



ISIS Rhetoric for the Creation of the *Ummah*

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Introduction

Discourse forms and shapes itself to create and reflect our social world. Therefore, language cannot be measured as neutral (Wijsen, 2012, p. 77). Not only does it outline, regulate and strengthen our understanding of the world, but language also sets out the actions accessible to us, while eliminating and delegitimizing other worldviews (Wijsen, 2012, p. 71). In this respect discourse serves as an instrument of influence and control often used by groups motivated for power to generate and preserve hegemonic regimes (Fairclough, 1992).

The purpose of this paper is to examine the linguistic strategy employed by ISIS as a means through which it constructs the notion of the Muslim *Ummah* (Muslim community), which seeks to lay emphasis on the unity of an international Muslim community based off the supremacy of Islam. A Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) is applied for the study of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's sermon on 4 July 2014 through which he ceremoniously declared the formation of the Caliphate (Islamic State) and himself as the self-proclaimed Caliph (successor of the prophet Muhammad and politico-religious ruler of the *Ummah*). Using CDA theory, I claim that the discourse employed by Al-Baghdadi generates a different communal self from a worldwide Muslim population who may have experienced marginalization, or may have been stereotyped and depersonalized due to their religious affiliations and ethnic origins, in their countries of residence. It is by means of this discourse that Al-Baghdadi structures the model of an *Ummah* devoted to the Caliphate in two ways: chiefly, by calling upon Islam to form a singular global Muslim body while speaking of far-reaching Quranic appeals for *jihad* and the creation of a Caliphate; and then, via the structuring of an undiscerning rival, one that clashes with the "camp of Islam" – "the camp of *kufir*." Al-Baghdadi arranges his rhetoric so that "the camp of *kufir*" is held accountable for worldwide Muslim isolation. He offers a narrative that is all-embracing and simplistic towards Muslims, fixating on particular evils they may face and a sole answer: devotion to the Islamic State - a utopia for all those who subscribe to the terror group's version of faith. By redefining "terrorism" and the deeds a truthful Muslim - one that is dedicated to Islamic State's dogmatic political program - ought to take, Al-Baghdadi forms the boundaries by which ISIS judges one to be an appropriate adherent of the *Ummah* – the brother or sister that is prepared to display indifference to the laws of their host country and be labeled as a "terrorist." He speaks of the responsibility one has to travel to IS-established land and join the fight. The rationale supporting this discourse is transparent: Al-Baghdadi formulates his sermon in a manner interpretive of religious discourse in order to relate it to his strategy for a Caliphate by inviting all dissatisfied Muslims to perform *hijrah* and to partake in *jihad* from all over the world and to identify themselves as its *Ummah*.

Terrorist groups whose actions have been established upon religious tenets have authority and justice allotted to them and are consequently in a position to have their violence endorsed through their power. In all three Abrahamic monotheistic faiths (Christianity, Islam, and Judaism), "there is language that has been interpreted not only to permit killing, but where killing in the name of God becomes a sacred obligation" (Post, 2007, p.160). That said, Islam places emphasis upon the central spiritual objective as one of pacifism and harmony (Juergensmeyer, 2000, p. 79). The Quran guides its followers to "slay not the life that God has made sacred" (Holy Quran, 6:152). However, force and violent actions are now and then permissible as means of penance and are from time to time deemed essential for "defending the faith" (Juergensmeyer, 2000, p. 79). In this sense, upholding the pureness of "religious existence is thought to be a matter of *jihad*, a word that literally means 'striving' and is often

translated as ‘holy war’” (Juergensmeyer, M. 2000, p.79). The process of convincing and generating approval – of institutionalizing *jihad* - goes beyond propaganda; in fact, it requires the establishment of an entirely novel lexicon, an account that bolsters and promotes endorsement and concurrently suppresses any reservations. In this case, language constitutes the apparatus by which brutality is driven.

The objective of jihadists is to appeal to and recruit as many to their group of violence and to achieve that they produce cracks in lexical priming. The Islamic State produces such cracks in priming so as to target sidelined and impressionable Muslims. For a subset of this alienated susceptible Muslims such cracks develop into productive priming’s, which result in the attraction of this subgroup to brutality. Occasionally the call for violence is inconspicuous. Since identities are shaped and preserved through language, particular words can be colored negatively or positively in order to create patterns of association. For example, the word *peace* is a projecting lexeme with seemingly positive connotations, while *victory* although also positive has a stronger priming to war, and a word like *path* has neither positive nor negative associations. Theologically loaded vocabulary items are used throughout Al-Baghdadi’s sermon. The terrorism itself need not be realized lexically, with some words seeming moderate. The violent significance, however, is inferred through lexeme associations. Al-Baghdadi’s sermon was clearly designed to demarcate the boundaries between the in-group and the out-group, namely the Muslims belonging to the *Ummah* of Islam and the *kufir* outside of it. The repetition and the importance placed upon the differences of the two opposing groups is essential in order to inscribe the basic makings of insiders (the good guys) and outsiders (the bad guys). Pronouns like “them” and “they” are applied to draw a clear line between “the camp of the Jews, the crusaders, their allies, and with them the rest of the nations and religions of *kufir*” and that of “the camp of Muslims and the *mujahidin*” represented by the “we” pronoun.

This paper’s objective is to briefly discuss notions of CDA and the importance of lexical choices in discourse and analyze Al-Baghdadi’s sermon while providing examples throughout as to how, via the use of CDA: i) his selected discourse cements his power status as self-proclaimed Caliph; ii) offer evidence as to how he merges Islam and religious scholarship with ISIS rhetoric and in doing so fastens and legitimizes the terrorist movement and his political project in the eyes of vulnerable Muslims; iii) describe how his lexical choices can demonstrate the vast outpouring of foreign recruits into the Islamic State.

Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA is employed in the analysis of text in order to ascertain how and what “structures, strategies or other properties of text, talk, verbal interaction or communicative events play a role” (van Dijk, 1993b, p.250) in the production of “social power abuse, dominance, and inequality” (van Dijk, 2001, p. 352; van Dijk, 1996). An essential notion of CDA is that linguistic choices are ideologically and sociologically driven, in other words orators opt for vocabulary and grammar choices, which are consciously or unconsciously “principled and systematic” (Fowler & Hodge, 1979, p.188). An individual or group assumes power if they control the actions and minds of other groups (van Dijk, 2001, p. 352, 354-355). As such there are four principles necessary for the examination of ideology: a) “Emphasize positive things about Us”; b) “Emphasize negative things about Them”; c) “De-emphasize negative things about Us”; d) “De-emphasize positive things about Them” (van Dijk, 2001, p. 355; van Dijk,

2000, p. 44). Contributing to the exemplification of Us versus Them is not just the manner in which an individual or group is defined, characterized with positive and negative traits by another, and painted with a brush of victimization but also through the citation of established texts or individuals to further one's argument and the lexical choices to present the Others in an illegitimate or threatening fashion to the group of Us, the civilized (van Dijk, 2004; van Dijk, 2001, p. 355; van Dijk, 2000, p. 44). Fairclough's (1995, p. 97) method aims "to make visible through analysis, and to criticize, connections between properties of texts and social processes and relations (ideologies, power relations) which are generally not obvious to people who produce and interpret those texts, and whose effectiveness depends upon this opacity." Discourse is socially "constitutive of (i) social identities, (ii) social relations and (iii) systems of knowledge and beliefs" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 134). Van Dijk (1995, p. 19) assumes that ideologies "indirectly influence the personal cognition of group members" when they follow the discourse. Beside Fairclough's (1995, p. 134) notion of intertextuality, Wodak and Ludwig (1999, p. 12) contest that "discourse...is always historical...it is connected synchronically and diachronically with other communicative events which are happening at the same time or which have happened before." Wodak et al. (2009, p. 35) concentrate on the linguistic ways involved in the discursive construction and reproduction of national identity, especially on lexical items which "serve to construct unification, unity, sameness, difference, uniqueness, origin, continuity, gradual or abrupt change, autonomy, heteronomy and so on." Speeches and texts are interpreted alongside ones upbringing and life experiences and therefore prior knowledge they have had about the topic in question is conditional (van Dijk, 1993a). With respect to this analysis of Baghdadi's discourse, the awareness of victimization felt by many Muslims, the significance of the *Ummah*, the Iraq war, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were but a few contexts that were considered.

Study of Al-Baghdadi's sermon

Due to its length, I have divided Al-Baghdadi's speech into the following five parts:

1. Theological foundations set out (paragraphs 1 - 13).
2. Declares the concept of *jihad* and *mujahidin* as vital to Islam and to the path of Allah. Introduces the concept of a new Caliphate (paragraphs 14 - 24).
3. Points out the suffering of Muslims worldwide; their defense is in the hands of those willing to wage *jihad* in the name of the Islamic State. Defines the enemy within a world order framework of two opposing camps: believers and disbelievers (paragraphs 25 - 34).
4. Defines "terrorism" as seen from the Islamic State's perspective (paragraphs 35 - 41).
5. Describes the Caliphate and calls on all those who can emigrate to do so with specific calls to certain professions (paragraphs 42 - 52).

Al-Baghdadi's sermon was published by ISIS's media arm - Al-Hayat Media Center, and is titled "A Message to the *Mujahidin* and the Muslim *Ummah* in the Month of Ramadan from Amirul-Mu'minin Abu Bakr Al-Husayni Al-Qurashi Al-Baghdadi" (available here https://ia902501.us.archive.org/2/items/hym3_22aw/english.pdf). In what follows, the entire text of the speech is reproduced using the same paragraph numbers as the translated version. The sections of the speech below that are in **bold** are direct quotes from the Quran.

The below analysis and construal of the ideological features within Al-Baghdadi's speech attempt to associate the language utilized with social processes and to interpret possible concealed ideologies within this text. By using the historically laden title of Muslim rulers – *Amirul-Mu'minin* (“Commander of the Faithful”) – to address himself, Al-Baghdadi aims to legitimize his power over both the *Mujahidin* and the entire *Ummah* from the onset. He, therefore, possesses and accepts the power he has bestowed upon himself to guide the *Ummah* on politico-religious issues. His speech commences:

- (1) Truly all praise belongs to Allah. We praise Him, and seek His help and His forgiveness. We seek refuge with Allah from the evils of our souls and from the consequences of our deeds. Whomever Allah guides can never be led astray, and whomever Allah leads astray can never be guided.
- (2) I testify that there is no god except Allah – alone without any partners – and I testify that Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) is His slave and Messenger.
- (3) **{O you who have believed, fear Allah as he should be feared and do not die except as Muslims}** [Āl ‘Imrān: 102].
- (4) **{O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed Allah is ever, over you, an Observer}** [An Nisā’: 1].
- (5) **{O you who have believed, fear Allah and speak words of appropriate justice. He will amend for you your deeds and forgive you your sins. And whoever obeys Allah and His messenger has certainly achieved a great triumph}** [Al-Ahzāb: 70-71].

Al-Baghdadi's sermon illustrates theological bedrocks of Islam, much like any other religious speech would: by thanking and recognizing Allah. Lexemes like “praise” and “fear” are recurrent throughout to indorse the certainty that a virtuous Muslim must fear Allah, obey Him, and fast during the holy month of Ramadan.

The adoption of the word “testify” to support “that there is no god except Allah” is of immense significance. It constructs Al-Baghdadi as a figure of authority; the supreme Caliph to his Caliphate. This is a strategic move that Al-Baghdadi makes as it cements him as the supreme leader of the jihadist camp and in effect places Zawahiri, the leader of Al-Qaeda, in the sidelines. This declaration is a reaction that is partly due to the threatened status of Al-Baghdadi within the global jihadist camp ranks following a dispute between Al-Baghdadi and Zawahiri, which caused the latter to openly criticize and expel ISIS from Al-Qaeda's associations.

By quoting *An Nisā’: 1* and other religious narratives, Al-Baghdadi reaffirms the supremacy and omnipresence of Allah and traces creationism, while simultaneously assuming validity for himself as the spokesperson of the terror group he leads and in part as the envoy of Allah.

- (6) As for what follows:
- (7) Allah (the Exalted) said, **{O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous}** [Al-Baqarah: 183].

- (8) **{The month of Ramadan [is that] in which was revealed the Quran, a guidance for the people and clear proofs of guidance and criterion. So whoever sights [the new moon of] the month, let him fast it} [Al-Baqarah: 185].**
- (9) We congratulate the ummah (people) of Islam, in the East and in the West, on the advent of the blessed month of Ramadan, and we praise Allah (the Exalted) for allowing us to reach this virtuous month.
- (10) Al-Bukhārī and Muslim reported on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) who narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said, **“Whoever fasts the month of Ramadan, having faith and anticipating a reward, will have his past sins forgiven.”** He also said, **“Whoever stands in prayer in the month of Ramadan, having faith and anticipating a reward, will have his past sins forgiven.”**

Ramadan is linked to the revelation of the Quran, as a means of enforcing fasting, and to the authority of Allah. Passages from the Quran, thought of by all schools of Islam as the “central theophany of Islam, the verbatim Word of God revealed to the Prophet by the archangel Gabriel and transmitted by him in turn to his companions who both memorized and recorded it” (Nasr, 1994, p. 445), are weaved throughout Al-Baghdadi’s speech. Elements of religious discourse drawn from the Quran are employed so that a direct relation between the holiest of Islamic text is drawn to the Islamic State’s political scheme. Associations to “those before” are made in order to reinforce the blessedness and importance of fast.

The notion of the *Ummah* is initially presented and the audience is told that there is no demarcation between Muslims living in the East and those in the West, for indeed the *Ummah* is an all-encompassing concept, one which is not restricted to regions. By emphasizing upon the unification of Muslims, irrespective of their worldwide dispersion, Al-Baghdadi first employs the tactic of crafting similarity amongst variety (the consequence of an egalitarian *Ummah* will be additionally explored further in my analysis of the sermon).

- (11) So congratulations to you, O slaves of Allah, as Allah has allowed you to reach this noble month. Praise Allah and thank Him for having granted you long lives, thereby giving you a chance to correct your past deeds. Meet the month of Ramadan with sincere repentance and truthful resolve.
- (12) **{O you who have believed, repent to Allah with sincere repentance. Perhaps your Lord will remove from you your misdeeds and admit you into gardens beneath which rivers flow [on] the Day when Allah will not disgrace the Prophet and those who believed with him} [At-Tahrīm: 8].**
- (13) **{And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a garden as wide as the heavens and earth, prepared for the righteous} [Āl-‘Imrān: 133].**

Notions of atonement, of transgressions, honesty, praying, and fasting during Ramadan are once again solidified as necessities for the Muslim to reap the rewards of Judgment Day. Such pious accounts echo perpetual, historic ideas established by texts on medieval legendary wars.

- (14) And there is no deed in this virtuous month or in any other month better than jihad in the path of Allah, so take advantage of this opportunity and walk the path of you righteous predecessors. Support the religion of Allah through jihad in the path of Allah. Go forth, O mujahidin in the path of Allah. Terrify the enemies of Allah and seek death in the places where you expect to find it, for the *dunyā* (worldly life) will come to an end, and the hereafter will last forever.

Here, Al-Baghdadi introduces the concept of *jihad* and *mujahidin* as the best way for one to walk in “the path of...righteous predecessors.” A link with the past is frequently made and is complemented with a tone of support and reassurance. Al-Baghdadi cheers on the future *mujahidin*'s and persuades them to fight the enemies of Allah in this temporary life, wherever that may be, to attain eternal existence. These enemies need not have a face; Al-Baghdadi creates a rhetoric whereby if you do not subscribe to his ideology, then you do not subscribe to the Word of Allah and are therefore an enemy of Islam.

- (15) **{So do not weaken and call for peace while you are superior; and Allah is with you and will never deprive you of [the reward of] your deeds. This worldly life is only amusement and diversion}** [Muhammad: 35-36].
- (16) **{And this worldly life is not but diversion and amusement. And indeed, the home of the Hereafter – that is the [eternal] life, if only they knew}** [Al-‘Ankabūt: 64].
- (17) **{But the enduring good deeds are better to your Lord for reward and better for [one’s] hope}** [Al-Kahf: 46].
- (18) And blessed is the one who parts with his *dunyā* in Ramadan and meets his Lord on a day from amongst the days of forgiveness.

Peace is mentioned as an indication of weakness and religion does not tolerate weakness. One must be unwavering in order to remain superior. This world is described as a futile and temporary place where “amusement and diversion” are passing elements and one must not take part in such interferences and diverge from the path of heavenly rewards. Khosrokhavar (2009, p. 30) asserts that “the prerequisite for Jihadism is this philosophy of heroic fearlessness that the Muslim espouses, leaning exclusively on Allah in his fight against the enemy, having no regard for human frailty, and, above all, rejecting compromise and tolerance.”

- (19) O mujahidin in the path of Allah, be monks during the night and be knights during the day. Bring joy to the hearts of a believing people, and show the *tawāghīt* (rulers who claim Allah’s rights) what they are wary of.
- (20) O mujahidin in the path of Allah, truly the matter is that of Allah’s religion and His commodity. You only have one soul, and an appointed time of death that will neither be hastened nor delayed. It is a matter of Paradise and Hellfire, happiness and misery. As for the religion of Allah, then it will be victorious. Allah has promised to bring victory to the religion. And as for Allah’s commodity, then it is precious and valuable. Indeed His commodity

is costly. Indeed His commodity is Paradise. As for the soul, then what a lowly, miserable, wretched soul it is if it does not seek what is with Allah and does not support the religion of Allah.

- (21) By Allah, we will never be mujahidin as long as we are stingy with our lives and our wealth. By Allah, we will never be truthful as long as we do not sacrifice our lives and wealth in order to raise high the word of Allah and bring victory to the religion of Allah.
- (22) **{Indeed, Allah has purchased from the believers their lives and their properties [in exchange] for that they will have Paradise. They fight in the cause of Allah, so they kill and are killed. [It is] a true promise [binding] upon Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Quran. And who is truer to his covenant than Allah? So rejoice in your transaction which you have contracted. And it is that which is the great triumph}** [Al-Tawbah: 111].
- (23) So take up arms, take up arms, O soldiers of the Islamic State! And fight, fight!
- (24) Beware of becoming deluded and losing strength. Beware, for the *dunyā* has come to you reluctantly, so kick it down, trample it, and leave it behind you. Indeed, what is with Allah is better and more lasting.

The reiteration of “O *mujahidin* in the path of Allah” is used for amplification purposes and as an invocation. Al-Baghdadi’s make a comparison between “Paradise and Hellfire, happiness and misery” and explicitly declares that the issue is one of religion, specifically “Allah’s religion.” In order to be considered a *mujahidin*, one must forsake their life and wealth – necessary sacrifices for admittance into “the gardens beneath which rivers flow.” Biblical references are associated with Al-Baghdadi’s speech as he quotes *Al-Tawbah: 111*, which alludes to the Torah and the Gospel in addition to the Quran. Such connotations additionally bolster Al-Baghdadi’s words and supplement theological heft to his sermon, by directly channeling Islam within his political strategy.

The self-proclaimed Caliph, urges Muslims to “take up arms,” something which is repeated for emphasis. He then coins them as “soldiers of the Islamic State.” By referring to the audience as “soldiers of the Islamic State,” he gives them a purpose and associates this movement with Islam to make the undertaking one of a higher calling. This is a crucial point in the sermon as this is the first mention of the “Islamic State” and Al-Baghdadi has primed his audience to believe they are the soldiers of Allah and it is in their hands to restore Islam, with Al-Baghdadi as their Caliph and leader of the new Caliphate – the Islamic State. This augments powerful political and religious authority to the context as the announcement of a Caliphate benefits Al-Baghdadi in leveraging the Islamic State’s territorial advances. At the time of this sermon, ISIS had occupied large swaths of land in Syria and Iraq in addition to the acquisition of critical economic resources and advanced armaments. The above developments contributed in Al-Baghdadi’s self-assurance to not only publicly declare himself as a Caliph but to link his authority to the creation of an Islamic State and thusly to the recognition of the prophecy of a reestablished Caliphate.

- (25) Indeed, the ummah of Islam is watching your jihad with eyes of hope, and indeed you have brothers in many parts of the world being inflicted with the worst kinds of torture. Their honor is being violated. Their blood is being spilled. Prisoners are moaning and crying for help. Orphans and widows are complaining of their plight. Women who have lost their children are weeping. Masājid (plural of masjid) are desecrated and sanctities are violated. Muslims' rights are forcibly seized in China, India, Palestine, Somalia, the Arabian Peninsula, the Caucasus, Shām (the Levant), Egypt, Iraq, Indonesia, Afghanistan, the Philippines, Ahvaz, Iran [by the rāfidah (shia)], Pakistan, Tunisia, Libya, Algeria and Morocco, in the East and in the West.
- (26) So raise your ambitions, O soldiers of the Islamic State! For your brothers all over the world are waiting for your rescue, and are anticipating your brigades. It is enough for you to just look at the scenes that have reached you from Central Africa, and from Burma before that. What is hidden from us is far worse.
- (27) So by Allah, we will take revenge! By Allah, we will take revenge! Even if it takes a while, we will take revenge, and every amount of harm against the ummah will be responded to with multitudes more against the perpetrator.
- (28) **{And those who, when tyranny strikes them, they defend themselves}** [Ash-Shūrā: 39].
- (29) And the one who commences is the more oppressive.

The concept of the *Ummah* is repeated and further outlined to comprise of every Muslim globally. Al-Baghdadi paints these Muslims with a brush of victimization as individuals persecuted and in despair. Even in Muslim nations, Muslims are labeled as underdogs, which is crucial in creating a symbolic divide within society - between the underdogs (the sufferers) and the Other (the subjugators). By way of redressing the dishonor, anger, and frustration amongst Muslims and optimism for a celebrated future, Al-Baghdadi strives to form the Islamic State as a lodestone for Muslims in search of a brotherhood an identity, and a cause to fight for. For these disenfranchised people in search of solidarity, the Caliphate serves as a powerful Islamic empire for believers, reminiscent of the religion's golden age. It is deduced therefore that, without *jihad* and piety to Allah, Muslims worldwide have been repressed by others who have robbed the Muslims of their control (Khosrokhavar, 2009, p. 28). But now the holy war brings with it the emergence of the *Ummah*, a "warm community" (Khosrokhavar, 2009, p. 237). Unlike one's previous "cold" society, this *Ummah* "is more than warm; it is effervescent, and it brings meaning to the life of the believer and assigns an ideal to it, namely the merciless combat against the arrogant Occident where imperialism goes hand in hand with godlessness and moral depravity" (Khosrokhavar, 2009, p. 237).

The use of terms like "inflicted," "moaning," and "plight" is a common discursive psychological warfare technique, used by many terror groups such as Hezbollah for example, to arouse emotions of persecution and sympathy. Al-Baghdadi draws a parallel between plagued Muslims and those who are ill and are weakly confined to hospital beds. Moreover, by applying military jargon such as "soldiers" and "brigades," Al-Baghdadi is buttressing the attitude that his audience are the defenders of the ill-treated and warriors of Allah's religion.

He proceeds to say, “By Allah, we will take revenge” and echoes the declaration, the effect of which is to bond Allah with the retaliation of the *Ummah* against the acts committed upon them.

- (30) Soon, by Allah’s permission, a day will come when the Muslim will walk everywhere as a master, having honor, being revered, with his head raised high and his dignity preserved. Anyone who dares to offend him will be disciplined, and any hand that reaches out to harm him will be cut off.
- (31) So let the world know that we are living today in a new era. Whoever was heedless must now be alert. Whoever was sleeping must now awaken. Whoever was shocked and amazed must comprehend. The Muslims today have a loud, thundering statement, and possess heavy boots. They have a statement that will cause the world to hear and understand the meaning of terrorism, and boots that will trample the idol of nationalism, destroy the idol of democracy and uncover its deviant nature.
- (32) So listen, O ummah of Islam. Listen and comprehend. Stand up and rise. For the time has come for you to free yourself from the shackles of weakness, and stand in the face of tyranny, against the treacherous rulers – the agents of the crusaders and the atheists, and the guards of the jews.
- (33) O ummah of Islam, indeed the world today has been divided into two camps and two trenches, with no third camp present: The camp of Islam and faith, and the camp of kufr (disbelief) and hypocrisy – the camp of the Muslims and the mujahidin everywhere, and the camp of the jews, the crusaders, their allies, and with them the rest of the nations and religions of kufr, all being led by America and Russia, and being mobilized by the jews.
- (34) Indeed the Muslims were defeated after the fall of their khilāfah (caliphate). Then their state ceased to exist, so the disbelievers were able to weaken and humiliate the Muslims, dominate them in every region, plunder their wealth and resources, and rob them of their rights. They accomplished this by attacking and occupying their lands, placing their treacherous agents in power to rule the Muslims with an iron fist, and spreading dazzling and deceptive slogans such as: civilization, peace, co-existence, freedom, democracy, secularism, baathism, nationalism, and patriotism, among other false slogans.

Al-Baghdadi continues with rigid statements and vows with the aid of temporal deixis found in repetitions of “soon,” “today,” and “now.” Phrases like “a day will come,” “a new era,” and “the time has come” grant the air of a new beginning for the *Ummah*.

Al-Baghdadi uses a slave metaphor all through his sermon by identifying his audience as “slaves of Allah” and continues with this metaphor by swearing that the “day will come when the Muslim will walk everywhere as a master...with [their] head raised high.” The use of the lexeme “master” implies that their self-worth will be well-maintained and that Muslims will become the oppressors not the oppressed, a stark contrast from the image of a “slave.” Indeed, he pledges that “...the time has come for you to free yourself from the shackles of weakness;” the term “shackles” representing the slave-like status Muslims have been subjected

to. He likens those waging *jihad* to “soldiers” and expresses their battle encounters by applying language like: “loud,” “thundering,” “heavy boots,” “trample,” “destroy,” “rise,” “camps,” and “trenches.”

There is contrast here also, with phrases like: “Whoever was heedless must now be alert,” “Whoever was sleeping must now awaken,” “Whoever was shocked and amazed must comprehend.” The above three statements are also examples of the rule of three, used in rhetoric to create tension and build up, which is ultimately unconfined as Al-Baghdadi puts a face to the tyrannical perpetrators: “the agents of the crusaders and the atheists, and the jews” – an additional application of the rule of three. Throughout the sermon, the Jews are not capitalized, which could suggest that Al-Baghdadi is endeavoring to dwarf and reduce from them as people.

Now that the enemy has a face, Al-Baghdadi begins to create definitions, starting with the world order and how it “has been divided into two camps and two trenches, with no third camp present.” This classification is of extreme significance as it is here that Al-Baghdadi tells his audience that there is no third option available - one is either with the Islamic State, and therefore a pious Muslim, or against the Islamic State, and consequently a “*kufir*” or a disbeliever. For those unsure as to who these foes are, further explanation is provided: “the camp of the jews, the crusaders, their allies, and with them the rest of the nations and religions of *kufir*, all being led by America and Russia, and being mobilized by the jews.” Upon placing a target on everyone who in essence is not Muslim, Al-Baghdadi goes on to maintain his decree for “*kufir*” blood by claiming historic rationalization. He explains that following the fall of the Caliphate, the “disbelievers [sought to] humiliate the Muslims, dominate them in every region, plunder their wealth and resources, and rob them of their rights.”

The fault is found with deceitful theories such as “civilization, peace, co-existence, freedom, democracy, secularism, baathism, nationalism, and patriotism.” In doing so Al-Baghdadi demonizes these concepts as being products of the *kufir*. Muslims have ended up favoring human-made laws over that of Allah – the ultimate “apogee of godlessness” (Khosrokhavar, 2009, p. 28).

(35) Those rulers continue striving to enslave the Muslims, pulling them away from their religion with those slogans. So either the Muslim pulls away from his religion, disbelieves in Allah, and disgracefully submits to the man-made shirk (polytheistic) laws of the east and west, living despicably and disgracefully as a follower, by repeating those slogans without will and honor, or he lives persecuted, targeted, and expelled, to end up being killed, imprisoned, or terribly tortured, on the accusation of terrorism. Because terrorism is to disbelieve in those slogans and to believe in Allah. Terrorism is to refer to Allah’s law for judgement. Terrorism is to worship Allah as He ordered you. Terrorism is to refuse humiliation, subjugation, and subordination [to the *kuffār* – infidels]. Terrorism is for the Muslim to live as a Muslim, honorably with might and freedom. Terrorism is to insist upon your rights and not give them up.

(36) But terrorism does not include the killing of Muslims in Burma and the burning of their homes. Terrorism does not include the dismembering and

disemboweling of the Muslims in the Philippines, Indonesia, and Kashmir. Terrorism does not include the killing of Muslims in the Caucasus and expelling them from their lands. Terrorism does not include making mass graves for the Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the slaughtering of their children. Terrorism does not include the destruction of Muslims' homes in Palestine, the seizing of their lands, and the violation and desecration of their sanctuaries and families.

- (37) Terrorism does not include the burning of masājid in Egypt, the destruction of the Muslims' homes there, the rape of their chaste women, and the oppression of the mujahidin in the Sinai Peninsula and elsewhere.
- (38) Terrorism does not include the extreme torture and degradation of Muslims in East Turkistan and Iran [by the rāfidah], as well as preventing them from receiving their most basic rights. Terrorism does not include the filling of prisons everywhere with Muslim captives. Terrorism does not include the waging of war against chastity and hijab (Muslim women's clothing) in France and Tunis. It does not include the propagation of betrayal, prostitution, and adultery.
- (39) Terrorism does not include the insulting of the Lord of Mightiness, the cursing of the religion, and the mockery of our Prophet (peace be upon him). Terrorism does not include the slaughtering of Muslims in Central Africa like sheep, while no one weeps for them and denounces their slaughter.
- (40) All this is not terrorism. Rather it is freedom, democracy, peace, security, and tolerance! Sufficient for us is Allah, and He is the best Disposer of affairs.
- (41) **{And they resented them not except because they believed in Allah, the Exalted in Might, the Praiseworthy}** [Al-Burūj: 8].

At this point, Al-Baghdadi cleverly outlines what does and does not constitute as terrorism. His irony-laden tone describes what the western world labels as terrorism but paradoxically disregards the vicious acts against Muslims. This discrimination and cruelty is meant to appeal to every Muslim regardless of their location, as he brings up cases from all corners of the world.

Al-Baghdadi's *Ummah* differs however from the idea of Islamic unity held by traditional Islamic communities (Khosrokhavar, 2009, p. 191). This hyper-Fundamentalist view of the *Ummah* is positioned upon a shared "identity of culturally uprooted people whose religious socialization is not achieved within the family but through Fundamentalist associations that provide the religious education that is otherwise lacking" (Khosrokhavar, 2009, p. 191). In this *Ummah's* worldview, "Muslims suffer from the mischief of Westerners through illegitimate domination" (Khosrokhavar, 2009, p. 191). This new *Ummah* lacks any cultural division and pervades all societies; it is an egalitarian monolithic group purely grounded on religion (Khosrokhavar, 2009, p. 191). The Muslim must select which camp he will belong to: "pull[ing] away from his religion, disbeliev[ing] in Allah, and disgracefully submit[ting] to the man-made...laws of the east and west" *or* "tortured, on the accusation of terrorism. Because terrorism is...to believe in Allah...terrorism is to refuse humiliation, subjugation, and subordination...terrorism is for the Muslim to live as a Muslim." The self-proclaimed Caliph is thus reeducating Muslims by restructuring the definition of terrorism – that is, devotion to Allah. He then skillfully concludes his definitions of terrorism by repeating

the abovementioned deceitful theories: “freedom, democracy, peace, security, and tolerance” as absurdly unassociated to terrorism. Besieged Muslims in countries like the Philippines, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Palestine are paralleled as terrorists who reside in hostile lands (according to the Islamic State’s definition of terrorism). This framing outlines those who ISIS deems to be the rightful *Ummah* – those willing to be branded as terrorists.

Such demarcation paves the way for the appeal to embrace the Islamic State’s political plan of forming a Caliphate, which is the ultimate solution.

- (42) O Muslims everywhere, glad tidings to you and expect good. Raise your head high, for today – by Allah’s grace – you have a state and khilāfah, which will return your dignity, might, rights, and leadership. It is a state where the Arab and non-Arab, the white man and black man, the easterner and westerner are all brothers. It is a khilāfah that gathered the Caucasian, Indian, Chinese, Shāmī, Iraqi, Yemeni, Egyptian, Maghribī (North African), American, French, German, and Australian. Allah brought their hearts together, and thus, they became brothers by His grace, loving each other for the sake of Allah, standing in a single trench, defending and guarding each other, and sacrificing themselves for one another. Their blood mixed and became one, under a single flag and goal, in one pavilion, enjoying this blessing, the blessing of faithful brotherhood. If kings were to taste this blessing, they would abandon their kingdoms and fight over this grace. So all praise and thanks are due to Allah.
- (43) Therefore, rush O Muslims to your state. Yes, it is your state. Rush, because Syria is not for the Syrians, and Iraq is not for the Iraqis. The earth is Allah’s. **{Indeed, the earth belongs to Allah. He causes to inherit it whom He wills of His servants. And the [best] outcome is for the righteous}** [Al-A’rāf: 128]. The State is a state for all Muslims. The land is for the Muslims, all the Muslims.
- (44) 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.
- (45) Allah (the Exalted) said, **{Indeed, those whom the angels take [in death] while wronging themselves – [the angels] will say, “In what [condition] were you?” They will say, “We were oppressed in the land.” The angels will say, “Was not the earth of Allah spacious [enough] for you to emigrate therein?” For those, their refuge is Hell – and evil it is as a destination}** [An-Nisā’: 97].
- (46) So rush, O Muslims, with your religion to Allah as muhājirīn (emigrants). **{And whoever emigrates for the cause of Allah will find on the earth many [alternative] locations and abundance. And whoever leaves his home as an emigrant to Allah and His Messenger and then death overtakes him – his reward has already become incumbent upon Allah. And Allah is ever Forgiving and Merciful}** [An-Nisā’: 97].
- (47) We make a special call to the scholars, fuqahā’ (experts in Islamic jurisprudence), and callers, especially the judges, as well as people with

military, administrative, and service expertise, and medical doctors and engineers of all different specializations and fields. We call them and remind them to fear Allah, for their emigration is *wājib ‘aynī* (an individual obligation), so that they can answer the dire need of the Muslims for them. People are ignorant of their religion and they thirst for those who can teach them and help them understand it. So fear Allah, O slaves of Allah.

- (48) O soldiers of the Islamic State, do not be awestruck by the great numbers of your enemy, for Allah is with you. I do not fear for you the numbers of your opponents, nor do I fear your neediness and poverty, for Allah (the Exalted) has promised your Prophet (peace be upon him) that you will not be wiped out by famine, and your enemy will not himself conquer you and violate your land. Allah placed your provision under the shades of your spears. Rather, I fear for you your own sins. Accept each other and do not dispute. Come together and do not argue. Fear Allah in private and public, openly and secretly. Stay away from sins. Expel from your ranks those who openly commit sin. Be wary of pride, haughtiness, and arrogance. Do not become proud on account of gaining some victories. Humble yourselves before Allah. Do not be arrogant towards Allah’s slaves. Do not underestimate your enemy regardless of how much strength you gain and how much your numbers grow.
- (49) I also remind you to attend to the Muslims and the tribes of Ahlus-Sunnah (the Sunnis) with goodness. Stay awake guarding them so they can be safe and at rest. Be their support. Respond with kindness if they do you wrong. Be gentle with them, giving them as much pardon as you can. Persevere, endure, and remain stationed. Know that today you are the defenders of the religion and the guards of the land of Islam. You will face tribulation and *malāhim* (fierce battles). Verily, the best place for your blood to be spilled is on the path to liberate the Muslim prisoners imprisoned behind the walls of the *tawāghīt*. So prepare your arms, and supply yourselves with piety. Persevere in reciting the Quran with comprehension of its meanings and practice of its teachings.
- (50) This is my advice to you. If you hold to it, you will conquer Rome and own the world, if Allah wills.
- (51) **{Our Lord, we have believed in what You revealed and have followed the Messenger, so register us among the witnesses [to truth]}** [Āl ‘Imrān: 53].
- (52) **{Our Lord, do not impose blame upon us if we have forgotten or erred. Our Lord, and lay not upon us a burden like that which You laid upon those before us. Our Lord, and burden us not with that which we have no ability to bear. And pardon us; and forgive us; and have mercy upon us. You are our protector, so give us victory over the disbelieving people}** [Al-Baqarah: 286].

Here, Al-Baghdadi calls Muslims to accept the Caliphate as their state and calls on them to “rush” to their territory, a “*khilāfah*” where all Muslim’s are accepted, irrespective of their ethnicity or country of origin. This “*khilāfah*” is the terror group’s version of a utopia; a land that will unshackle the global Muslim from his oppressor.

Al-Baghdadi stresses that there is no substitute to *hijrah* (emigration) - those who are able must rush to this all-encompassing brotherhood. Those, however, who are capable to emigrate but do not do so will find a place in Hellfire. “For Jihadists, Muslims performing religious rituals without engaging in *jihad* are fake Muslims, not genuine ones. An authentic Muslim has to be unafraid of death, steadfast and confident in his lot as preordained by Allah” (Khosrokhavar, 2009, p. 29). Those who rush to their Caliphate as *muhājirīn* (emigrants) and die for the sake of Allah will go to Paradise. Thusly, the paradox attached to this utopia: like any utopia, one secures their entry only via sacrifice, in this case, their life. By decreeing himself as Caliph, Al-Baghdadi’s proclamations carry the standing of obligatory decrees that cannot be violated. This turns anyone contesting him into an enemy of Islam, whether Muslim or not.

Al-Baghdadi’s sermon is colored with overtones of Islamic ideology strengthening the cause for which *hijrah* and *jihad* are obligatory acts under the authority of the terror group. He consolidates his argument by selecting passages from the Quran or Islamic education to justify his political project. By applying verses from the Quran and Islamic scholarship, Al-Baghdadi effectively “controls [the] most influential discourse” concerning Islam and therefore has “more chances to control the minds and actions” of numerous vulnerable Muslims (van Dijk, 2001, p. 355). While some may at first feel discomfort exposed to Al-Baghdadi’s sermon, they lack the semantics or standards of determining how to communicate such reservations (van Dijk, 2001, p. 355). With time, and as the discourse becomes all the more cemented within society, they may likely abandon doubt entirely and view the abhorrent treatment of disbelievers (non-Muslims) as rational and ethically acceptable (van Dijk, 2001, p. 355).

As with any real state, there must be mechanisms and branches in place to serve the people of the “*khilāfah*” and so Al-Baghdadi calls for judges, medical doctors, engineers, and military, administrative and service experts so that the Caliphate will run as an effective and successful state. He invokes *hijrah*, a deliberate vocalization of a polysemic lexeme in historic Islam, like *jihad* and *kufr*. The exact meaning of such terms, immersed in theologically historical meaning, is dependent upon the context of their use. Principally, *hijrah* refers to the journey of Prophet Muhammad and his Companions from Mecca to Medina in the course of the first year of the Islamic calendar, in 622 C.E., (Esposito, 2003). It also means resistance to colonial rule and the legitimization of Muslim migration as well as “a form of withdrawal from the politics of secularism, capitalism, socialism, and modernization/Westernization” (Esposito, 2003). But the general consensus is that *hijrah* refers to “the willingness to suffer for faith and the refusal to lose hope in the face of persecution” (Esposito, 2003). Plausibly, we see how easy it is for someone like Baghdadi to manipulate historic Islamic language to serve his Islamic State project by specifying that all Muslims have a holy responsibility to migrate to the Caliphate.

The tone changes to one of gentleness and the narrative comprises of words like “guard,” “safe,” “rest,” “support,” “kindness,” “gentle,” and “pardon.” According to the self-proclaimed Caliph, sympathy and kindness may only be given to the Sunni Muslims. In doing so, Al-Baghdadi further delegitimizes any other Muslim sect as false and consequently rivals in the eyes of the true Muslims (*Ahlus-Sunnah*) and of Allah’s religion. The Quran’s “meanings,” “practice,” and “teachings” are related to the Islamic State’s version of *jihad* and the requirement for the Muslim’s “blood to be spilled...on the path to liberate the Muslim prisoners imprisoned behind the walls of the *tawāghūt*.”

At this point, the audience knows who the true Muslims are, where and how they have been restrained, and by whom. Al-Baghdadi ends his speech by telling Muslims that if they heed his “advice,” their capabilities will be endless and that, should Allah permit, victory over Rome is just the beginning. The consequence of the fall of Rome is significant for two reasons: a) Islam came to power following the collapse of the Roman Empire and b) the fall of Rome is a prophecy mentioned in the Quran, which directly links the sermon with the holiest Muslim source and additionally codifies Al-Baghdadi’s word. The theological account enhances the awareness of the terror group as a phenomenon of epic eschatological battles, equipped with black flags and large numbers of marching soldiers, all of which signify end-of-days wars. “At a time of deep political and cultural crisis (which is the case within the Muslim world), however, apocalyptic ideologies become more attractive than those without a promise of a deep rupture in the world” (Khosrokhavar, 2009, p. 30). The minds of disenfranchised Muslims, who desire camaraderie and belonging, are intensified by folklores of legendary battles. Their necessity for revenge is sparked by such interpretations. This aids in understanding the aetiology behind the outpouring of foreign fighters hastening to Islamic State territory from all over the world. These eager emigrants come to the land of the “*khilāfah*” in search of timeless redemption and retaliation against those, by the hands of whom, they had been suffering in their previous nations.

Analysis of frequently used words and phrases in Al-Baghdadi’s sermon

A quantitative analysis of Al-Baghdadi’s speech elucidates the significance of particular words and phrases, which when used recurrently create significance. A keyword study of commonly used words and phrases produced the following results.

The speech is made up of 2962 words. The word “Allah” being used the most throughout the sermon, with an overwhelming count of 74 times, which can be attributed to Al-Baghdadi’s emphasis on associating the Islamic State with Islam. In the table below I have grouped the words “Lord,” “God,” “Him,” “His,” “He,” and “You” together, if they were capitalized in the text, as they suggest Allah, but have chronicled Allah separately due to the overwhelming majority of the word throughout the speech.

Words

Keyword	Repeats	Density
Allah	74	2.5%
Lord, God, You, He, Him,	34	1.1%
His	33	1.1%
Muslim(s)	20	.68%
Terrorism	14	.47%
Khilāfah, state		

Religion	10	.34%
Fear	10	.34%
Islam	7	.23%
Mujahidin	6	.20%

Pronouns demarcating the “Us” versus “Them” theme, which was tantamount throughout the speech, are listed below. Such pronouns hint at inclusiveness and unity of the in-group. Pronouns like “they” (mentioned 17 times throughout the text) and “their” (29 times) have not been coded as their designation (implying the believers or nonbelievers) interchanges through the text and consequently is vague whether used to describe the Muslim brothers in oppression or the camp of the disbelievers.

Keyword/Pronoun	Repeats	Density
You	53	1.8%
Your	35	1.18%
We	17	.57%
Us	11	.37%
Our	11	.37%

Phrases

Keyword/Pronoun	Repeats
Fear Allah	6
Your Lord	4
Terrorism is	4
O Muslims	4
Camp of	4
Be upon	4
O mujahidin in the path of Allah	3
Allah	3
The jews	3
Your enemy	3
Ummah of	4
Islamic State	

The results of the keyword analysis show Al-Baghdadi’s unending effort to incorporate vital Islamic text into his speech in order to sanction his cause, “Allah,” “Lord,” “He,” “Him,” “His,” “You,” and “religion” being prominent. His emphasis is placed on creating a demarcation between the believers and the nonbelievers by using pronouns like “we,” “you,” “us,” “our,” “your,” “they,” and “their.” Keywords and phrases like “Muslims,” “mujahidin,” “camp of,” “the Jews,” “your enemy,” and “*Ummah* of” are all linguistic tactics intended to create social inclusion and social exclusion. Additionally, the phrase “Islamic State” and the words “state”

and “*khilāfah*” are found in abundance as they cement ISIS’s political strategy of recreating the Islamic golden age via the establishment of a Caliphate.

Concluding Remarks

The theoretical position that language can be employed to construct and solidify an ideology is amply maintained in the study of Al-Baghdadi’s sermon. It can be affirmed that the CDA conducted - of a speech that was so powerful, it has resulted in an unprecedented surge of support within radicalized Muslims worldwide - can contribute to the study of radicalization and in research concerning the intensification and convergence patterns of foreign fighters to Iraq and Syria, principally from a discursive perspective. Moreover, this paper confirms the theoretical stance that political discourses are reinforced by words, phrases and sentence structures that are methodically chosen with the intent to have a particular influence on spectators. Since language co-constitutes reality, information concerning the existing global radicalization trend is impossible in the absence of a critical deconstruction of the semantics of *jihad*. Discourse invoking the name of Islam to construct a borderless identity, has played and continues to do so an instrumental role in the wider ISIS propaganda of recruiting susceptible and isolated Muslims for *jihad*. Al-Baghdadi’s rhetoric has been used to: 1) establish ISIS as the new threat to world order; 2) institute areas of Syria and Iraq as a converted Caliphate 3) reinforce Al-Baghdadi’s claim as the Caliph of this Caliphate; 4) call upon all Muslims able to fight and provide services to make the journey to the Islamic State; but most importantly to 5) create a clear demarcation between the West and the East, between evil and good, and between the nonbelievers (*kufir*) and the believers (*mu’minin*).

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