tawḥīd*. However, women were enslaved and impregnated for the purposes of ensuring the preservation of this jihad in to future generations so that *Dabiq's* vision of a European caliphate could be realised. These material efforts are evidence of *Da'esh's* belief regarding violence and conflict as the defining principles of *ʿibādah*.

Thus the dynamic consisted on two integral components; women and children. These will examined independently

7.4.2.1.1 Ensuring the Continuity of Jihad: *Da'esh* with Children.

The children that *Da'esh* captured were separated from their families, indoctrinated and trained for combat in support of the 'Islamic States' immediate operational needs. A report issued by the Human Rights Council (HRC) (2016) stated that Yazidi boys[103] were trained and used in support of *Da'esh* offensives across Syria (Human Rights Council, 2016, pp 04). This practice itself is interesting as *Da'esh* regarded the Yazidi community as apostates which is why they enslaved scores of Yazidi women (as this section will highlight in greater detail). However, *Da'esh* utilised the Yazidi boys in support of their jihad; in support of the pinnacle of faith practice and the essential tool to establish Allah's divinity in the world. It is certainly a point of theological attention as to how *Da'esh* justified this practice. *Dabiq* makes no direct reference to this consideration but does present a narrative on forced conversions as a means of attaining Allah's pleasure (Dabiq, 2015, vol.7, pp 17). There is possibly the argument that *Da'esh's* indoctrination of these children involved the practice of forced conversion prior to their application in combat. However, the considerations raised in chapters 4 and 5 (regarding the broader context of theological accountability) firstly relates to adults[104] and secondly suggests that this tactic was *nafs* driven in pursuit of organisational interests as opposed to individual theological well being. As already established in this chapter, *Da'esh* are not averse to compromising theological frameworks and principles for what they consider to be the greater 'good'.

In addition to the children captured by *Da'esh* were those children whom *Da'esh* fathered or cared for. Such children carry an enormous social stigma (Trew: 2018) and face a great deal of resentment within the Iraqi community who consider them 'unholy devil spawn'. As a

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[103] The HRC (2016) report details *Da'esh's* designation of 'boy'. The report suggests that pre pubescent children were divided from men and other boys aged approximately 12 years and above. Children under 7 years old were allowed to remain with their mothers although the report suggests that they were separated at a later date. The men and older 'boys' were instructed to accept Islam and if they refused they were summarily executed. Many Yazidi women lost their husbands and children in this manner.
[104] Adult is regarded as post pubescent in Islamic law.

result those who care for such children, for example the staff at the *al-Zahour* orphanage in northern Iraq, face anger from members of the local community (Ensor: 2018). In the post caliphate reality of the Middle East, orphaned and abandoned children are either cared for within state provisions or find themselves in either displacement camps on the outskirts of cities, isolated from other internally displaced persons due to their parentage, or begging on the streets of Iraq (Ensor: 2018). The very nature of who their fathers were has condemned them to a life of stigma, impoverishment and discrimination.

Furthermore, thousands of children who were not fathered or cared for by *Da'esh's* fighters have been directly affected (as an intended consequence) by *Da'esh's* rule. Children were referred to across the volumes of *Dabiq* as the custodians of their future jihad. It is not surprising then that *Da'esh* embedded educational provisions that taught their militant ideology to future generations. In 2017 CBS News carried a report stating that hundreds of children were enlisted in to *Da'esh* run schools in which they received tailored education that was designed to embed *Da'esh's* theological worldview in the hearts and minds of the next generation (D'Agata: 2017). Incidentally the educational material utilised by *Da'esh* was strikingly similar to the 'Alphabet of Jihad' used by al-Qaeda during the Cold War era.

Aside from formal educational provisions, *Da'esh* also actively recruited children and used them in support of their military campaigns. This was in addition to the enslavement of Yazidi boys as highlighted above in this section. In 2018 the Independent carried a report which stated that in the city of Mosul, Iraq; *Da'esh* actively targeted children forcing them to fight (PBS: 2015), participate in extra judicial killings and subjected them to video footage of the organisations brutality at designated media points across the city (Trew: 2018). However, contrary to the depictions of utopia within the volumes of *Dabiq*, child participation in *Da'esh's* jihad was not at all joyful. Section 7.4.1 above has detailed how *Da'esh* used children as battlefield pawns for the purposes of furthering their organisational objectives.

Many children were forced to serve as soldiers of the caliphate and by the age of 16 *Da'esh* obligated national service in the caliphate. Refusal to do so brought dire consequences as evident in the case of 14 year old Omar whose hand and foot were cut off because he refused to fight for *Da'esh*. They used his public punishment as an example of what would happen to others who refused to fight for them (PBS: 2015). So as much as *Da'esh* used the term 'education' when relating jihad to what they refer to as the 'Cubs of the Islamic State' the reality from the ground is in stark contrast to the utopic battle images they present. *Da'esh* exposed children to the oppressive brutality of their regime for several years. They indoctrinated children with their monolithic worldview and forced from them compliance against the threat of corporal punishment. The accumulative impact of these individual factors has left children in a state of emotional and psychological depravity. This became evident in a report carried by the Telegraph regarding the efforts of organisations across Iraq who were attempting to rehabilitate young children impacted by *Da'esh's* rule. The report stated that young children demonstrated aggression and violence whilst others would still sing *Da'esh's nasheeds* and religious songs praising the 'Islamic State'. Older children refused to participate in activities such as football and crafts stating that they were *ḥarām* (forbidden) (Ensor: 2018). When these considerations are measured against the numbers of children who have been impacted by *Da'esh's* rule the profoundness of the consideration becomes apparent. According to the New York Times approximately 20,000 children have been orphaned by *Da'esh* (Coker: 2018); this is in addition to the countless other children who have lived under their rule, believed in their ideology, supported them and fought for them.

Relating these considerations back to the statement made in *Dabiq* regarding Muslim dignity, the obvious question is how have they afforded dignity to these children? The children who have been orphaned and ostracised due to social stigma as well as the children who have been

exposed to brutality, warfare and conflict. The superlative narratives within *Dabiq* when measured against the lived reality of these children highlights (once again) the disconnect between *Dabiq's* narratives *Da'esh's* operations. It also demonstrates the operational focus within *Dabiq's* strategic narratives to set in position the future generations of their militancy. It is unknown (as *Dabiq* does not discuss the matter in detail) whether the children who were exposed to *Da'esh's* educational system gained an understanding of the broader faith context that was argued in chapter 4. But the manner in which *Dabiq* has referenced children within its publications and the manner in which *Da'esh* utilised them operationally is further evidence of *Da'esh's* tactical temporal focus. It is certainly questionable as to whether *Da'esh* had the overall theological wellbeing of these children in mind whilst they were indoctrinating them and teaching them to fight. It is also questionable whether the principle focus for these children was the abstract understanding of accountability in the metaphysical realm. However, despite the ambiguity in this area, it is clear how central children have been (and will continue to remain) in the continuity of *Da'esh's* militancy.

7.4.2.1.2 Ensuring the Continuity of Jihad: *Da'esh's* Use of Women.

Da'esh's use of women served a far more intricate purpose than their use of children. The manner in which *Da'esh* legislated for the provision of slavery within its 'state', for example the issuance of slave ID cards, recording 'master' details and setting prices for slave sales (Cohen: 2017) is evidence that their approach to slavery was not a reactionary one rather it was embedded within their organisational framework. As far as *Da'esh* were concerned, the practice of sexual servitude to a slave 'master' was a bonafide religious practice established in Islamic jurisprudence. *Da'esh* considered their practices to be far removed from the illegality of rape charges that were levied against them. They took time to evidence the legitimacy of their practices in *Dabiq* (Dabiq, 2014, vol.2, pp 26; Dabiq, 2014, vol.4, pp 14)

thereby positioning slavery and sexual servitude as religiously justifiable. Indeed, the label of sexual servitude as a descriptor of *Da'esh's* female enslavement campaign is arguably a superficial assessment of more sinister intent.

Da'esh enslaved thousands of Yazidi women who were then bought and sold for the purposes of domestic servitude and sexual gratification. The United Nations Commission of Inquiry in Syria confirmed these reports adding that Yazidi women were also 'gifted' among *Da'esh* fighters; meaning that one fighter would pass his slave woman around for other fighters to use (OHCHR: 2016). The Human Rights Council (HRC) issued a report in 2016 detailing accounts of Yazidi women who were held captive by *Da'esh*. Some Yazidi women stated that they had been given birth control pills in order to prevent pregnancies. However, others stated that they received no such measures and as a result pregnancies were inevitable (Human Rights Council, 2016, pp 15). This 'inevitability' was the product of focused intent by *Da'esh* to expand their forces (*ibid*, pp 27). As with the use of child soldiers, rape as an institutionalised weapon of militancy during the course of war and conflict is not a new practice exclusive with *Da'esh*. Card (1991) makes reference to the 'institution' of rape as a structured mechanism of punitive subjugation in conflict settings (Card, 1991, pp 302-303). Fisher (1996) argues that the occupation of wombs, as an intended consequence of rape during warfare and conflict, is a strategic action of genocidal drive (Fisher, 1996, pp 11, 93, 106-111).

However, it is necessary to highlight the complexities of determining how many children were actually fathered by *Da'esh* fighters to enslaved Yazidi women. Primarily this was due to cultural sensitivities within the Yazidi community (Hendawi *et al*: 2018). The social and cultural stigma was so profound that many women simply would not have come forward to highlight what happened to them or their offspring. Furthermore, a 2016 HRC report which detailed that affiliation to Yazidism is contingent upon parental lineage to the faith, one

cannot be converted in to the Yazidi faith (Human Rights Council, 2016, pp 15). So although these children have Yazidi heritage from their mother's side they are denied affiliation to the faith and culture by virtue of their circumstance. Consequently hundreds of children who were regarded as illegitimate *Da'eshi* babies were abandoned (wilfully or otherwise) at orphanage centres across Syria and Iraq (Hendawi *et al*: 2018). In accordance with local law these children were subsequently considered Muslim (Hendawi *et al*: 2018) meaning they now had a dual affinity to *Da'esh*; one in the form of their parental lineage and second in the form of the faith they were ascribed. In theory *Da'esh's* use of Yazidi women appears to be no different to the forced impregnation of Muslim women during the Bosnian genocide as related by Fisher (1996). Serbian soldiers impregnated their victims in the belief that the children born as a result of this practice would be Serbian instead of Bosnian (Fisher, 1996, pp 116). Although *Dabiq* is not explicit in referencing this intent there is an inescapable reality that scores of children were fathered by *Da'esh* fighters to mothers from a religious community who would never accept their 'illegitimate' offspring. So there is credible room to argue that *Da'esh's* sexual slavery campaign was intended as a platform to create the numbers needed to continue their militancy in to future generations. *Dabiq* made it clear that if *Da'esh* failed to conquer Rome and enslave European women and children then their children and grandchildren would perform this task (Dabiq, 2014, vol.4, pp 05). *Dabiq's* narratives and *Da'esh's* operational practice suggests that this is something that they did not leave to chance. However, this is not at all to suggest that somehow *Da'esh's* ideology is biologically hereditary and that these children will automatically turn in to militant *Islamists*. To the contrary, as the previous sections have detailed, *Da'esh* actively destroyed communal infrastructure across Syria and Iraq as part of their *tawaḥḥush* campaigns. They sought to create environments that are wholly conducive to militancy and it is in these environments that *Da'esh's* offspring have been born, raised and are now forced to live. The assertion

made here is that *Da'esh* developed the practice of *tawaḥḥush* from state level application to individual level application through an accumulation of deprivations; from state level down to individual level in which a persons' social, religious, emotional and psychological dimensions have been critically affected.

Furthermore, outside of practice of sexual slavery, *Da'esh* also undertook a comprehensive recruitment campaign focusing on women. The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR) states that 4,761 women made the journey to the Islamic State between 2013 and 2018; many of whom took their children with them whilst many others fell pregnant in the 'caliphate'. In March 2016 The Independent carried a report commissioned by the Quilliam Foundation which stated that approximately 31,000 women in the 'Islamic State' were pregnant. They argued that *Da'esh* were giving birth to the next generation of terrorists as they not only indoctrinated young children whom the caliphate had taken custody of but also fathered 'blank slates' for the purposes of their jihad. Furthermore, the ICSR suggested that approximately 730 infants were born in the 'Islamic State' between 2013 and 2018 (ICSR: no date): on average that equates to approximately 1 child born every 3 days. In February 2019 the International Observatory for Human Rights carried a report suggesting that approximately 700 children born to foreign fighters were still in Syria whereas Save the Children claim to have discovered over 2,500 children from 30 different countries in 3 refugee camps alone (Svensson: 2019). It therefore becomes evident that *Da'esh's* engagement with women (whether as sex slaves or as those emigrating in to the caliphate) was for a strategic purpose and that was the continuity of their jihad. *Dabiq's* content reflects this and communicates the imperative of *Da'esh's* organisational objectives.

These sections sought to establish *Da'esh's* practice of *tawaḥḥush* and how they have adapted it in order to embed generational 'savagery' that is conducive to their organisational objectives. The contexts in which they operated have been decimated. The communities

affected by their jihad have been relegated in to a long-term state of deprivation and in to these environments hundreds of children have been born who are fathered by *Da'esh's* fighters and are now stigmatised, outcast and isolated. The accumulation of these realities is what I refer to as *tawaḥḥush al-fard* (individual savagery).

These sections (7.4.1 to 7.4.2.1.2) have demonstrated how *Da'esh* has worked to achieve *tawaḥḥush al-fard* by focusing on the three essential components listed at the opening of section 7.4.1. They were listed:

  i.   Numbers
 ii.   Ideology and
iii.   Environment.

Da'esh catered for numbers through an active recruitment campaign but also by fathering children from women they enslaved and invited in to the caliphate. They embedded their militant ideology throughout the social constructs of Syria and Iraq; through school curriculums, by exposing individuals to it and compelling people to participate in it. Whilst these efforts were underway, *Da'esh's* continual engagement in militancy and *tawaḥḥush* created widespread social deprivation through the active destruction of infrastructure and expansion of their 'jihad' campaigns. Furthermore, nearly everyone who has been affected by *Da'esh's* rule has and perhaps will continue to experience emotional, psychological and religious trauma. The sum of these outcomes produces a context in which militancy can thrive; one where people are sufficiently broken and state structures damaged to the point *Da'esh's* indoctrinated ideology can flourish. It is evidence in support of *Da'esh's* conceptual development of *tawaḥḥush ^from state level application to individual level application – tawaḥḥush al-fard.* Crucially the application of this practice challenges

Dabiq's narrative of preserving Muslim dignity; rather they have created multiple degrees of deprivation.

The following section will provide a summary of this chapter.

7.5 Summary.

This chapter set out to understand the consequences of *Dabiq's* theological propositions on the construct of *ʿibādah*, 'reality' of Islam and temporal impact of *Da'esh's* jihad.

Contrary to the conceptual framework that was established in chapters 4 and 5, *Dabiq's* theological propositioning gives primacy to militancy as the central defining characteristic of Islam. Military jihad defines the existence of humankind in *Dabiq's* worldview and to a degree this is understandable as on the surface the publication is the journal of a militant organisation. However, as established in chapter 6, *Dabiq* is not engaging exclusively in militancy rather it firmly positions itself in the theological domain and promotes its activities as *ʿibādah*. In this regard, there is very little consideration, both textually within the volumes of *Dabiq* or throughout *Da'esh's* organisational practices which evidences a regard for *nafs* consciousness. There is a disregard within its volumes to ensure that human efforts seek the primacy of Allah in all actions undertaken as expressions of *ʿibādah*. In fact, *Dabiq* advocates and promotes competing temporal interests in the performance of military jihad and as we have understood in the previous chapters such interests renders the theological value of *ʿibādah* as null and void. If indeed *Dabiq* was genuinely working in the theological space, then with all of the considerations raised in the previous chapters regarding *Da'esh's* support base, should a fundamental aspect of religious safeguarding (in the form of a greater focus on *taqwāʾ* and the jihad *al-nafs*) not have been catered for more comprehensively throughout the 15 volumes of their flagship publication which spread across a period of

almost two years? Thus what credence can be afforded to *Dabiq's* claims of jihad and *ʿibādah* when the very primacy of Allah's pleasure is absent in its volumes and seemingly disregarded from *Da'esh's* operations.

This in turn brings in to question *Da'esh's* overall motives in advocating jihad as an act of *ʿibādah* in the establishment of *tawḥīd*. Contrary to their claims, *Da'esh* has failed to restore Muslim dignity, might, rights and leadership whilst unifying the Muslim nation under one banner for one goal (Dabiq, 2014, vol.1 pp 07). Rather the temporal impact of their 'jihad' has scattered Muslim communities across the world and reduced them to a life as refugees who are dependent upon aid and humanitarian assistance. It has orphaned thousands of children who have been exposed to the brutality of war, conflict and destruction ever since they were born. Furthermore, it has made hundreds of children the point of hostility for no other reason but the stigma they carry of parental lineage. These children have been isolated and ostracised; removed from any understanding of a 'normal' childhood. Beyond the borders of Iraq and Syria, *Da'esh's* jihad has made Muslim communities in the European and 'western' contexts targets of anti-Muslim, anti-Islam and Islamophobic hate crime as well as institutionalised Islamophobia.

The temporal impact of *Da'esh's* jihad has been profound. Their practice of *tawaḥḥush* and development of *tawaḥḥush al-fard*, alongside the minimal thematic focus on the *nafs* in *Dabiq*, has arguably created a gateway for the application of *nafs* laden practices presented as *ʿibādah*. Be that the application of indiscriminate violence positioned as military jihad, the enslavement and rape of women or utilising children as military tools of war; the absence of 'self' consciousness is indicative of the absence of Allah in their efforts. Furthermore, *Da'esh's* militancy has denigrated the personal, societal and faith related securities that once existed across Syria and Iraq (with full acceptance that both contexts had their respective issues prior to *Da'esh's* prominence). *Dabiq's* narrative and *Da'esh's modus operandi*

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wholly supports the assertions made by el-Fadl (2007) who stated that puritanical practitioners are unaffected by the impact or consequence of their actions (El-Fadl, 2007, pp 125-141).

The considerations raised in this summary will be addressed in greater detail in the thesis conclusion.

8.0 CONCLUSION.

8.1 Conclusion: Answering the Research Question.

This thesis set out to better understand *Da'esh's* ultimate theological goal(s). In doing so it filled the gap in current literature on militant *Islamist* organisations which called for more focused engagement with the theological perspective: Colas (2016); Spier (2018); Welch (2018); Mansouri & Keskin (2018); Spier (2018). However, at the conclusion of this research *Da'esh's* overall theological ambition(s) remain unclear and ambiguous. Indeed the examination of *Dabiq* revealed reveals two distinct areas of consideration. One relates to the organisation itself; the macro body that is *Da'esh*. The second relates to the individual supporters of *Da'esh*; the micro components who make up its numbers. As the macro organisation *Da'esh* presents very clear and distinct theological intent. They exist to establish a caliphate in order to realise absolute *tawḥīd* in this temporal world. This ambition is the defining characteristic of *Da'esh's* narrative and across the 15 volumes of *Dabiq* they advocate for the establishment, expansion and preservation of an 'Islamic State'.

In order to establish religious legitimacy *Da'esh* littered the volumes of *Dabiq* with references from the Quran, hadith and accepted Sunni Muslim scholars. They further attempted to embed their position through *Dabiq's* iconography and organisational religious symbolisms. To a degree they were successful in convincing people that they were a religiously bonafide operation as thousands of Sunni Muslims from across the world travelled in support of their campaign. However, as Jurgensmeyer (2018) highlighted and as evidenced in this study, simply because narratives are layered in theological reference doesn't make it theological or 'religious'. The fractures within *Dabiq's* volumes and its disconnect from *Da'esh's* operational practice has proven this statement.

However in order to make such a determination it was necessary to have an understanding of 'mainstream' and 'normative' Islam that other research studies have made reference to but not defined. Thus chapters 4 and 5 argued a conceptual framework against which *Dabiq's* theological content was examined. Chapters 6 and 7 detailed the inherent flaws with *Dabiq's* theological proposition of Islam and *Da'esh's* expression of military jihad. The investigation revealed that *Da'esh* have reconfigured the dynamics of *tawḥīd* and *ʿibādah* to construct a reality of religious existence that is principled upon war, conflict and bloodshed. According to *Da'esh's* worldview the essence of faith and belief cannot be conceived unless it is validated by military jihad. However, *Da'esh's* proposition of *tawḥīd* was subject to irreconcilable complications amid the sliding scale of subjectivity which could invalidate belief in Allah. So even whilst observing all of the tenets of faith, Islam, pledging allegiance to the caliph and fighting jihad in the path of Allah it was still possible to render the faith of an individual null and void based upon some material action or inaction.

Furthermore, *Da'esh's* understanding and application of jihad sits in contradiction to the characteristics of *ʿibādah* as established by the conceptual framework. In *Da'esh's* custody, jihad is an entirely destructive tool with no apparent beneficial outcome in the temporal realm. It permits the indiscriminate killing of innocent people and facilitates the practice of *tawaḥḥush* against the very communities whom *Da'esh* claimed to be fighting for; Sunni Muslims. Of course all of this is theologically justified across the volumes of *Dabiq* and *Da'esh's* expression of *ʿibādah* in this vein supports the claims made by Weiss & Hassan (2006) and Ali (2018) who argued that *Da'esh* had their own understanding of Islam.

The credibility of *Da'esh's* theological propositions is further compounded by their overwhelming absence of focus on the 'essence' of *ʿibādah*. *Taqwāʾ* and the jihad *al-nafs* were established in the conceptual framework as the underpinning constructs for the theological validity of temporal acts of worship. Indeed this was necessary in order to

address the impending theological accountability which Sunni Muslims believe is to unfold in the metaphysical realm. However, *Dabiq's* primary focus was on warfare and conflict in the temporal realm and in order to secure their organisational goals they promoted and adopted practices that contravened the theological integrity of ʿibādah. Thus when jihad is not an expression of ʿibādah, it is simply material violence in the temporal realm that is disconnected from theological value and merit in the metaphysical realm.

However, despite these theological difficulties, as an organisation *Da'esh* presented and argued their theological case with a great deal of clarity, conviction and vigour. They argued their position with an abundance of reference from the Quran and hadith as well as classical Sunni Muslim scholars from the prophet Muhammad's time, the medieval and contemporary periods. By doing so they fought to position themselves firmly within the camp of a theologically driven movement thereby validating the jurisprudential examinations conducted by el-Badawy *et al* (2015), Welch (2018) and Wiktorowicz (2018). Furthermore, their theological positioning as an organisation alongside the manner in which they operated offers a great deal of currency to the arguments presented by Cook (2005), Phares (2005) and Rubenstein (2010) who deliberated the essentialist nature of jihad as expansionist violence. *Da'esh* were wholly aggressive in their military operations and actively dismissed all arguments which removed jihad from connotations of violence. They wanted to expand and even titled one of their publications of *Dabiq* 'Remaining and Expanding'. They explicitly rebuked all challenges against the manner in which they performed their 'jihad' even if that challenge was made by their co-jihadists. Furthermore they distanced themselves from a pacifist approach and dismissed all arguments which suggested utilising the principles of faith adopted during the Meccan period of Islam as theologically abrogated. So for all intents and purposes *Dabiq's* theological proposition moved forward with a great deal of clarity: that

being the establishment of a caliphate.   In doing so *Dabiq* sits squarely in the camp of those

who argue jihad to be a tool of belligerent conquest.

In addition, *Da'esh's* operating model supports Berman's (2003) assertion that revolutionary

Islamism is a product of the declining efficacy of nation states (Berman, 2003, pp 257-258).

Although this 'sate' inefficacy is engineered by *Da'esh* themselves through their *tawaḥḥush*

campaigns so that they can create social instability in order to decay state infrastructure and

legitimacy. With it being so they engineer the very civil conflict that Crenshaw (2017) makes

reference to (Crenshaw, 2017, pp 59). Furthermore, as a result of their *tawaḥḥush* operations

Da'esh, to a certain extent, expose themselves to the direct impact of their own militancy.

Although this takes various forms, for example suicide missions, being the subject of

retaliatory attacks by state and non state operators and the desired consequence of living in a

broken context; they share the lived experiences of depravity with their fellow Muslims. By

doing so they create the very narrative of collective suffering that was referred to by

Crenshaw (1981), Marranci (2006), Mustafa (2013) and Spier (2018). They use this image,

which is constructed through self induced depravity, as currency to argue that they are

fighting oppression and tyranny. They position the suffering of Muslims in Syria and Iraq as

a collective torment in which they are also a part and for which jihad is presented as the

absolute solution; hence a rallying call to Muslims all across the world to fight the

'oppressors'. This global rallying call positions *Da'esh* firmly in the camp of the 'global'

Islamist movements as alluded to by Mozaffari (2007). *Da'esh* rejects the notion that an

'Islamic State' should be confined to the contexts of Syria and Iraq, rather they have a clear

organisational goal of spreading their jihad in to Europe and specifically conquering Rome.

In addition to being a transnational movement, *Da'esh* are also 'trans-continuum' meaning

that they have actively engineered an environment in which future militancy can thrive.

Da'esh believed, and still do, that they will conquer Europe; not necessarily as the

organisation that existed between 2014 and 2019 but as the ideological movement that gained mass support and notoriety.

The sum of discussions thus far regarding *Da'esh* as an organisation is that they are nothing new. Their terrorism, operations, methodology and overarching motivations are relatable to any organisation or movement which dates back to the pre enlightenment period. As a terrorist organisation *Da'esh's* terrorism is a product of multiple factors and this wholly supports the research conducted by Rapoport (1984); Jurgensmeyer (2003) and Hoffman (2017) who argue precisely this point regarding *Islamist* terrorist organisations. So as an organisation they are absolutely clear in their identity, positioning, direction and theological mandate. However, this is where the theological clarity ends as the considerations for the individual supporters of *Da'esh* at a micro level become much less clear and much more ambiguous. This understanding of the micro dimension has only been possible by embracing the methodological approaches advocated by Asad (1994),Cavanaugh (2009), Shakman-Hurd (2015) and Jurgensmeyer (2018). The clinical separation of religion, faith and belief from mainstream 'political' discussions is not as clinical as historical (post secular) research has suggested. As a consequence this research study lends itself to the growing body of literature that seeks to understand these sorts of phenomena from an insider perspective. In attempting to do so, this investigation found that *Dabiq* struggles to define the overall theological objective for those who support their movement. It fails to define the role of the individual operators within the network who propel the organisation toward establishing *tawḥīd* in this temporal realm. What are their ultimate theological objectives beyond the fulfilment of an assumed religious duty and responsibility? *Dabiq's* focus is almost exclusively on temporal outcomes: the 'here and now'. This is despite the metaphysical or 'other worldly' origins that their declared theological ambition is rooted in; being the establishment of absolute *tawḥīd*. Ironically, at micro level *Dabiq* has removed the centrality of Allah and His pleasure from

their overall theological proposition; despite *tawḥīd* being the embodiment of His divinity. Instead they have layered their narratives with theological references so individual operators and supporters pursue the organisations temporal objectives that serve their tactical strategy, as detailed in chapter 6. This finding is the very embodiment of Jurgensmeyer's (2018) contention to challenge the acceptability of self attributed labels adopted by militant organisations. It also supports the research conducted by Jacoby (2019) which sets the preliminary foundations for greater contextual engagement with the theological propositions of militant *Islamist* organisations. These developments are fundamentally necessary to redress the balance of how theological and ideological terrorism is presented and understood in academic literature. It also challenges the credibility of terms like 'jihadism' as introduced by Crenshaw (2017); as there simply cannot be conceptualisation of military jihad with the absence of Allah's centrality in such an endeavour.

This assertion is supported by the principle established in chapter 4; that the faith proposition in Sunni Islam is based upon accountability in the afterlife. The temporal realm in which material actions are conceived is connected to the metaphysical realm by virtue of belief which must necessarily be exclusively for Allah. Thereafter, the human experience in the temporal realm resonates in the hereafter; the decreed court of Allah, where His answerable creation will be judged according to the responsibilities associated with *ʿibādah*. Whether the resonance of acts of worship in the metaphysical realm leads to a positive outcome is entirely a product of individual intent: all actions presented as 'worship' must be exclusively for His sake. As established in chapter 5, individual intent is regulated by the jihad *al-nafs* and *taqwāʾ*. These mechanisms are the essential underpinnings of all faith practice in accordance with Sunni Islam and military jihad is no exception. But this aspect of theological focus is greatly ignored by *Dabiq*. *Dabiq* disconnects a section of its intended audience from an understanding that temporal actions are framed within a dynamic of metaphysical

consequence, judgement and accountability. The 'bigger picture' or wider theological context in which temporal human experiences are situated (as detailed in chapter 4) is all but disregarded. This leaves *Da'esh's* fighters, supporters and advocates theologically vulnerable in the most indicting manner. When the disparate and varied backgrounds of *Da'esh's* support base is taken in to account (as detailed in chapter 6) *Dabiq's* absence of direction and support in this area is even more perplexing. For instance, do their fighters understand the critical importance of religious sincerity in the preservation of theological integrity? How is this communicated, achieved and ensured in application at an individual level when the flagship publication for the organisation is largely silent on the matter? Furthermore, in the absence of such direction how do *Da'esh's* fighters safeguard their theological validity from the lures of their *nafs*, influence of *Sahyṭān* or a test of faith from Allah? Were, or are their supporters able to detect deviations within their intentions, adjust them to realign with theological credibility or desist actions if they were unable to? The evident response to these considerations from academic literature is no and this where our understanding of *Da'esh's* jihad diverges from and makes challenge to the assessments of Cook (2005), Phares (2005) and Rubenstein (2010) referred to above. *Da'esh's* obsession with conflict and warfare at the expense of the 'essence' of *ʿibādah* leads to the assertion that *Da'esh* was more concerned with organisational progress and development in the temporal domain as opposed to the theological safeguarding and wellbeing of their supporters in the metaphysical domain.

For example, the financial motivations for some individuals who joined *Da'esh* have been commented upon by Lister (2015); Atwan (2015) and Weiss & Hassan (2016). Atwan (2015) records an account of British jihadi Abu Baraa al-Hindi who stated that there is no cure for depression the like honour of coming for jihad (Atwan, 2015, pp 177-178). So what theological validity remains in actions which remove the exclusivity of Allah's pleasure and are contaminated by temporal self interests? As detailed in section 5.2 of chapter 5, the

prophet Muhammad stated that the metaphysical and spiritual consequences of such a contamination are catastrophic as such a '*mujāhid*' will be condemned to hell due to his insincere intentions. Thus irrespective of *Dabiq's* superfluous narratives and theological references this sort of 'jihad' is reduced to nothing more than temporal violence that is removed from the designation, title and privilege of *'ibādah*. It is a 'this worldly' act of violence disconnected from theological merit and reward in the afterlife. So irrespective of *Da'esh's* presentation of their militancy as theologically bonafide 'jihad' at a macro level, a great deal of theological ambiguity remains regarding their micro level actors. What is s/he fighting for and is it even religious?

The implications of such a statement are profound. Firstly, this challenges the assertions made by Cook (2005), Phares (2005) and Rubenstein (2010) mentioned above and demonstrates that *Da'esh's* appropriation of theological references from the Quran and hadith does not theologically legitimise the claimed jihad of their advocates (as suggested by Jurgensmeyer (2018) and Jacoby (2019) referred to above). Rather it is the ill appropriation of a religious construct, using theological stimuli, for temporal self interests; albeit at an organisational level. This sentiment supports Ali's (2018) position who states that *Da'esh* has taken a theological construct in the form of jihad and turned it in to a political weapon (Ali, 2018, pp 55). Secondly, as much as *Da'esh* impresses the need of a caliphate to rectify the ills within the Muslim world, across the volumes of *Dabiq* they have abandoned attention to the underpinning principle which legitimises any action in its formation (that principle being the jihad *al-nafs* and *taqwā'*). In pursuit of temporal objectives, *Da'esh* has reduced the primacy of Allah as the ultimate purpose of human endeavour (Faruqi: 2005) to a position that is subordinate to their organisational goals. And this is overwhelmingly evident in the manner in which *Da'esh* function and operate.

For example, *Da'esh* utilises a brutality that is unpalatable even amongst other militant *Islamist* organisations within the regions of Syria and Iraq. They seem to function upon the premise that the end justifies the means. With it doing so they express a flagrant disregard for the sanctity of life in Islam and demonstrate little concern for religious culpability in the metaphysical domain of recklessly taking life. This sense of religious impunity and nonchalant arrogance suggests that *Da'esh* subsume the theological validity of individual actors at a micro level within the claim of religious legitimacy made by *Da'esh* at the macro level. So irrespective of whether the individual fighters are aligned to theological compliance, as long as they are fighting for the caliphate then everything will eventually workout fine. Of course *Da'esh* does not openly advocate this position within the volumes of *Dabiq* and indeed there is sparing content across its volumes which touches upon self awareness.

This disconnect between *Da'esh* as an organisation at a macro level and its supporters at a micro level is squarely a product of *Dabiq's* silence on the jihad *al-nafs* and primacy of *taqwā´*. Inevitably there will be some from among *Da'esh's* ranks who are genuinely seeking the pleasure of Allah. But there are also those who are not as well as those who have no understanding of the significance of this area and no idea on how to develop awareness of it. Yet in this state of self ambivalence they are called upon to perform military jihad and erect a caliphate that will fulfil a religious obligation, establish absolute *tawḥīd* in this temporal realm and restore the lost dignity of the Muslim Ummah. But theologically is any of this achievable? What I mean by this is that *Da'esh* argues a caliphate is necessary in order to establish absolute *tawḥīd* in this world. They further argue that the caliphate can only be established through military jihad, which as an act of worship requires sincerity of intention for theological legitimacy. Yet when the motivations of individuals performing *Da'esh's* jihad are *nafs* laden, conflicted and contradictory to the required theological mandate, how

credible is the outcome of their *tawḥīd* upon which the caliphate is built? This consideration raises profound questions regarding the status of *Da'esh's* 'Islamic State'. Are *Da'esh's* claims of a conceptual caliphate even fathomable when the 'Islamic State' has arguably been formed through nothing more than temporal violence and militancy? Unless of course there is an argument to suggest that absolute *tawḥīd* can be borne out of mechanisms that have no theological validity. Are *Da'esh's* macro level organisational ambitions legitimate in the presence of micro level fractures and dysfunctions? Is their 'jihad' simply a form of 'religious' nationalism in defence and expansion of their geographical territories and 'non' Islamic State? *Da'esh* have undeniably appropriated religious material, iconography, symbolism and narratives within their construct and as part of their identity. But is all of this, consciously or otherwise, simply a facade which is wholly removed from religious legitimacy and theological validity? These questions regarding *Da'esh* are a product of examining *Dabiq* through an 'insider' lens and its view reinforces the considerations raised by Jurgensmeyer (2018) and Jacoby (2019).

Da'esh as the macro organisation is made up of its micro level components: its support base in the form of *Da'esh's* ideologues, advocates and fighters. As the research investigation has detailed the intentions of some of *Da'esh's* support base has evidently been compromised. To what extent this spreads across the network is at the present moment unknown. Furthermore, with a support base of approximately 30-40,000 personnel at a given moment in time, it is arguably impossible from a research perspective to determine exactly the theological 'health' and sincerity of every single individual associated to the organisation. What is known however is that *Dabiq* offers little support in the areas of *taqwā'* and the jihad *al-nafs*. So even if individuals or the wider organisation were conscious of this consideration *Dabiq* does not provide the necessary support to address it. As a result, if the theological mandate of the organisation can be argued as legitimate, to what extent is it compromised by

the theological illegitimacy of its support base? This consideration is also relatable from the opposite perspective: is the theological legitimacy of micro level actors compromised by the theological illegitimacy of *Da'esh* as an organisation? But perhaps this level of intimate detail isn't necessary as the determination can be based upon the type and sort of organisation that *Da'esh* is. Their theological position is made clear by what they advocate, the manner in which they operate and their disregard for the concepts of the jihad *al-nafs* and *taqwā'* across the volumes of *Dabiq*. Their surface level engagement with theology is entirely framed upon the 'here and now'. How that theology relates to a life beyond this temporal realm is simply not a factor within their organisational narrative.

This research provides the necessary framework to understand the measure against which an endeavour can credibly be referred to as 'jihad'; irrespective of the theological references used to make that claim. This in turn forces researchers and academics to fully appreciate the theological dimension and consciously think about the labels that are being attributed to such organisations and movements. For example, Maher (2016) has offered a detailed theological examination of Salafi jihadism and challenged the conventional wisdom regarding militant *Islamist* movements who have historically been depicted as a single homogenous group. This research follows a similar trajectory to that of Maher's (2016) work by providing the necessary framework through which the diversity of jihad can be understood and the validity of its claims measured. Thus when individuals, groups or organisations are referred to as 'jihadists' then against which measure is that claim being validated? So just as Maher's (2016) research challenges the conventional wisdom on Salafism this research challenges the acceptance of the term jihad being attributed to anyone who makes it. This consideration is absolutely necessary as the labels ascribed to individual, groups, organisations and movements gives them currency and legitimacy. It also influences the manner in which researchers engage with such phenomena in a post enlightenment and 'secular' society. For

example how relevant are the theories presented by Rapoport (2001), Laqueur (2001) and Parker & Sitter (2016) regarding the fourth wave/strain of terrorism when the entire 'religious' element is under question?

Furthermore, this study has identified additional pathways of investigation regarding the study of *Islamist* militancy. Some of those pathways relate directly to *Da'esh* (as alluded to above in this section) and the narrative it presents across other forms of media communication; for example, its web pages, tweets, Facebook posts, online videos, subject interviews and interviews by its spokespersons. It also provides a definitive starting point for comparative studies of other militant *Islamist* organisations. For example, al-Qaeda, *Jabahat al-Nusar, Faylaq ash-Sham* etc. It provides a starting point to examine whether the theological propositions of militant *Islamist* organisations change across time and space; for example, have *Da'esh's* theological narratives changed from when it was operating as *Jamāʿat al-Tawhid wal Jihad*? Have there been any variations in their overarching narrative as the organisation developed, grew and amassed strength as well as when it was challenged, in decline and ultimately defeated? Are the theological propositions of other militant *Islamist* organisations in the same region any similar or different to those of *Da'esh*?

There are many more questions and avenues for research that develop from this investigation. However, perhaps the greatest contribution that this thesis makes is forcing a theological analysis of an organisation which has been dominated by post enlightenment and secular world perspectives. *Da'esh* demanded to be heard and seen as a theological movement with theological legitimacy operating for intended theological outcomes. Yet predominantly the examinations of *Da'esh* have been forced in to a paradigm of 'secular' politics. One in which the construct of faith is greatly diminished from the significance of intended organisational action. This is something that *Da'esh* and perhaps wider militant *Islamist* movements wholly reject. They need to be seen, heard and examined through the very same lens with which

they view the world and not solely in the image that secular modernity has created (Asad (1994); Cavanaugh (2009); Shakman-Hurd (2015)). The irony, however, in doing so is that *Da'esh* have exposed themselves as a movement focused on temporal political change. But it has necessarily taken a theological lens in order to establish that.

This PhD study positions researchers to better understand the phenomenon of *Islamist* militancy and in doing so it contributes to the rich and diverse intellectual heritage of 'terrorism' studies.

The following section will provide a summary of *Da'esh* as an operational organisation.

8.2 Conclusion: Summarising *Da'esh*.

'*Da'esh* is a (*a*) **conflicted and contradictory organisation focused on** (*b*) **temporal objectives** (*c*) **compromising theological validity and** (*d*) **ethereal success**'.

a. <u>Conflicted & Contradictory:</u> Conflict and contradiction permeates *Dabiq's* narrative and *Da'esh's* operation. *Da'esh* purport to work for the 'dignity' of Muslims yet disregard the sanctity of Muslim life. *Da'esh's* operations have been the very antithesis of the polemical narratives contained within *Dabiq* as those who have suffered the most have been the very people whom the caliphate was promoted to protect. This clash, between rhetoric and 'reality', is the embodiment of *Da'esh's* dichotomous ideology and the organisational self conflict that consumes it. *Da'esh* claim to have built a land of salvation for Muslims all over the world but in order to do so they have actively contributed to the deaths of hundreds and thousands of Muslims. Furthermore, they have wilfully displaced millions more across the landscapes of Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey; leaving them in states of abject poverty, absolute deprivation and hopeless desperation.

These fractures and disjoins are a direct consequence of how *Da'esh* interpret their spiritual reality within this temporal realm. *Da'esh* consider military jihad as the sole conduit toward the establishment and realisation of absolute *tawḥīd* which, in accordance to their world view, is embodied in the form of a caliphate. So all routes to Allah's pleasure and pathways to ethereal success must necessarily pass through this celestial embodiment of absolute *tawḥīd*. In being so, all theological efforts, acts of worship and indeed the notion of Islam itself are incomplete and ultimately redundant if *tawḥīd* is not established. And for *Da'esh* this is an entirely violent endeavour. War, conflict and militancy are *Da'esh's modus operandi* and their defining attributes. But these attributes are no mere discretionary undertakings; rather they are essentially associated with *Da'esh's* creed. Thus the very nature of 'existence' in *Da'esh's* theological offering is predicated upon conflict. They are so consumed by it that they have lost sight of the claims of 'dignity' and salvation they have made within the volumes of *Dabiq*. The caliphate must be established at all costs and it is a price that *Da'esh* are willing to pay even if that means working against their own mandate.

b. Focused on Temporal Objectives: *Dabiq's* primary focus is the temporal realm in which they seek to establish and maintain the caliphate. This recurring and perpetual narrative has wholly reduced the spiritual and theological dimension of military jihad as an act of worship. The appreciation that its performance in the temporal realm has a distinct and critical resonance in the metaphysical realm is simply not communicated with the same veracity as its temporal objectives. Although *Dabiq* layers its narratives with references from Quran, hadith and hyperbolic utopia of yesteryear; they are all temporally focused to support the organisations operational goals. To pledge allegiance to it, migrate towards it, import skills that will help sustain it and most importantly, to raise arms in support of it.

Da'esh's temporal focus is further evidenced in their ambition to conquer Rome. However, as the organisation that was operational between 2014 and 2019, they were themselves unable

to achieve this but ensured that the foundations were set for future generations to work toward this goal. Whether *Da'esh's* progeny will ever be effective in 'liberating' Rome is a matter of indifference. What is important here is the attention and focus that they placed upon ensuring the continuity of their 'jihad'. This temporal concern resulted in the development of their *tawaḥḥush* practice from state level application to individual person application; detailed in chapter 7 as *tawaḥḥush al-fard* (individual savagery). It has categorically undermined the rights to 'dignity' that Islam affords its subjects and that *Da'esh* purportedly were acting in support of. Furthermore, it has broken thousands of innocent individuals: women and children have been left psychologically damaged and emotionally traumatised in a context that is socially, economically, politically and religiously shattered. Thousands are the subject of persecution, exploitation, abuse and discrimination and will remain in a state of physical, emotional and psychological impoverishment for years to come. So in order to ensure the temporal continuity of their 'jihad' *Da'esh* have compromised the theological and spiritual considerations of the right to life and 'dignity' to which every Muslim is entitled. *Da'esh* have left generations in a condition that is ripe for militancy.

c. <u>Compromising Theological Validity:</u> This follows on from *Dabiq's* temporal focus. The volumes of *Dabiq* are overwhelmingly light in content that communicates the importance of the afterlife and the need to develop self rectification and *taqwā'* in preparation of it. As already stated in chapters 3, 6 and 7, there is every possibility that *Da'esh* may have catered for this spiritual need in some other format. However, as *Da'esh's* flagship publication one would expect to find it in greater detail across the volumes of *Dabiq*; especially as the publication produced 15 volumes over a two year period in several languages.

Furthermore, the multiple degrees of deprivation engineered by *Da'esh* has compelled individuals to raise arms not in the interests of Islam nor for the pleasure for Allah but rather in pursuit of temporal interests. For example, *Da'esh's tawaḥḥush* operations in Iraq

damaged the local contexts to such an extent that individuals laid Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) for *Da'esh* simply to feed their families. *Da'esh* created an environment of deprivation causing people to support their jihad as there were limited alternative means of income. So not only was the theological validity of temporal actions compromised, *Da'esh* actively usurped the very sincerity of intentions that were necessary to validate their militancy as an expression of jihad. This was evidenced in al-Maqidsi's statement who questioned the 'purity' of contemporary jihadi efforts suggesting that a 'sincere' jihad with strategic focus has been rare (Wagemakers, 2011, pp 149-150).

d. <u>Ethereal Success:</u> As established in chapters 4 and 5 the absolute measure of ethereal success is the acquisition of paradise. This rests within Allah's pleasure which itself is a product of *taqwā'* and the jihad *al-nafs*. The details offered throughout this thesis have demonstrated *Da'esh's* inherent failure in this area. The absence of self focus across the volumes of *Dabiq*, its contradictory narratives, conflicting operational practices and disproportionate focus on temporal endeavours has compromised the pathways to ethereal success for its proponents. It is their disregard of metaphysical consequence through which they are able to justify the use of disabled girls as IED's and infant children as live human bait. It validates practices of gang rape, burning prisoners alive, exposing children to beheadings, killing entire families who are attempting to flee a warzone and amputating the limbs of children who do not fight for their cause.

These outcomes are a product of *Da'esh's* wholly *nafs* ridden agenda to establish their rule and (towards the end of their reign) desperately retain their territory. As a result, *Da'esh* have not only compromised the theological integrity of their actions but also the prospect of ethereal success and salvation for their proponents. One cannot say with any degree of certainty whether paradise has eluded any of *Da'esh's* fighters and advocates. From a theological position that is a judgemental privilege which is exclusively the right of Allah.

However in accordance with the conceptual framework established in this thesis, and by all temporal measures, *Da'esh's* absence of self focus has reduced the primacy of Allah to a mere afterthought. It has taken the pinnacle of faith practice in the form of military jihad and reduced it to a construct that is conceptually no different to areligious, political guerrilla warfare. There is a reason why the jihad *al-nafs* and *taqwā'* are so important. They are the essence of *'ibādah*: the cognitive regulators of deviant human emotional and intellectual impulses. There is indeed a truth within the statement that jihad is the reality of Islam, but it is not the jihad that *Da'esh* advocate, it is the jihad *al-nafs*.

8.3 Research Impact.

The impact of this research investigation in the academic arena has been detailed above in section 7.1 and 7.2. It makes a distinct contribution to the field of terrorism studies and adds to the wealth of literature which exists on militant *Islamist* movements and organisations.

However, the research findings of this study also relate to discussions on public policy and intervention programmes. For instance:

- Informing the learning and development of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) practitioners.

- Supporting the development of preventative 'extremism' programmes in the United Kingdom and abroad.

- Developing theological safeguarding programmes for children and vulnerable persons across the Middle East who have been impacted by *Da'esh's* ideology.

- Developing contextualisation programmes for UK *madrasahs'* (traditional seminaries dedicated to the learning of classical Islam) to support the learning and enrichment of future clerics.

Some of these pathways are already being explored. For example, discussions are ongoing with the Foreign & Commonwealth Office and International Non Governmental Organisations regarding the development of a Theological Safeguarding programme for children and vulnerable persons in IDP camps across Syria. Such a programme has the potential to expand beyond Syria in to Iraq and indeed in to regions like Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey where millions of displaced persons are currently housed. Furthermore, some of the research outcomes of this thesis have been shared with Counter Terrorism Policing networks across the United Kingdom. As a result it has facilitated a better understanding of militant *Islamism* among counter terrorism practitioners.

8.4 Research Limitations.

The methodological considerations associated with this research have been detailed in chapter 3: Research Methodology. The greatest consideration relates to the scope of this investigation which attempts to understand *Da'esh's* theological proposition based upon one publication; *Dabiq*. Although *Dabiq* was both comprehensive, in that it consisted of 15 volumes over a 2 year period, as well as consistent in that it was released on average every 6 weeks; it was nevertheless but one iteration of the organisations narrative. Due to time constraints and in order to keep the research pool manageable other media forms such as twitter posts, Facebook posts and online interviews were purposefully omitted from the investigation. The consequence of such an approach, as highlighted in section 3.4 of chapter 3, is that this investigation is by no means absolute. Rather its findings have led to the formation of a hypothesis which can be tested by further research using the methodology adopted in this study but including data samples that were omitted in this investigation.

In addition to the scope of the study and the research samples, one observation that became apparent from analysing *Dabiq* was that it is dominated by the male voice. With the

exception of a few segments across a handful of volumes of *Dabiq*, the theological

proposition is one crafted and presented by men. How much of this relates to *Da'esh's*

female support base is unknown. Similarly, *Dabiq* was authored at the height of *Da'esh's*

reign. It was a tool for communicating its 'victories' and arguably subduing its failures as the

organisation faced the world at large. So how much of the content within *Dabiq* is an

accurate reflection of *Da'esh's* ideology compared to hyperbolic bravado and tactical

imperatives is also a point of consideration. Indeed *Da'esh* operates on the principle that

'jihad is deception' so there is every possibility that *Dabiq* (in part or in whole) was authored

in order to deceive a section of its intended audience. This is certainly a valid consideration

when reflecting upon how *Da'esh* have operated in compromising and wilfully sacrificing the

very people they claimed to protect. However, for the purposes of this study, the publication

was taken *prima facie* as the official word of the organisation. It provided a definitive

starting point for the research utilising research samples that were 'safe', accessible and

manageable.

These considerations have a direct impact upon research validity. As detailed in section 3.2.4

of chapter 3, the number of *Dabiq's* volumes coupled with the time it ran for offered a form

of *pseudo* triangulation of the research findings. There was a degree of consistency across

the theological proposition of all the volumes contained within the series. In fact, as detailed

in chapter 6, *Da'esh's* theological engagement in *Dabiq* increased as they lost territory and

faced difficulties.

However, these limitations can be overcome by further research on *Da'esh's* other media and

communications platforms utilising the same conceptual framework as this study.

Furthermore, as the dust settles on *Da'esh's* demise and their supporters and fighters are

either repatriated to their native countries or managed in their respective contexts, future

opportunities may arise for subject interviews. These will provide first had accounts of

individuals directly affiliated to the organisation and enable researchers to better dissect the theological question. It will also provide an opportunity to garner a better understanding of the female perspective from *Da'esh's* 'support base' as the vast number of detainees currently within displacement camps are women and children.

Thus despite the research limitations detailed in this section and in chapter 3, this study provides a definitive starting point for further investigation and research.

8.5 Closing Statement.

Dabiq shapes a reality that is in contravention of normative and mainstream Sunni Islam. That is a statement that can now be made and better understood as the points of divergence are clearer. *Dabiq* insists on a reality for Allah's answerable creation that is rooted in violence. It defines *Da'esh's* reason for being and permeates across their publications as well as their actions. *Dabiq's* theological worldview is temporally focused despite being theologically layered. With it being so *Da'esh's* militancy and vision to (re)establish the caliphate and conquer Rome will remain unrelenting; irrespective of the operational defeats they experience.

APPENDIX 1.

As detailed in chapter 3: Research Methodology, 'selective' coding was utilised to identify themes within *Dabiq* which fed in to a 'core category' that was established in the conceptual framework chapters. The codes were classified in to two distinct categories; direct and indirect, from which the themes were identified. A 'line by line' reading of *Dabiq* provided the opportunity to fully engage with the text and more accurately decipher themes within the context of the narrative. In this particular regard it was important to differentiate a 'call to action', whereby individuals are encouraged to actively support *Da'esh*, from the rest of the content within *Dabiq*. Failure to engage with the narrative in such a manner would have rendered the coding process unreliable as there is potential to argue that *Dabiq*, in its entirety, is *Da'esh's* call to action for a section of their intended audience. This will be discussed in greater detail in section 6.4.2. Thus the 'line by line' analysis identified codes whereby the pleasure of Allah, as the core category, was sought. The sub categorisation of themes in to 'direct' and 'indirect' enabled differentiation in content that explicitly defined the seeking of Allah's pleasure as its objective from content where it was implied or an inevitable consequence of having undertaken an action.

Table 1 below offers an illustrational overview of the methodological process.

Table 1.

Core Category: Seeking Allah's Pleasure.	
Category: Direct reference.	**Category:** Indirect reference.
Description: Clear statements in which the seeking of Allah's pleasure is explicitly stated.	**Description:** Allah's pleasure is implied as a direct result of an action an individual has taken.
Examples of a Selective Code: • 'For the sake of Allah'. • 'So Allah is pleased' • 'Allah's pleasure is in this'	**Examples of a Selective Code:** • Forgiveness of sins. • Entry in to paradise. • Becoming closer to Allah. • Elevating the word of Allah. • Gaining spiritual reward. • Elevation of status in the hereafter. • Direct command of Allah or the prophet Muhammad.
Detail: The text is clear and unambiguous in respect of the relationship between an action and the pleasure of Allah. So if one does X then Allah will be pleased with them, or it contains the pleasure of Allah. The motivation and goal for undertaking the action is clear in the mind of the reader.	**Detail:** The text communicates an outcome that necessitates the pleasure of Allah but a direct reference to seeking Allah's pleasure is not made. So for example, if one does X then their sins will be forgiven, or they will be granted entry in to paradise. Although Allah's pleasure is not mentioned explicitly it is certainly implied within the narrative as forgiveness of sins or entry in to paradise is inconceivable unless the pleasure of Allah has been harnessed.

APPENDIX 2.

Volume 1. Return of the Khalifah.

The first volume establishes the need for this publication following on from the success of a couple of smaller, pre *Dabiq* publications. *Da'esh* claim that their endeavour is to unify the Muslim Ummah, locally and internationally, through the *ba'yah* (allegiance) mechanism which offers support to communities. However in order to achieve this local communities are required to pledge their allegiance and make *ba'yah* to the Islamic State. *Da'esh* argues that Ibrahim disassociated himself from the illegitimate practices of his time in order to fulfil his obligation to Allah. Thus his adherence to Allah's commands led to his designation as the Imam. *Da'esh* propose that they have followed a similar journey to Ibrahim so now have state level leadership which is manifest in the form of the caliphate. Furthermore the caliphate is now self sustaining which means that not even *'amīr* (leader) can end it if he wanted to. To further validate their own position as the leaders of the global Muslim nation, *Da'esh* asserts that legitimacy is for them alone as religious *'imāmah* (leadership) is dependent on political and state *imāmah* which is the privilege of *Da'esh*.

Da'esh pushes for allegiance and suggests that all those Muslims who refuse to make *ba'yah* to them should be killed. They argue that pledging allegiance is a fundamental obligation and refusal to fulfil it is an indication of apostasy thereby making non adherents a legitimate target for warfare. The publication offers advice and guidance to its intended readership on how to set up groups for the purposes of destabilising and terrorising countries. They value continued social instability through what they refer to as terrorism, *nikāyah* (military) and *tawaḥḥush* (mayhem) operations.

Volume one details how they formed and grew, the situation on the ground and difficulties they've faced in respect of civilian causalities due to third party attacks. The title of this volume is a statement that introduces *Da'esh* to the world as the self proclaimed leaders of the Muslim world.

Volume 2. The Flood.

This volume starts with communicating the 'obligations' that Muslims have towards the *khilāfah* (caliphate). *Da'esh* speaks of liberating Mecca, Medina & al-Quds (referring to Masjid al-Aqsa) as a one of its operational goals, freeing the holy lands from the impurity of democracy, apostasy and manmade laws. *Da'esh* continue to push on *baʿyah* and work hard to promote it. They advocate for non physical, proxy *baʿyah*; one formed by intention only if an individual is unable to physically move to the Islamic State; as long as an allegiance to caliph is made. *Da'esh* continues to reference the liberation of Palestine suggesting that empty words will not free al-Aqsa, rather action is necessary. They cite the example of prophet *Nūḥ* (Noah), who warned his people but also acted upon his own instruction and didn't allow them 'free will'. So *Da'esh* claim to do the same, in that they remove the practice of free will or the decision to make a wrong choice and in its place impose an authority upon the people. Democracy is not only un-Islamic *Da'esh* argues, it is unprophetic.

They defend their position of killing Muslims as they suggest that many Muslims have apostosized either through ritual malpractice or through the reverence of free will and democracy as an object of worship. So they assert that claims of Islam made by Muslims who do not pledge allegiance to the caliphate are questionable and no different to the state of previous nations. In being so the parallel is the same and *Da'esh* mandates itself with the need to eradicate free choice and pushes everyone to do the same by making *baʿyah*.

Da'esh chronicle their battle with the Kurdish PKK, cite the issue they have with the Jawlani front and al-Harari, establish *mubāhalah* (a customary debate in which the curse of God is invoked upon those who are false in their claims) as a valid practice and proclaim themselves as the bastions of sound and correct creed. They cite Senator McCain's assessment of *Da'esh's* progression in the area in order to promote their territorial gains and arguably add value to the claims of operational success they have made. This volume offers an insight in to Ramadhan within the 'Islamic State'; the collection and distribution of Zakat, Eid celebrations, *tarāwīḥ* (additional prayers during the fasting month) prayers and religious lectures all in one of their *wilāyats* (area under their control). The title of this volume relates to the floods which occurred within the time of the prophet Noah. They were widespread and indiscriminate, only those who sought salvation within Noah's message were saved. Similarly the proposition is that those who seek salvation within the *Islamic State* will be saved from the flood of their wrath.

Volume 3. A Call to Hijra.

This volume opens with a reflection on international affairs, in particular the Obama administration's decision to take military action against *Da'esh*. *Da'esh* alleges that US soldiers have killed Muslim families and raped Muslim women. A ransom is demanded and terms are disclosed for James Foley, whom *Da'esh* has taken prisoner. They afforded Foley an opportunity to provide an account which they published prior to his execution.

Da'esh takes a moment to reflect upon what they consider to be their miraculous creation in Syria. The poor from all over the world gathered in Syria in order to fight together and establish *Da'esh*. They argue this achievement is even greater than that of the development of the Islamic State in Medina. There a numerous theological references on how Islam will return to whence it started; a strange phenomenon. *Da'esh* infers that their practice is strange

to many; thus proposing that they are on the 'true' Islam. This volume lists the virtues of Syria or *Shām* as it is historically referred to, the apocalyptic wars and validation found in hadith of the people who live and rule there as true believers. *Da'esh* impresses the importance of making Hijra to *Shām* by asserting it to be the methodology of the prophet Abraham. They claim that Abraham's actions created two distinct camps, one of belief and the other of disbelief. Thus their actions, upon the methodology of Abraham have, likewise, created a camp of Islam and a camp of *kufr* (disbelief). Thus those who affiliate themselves to the camp of Islam are safe whereas those who do not are legitimate targets. There is a particular disdain for those individuals who support or align themselves with state institutions such as the police. *Da'esh* claims a principle of execution by affiliation so police officers are killed, their homes burnt and families imprisoned. In validation of their conduct they cite the practice of the prophet Muhammad and his successors; *Abū Bakr* and *ʿUmar*. They suggest that what many consider to be severity is in fact a bonafide religious practice conducted by the prophet and his companions.

Da'esh present a call to arms for all professional folk; doctors and engineers in particular, to make *hijrah* (migration) to the Islamic State. This is accompanied with a hard push to religiously compel individuals to sign up for their jihad. There are lots of scriptural references to religious obligation and the fouls of hypocrisy alongside constant repetition of a notion that jihad gives life. *Da'esh* presents an image that those who live in the caliphate do not sin or are less inclined to sinning than those who live in a non Muslim, democratic state which ultimately compromises ones faith. Therefore it is necessary to migrate to the Islamic State.

<u>Volume 4. The Failed Crusade.</u>

This volume opens with a focus on having belief in Allah and offers reassurance that *Da'esh's* conduct is bonafide. Thus they attribute doubt in their operation to the historical concept of *jāhiliyyah* (ignorance) which, if left unchecked, can render individuals vulnerable to *Da'esh's* wrath. Their discussions feed back in to the principles of *ba'yah, khiāfah & imāmah* established in earlier volumes. In this particular volume *Da'esh* cement Abu Musab al Zarqawi as a jihadi visionary who proposed to liberate Jerusalem and recapture Rome. In pursuit of this global vision *Da'esh* boasts the enslavement of *non Muslim* women and children as an apparent objective of jihad itself but also encourages its readership to attack the crusaders in their own lands. Here *Da'esh* takes a particularly aggressive and indiscriminate stance against civilians of countries who have supported efforts against them. They advise their operatives to kill anyone they deem to be non Muslim in 'crusader' lands. In doing so, *Da'esh* laden their narrative with emotional appeals and references to scores Muslims who have been killed as a result of western intervention.

Furthermore, *Da'esh* reassures it's fighters that they will be rewarded for the hardships that they have endured. Indeed death for them is victory as divine glory at the cost of temporal loss makes absolute sense. They advocate against oppressions and instruct their readership to focus their efforts on the crusaders; being America and its allies. *Da'esh* impresses the importance of jihad continuity in to future generations and also speaks about the economic cost of warfare and continual occupation. They vigorously argue that the gray zone of uncertainty has shrunk and now there are clear and definitive choices that individuals need to make; either faith or disbelief. Thus they advocate for indiscriminate violence across the world and reaffirm their desire to conquer Rome.

In this volume *Da'esh* introduces the concept of *al-walā wal barā'ah* (association and disassociation for the sake of Allah). They depict the prophet Muhammad as a warrior prophet and seek to reassure their readership that Allah provides for those who fight in His path. They justify their position for the reintroduction of slavery and have an evident zeal for warfare leading to an apocalypse. However at the very same time, *Da'esh* also speaks of the investment it has made within its regions in respect of community, security, trade, and redevelopment. Branding and attribution of credit is important to *Da'esh* as they actively seek to take credit for attacks and incidents purportedly done in their name. In doing so, they discredit other operational jihadi groups unless they've pledge allegiance to *Da'esh*. The title of this volume relates to Americas military intervention against *Da'esh* and *Da'esh's* subsequent designation of those endeavours as a failed crusade against them.

Volume 5. Remaining and Expanding.

This volume focuses on the story of prophet Yahya, who met his end whilst standing against tyranny; one of the noblest ends according to the prophet Muhammad. In it being so, this volume continues on from volume 4 and challenges America's military intervention against *Da'esh*. They present themselves in the same light as the prophet Yahya, righteous individuals standing up against a tyrannical ruler. They also consider America's intervention to be a damning indictment of Americas continued foreign policy within the Middle East and Muslim world. However, *Da'esh* state that they will continue to stand against America and all the other stakeholders in what they consider to be a war against Islam and Muslims as their doing so is a supplication of the oppressed and bereaved. Their proposition leads in to an eschatological stance and makes direct reference to the return of the messiah, *'Isa* son of Mary who will lead the final apocalyptic battle. *Da'esh* cites the example of all the prophets and how they never backed down from their message, rather they confronted, challenged and engaged in battle thereby leaving a legacy of confrontation.

This volume touches on spiritual development and a need to seek help from Allah as the path of *daʿwah* and jihad isn't easy but needs to happen. *Da'esh* presses for the galvanisation of forces across the Arab peninsula with a call to other jihadi operations to give *baʿyah* to them. They boast their own achievements as an organisation and are insultingly critical of other opposing factions whilst positioning themselves as the truth bearers. Although 9/11 was not their attack to claim, they state that it was a success on several fronts; most notably the cost of occupation to the United States and *Da'esh's* subsequent ability to influence fighters off the back of it. *Da'esh* appears to express dissatisfaction with the level of media coverage they receive for the lone wolf attacks in European and America. In this volume *Da'esh* details the reintroduction of gold, silver and copper based currency and advocate for its merits over non asset based currencies. There is additional focus on the concept of *al-walā wal barāʾah* as a means of directing their readership to support *Da'eshs* cause. The title of this volume follows on from the Failed Crusade (volume 4) and in the assumed spirit of prophetic methodology *Da'esh* continue to challenge the established order by Remaining and Expanding their operations.

Volume 6. Al-Qaedah in Waziristan.

This volume opens with an immediate focus on international terror attacks and the promotion of lone wolf operations in the international context. The apparent purpose of Jihad for *Da'esh* is to cause terror within the minds and hearts of their enemies. In doing so *Da'esh* explicitly state that there is no need to seek validation from anyone ahead of carrying out a lone wolf attack; rather individuals should just do it and adopt non complex, rudimentary means in their execution. *Da'esh* report that death in the path of Allah is a means of instant forgiveness and admittance in to paradise. This volume also seeks to resolve some of the criticisms that *Da'esh* have faced from other prominent jihadi movement leaders; namely al-Dawahiri and Nadhari. *Da'esh* criticise the aforementioned for their hypocritical stance and

allegiance with leader of Yemen. By all understandings these organisations are not *takfirī* enough for them. The narrative of the publication changes to a more aggressive style of writing than normal as *Da'esh* preaches the standard of jihad. They cite Abu Musab al-Zarqawi as the benchmark within the jihadi movement; someone who was once affiliated to *al-Qaedah* but no longer due to ideological differences. *Da'esh* highlight the problems they perceived with al-Qaedah in Waziristan and how the expression of Islam within that context was not a true application of the faith. So *Da'esh* refer to themselves as the *ahles sunnah* (people of the prophetic methodology) and as an organisation who is on the middle path; not deviating to the extremities of either the left nor right and not being corrupted by cultural practices.

This volume offers a greater focus on spirituality, making *duʿā* (supplications) and engaging in the remembrance of Allah. The volume was titled al-Qaedah in Waziristan as *Da'esh* had a clear agenda to highlight, discredit and sideline al-Qaedah citing religious ineptitude whilst presenting themselves as the true flag bearers of Islam and jihad.

Volume 7. From Hypocrisy to Apostasy.

This volume opens with the statement of bin Laden who questioned the need for international powers like Japan and Australia to enter in to a war on terror. *Da'esh* present this as an argument that the West is at war with Islam. There is also a great deal of focus on the justification for the use of fire as a punishment. *Da'esh* cites several examples from classical sources of the actions of not only the prophet Muhammad but also several of his companions. Thus they assert that using fire as a means of punishment is entirely acceptable and within the realms of permissibility. In substantiating their case they further argue that anyone who has the ability to make *hijrah* to the Islamic State but refuses to do so and then criticises the practice of the *mujāhidīn* has diluted their faith.

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In this volume, *Da'esh* also raise a concern regarding trust and deception, stating that leaders shouldn't always accept what they have been told by their foot soldiers and should always make the effort to verify information as people can betray them. This consideration is also found in the advice offered by Abu Hamzah al-Muhajir who suggests that advice should only be sought from trustworthy individuals. He continues to offer advice on spiritual development and states that it is important to stay away from sins for the sake of Allah as the *mujāhidīn* are held to a higher degree of accountability. The focus on spiritual development continues with a story of one of *Da'esh's* other fallen fighters, Abu Qudamah. *Dabiq* presents him as an individual who would fast voluntarily, read the Quran and spend a portion of the night in the worship of Allah. A similar image is presented of Abu Basir, the individual responsible for the attack on Charlie Hebdo.

Da'esh argue that Islam is the religion of the sword, not of peace and suggest that the prophet was in fact sent with four swords in order to combat a said group of people. They completely dismiss the notion of a 'Meccan' era of Islam in the modern day context and thus present themselves as the only legitimate Khilafah in the world for the Muslims. As a result everyone should unite under their banner, repent to Allah and join the caliphate. This volume is also the first edition in which narrative is presented from a female in order to recruit support from women. The title of the volume is reference to the methodological and ideological flaws that *Da'esh* considers al-Qaedah to have.

Volume 8. <u>Shariah Alone will Rule Africa.</u>

This volume opens with a statement that wills to show the world what terrorism is. *Da'esh* presents an actual framework for the purpose of jihad or fighting in the path of Allah and describe it as elevating the word of Allah. They state that victory and success is made by Allah for those who practice pure *tawḥīd* and this is something that cannot coexist with

nationalism. Thus there is a reaffirmation of *al-walā wal barā'ah* as a fundamental principle to their endeavour which is at absolute odds with Islamist nationalism. Therefore *Da'esh* suggest that all other regimes and organisations, of which the *Deobandis'* are one, are illegitimate and supported by secular agendas. Within this vein they present disagreements with the Shamiya Front and al-Qaedah all whilst fending off allegations levelled against them that they are *khawārij* (a sect within *Shi'ī* Islam). *Da'esh* assert that such claims are made by the *murjiah* who impose so many conditions as prerequisites for *takfīr* that when anyone attempts to make genuine *takfīr* they are pronounced as *khawārij*.

There is a veneration of Boko Haram and for the kidnappings they undertook of a number of Christian girls in Africa. *Da'esh* not only celebrated this move but also openly called for Muslims to travel to Africa. However there also appears to be somewhat of an appeal within this volume for individuals to remain within the Islamic State. *Da'esh* reaches out to women in this volume and impresses upon them the obligation of making *hijrah* to the Islamic State and fulfilling this command. They assert that regard should not be given to those family members who prohibit the womenfolk from making *hijrah*. They suggest that they are operating in a manner no different to what the prophets' Ibrahim and Muhammad did when they broke the idols and challenged the Quraysh, respectively, in order to propagate the oneness of Allah. The title of this volume relates to the Boko Haram and the allegiance they have pledged to *Da'esh*.

Volume 9. They Plot and Allah Plots.

This volume opens with an offensive against the crusaders who *Da'esh* claim have contempt within their hearts for Islam and how this is evident through the 'idol' of free speech. They refer to the Texas 'draw Muhammad competition' as an example of this contempt; an event that was disrupted by two of *Da'esh's* supporters for whom *Da'esh* claim martyrdom.

Da'esh continue to highlight issues with other jihadi operatives in the area, the Shamiyyah front, Jawlani front, PLO, Faylaq ash-sham and the sahwah fighters whom they argue have been supported by Iran. In this volume *Da'esh* supports its practice of enslavement and suggest that it is a sunnah of the prophet Muhammad that they have reinstated. In fact they argue that many individuals, of their own free will, accept Islam after being enslaved. *Da'esh* pays some attention to the spiritual development of its supporters within this volume and outlines a roadmap for *shaḥādah* (martyrdom) which begins with *hijrah* and ends with *shaḥādah*.

Most interestingly, *Da'esh* argue that conspiracy theories are *shirk* (polytheism). They suggest that the conceptualisation of certain events (for example 9/11) as something that has been orchestrated by international governments forcibly invalidates the attribute of God as being the 'all mighty'. Rather it places such a designation in the hands of mortal (and in this case) infidel organisations which, in *Da'esh's* legislation, is apostasy and *shirk*. Thus jihad should not be abandoned for fear of apostasy. *Da'esh* details the healthcare programmes it offers within its *wilāyat*, medical interventions that are provided by qualified medical staff. They boast about the fact that they have both male and female teaching staff who are qualified within their respective disciplines. *Da'esh* offers free education to its students. In addition they offer the stories of two notable individuals, Abu Musa al-Almani, a German soldier who enlisted to *Da'esh* and Hudhayfah al-Battawi, a dentist who became a *Da'esh* operative and was then incarcerated. Al-Battawi led a rebellion in prison against his jailors and was killed as a result of it. He was with a child who he never met. *Da'esh* present this as the model exemplar of commitment to jihad; a benchmark of faith in which this world did not distract him from his religious duty. In a similar fashion to other volumes *Da'esh* present an open call for supporters to make *hijrah* to the Islamic State or attack the non Muslim context

wherever they may be. The title of this volume is a rebuttal to the notion that western powers plot to a degree that is greater than Allah's ability to plan and prepare.

Volume 10. The Laws of Allah or the Laws of Men?

This volume opens with a summary of *Da'esh's* attacks across the world; Lyon, France and the Tunisian beach attack. *Da'esh* issue an open plea to support their efforts against the 'crusaders' and stress upon their readership not to abandon this obligation. There is a special focus on parental rights and obligations that need to be adhered to but not at the cost of jihad as that is the greater obligation. As with other volumes, *Da'esh* highlight their contempt for other operational jihadi groups, in particular the *Jawlani* front and *Ahrar al-Sham* who *Da'esh* argue are being posited by US Secretary of State John Kerry as an alternative power in Syria.

Da'esh provides details of a radio interview with Zahran Alloush, leader of the Army of Islam in Syria. They suggest that he and his organisation pose a threat to the monolithic Muslims of Syria as this sort sectarian group condemns the killing of Druze communities by *Da'esh*. They continue to highlight issues with Mulla Omar and his Afghan Emirate suggesting that it is a nationalistic, not global entity. *Da'esh* offers instruction to their *walī* (designated representative) in the Caucuses to observe *taqwā'* (God consciousness). Additional accounts of two of *Da'esh's* supporters are also offered; Abu Malik al-Tamimi and Abu Umar al-Tunisi, who were both observers of additional religious practices to build closeness to Allah. *Da'esh* places a great deal of emphasis on the reestablishment of the *ḥadd* (corporal punishment) and argue that they are the caliphate so seeking help against them from the non believers is apostasy. The title of this volume is in response to operational perspectives offered by Ayman al-Zawahiri (and others) who argue that non combatants should not be targeted in military operations; rather they should be left alone and educated.

Da'esh reject this philosophy and state that Allah's laws should be implemented to the full hence their volume title.

<u>Volume 11. From the Battle of Ahzab to the War of Coalitions.</u>

This volume opens with *Da'esh* airing their disdain against the Taliban over their concealment of mullah Omar's death. *Da'esh* state that the Taliban deceived the Ummah and then further sinned by not pledging allegiance to them. Instead they passed leadership over to an individual who supports nationalism by his recognition of Iran and Qatr. The obligation of *al-walā wal barā'ah* has been forsaken and thus in *Da'esh's* opinion the entire Taliban are compromised. They push for Muslims to make *ba'yah* to the Islamic State and for all Muslims to unite because the Islamic State is not just for the Syrians or Iraqi's, rather it is a homeland for all Muslims. There is a great deal of emphasis on belonging and brotherhood. However in doing so, *Da'esh* expresses a discontent with all other 'jihad' practitioners. They detail all the countries, organisations and individuals who have taken part in jihad across the world in recent history but who have then apostosized by fighting against Da'esh.   They consider democracy to be *shirk* and offer *tawḥīd* as the only answer. In order to take benefit of the opportunity *Da'esh* impose an obligation, no different to that communicated in previous volumes, of making *hijrah* to the Islamic State in order to unite the ummah; they assert that death without *ba'yah* is a death of the ignorance.

Da'esh take a firm stance against *taqlīd* (adherence to a particular mode of practicing Islam). They advocate for reference to primary sources so that individuals may understand and practice their own faith without reliance on anyone else. They make plentiful references to Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab's work on *taqlīd* who incidentally proscribes the scholars of *taqlīd* as deviant and draws parallels to the pre Islamic era. *Da'esh* liken their efforts to that of the treaty of *Hudaybiyyah* in that an agreement with the non believers only came after

decisive military victory for the Muslims and *hijrah* to Medina. Thus any peace treaty can only occur after jihad and this is the prophetic way. As with previous publications, there is also reference to a fallen *Da'esh* operative and his religious, faith practices. *Da'esh* assert that Abu Jafar would spend his time in the remembrance of Allah and his nights establishing voluntary prayer.

Volume 12. Just Terror.

This volume begins with *Da'esh's* operations against Russia and France in retaliation for their support of the 'western' led coalition. *Da'esh* offer a special mention to Farhad Khalil Mohammed who was just 15 years old at the time he conducted his lone wolf operation. They continue to offer counsel to the *mujāhidīn*, stating that loyalty to the leader is imperative as is following what he says and sticking to it whether one agrees or not.

Da'esh present a strong animosity against nationalism that the other jihadi groups are allegedly supportive of. They continue discussions in to *al-walā wal barā´ah* within the context of children's education, suggesting that it instils nationalism within future generations. *Da'esh's* staunch opposition to such doctrines is one of the reasons why they will continue to remain or so they advocate. This volume places a great deal of focus on polygamy and arguments in favour of it. The segment is authored by a female contributor who champions the religious permissibility of husbands having more than one wife in order to cater for the need within their society.

Da'esh details its military operations and successes across Syria and Iraq. They highlight the issues of practicing Islam in the 'west' with all of the deviations that western society holds (a thesis they evidence with a testimony from Abu Harith al-Thagri). They present the Islamic State as a blessing of Allah and that Muslims should indeed thank Allah for His blessings; meaning that the Muslims should thanks Allah for the caliphate He has provided.

Da'esh provides detail of their jihad in Bengal, a history and current affairs and they touch upon the political relationships between several actors operating in the Syrian and Iraqi space; being Russia, America, PKK and the FSA. The title of this volume is a reflection of the attacks their operatives have conducted across the world, most notably those in Russia and France.

<u>Volume 13. The Rafidah.</u>

Da'esh opens this volume with the peculiar case of Rizwan Farook and his wife Tashfeen Malik. A husband and wife duo who in San Bernardino, California held a shootout with police and security services. The couple had a small child which they placed with a third party prior to conducting their operation. *Da'esh* cite this as the embodiment of *taqwā* (God consciousness). *Da'esh* pushes its readership to attack any target anywhere, in what can best be described as an indiscriminate call to violence. They continue to showcase their operational reach across the world as they boast operations conducted in Pakistan, Indonesia, United States, Yemen, Syria and Iraq.

There is a strong push against the 'palace' scholars of Saudi whom *Da'esh* advocate should be killed for supporting an apostate regime. They also take an increasingly more aggressive stance against al-Zawahiri and air criticism of him which is much more vocal and disrespectful compared to previous volumes. Al-Zawahiri was critical of *Da'esh's* attacks on the Shia communities and stated that Shia laypersons should be educated and given an invitation to Islam rather than being killed. A-Zawahiri held the opinion that the real threat was America and alliances with the Shia should be considered in order to fend off the greater threat. *Da'esh* believe that any alliance with the Shia and not fighting them is apostasy and therefore al-Zawahiri is fatally wrong in his opinions. *Da'esh* proceed to offer an overview of the Shia presence across the Middle East and Persia and also offer clarification on why

they are fighting other jihadi groups; the others have apostosized due to their stances on the Shia.

This volume contains a segment on Jihadi John, who trekked for two months across Europe to get to Syria despite being under surveillance from MI6. They relay a story regarding him when he was in prayer and began to cry during prostration as another group member spoke of the situation in Palestine. *Da'esh* assert that military might is not necessary to fight when the help of Allah is at hand.

Da'esh present a comprehensive discussion on the *Rāfidah* community, their origins, a staunch rebuttal of their ideology and a firm stance on their apostasy. From their own content it appears that other organisations such as the al-Qaedah and the Taliban, do not share the same ideological views as *Da'esh*. They appear to be far more diplomatic in maintaining inter and intra faith relations whilst channelling their aggression to immediate combatants and the crusading 'west'. The title of this volume relates to the comprehensive discussion put forth by *Da'esh* on the *Shīʿā* and *Rāfidah* communities.

Volume 14. The Murtadd Brotherhood.

This volume opens with a reflection over the past two years in which Muslims have been bombed and killed. The seed for revenge has been planted and is blooming. They posit a reminder that their vision is global domination and they will not stop their operations until they reach Europe. More references are made to to waging battles against the crusaders in Europe as a result of attacks in Iraq and Syria. There is a great deal of focus across all the volumes on 'pure' creed. This volume identifies and names those *Da'esh* consider to be *murtadd* (deviates from Islam). These are a community who call themselves Muslim but have compromised their faith by adopting liberal faith values at the expense of pure creed and Islam. *Da'esh* undertake an all out attack on some of the most prominent western scholars,

Hamza Yusuf, Sohaib Webb, Yasser Qazi, Muhammad al Yaqoobi, Nazim al-Haqqani; classifying them all as deviant. *Da'esh* associates non literal and puritanical faith observance as a cancer of which the Muslim brotherhood is one. They admonish those who seek to engage with different Muslim groups through dialogue, discussion and non violent means. For Da'esh there is only violent confrontation, nothing else. They assert that the *ikhwān* (Muslim Brotherhood) have abandoned *al-walā wal barā'ah* due to them regarding Jews and Christians as their brothers; so they are all the same in kufr.

Volume 15. Breaking the Cross.

The final volume in this series offers a great deal of focus on scripture and evidential proofs. *Da'esh* challenge the concepts of modernity and Christian theology, citing verses from Christian sources that seemingly contradict each other. In addition they argue that jihad is not an Islamic construct, rather is a practice found within both Judaism and Christianity quite often with far more brutal consequences. *Da'esh* make reference to Deuteronomy and Leviticus ahead of ending their discussions by suggesting that the black flag of IS flutter over Rome.

Interestingly there is little incitement to violence compared to the other volumes. They continue to reject democracy and rebut the claims made by scholars who they deem to be deviant. *Da'esh* state that their aggression is in response to the Muslims who are killed by international actors such as the United States as well a challenge to the *kufr* that is prevalent in society. They draw parallels from the various different prophets who called their deviant communities to Allah; be they the Abyssinians, Romans or the Copts. *Da'esh* suggest that *da'wah* was never forsaken and must continue and neither were the prophets uncompromising in their stance on the 'truth'.

The ruthless mentality of *Da'esh* is evidenced again in the final pages of this edition where they talk about the Holocaust being a bedtime story compared to what they would do to the Jews in Europe and how they were quite happy to drop another Nuke on Japan. The title of this volume relates to the long theological discussion that *Da'esh* have put forward in respect of Christian theology. It also relates to an eschatological narration of the prophet Muhammad who states that prior to the final hour ʿĪsā son of Mary will return to the fight the antichrist during which he will break the cross, the symbol of Christianity.

APPENDIX 3.

Chapters 4 and 5 established the conceptual framework through which *Dabiq* was analysed. Chapter 4 concluded that absolute theological success in the spiritual domain is measured by the acquisition of paradise which is a product of Allah's pleasure. The Transactional Engagement Model set out the framework for achieving spiritual success which was predicated upon an active consciousness of one's *self*. This *self* consciousness was argued at the jihad *al*-nafs.

Chapter 5 detailed the plurality of understandings associated with the term jihad and validated the jihad *al-nafs*, not as some hollow or apologetic term developed to obfuscate the military objectives of jihad but rather as a bonafide theological principle established from the very inception of Islam. Chapter 5 concluded that the jihad *al-nafs* is the *a priori* standard and the 'essence' for all acts of ʿibādah, designated or otherwise; of which military jihad is one. Without this 'essence' any expression of faith that is claimed as an act of ʿibādah is void of theological value, Furthermore it is incongruent with manner in which Allah's pleasure is sought with which paradise is aligned.

APPENDIX 4.

Mr. Rizwan Mustafa

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18th May 2015

National Offender Management Service

National Research Committee

Email: ███████████████████████

NATIONAL RESEARCH COMMITTEE DECISION

Ref: 2015-148

Title: Muslim Violent Extremism: A Theological Narrative Analysis.

Dear Mr. Mustafa,

Further to your application to undertake research across NOMS, the National Research Committee (NRC) has considered the information provided and is unable to support your project at the present time. Reasons are as follows:

The Committee felt that the potential benefits to NOMS (including how the findings could be operationalised) did not justify the resource demands (assisting with identification/recruitment, accompanying the researcher etc) involved. In reaching this

decision, the Committee noted that theology and narrative are already assessed for each TACT individual, as part of risk assessment and as part of interventions, and that interventions are continuing to be developed.

It was also recognised that TACT prisoners, especially Muslim prisoners, have been subject to numerous research projects relating to extremism, gangs, and faith. The committee is aware that those prisoners most driven by extremist theology have been reluctant to open up to researchers, and there is a need to be highly selective regarding access to these offenders to encourage participation and to avoid negative perceptions from perceived over-scrutinisation due to faith identity.

There were some uncertainties around the identification and sampling of offenders (including the need for any inclusion/exclusion criteria and stratification), the likely response rates and how these would be monitored/addressed, and whether the samples would be sufficiently representative.

It was unclear how accuracy of notes would be ensured during the interviews.

There was insufficient consideration of confidentiality issues and the need to disclose certain information obtained during the research.

We appreciate that this will be disappointing for you and that this is not the response you would have hoped for.

As set out in the NOMS Research Applications Instruction

(https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-offender-management-service/about/research), consideration can be given to one resubmission.

Yours sincerely,

National Research Committee

Dear Rizwan,

This email is in response to your proposal entitled "Identifying the cause(s) of Muslim violent extremism: Developing a theoretical framework for a preventative intervention program." The Bureau of Prisons (BOP) Bureau Research Review Board (BRRB) has carefully reviewed your proposal and has determined that the proposal raises some concerns for the BOP and therefore denied.

The BRRB does not feel your proposal tests a stated hypothesis that will generate meaningful information. Further, the research design must be compatible with both the operation of the prison and the protection of human subjects, (PS 1070.07, p. 5) and have a research design and methodology that will answer specific research questions through reliable and valid measurement tools. In meeting this requirement, the project must have an adequate research design and contribute to the advancement of knowledge of the criminal justice community (PS 1070.07, p.4). It is also essential that all research conducted within the BOP be justified in the context of safety and security within the correctional institution, and limiting staff burden. The BRRB feels the proposal does not adequately meet these requirements.

In addition, in Section B, #2 titled: Detailed description of the research method, you request for help from the BOP Chaplaincy. This request from the Chaplaincy team goes well beyond pastoral care, and presents a conflict with the mission of Chaplaincy and seems to be asking them to assist in profiling.

Also in Section B, #4 titled: Specific resources required from the Bureau: Your request for a member of the staff, possibly the chaplaincy team, to meet and greet and escort researchers as well as bring prisoners to and from designated interview areas will be burdensome to Chaplaincy staff and cause Union issues.

Finally, your proposal is focused on theological rather than behavioral interventions. This runs counter to our efforts to focus on behavior, not belief.

It is our recommendation that this project would be better suited for te National Offender Management Service (NOMS). Accordingly, at this time we are not able to allow you to interview the inmates that would be required to proceed with your proposal.

Sincerely,

Jody Klein-Saffran, Ph.D.

Jody Klein-Saffran, Ph.D.

Human Subjects Protection Officer

Federal Bureau of Prisons

Office of Research and Evaluation

voice mail: ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓

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Volume	Allah's Pleasure						
	Page	Column	Line	Quote/Example	Theme	Direct	Indirect
Vol. 1 Return of the Khalifah	6	2	12	O Muslims everywhere, whoever is capable of performing hijrah (emigration) to the Islamic State, then let him do so, because hijrah to the land of Islam is obligatory.	Hijra		x
	6	3	7	We call them and remind them to fear Allah, for their emigration is wajib 'ayni (an individual obligation), so that they can answer the dire need of the Muslims for them.	Hijra		x
	14	2		And upon every scholar who calls to, or writes about, the obligation to follow the millah of Ibrahim ('alayhis-salam), is to not detest the imamah of The Islamic State today, and to not seek to undermine it or destroy it.	Khilafah		x
	21	2	25	The obligation is now clearer than ever before for all Muslims to raise their voices and pledge their allegiance to Imamul-Muslimin and AmirulMu'minin – the Khalifah – Abu Bakr al-Husayni alBaghdadi	Bayah to Khilafah		x

	3	1	9	The first priority is to perform hijrah from wherever you are to the Islamic State, from dārul-kufr to dārul-Islām. Rush to perform it as Mūsā ('alayhis-salām) rushed to his Lord, saying, {And I hastened to You, my Lord, that You be pleased} [Tāhā: 84].	Hijra	x	
Vol. 2 The Flood	3	2	1	Second, it is a way to fill the hearts of the kuffār with painful agony. This is sufficient cause for you to rush towards this noble deed. {That is because they are not afflicted by thirst or fatigue or hunger in the cause of Allah, nor do they tread on any ground that enrages the disbelievers, nor do they inflict upon an enemy any infliction but that is registered for them as a righteous deed. Indeed, Allah does not allow to be lost the reward of the doers of good} [At-Tawbah: 120]	Bayah to Khilafah		x
	4	1	8	"Whoever dies without having bound himself by a bay'ah, dies a death of jāhiliyyah" [Sahīh Muslim].	Bayah to Khilafah		x

	5	1	6	there is no real jihād in Iraq except with the presence of the muhājirīn, the sons of the generous ummah, those who have left their tribes, those who bring victory to Allah and His Messenger (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam)	Jihad		x
Vol. 3 A Call To Hijrah	6	2	8	And what a tremendous favor it is from Allah to guide one to the Islamic State and grant him companionship with its muhājirīn, those who plunge into the malāhim	Hijra		x
	10	1	8	There will be hijrah after hijrah. The best people on earth will be those who keep to the land of Ibrāhīm's hijrah.	Hijra		x
	23	1	1	And that hijrah wipes out all previous sins? And that hajj wipes out all previous sins?'" [Sahīh Muslim]	Hijra		x
	31	2	8	"Perform jihād fī sabīlillāh, for it is a gate of the gates of Jannah by which Allah repels worry and sorrow from the souls" [sahīh – reported by Imām Ahmad and al-Hākim	Jihad		x
Vol. 4 The Failed Crusade	6	2	1	O soldiers of the Islamic State, what a great thing you have achieved by Allah! Your reward is upon Him. By Allah, He has healed the chests of the believers through the	Killing	x	

			killing of the nusayriyyah and rāfidah at your hands			
	10	1	13	What is implied by this is that he kills Allah's enemies who refuse to accept tawhīd, legitimizes the spilling of their blood and the taking of their wealth, and enslaves their women and children, and thereby his provision becomes what Allah has given him of spoils from the property of His enemy.	Killing		x
	44	4	12	He should be pleased to meet his Lord even if with just one dead kāfir's name written in his scroll of deeds, as the Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) said, "A kāfir and his killer will never gather in Hellfire	Killing		x
Vol. 5 Remaining & Expanding	16	1	16	They continue to remain firm, having confidence in Allah's promise of victory for those who fight in His path.	Fighting		x
	22	1	8	Allah – the Exalted – said, {And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided} [Āl 'Imrān: 103	Unity		x

	24	1	9	So settle your matter, gather yourselves, and support your state, for you depend on it and it depends on you. By Allah, it is upon the clear truth and supported by Allah, the Mighty, the Strong. So fear Allah, your Lord	Unity		x
Vol 6. AQ Waziristan	3	2	1	reporting numerous allegations made against him in an attempt to smear his character and, by extension, the noble cause that he was fighting for – the cause of Allah (ta'ālā).	Fighting		x
	4	1	4	So how much more so in the case of one who followed up his repentance by fighting and being killed in the path of Allah, knowing the Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) declared that such a person would be forgiven the moment his blood is first spilled.	Forgiveness		x
	6	2	7	Allah has guaranteed the one who performs jihād in His path, having left his home for no reason other than to perform jihād in His path out of belief in His words, that He would enter him into Jannah or return him back home with what he has attained of reward or ghanīmah	Jihad		x

	11	2	7	{O you who have believed, persevere and endure and remain stationed and fear Allah that you may be successful} [Āl 'Imrān: 200].	Ribat		x
Vol 7. From Hypocrisy to Apostasy	5	2	11	but Allah decreed that they would return to Him as shuhadā', an incomparable honor which they had both desired, eagerly pursued, and supplicated their Lord for.	Death		x
	6	1	25	with no intention of making hijrah to those lands in which the word of Allah is the highest	Hijra		x
	7	2	5	Burning ppl alive, enslaving their women and children. Using the action of Abu Bakr as proof. Pleasure of God contained within it as Allah is pleased with Abu Bakr.	Example of sahabah		x
	10	1	14	"Allah has guaranteed the one who performs jihād for His cause, having left his home for no reason other than to perform jihād for His cause and to affirm the truth of His words, that He would enter him into Jannah or return him back home with all the rewards he has attained or the ghanīmah he has acquired.	Jihad (fighting). Hijra		x

	10	1	29	Likewise, "Any leader who takes charge of the affairs of the Muslims and then doesn't strive for them and advise them, will not enter Jannah with them."	Sincerity		x
	12	2	14	And don't select the strong fighters for the battle while leaving out the weak ones who are eager to attain the rewards of Allah,	Opportunity to fight		x
	15	2	1	Know that your brothers listen and obey out of eagerness for Allah's rewards, so their compliance is due more to their good character and adherence to the Sharī'ah, than it is due to fear of authority.	Religiousity		x
	17	1	13	We affirm what he came with, pronounce takfīr upon those who refuse this affirmation, and wage jihād against them.	Takfir & Jihad		x
	17	2	3	Allah then guided by the truth whoever answered him, and Rasūlullāh (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) struck those who turned away from Him by His permission, until they entered Islam either willingly or grudgingly.	Forced conversion		x
	18	2	10	"The best jihād is a word of truth in front of an unjust	Truth, Courage		x

			ruler			
32	3	20	Finally, it is important for Muslims everywhere to know that there is no doubt in the great reward to be found on Judgment Day for those who spill the blood of these Coptic crusaders wherever they may be found…	Killing Copts		x
36	1	15	The lessons to be noted here are that, firstly, there is no solution – neither shar'ī nor qadarī – to the problem of multiple banners except for all groups to unite behind a Qurashī man who openly declares his īmān in Allah and his rejection of tāghūt, and wages jihād to raise high the word of Allah.	Bayah to Khilafah		x
38	2	20	So I advise everyone in Jabhat an-Nusrah, and in particular those young men whom I trained, to join the ranks of the Islamic State, because it is upon the truth, for it implements the Sharī'ah of Allah, carries out the hudūd, and enjoins good and forbids evil.	Shariah		x
48	2	1	"Paradise is under the shades of swords!" over and over again to encourage others who were under fire.	Fighting		x

	6	2	6	The filthy blood of the Danes was spilled by his blessed hands, by which he guaranteed for himself a place in Paradise, inshā'allāh.	Killing		x
	6	2	28	May Allah accept Abū Ramadān, gather him with the Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) in Paradise, and make him an example for the Ummah everywhere to follow…	Killing		x
Vol 8. Shariah Alone Will Rule Africa	7	1	12	'Whoever fights so that the word of Allah becomes supreme, then he has fought fī sabīlillāh	Fighting		x
	7	2	5	'Fighting is not fī sabīlillāh unless the only purpose of his fighting is to make Allah's word supreme.' Liberating the nation and other goals enter into this as a consequence but not as the purpose.	Fighting		x
	14	2	16	We also reaffirm to the masses of our people that we will continue with Allah's support to either attain martyrdom or achieve victory.	Martydom, Territory		x
	15	1	4	they closed ranks with their brothers in the Islamic State, uniting upon the truth, pledging to listen to and obey Amīrul-Mu'minīn and to	Uniting		x

			continue upon the path to raise high the word of Allah.			
16	1	2	uniting behind the Khalīfah to raise high the word of Allah	Uniting		x
20	1	9	The Islamic State has taken it upon itself to fulfill the Ummah's duty towards this generation in preparing it to face the crusaders and their allies in defense of Islam and to raise high the word of Allah in every land.	Defence of Islam		x
22	2	10	also served to enrage the kuffār, a deed that in itself is beloved to Allah	Enrage kuffar	x	
30	1	15	This was a great sacrifice for the cause of Allah on the battlefield.	Sacrifice		x
31	2	16	Shaykh Abū Talhah thereby attained shahādah at the age of 45 after a life of jihād, hisbah, and da'wah.	Martydom		x
32	1	10	And the first forerunners among the Muhājirīn and the Ansār and those who followed them with good conduct – Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide	Not be hesitant		x

				forever. That is the great success		
	36	2	21	I saw sisters on a night enflamed by battle send their fifteen year old sons outside the home saying, "Allah is the greatest! Go to Jannah whose width is that of the Heavens and the Earth!"	Sacrifice	x
Vol.9 - They Plot & Allah Plots	3	2	35	And if they had intended to go forth, they would have prepared for it [some] preparation. But Allah disliked their being sent, so He kept them back, and they were told, "Remain [behind] with those who remain"} [At-Tawbah:	Fighting	x
	30	1	5	Abū Mus'ab al-Almānī, whose name would now be written – by Allah's permission – amongst those whose past had been tainted with Muslim blood, and would atone for it by embracing Islam and fighting for the cause of Allah until they were killed.	Forgiveness	x

	30	1	10	Allah's Messenger (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) said, "Allah laughs at two men who both enter Jannah after one of them kills the other." He was asked, "How, O Messenger of Allah?" He said, "This one is killed, so he enters Jannah. Then Allah turns to the other one in forgiveness by guiding him to Islam. Then he fights for the cause of Allah and attains shahādah" [Reported by al-Bukhārī and Muslim].	Shariah		x
	73	1		But every Muslim who cannot come and wants to perform jihād and support the Islamic State can do so wherever he may be, just as he was ordered by the Khalīfah (hafidhahullāh) in his latest address. A simple supplication from our Muslim brothers practicing ribāt is in itself support – a great support for us. Any advance of the Khilāfah against the Nusayriyyah and Rāfidah, any manifestation of unity through new bay'āt to the Khilāfah, and any attack against the supporters of the Sahwah – the crusaders and Āl Salūl – strengthens the mujāhidīn in Dimashq.	Support		x

	29	1	9	Therefore, O you who remains sitting back from jihād even as the mujāhidīn march out day after day in this blessed month to face the legions of kufr gathered to wage war against Allah's religion, do not allow another Ramadān after this one to pass you by except that you have marched forth to fight for Allah's cause	Jihad	x	
Vol 10 - The laes of Allah or the laws of men?	37	2	1	We call the Muslims and the mujāhidīn everywhere to give bay'ah to the Khalīfah in obedience to Allah's command, for the truth has become as clear as the sun in the middle of the day, and only the blind one is incapable of seeing it.	Bayah to Khilafah		x
	37	2	24	So obey the command of Allah to unite and not to divide, and do not listen to the evil scholars nor obey those leaders who call you to remain disunited, divided with your various groups, and scattered.	Bayah to Khilafah		x

Vol. 11 From the battle of Ahzab to the war of colalitions	10	1	12	Allah c revealed the Qur'ān and the Sunnah to our Prophet Muhammad g so that mankind would study them and practice them. This was the religion of Islam that was conveyed by the Messenger g to his Companions j, which they conveyed to the generations thereafter. Islam was preserved in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, and the Sunnah was preserved in the books of hadīth. If a Muslim with understanding of the Arabic language picked up the Qur'ān, or Sahīh al-Bukhārī, or Sahīh Muslim, he would not require encyclopedic knowledge to be able to understand and practice his religion overall, for learning its basics was facilitated for him by Allah c. He made tawhīd and īmān from the simplest matters that any layman could understand. Similarly is the case of many definite rulings of Islam, including the obligation to unite in one body, appoint a single leader, and hear and obey him, as the proofs in the Sharī'ah and the evidences inside the creation are so many that a person with a sound fitrah, even if he were	No Madhab		x

			mostly ignorant, would not be able to overlook this obligation.			
	11	1	42	The second principle [after the obligation of tawhīd and prohibition of shirk] is that Allah ordered with unity regarding the religion and prohibited division within it.	Jamah/Khilafah		x
	19	1	40	one to be prepared to reject his own people when they fall into kufr and shirk, and not to remain attached to them on account of tribal or blood ties. If this is the case with one's own people with whom a common lineage is shared, how much more so in the case of those with whom one shares nothing more than a superficial characteristic such as skin color!	al-walaa wal baraa		x

20	1	35	"We perform jihād so that Allah's word becomes supreme and the religion becomes completely for Allah.	Jihad		x
21	2	4	And as Allah informs us, the answer to any coalition of disbelievers seeking to wage war against Islam and the Muslims is for the Ummah to strengthen its walā' and barā'.	al-walaa wal baraa		x
22	1	1	Nisa: 97-99	Hijra	x	
22	1	11	Rasūlullāh g said, "Allah b does not accept any deed from a mushrik after he accepts Islam until he departs from the mushrikīn and goes to the Muslims"	Hijra		x
35	1	26	Tawbah: 111	Jihad	x	
38	2	24	our killed soldiers are in the gardens of Paradise while their dead soldiers are in the dungeons of Hellfire.	Shadah		x
54	2	4	If one is held back from hijrah for whatever reason, he is not excused from performing jihād against the enemies of Islam near him. {O you who have believed, fight those adjacent to you of the disbelievers and let them find in you harshness. And know that Allah is with the	Jihad		x

				righteous} [At-Tawbah: 123].			
Vol 12. Just Terror	33	2	37	And this Khilāfah would not be safe if not for those Allah chose to guard its frontlines. May Allah reward the murābitīn, muqātilīn, and shuhadā' with great good in both the Dunyā and Ākhirah.	Jihad		x
	47	2	23	The answer is that nothing has changed except that the opportunity for reward from Allah c is now greater.	Patience		x
					Jihad		
Vol 13. The Rafidah	8	3	32	However, the reason to kill them now is even greater, as Allah c said, {So whoever aggresses against you, then aggress against him the like of which he aggressed against you} [Al-Baqarah: 194].	Kiling		x
	21	1	1	The best shuhada are those who fight in the front tanks. They do no turn their faces aside until they are killed. They will roll about in the loftiest chambers of Jannah. Allah will laugh being pleased with a slave during a deed of his, then there is no reckoning for him.	Shadah		x

	29	1	1	{So fight in the cause of Allah; you are not held responsible except for yourself}.' And for this reason, it is incumbent on every believer to wage jihād, even if he has to do so alone.	Jihad		x
	29	1		{So fight in the cause of Allah; you are not held responsible except for yourself. And encourage the believers [to fight]}	Jihad		x
Vol. 14 The Murtadd Brotherhood							
Vol. 15. Break the cross.	27	2	10	Regardless of where you are, know that pledging allegiance is an obligation upon you, as is listening to your leader, the Caliph, and obeying his command. Allah's Messenger g said, "The Muslim must listen and obey in what he loves and what he hates, as long as he is not commanded with a sin. If he is commanded with a sin, there is neither listening nor obeying (in that sin)" (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)	Bayah to Khilafah		x

27	2	18	Rush to perform hijrah (emigration) to the land of Islam, where the Shari'ah is in full application. Hijrah is a sign of both one's love for unity and his adherence to the Sunnah of Allah's Messenger g. This was reiterated as a direct order from Amirul-Muminin, who said, "O Muslims everywhere, whoever is capable of performing hijrah to the Islamic State, then let him do so, because hijrah to the land of Islam is obligatory"	Hijra		x
28	1	13	The blood of the disbelievers is obligatory to spill by default. The command is clear. Kill the disbelievers, as Allah c said, "Then kill the polytheists wherever you find them" (At-Tawbah 5).	Killing		x
28	2	19	Likewise, as they haphazardly kill Muslims in their war against the mujahidin, it becomes even more obligatory for you to attack the Crusader nations and their citizens in their homelands,	Killing		x

	31	2	20	So in the end, you cannot bring an indefinite halt to our war against you. At most, you could only delay it temporarily. "And fight them until there is no fitnah [paganism] and [until] the religion, all of it, is for Allah" (Al-Baqarah 193)	Killing		x
	38	2	11	"I have nothing to do with any Muslim who resides amongst the pagans." His companions asked, "O Allah's Messenger, why is that?" He replied, "They should not be able to see each other's camp fires (or lights)" (Abu Dawud and at-Tirmidhi)	Hijra		x
	69	2	20	Follow the example of the lions in France and Belgium, the example of the blessed couple in California, and the examples of the knights in Orlando and Nice. If you do so then your reward is with Allah and you will have no regrets when you meet Him.	Killing		x
	78	1	7	many people in Crusader countries express shock and even disgust that Islamic State leadership "uses religion to justify violence." Indeed, waging jihad – spreading the rule of Allah by the sword – is an obligation found in the Quran, the word	Killing	x	

				of our Lord			

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