

**INTELLIGENCE, SECURITY  
AND INTERDISCIPLINARITY**

**TERRORIST PUBLICATIONS.  
RUMIYAH MAGAZINE: SHORT MONOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS**

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**Abstract**

*Rumiyah is a classic example of the effects of that globalization has and of the relationship that appears between mass media and terrorism. Terrorist groups have always been concerned about the degree of loyalty of its members, on the one hand, and attracting new supporters, on the other. In this direction they have developed successful editorial projects. One of these editorial projects is Rumiyah magazine. Using the content analysis method, this article is a monographic analysis of the twelve issues of Rumiyah magazine. The main purpose of this approach is to understand the narrative discourse of the terrorist group and the way its identity is constructed.*

**Keywords:** *Islamic State, Rumiyah, mass media, terrorism, monograph.*

In an extremely interconnected and digitalized world in which anyone can create content, the laws of journalism change. Helpful and harmful at the same time, internet and social media offer everyone a platform to express themselves. Having seen the usefulness of mass media since the '80's, terrorist groups have used mass media and, after that, the internet, as a vector in promoting their ideals and objectives. The relationship being established between terrorist groups and mass media is described by the vast majority of researchers as a symbiotic relationship. Terrorism cannot exist without mass media, while mass media enjoy the benefits resulting from the terrorists' activity, the two reciprocally influencing each other.

Terrorist groups use mass media in order to legitimate the actions they promote, in order to draw attention and to gain

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recognition. Their strategy goes beyond and stops, also, over the issues related to legitimizing their cause, gathering respect, sympathy and new adepts.

Aware of the role of publishing in promoting their aims and in forming a harmonious community, the contemporary world's great terrorist groups have developed true publishing houses, which are used as engines for promoting their own ideas. As such, terrorist publishing is a reality and, during the last years, it has become a constant for building terrorist groups. Al Qaeda, Hamas, or the Islamic State, the newer terrorist group, have developed, within their ranks, media departments dealing with publishing and spreading publications, resembling famous western publishing successes. While Westerners are used to reading *Foreign Policy* or *Cosmopolitan*, *Inspire Magazine*, *Azan Magazine* or *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* magazines are required reading for the individual in contact with terrorist groups.

This work aims at analysing one of these terrorist publications, namely the Islamic State's latest editorial project, the *Rumiyah Magazine*. The approach is a monographic one at the end of which an overall image of the magazine is given. From the ideological perspective, the image was built using the document analysis tool. The magazine's twelve issues have been analysed from the point of view of the following elements: the name of the publication, the type, the timeliness, the format and the content. The reasoning behind our attempt is related to the need to understand in detail how the terrorist group's narrative speech is built.

### **The Islamic State and Mass-Media production**

Having Al Qaeda in Iraq and the Iraqi Islamic State as predecessors, the Islamic State, or ISIS, represent the new wave and "a new step in Jihadism" (Al-Istrabadi, Ganguly, 2018), being, in this moment, the greatest threat to regional security and, in some cases, even to international security. Taking advantage of the social, economic and institutional chaos, ISIS was successful in developing in the shadows and in drawing the attention of the entire international stage. The terrorist group's real echo starts when it becomes capable of recording astonishing progresses in conquering the Iraqi and Syrian

territory, a success which reached its peak with conquering the town of Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq. In June 2014 the leaders of the terrorist group issue a statement which has been unique in the history of any Jihadi movement: the declaration of the Caliphate is the moment which declares ISIS as a terrorist group standing apart.

The *Dabiq* magazine is published during this geopolitical context. With a modern look, the terrorist magazine is, often, compared with Western publications like *People* or *Cosmopolitan*. The publication's digital début took place one month after conquering the city of Mossul, on July 5th 2014, and announced the terrorist group's most important moment: proclaiming the Caliphate, on a day filled with symbolism, the first day of Ramadan. The symbolism of the day in which the announcement has been made by network's declared leader is very important and loaded with meanings. During this solemn moment, the leaders of ISIS have chosen to proclaim the creation of the Islamic Caliphate and of the Islamic State. "Raise your head high for today, by Allah's grace; you have a state and Khilafan, which will return you dignity, might, rights and leadership" (*Dabiq*, 2014). The ISIS publishing team has continuously kept on publishing and, in 2018; the *Dabiq* magazine reached fourteen editions.

The Islamic State's propaganda machine is formed by teams located from West Africa all the way to Afghanistan, dealing with spreading the Caliphate's brand (winter 2015). The marketing policy and strategy are well set and aim at quantity but, also, at the quality of the materials they supply. The materials promote the narrations in a continuous dynamic. More than that, the propaganda effort is centred both on the international public (motivation for which the publications have been translated in more languages) as well as on the local public, who must agree with the ideas of the organizers. For the local public, an Arab-speaking one, the local marketing trend is not just a digital one. In the territory conquered by it, the Islamic State has created more nuqat *i'lamyya*, true centres specialized in popularizing the group's ideology. These media centres publish and distribute CD's and DVD's to the locals, especially children and teens, the group which is mostly targeted by the organization. In certain moments, these centres have become mobile in order to be able to cover as much territory as possible and in

order to spread the network's ideology as efficiently as possible (Zellin, 2018).

For the Islamic State, the *Dabiq* magazine is not the organization's first attempt at publishing. Before this publication appeared, the Islamic State was dealing with printing and popularizing *Islamic State News* and *Islamic State Report*, two publications which kept the readers up to date in relation to the progress registered in the war to proclaim the Caliphate – the organization's ultimate ideal. The *Dabiq* magazine is born from the combination between the two publications (*Islamic State News* and *Islamic State Report*) and the addition of a powerful religious accent (Gambhir, 2015). Through the Al HayatCenter, the *Dabiq* magazine aims at offering updates from the battlefields in relation to those who fight against the unbelievers, offering administrative reports in relation to the evolution of the Caliphate proclaimed and, last but not least, the magazine is a place for expressing the religious ideology, which is the base of the newly formed state.

### **The *Rumiyah* magazine**

The first number of *Rumiyah* magazine, ISIS' second publishing project, appears online in an interesting geopolitical context. The period before the year 2016 has been, for the terrorist group, a moment of territorial expansion and extraordinary gaining. In the meanwhile, the international coalitions have been successful in conquering back many of these territories, and the group has found itself defeated many times. One of the cross-roads moments took place in October 2016, when the city of *Dabiq*, a city with an important symbolism for the terrorist group, has been freed. Not only was the name of the city also the name of the successful editorial project, but this town was to be the place where the crusaders and Allah's courageous troops would have met for a last battle which would have ended, in their view, with the triumph of Islam. For ISIS, losing the control over the town of *Dabiq* has meant delaying the Islamic Armageddon they were imagining, the end of the *Dabiq* editorial project, which lost its legitimacy and the début of a new terrorist publication, *Rumiyah* magazine.

Therefore, *Rumiyah* is the replacement and the continuation of *Dabiq* magazine. This is published within the same agency (Al Hayat Centre) and is available online since the end of 2016. It can be read in more languages: English, French, German, Russian or even Indonesian (Ghosh, Pooja, 2017).

**The name of the publication** is loaded with significations. It refers to the city of Rome, the place where the Jihadi fighters will rest after having conquered the world. Rome is a place with a separate meaning, desired throughout history by Muslim empires, a place of reference for Christianity (especially for the Catholic one) and a symbol for Western civilization. This time, Rome is seen as the place where the last confrontation between the Islamic fighters and their enemies will take place.

**The publication's motto** explains the meaning of the title. „O *muwahhidin*, rejoice, for by Allah, we will not rest from our jihad except beneath the olive trees of *Rumiyah* (Rome)”. Abu Hamzah al Muhajir, known as Abu Musab al-Zarqawi' successor, is the author of the motto on the frontpage of each issue of the publication. The quote is identified on all the covers of the publication.

**Type of magazine:** *Rumiyah* is a magazine that deals with religious propaganda. It uses symbols, an allegoric language rich in religious images and citations and it aims at “manipulating the collective aptitudes” (Anton, 2007). According to Guy Durandin (Reiffel, 2008), propaganda aims at exercising an influence on personalities in order to generate certain behaviours. Through it “thought is short-circuited, the adherence to orthodoxy is provoked and orthodox religious practice is favoured” (Reiffel, 2006). The same thing happens also in the case of *Dabiq* magazine. In its pages, it uses religious citations, invitations aimed at causing a specific behaviour. This type of behaviour has more hypostases. A first hypostasis is the one represented by the concept of *hijrah*, which requires all the believers to return back to the Islamic State. This is in addition to the idea of violence which must be shown against all those who do not share the Islamic State's values. The narrative speech is based on the values of violent Islam, on demonizing the enemy and on repeating certain important issues (governing the caliphate, war and, of course, religion

as supra-issue). The information is used with political and military purposes.

In his work *Disinformation, source of war (2000)*, Vladimir Volkoff offers a matrix that must be followed when analysing propaganda publications. At *Dabiq* magazine' level, this matrix structures as follows:

<b>PROPAGANDA IN RUMIYAH MAGAZINE</b>	
<b>Group of individuals which must be influenced</b>	Nowhere clearly specified. The magazine is dedicated to all those who believe in the values and actions promoted by the Islamic State. As such, two categories can be distinguished: (A) members of the Muslim community and (b) others who can be attracted and converted to Islam.
<b>Establishing the objectives</b>	They are connected to attracting new supporters of the group, <i>Rumiyah</i> works as a liaison channel between the new "state" formed and its citizen.
<b>Organization created to accomplish them</b>	The Al Hayat Media Centre is responsible with publishing and spreading the magazine.
<b>Campaign Plan</b>	Unknown
<b>Command Centre</b>	Unknown but it could be located within the area Of the territories conquered by the Islamic State (Syria and Northern Iraq).

Tabel 1: Propaganda in *Rumiyah* (Source: author's idea)

The eleven issues of *Rumiyah* magazine analysed are gathered in a **corpus** of 508 pages. The number of pages for issue grows exponentially once with the passing of time. In the case of *Rumiyah* magazine, the difference between the first and the last issue is not as considerable as in the case of *Dabiq* magazine. The first issue of the

publication goes on for 38 pages while the last issue has 46 pages. The longest issue of the magazine is number 11, published in June 2017 “*Rumiyah* – the rulling on Ghaninmah Fay and Ihtitab” and goes on for 60 pages.

From the point of view of **timeliness**, the *Rumiyah* magazine is published monthly. The publishing début takes place in September 2016, five months after the last issue of *Dabiq* magazine. Beginning with September of 2016 and until the month of June 2017, *Rumiyah* magazine appears constantly with the mention that, in December (2016) two issues is published.

**The format** is A4, glossy, destined to attract the reader’s attention. The choice for this format is evident. Through a modern design enriched with illustrations, the publishers of the magazine are aware of the fact that the texts and the messages they are transmitting will be easier to be understood by the reader, and more attractive.

**Page layout:** The speech is rarely interrupted by illustrations. The analysis of the magazines highlights a symmetric and proportional trend. The alignment of the text is done on two columns.

**The illustration** present within the pages of the magazine is a modern one, made in a professional and abundant manner from the point of view of the images representing the soldiers of the Islamic State, the atrocities they produce and the group’s military arsenal. The images are brutal, violent, even catastrophic and uncensored. The characters are exclusively males, and represent religious leaders, soldiers, western leaders and children. A novelty element brought by *Rumiyah* magazine is given by the infographics showing in graphically attractive manner essential aspects related to the group’s military successes or other issues.

From the point of view of graphics, the cover of *Rumiyah* magazine appears, from our point of view, as being very bland. These changes after issue number eight, the cover getting closer to the identity concept used by its predecessor. The covers of *Rumiyah* magazine showed, on the left side, the issue’s content while, starting with issue number eight, the content’s index no longer appeared on the first page.

The publication's structure is an organized and, relatively, constant one. Besides the editorial called "Foreword" or "Feature", the eleven issues of Rumiya magazine show five categories of sections which are found within the magazines. These five sections are: *Articles*, *Exclusive*, *Sisters*, *Interview* și *News*. Picture number 2 shows the frequency with which they appear within the eleven issues. The *Articles* section and the *News* section can be found in each issue of the magazine. From the point of view of continuity, the *News* section is the most continuous and most organized. In each of the magazine's issues, it shows the Islamic State's military operations,

The *Articles* section does, also, have a few sub-sections who appear throughout more issues. Among those: paths to victory, establishing the Islamic State or among the believers are men. The last sub-section has been kept from the *Dabiq* magazine. In a logic that follows the section from *Dabiq*, Form Pages of History, the Paths to victory section shows important elements who contributed to building the Islamic State. The Establishing the Islamic State section shows the steps that need to be taken in order to create a state according to the true meaning of the word, while the Among the believers are men section continues with the same idea as in *Dabiq*, the one related to glorifying the important members of the group.

Together with these sub-sections, the *Articles* section includes articles like: "Brutality and severity towards the Kuffar" (Nr.2), "The pledge to fight to the death" (Nr.4), "The flames of justice" (Nr.5) or "A Mujahids memories from the battle of Mosul" (Nr.12).

The *Exclusive* section is present in all the eleven issues, except in issues number five and twelve. It includes an interesting sub-section, one like "DIY - Do it yourself" type. Just Terror Tactics reminds of Open Source Jihad, which was present in *Inspire* magazine. The section was designed with the purpose of offering inspiration and knowledge to all those who intend to fight in the name of Allah. The publishers consider that, in order to organize successful attacks, you don't need to be a military, an expert or a martial arts master. With the proper training – offered by this sub-section, and with the proper means, anyone can organize successful operations that end up with wounding more unbelievers and with terrorizing a whole nation (*Rumiya*, 2018).

Throughout more issues, the readers are instructed how to carry out attacks with knife (what are the advantages and the best tactics), how to choose the best cars in order to carry out car attacks or how to plan and to carry out kidnappings and hostage takings. The “valuable” lessons the leaders can learn represent indicators that might be used by spy agencies in the fight against this group.

The *Sisters* section is dedicated to the woman who is seen as an important partner in the fight against the unbelievers while in the Interview section, in the four issues in which it is present, the Interview section shows interviews with important members of the network.

Another element that deserves to be specified is the “Selected 10 videos from the Wilayat of the Islamic State” page. The section takes the shape of a page and it can be found within the issues 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 9 and 11. It shows ten video recommendations.

<b>The timeliness of the sections in <i>Rumiyah</i></b>		
	<b>SECTION</b>	<b>PUBLISHED</b>
1.	Articles <i>Paths to victory (Nr.2, Nr.3, Nr.5, Nr.6)</i> <i>Establishing the Islamic State (Nr.8, Nr.9, Nr.10)</i> <i>Among the believers are men (Nr.10, Nr.11)</i> <i>Important advice for the Mujahdin (Nr. 11, Nr.12)</i>	Nr.1, Nr.2, Nr.3, Nr.4, Nr.5, Nr.6, Nr.8, Nr.9, Nr.10, Nr.11, Nr.12.
2.	Exclusive <i>Just terror tactics (Nr.2, Nr.3, Nr.5, Nr.9)</i> <i>Important memorandums (Nr.2, Nr.10)</i>	Nr.2, Nr.3, Nr.4, Nr.6, Nr.8, Nr.9, Nr.10, Nr.11.
3.	Sisters	Nr.5, Nr.6, Nr.10, Nr.11.
4.	Interview	Nr.5, Nr.6, Nr.9, Nr.10.
5.	News <i>Military and covert operations</i>	Nr.1, Nr.2, Nr.3, Nr.4, Nr.5, Nr.6, Nr.8, Nr.9, Nr.10, Nr.11, Nr.12

Tabel 2: Timeliness of the sections in *Rumiyah* (Source: author’s idea)

The following are the types used within the articles: (A) types of opinion (editorials, commentaries and interviews) and types of information (useful news and reports). The type of report can be found best within the News section, while the interviews and commentaries can be found both in the Articles as well as in the Exclusive sections.

**The style** in which the articles are written is a religious, persuasive one. The call for Allah and for his Messenger is especially frequent, and the lesson the reader receives about Islam are especially useful if he wants to become a model member of the Islamic State. The mean for the victory of the Islamic State and of Allah's teachings is faith, and the lack of it does nothing but to allow the unbelieving enemy to win: "With the absence of this religion and the implementation of something other than Allah'sshari'ah, kufr becomes dominant and oppression prevails, and to cure this, the people pursue various paths" (Rumiyah, 2018). The religious message promoted by the magazine focuses, in a strategic and extremely intelligent manner, on the feelings of the readers, who can be easily influenced toward disapprove of other religions, even violently. The references from the Quran, or from other books considered by Islamic theology as being holy, confer value and legitimacy to the content.

The articles signed by **authors** are a few. Throughout the 11 issues of the magazine, we have identified fourteen signed articles. The authors of the articles are important members of the group. Among these we mention: the organization's speaker (who signs articles in issues number four and nine), Abu Musab az-Zarqawi ("And likewise the messenger are afflicted, then the final outcome is theirs" in issues number eight and nine), group leader, or Abu Dujnah al-Bengali (Tamim Chowdhury) former leader of Military and covert operations in Bengal. Beside these, issues number two, three and five include articles signed by Abū Hamzah al-Muhājir ("Paths to victory"), author of some sections of *Dabiq*, which shows the publication's editorial continuity.

The publisher who publishes the magazine is the Al Hayat Media Centre, known in the world of terrorist publishing for its support of terrorist groups.

A careful analysis of the issues of the magazine forms an overall picture related to the terror group's evolution and can contribute to

understanding the latter while understanding how the issue of fear is built contributes to understanding the agenda promoted by the organization. The above-mentioned elements form the group's identity and help not only in attracting new adepts but, also, in understanding the organization and the philosophy it promotes.

## Conclusions

The *Rumiyah* Magazine promoted so powerfully by the Islamic state terrorist group in Iraq and Syria represents a clear demonstration of the importance given by the group to this kind of publishing projects. Unlike other forms of online presence which can be volatile, temporary or channelled toward certain aspects, this kind of magazine has an integrating, stable, nature and is successful in transmitting a large volume of information's aimed at keeping the reader up to date in relation to the evolution of the organization but, also, emotions through which they successfully attract new adepts.

The analysis of *Rumiyah* magazine represents an incursion in how the group's narrative speech is built. We have observed the symbolism of the title they have chosen, the religious and persuasive style and the logics of the sections representing the skeleton of a religious propaganda publication. The editorial project carried out by the Islamic State represents a mean of indoctrination and of attracting new adepts but, especially, an incursion in the terrorist group's philosophy. The Islamic State's brand is built through the attacks carried out by the group and is solidified through what has been promoted by it.

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