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*Till Justus Baaken*

## OF KNIGHTS AND LIONS. A COMPARISON OF RECRUITMENT PROPAGANDA NARRATIVES OF WORLD WAR ONE BRITAIN AND THE “ISLAMIC STATE”



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Zusammenfassung:

### VON RITTERN UND LÖWEN. EIN VERGLEICH DER NARRATIVE DER REKRUTIERUNGSPROPAGANDA IN GROSSBRITANNIEN IM ERSTEN WELTKRIEG UND DES SOGENANTEN ISLAMISCHEN STAATES

Dieser Artikel betrachtet die Rekrutierungspropaganda der Briten während des Ersten Weltkriegs und des selbstproklamierten „Islamischen Staats“ (IS) zwischen 2014 und 2017. Anhand der Rahmenanalyse von Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow werden Parallelen und Unterschiede im Framing (der „Einrahmung“) der jeweiligen Propagandastrategien mittels eines Vergleichs der zentralen Narrative beider Akteure aufgezeigt. Die propagandistisch vereinnahmten bestehenden „Vornarrative“, also kulturell tief verwurzelte Stereotypen, Mythen etc. nach Jacques Ellul werden ermittelt, woraufhin die eigentlichen Propaganda-Narrative nach den drei Kernfunktionen der Rahmenanalyse (diagnostische, wertende und einordnende Funktionen) betrachtet werden. Dieses Lernen aus der Vergangenheit trägt auf komparative Weise zum aktuellen Diskurs bei, der darauf abzielt, Lösungsansätze gegen die Propaganda des IS zu entwickeln. Die Propaganda unserer Tage entsteht nämlich nicht aus einem Vakuum heraus. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass beide Akteure, sowohl das historische britische Empire als auch der IS, ähnliche Themen nutz(t)en, um ihre Narrative zu rahmen. Die Parallelen veranschaulichen die methodischen und ideologischen Analogien zwischen verschiedenen Propagandaproduzenten und unterstreichen die Notwendigkeit, aus der Vergangenheit zu lernen, um auf heutige Krisen zu reagieren.

## INTRODUCTION

When the First World War (WWI) broke out in July 1914, hundreds of thousands of men quickly enlisted voluntarily into the British Army. Exactly a century later, under very different circumstances, over 60,000 men followed the call of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi to fight for a newly established caliphate in the form of the so-called Islamic State (IS).<sup>1</sup> What motivated these men to voluntarily join a fight in which they could lose their lives? How were the British Empire and IS able to draw men into believing that they were fighting for a better world against vilified enemies they

respectively saw as “Huns” and “Crusaders”? The answer to both questions may lie in the propaganda carefully prepared and disseminated before and during the conflicts, framing events that happened before the war, and the use of topics appealing to the men that could incite deeply felt emotions of hatred and love. To examine this hypothesis the following article will focus on the recruitment propaganda employed by both actors, comparing the topics and narratives that ultimately led to thousands of men enlisting in these conflicts. The aim is to show parallels in the framing of events and narratives in British WWI and contemporary IS propaganda as well as to show

the transferability of the framing theory by Benford and Snow.

To analyze the question posed by the article, in the next chapter the methodology and definition of propaganda, as well as the theoretical framework, will be established. Following this, the pre-narratives and narratives will be explored, divided into the three core framing types of diagnostic framing, prognostic framing, and motivational framing. Lastly, the conclusions drawn from these analyses will be summarized.

Understanding the similarities and differences in the propaganda can further the understanding of its appeal, which can facilitate efforts to counter propaganda in the conflict with IS or other Islamist groups. The methodology chosen in this article follows a newly popularized approach within terrorism studies that focuses upon drawing lessons from the past in order to explain recent propaganda successes of IS. This article aims to contribute to the current discourse headed by Ingram, Reed, and Thompson, who all focus on understanding the recent phenomenon by looking at propaganda approaches in the past.<sup>2</sup> The propaganda of IS cannot be viewed in a historical vacuum and the academic discourse benefits from critically evaluating the current assumption that IS propaganda operates in a previously unseen manner. Hence the author will compare the framing of the recruitment propaganda of IS to the recruitment propaganda of the British Empire during WW1.

## METHODOLOGY

Propaganda has been a long-standing topic for examination by social scientists.<sup>3</sup> Much has been written about propaganda in WWI, as well as the propaganda of IS. While these mostly focus on the organizational aspects, on the home front or in neutral and enemy countries, no studies have been conducted comparing British WWI propaganda to the efforts of more recent groups, including non-state actors such as IS.<sup>4</sup> The study of IS propaganda has focused mostly on distribution, organization, the influence of the internet and content.<sup>5</sup> This article will therefore compare the content focused on recruitment using frame analysis as defined by Benford and Snow.<sup>6</sup> It must be pointed out that radicalization and recruitment decisions are individual processes and not necessarily solely influenced by propaganda content. However, an identification with the general narrative

of the recruiting party may be viewed as facilitating recruitment decisions.<sup>7</sup>

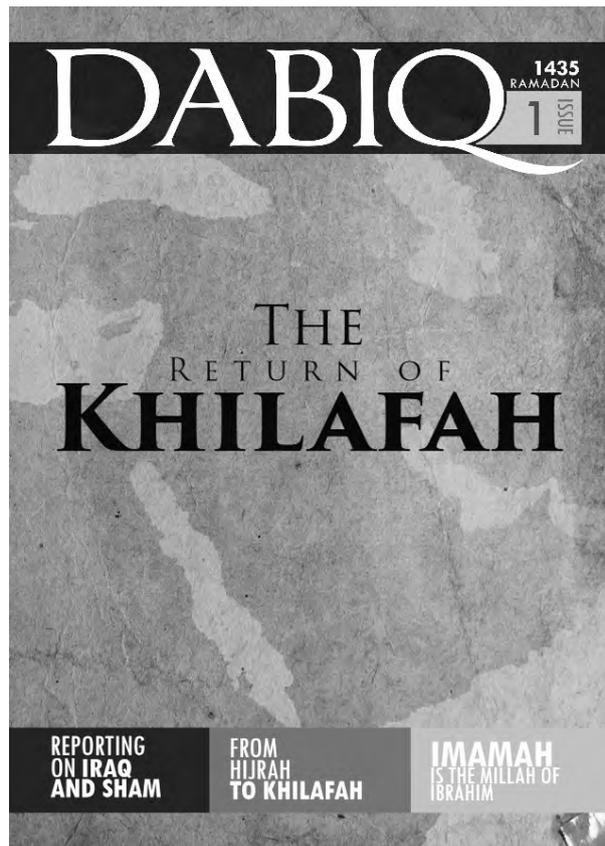


Fig. 1: Cover of the first issue of *Dabiq*, titled "The Return of the Khilafah," published July 5, 2014.

To explore this, various primary sources are used. For British propaganda, these include newspaper articles and books, with the most used archive being the poster collection of the Imperial War Museum. Despite the existence of significant material, much has been lost or destroyed, therefore the collection may not be representative of the actual distribution of topics, hence the sources chosen must be viewed as anecdotal. The sources for the propaganda of IS stem mostly from the archive of Aaron Y. Zelin for videos, nasheeds (vocal music used by Islamists that does not include the use of instruments and is hence "halal" in the eyes of extremists), as well as from the magazine *Dabiq* (now *Rumiyah*), while pictures are from the archive of the International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism. Sources are limited to online resources due to the unavailability of posters, pamphlets and newspapers from within the territory of IS itself. This also explains the focus of this study on Muslims in Western countries and the emphasis on recruitment propaganda aimed at fighting men. Propaganda effects on women during both conflicts will not be examined. The propaganda analyzed is not representative due to the unavailability of a holistic

range of sources, but this qualitative examination of existing propaganda makes it possible to focus on certain topics available in the propaganda of both actors. It needs to be acknowledged that narratives and frames cannot be separated from each other and that all framing is interlinked. However, for analytical purposes the themes of atrocities, victimhood of women and children, utopia, honor, duty, shame, belonging, peer-pressure and the use of images of certain cultures are discussed individually in the section on framing.

## THE DEFINITION OF PROPAGANDA

The term propaganda originates from 1622 when Pope Gregory XV founded *Congregatio de propaganda fide*, an Office for the Propagation of Faith, but did not assume its modern contours until 1915 when “governments first systematically deployed the entire range of modern media to rouse their populations to fanatical assent.”<sup>8</sup> Edward Bernays, a pioneer in propaganda strategy who was involved in American propaganda in WWI,<sup>9</sup> published a book in 1928 in which he defines propaganda as follows: “Modern Propaganda is a consistent, enduring effort to create or shape events to influence the relations of the public to an enterprise, idea or group.”<sup>10</sup> While this is a very broad definition, it shows that simple incoherent messages are not enough to persuade a part of the public. Events must be systematically framed using a consistent narrative to impact the behavior of the public or target group, and this must be done both qualitatively and quantitatively. Harold Lasswell, a contemporary of Bernays and a renowned communication theorist, emphasized the importance of symbols in his 1927 definition: “Propaganda is the management of collective attitudes by the manipulation of significant symbols. The word attitude is taken to mean a tendency to act according to certain patterns of valuation.”<sup>11</sup> Symbols are a powerful tool, as humans are symbol-minded, holding the key to “effective communication and persuasion”<sup>12</sup> appealing to humans on an emotional rather than a rational level. As Hilmar Hoffmann observes: “from time immemorial men have fought with greater ferocity over symbols than over genuine interests.”<sup>13</sup> Symbols are either created anew or rooted in ancient myths, legends or religion and can be spun to support a narrative to which individuals connect without fully understanding the reason.

In his monograph of 1965, *Propaganda. The Formation of Men's attitudes*, Jacques Ellul understands propaganda as a sociological phenomenon.<sup>14</sup> Propaganda in Ellul's mind works by surrounding “man by all possible routes, in the realm of feelings as well as ideas, by playing on his will or on his needs, through his conscious and his unconscious, assailing him in both his private and his public life. It furnishes him with a complete system for explaining the world, and provides immediate incentives to action.”<sup>15</sup> Hence in Ellul's view propaganda must fully immerse an individual who then eventually accepts the propagandist's view of the world and actively participates. Propaganda does not operate in a vacuum and relies on “pre-propaganda”<sup>16</sup>, the intentional spreading of images and prejudices with no apparent purpose. This pre-propaganda may have existed previously, deeply rooted in society and narratives within religious or political groups. Ellul argues that: “the ground must be sociologically prepared before one can proceed to direct prompting.”<sup>17</sup> Lasswell maintains the point that the “achievements of propaganda are affected by the traditional prejudices of the nation and of each constituent group.”<sup>18</sup> These pre-existing, deeply rooted narratives existed in Britain during WWI, and are found in Salafi-jihadism, making them useful to fit the purpose of propagandists. Propaganda helps to crystallize pre-existing images and ideas as well as prejudices, which, without propaganda, may only have occupied a small part of the personality of an individual to the extent that their whole private life, moral code and actions eventually revolve around the proposed factors only, and private opinion is reshaped to affirm to the propaganda. Through this mechanism, self-justification is provided: the justifications “furnished by propaganda are irrefutable and solid. The individual believes them and considers them eternal truths. He can throw off all sense of guilt; he loses all feeling for the harm he might do, all sense of responsibility other than the responsibility propaganda instills in him.”<sup>19</sup>

While the focus is laid on different aspects of propaganda by these authors, the identified aim of propagandists remains the same in the definitions, hence the working definition of propaganda in this article will be: propaganda aims to influence the opinion and ultimately the behavior of various selected target groups by constantly exposing them to the propagandists' ideology through the framing

of issues, events and symbols using and reinforcing pre-existing narratives and prejudices by means of various (technologically state of the art) outlets. Additionally, the ten commandments of the historian Anne Morelli, based on Arthur Ponsonby's *Falsehood in Wartime*<sup>20</sup>, are useful in the analysis of the narratives in this article. These are:

1. We do not want war.
2. The opposite party alone is guilty of war.
3. The enemy is the face of the devil.
4. We defend a noble cause, not our own interest.
5. The enemy systematically commits cruelties; our mishaps are involuntary.
6. The enemy uses forbidden weapons.
7. We suffer small losses; those of the enemy are enormous.
8. Artists and intellectuals back our cause.
9. Our cause is sacred.
10. All who doubt our propaganda are traitors.

Morelli asserts that these ten points have seen use by every propagandist since WWI and that they are the bedrock that influences the population or target group into action by framing narratives accordingly.

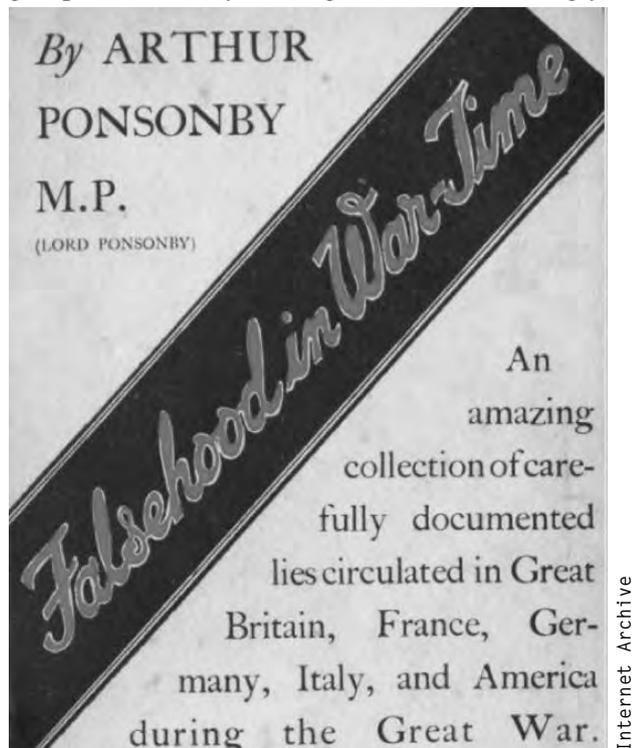


Fig. 2: Cover of *Falsehood in War-Time* (published 1928). The book has mostly been received positively in Great Britain and Germany.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This article will use the concept of frame analysis deriving from social movement theory. As one of the first researchers in this field, Erving Goffman intro-

duced the concept in *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organisation of Experience* in 1974. In his view, frames denote “schemata of interpretation” that allow actors “to locate, perceive, identify and label” events and occurrences in their immediate environment and in the wider world.<sup>21</sup> Frames enable us to make sense of reality and provide anchor points for our social existence. While an abundance of research has since been conducted on the topic, this article will adopt the framing definition of Benford and Snow due to the concise theoretical framework developed through their comparison of the different approaches to the concept of framing.<sup>22</sup> According to Benford and Snow, framing can be defined as meaning construction, thus being “an active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction.”<sup>23</sup> Benford and Snow identify three core framing tasks: diagnostic framing, prognostic framing and motivational framing. Diagnostic framing describes the process of finding the source of the identified problem by the social movement. It attends to the function of attributing blame to an agent, in line with the second commandment of Morelli (“The opposite party alone is guilty of war”). The second stage is prognostic framing, in which a solution must be found and framed to tackle the problem identified, i.e. what has to be done to change the status quo and to develop a consensus among the group or population. Motivational framing then aims at an emotional arousal and provides a call to arms by using vocabularies of “severity, urgency, efficacy and propriety.”<sup>24</sup> This can be observed in many WWI and IS recruitment posters to be shown below.

In the framing concept, the deliberate strategic processes, which are the theoretical bases of propaganda, are called frame alignments. For frames to resonate in the target group they need to be aligned with the discourse, myths or domain assumptions of the target group, meaning that they are required to synchronize with pre-existing cultural narrations. Islamist propaganda, for example, cannot be fully understood without comprehending both Muslim faith and Islamic culture. This has been identified by Fisher as “narrative fidelity”<sup>25</sup> and is also called frame amplification.<sup>26</sup> To understand the narrative fidelity of the propaganda, pre-narratives will be explored below. Other forms of frame alignments are so-called frame bridging, linking structurally unconnected frames, e.g. feminism and the Islamist way of life; frame extension, extending the original

frame “beyond its primary interests” to include issues deemed “of importance to potential adherents”<sup>27</sup>; and frame transformation, changing “old understandings and meanings and/or generating new ones.”<sup>28</sup> Aligning frames is important for recruiting potential sympathizers, because radical frames need to be adapted as one’s own for radicalization to occur.<sup>29</sup>

## PRE - NARRATIVES

*“Germany has always been disliked and distrusted for her bullying policy of sabre rattling, the mailed fist, the goose step, and the spiked helmet – symbols of violence and brute force. Indeed she has been suspected for years of looking forward to war with Great Britain.”*

– Michael MacDonagh, 3 August 1914<sup>30</sup>

Propaganda does not operate in a vacuum and relies on existing narratives, which must be present in the minds of people prior to starting a large propaganda campaign. This pre-propaganda is deeply rooted in societies and narratives within religious or political groups, which can be used and framed to change people’s behaviors if need be. Lasswell additionally emphasizes the need for traditional prejudices to be used. Ellul described it as preparing the ground sociologically for the wartime narratives.<sup>31</sup> For propaganda to resonate it is important that the frames are aligned with pre-existing cultural narrations and a narrative fidelity exists. In this section, the political as well as the religious pre-narratives are examined. They exist in both WWI Britain and Salafi-jihadism and are used to propagate the purpose of the propagandists.

## POLITICAL PRE - NARRATIVES

The unification of Germany in 1871 under Prussian leadership fed into the British political pre-narrative of a strong, dangerous Germany. A confident, unified nation in the middle of Europe was perceived as dangerous by France, the Russian Empire and especially the British Empire. This feeling was exacerbated by newspapers and further reinforced by the conduct of the Germans. In particular, two specific incidents added to the fear of the new Reich, and ultimately led to the Triple Entente of 1907, an understanding to aid one another in case of an aggressive act of Germany (though this was not an alliance of mutual defense). Firstly, the assertive demand of then

Foreign Minister Fürst Bernhard von Bülow for Germany’s “own place in the sun” in 1897 led to a change in the foreign policy outlook of the German Empire from one of Realpolitik (practical policy) to Weltpolitik (global policy), which was widely perceived in the British Empire as a threatening change in tone by the Germans.<sup>32</sup> Bülow also called for a change in the colonial policies of the German Empire, emphasizing East-Asia, an area of strong British and French imperial interest.<sup>33</sup> By building more warships to secure this goal, Wilhelmine policy led to the Anglo-German naval arms race, feeding into the narrative of a threatening German Empire that sought to undermine the position of the British Empire. Both populations supported the building of a bigger fleet, suggesting that a narrative of patriotism and mistrust between the two existed before the war. It is easier to frame someone as the enemy and dehumanize them when they are already mistrusted, which facilitates the justification of war against a country seen to be threatening the status quo. It was only a matter of utilizing this mistrust for framing by the propagandists to ensure control of the population and high enlistment numbers when WWI broke out.

The second incident was the so-called Panther-sprung during the Agadir Crisis. In 1911, Germany sent the SMS Panther to the coast of Morocco under the pretext of protecting German trade during a crisis sparked by a Moroccan rebellion against the French. The British were worried that the German move was to secure a naval base on the Atlantic coast at Agadir, which would endanger British trade routes.<sup>34</sup> As the British intended to inhibit German influence, tension mounted as German aggression against the French Empire threatened the influence of the British Empire.<sup>35</sup> After the crisis, the relations between London and Berlin remained troubled.<sup>36</sup> The Agadir crisis reinforced views held by the British population before WWI and facilitated the framing of the narrative by British propagandists that Germans were imperial expansionists who were inherently aggressive and therefore started the Great War. On the other hand, the entrance of the British Empire into WWI was framed as defensive and noble, as she was protecting small nations in the propagated narrative. As the population had seen these earlier crises, anti-German sentiment and feelings of patriotism were easily exploited by recruitment propaganda when the conflict ensued.

The pre-narrative of IS builds on a similar history of (perceived) aggression by the West and the United

# TWO WAR CLOUDS MENACE EUROPE

Prices on Stock Exchanges Col-  
lapse Owing to Moroccan and  
Balkan Developments.

AWAIT GERMAN EXPLANATION

Excuse so Far Given for Sending  
Warship to Agadir Not  
Taken Seriously.

FRENCH WITHDRAW CAPITAL

Take Money from German Banks, Ac-  
cording to Report Credited in Lon-  
don—England Warns Germany.

Special Cable to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

Fig. 3: Original headline in the New York Times from 1911 about the Panthersprung.

States. These narratives have not been constructed by the IS itself, but have been created in the Islamic world by the Muslim Brotherhood and other key interlocutors since the end of the colonial age. While recent jihadist (pre-)narratives reach back to the Algerian War of Independence and the war in Afghanistan against the Soviets, for the purpose of this article the two most significant events for Salafi-jihadism itself will be briefly analyzed. These are the first Gulf War (US Operation Desert Storm) and its preparation with the stationing of United States soldiers in Saudi Arabia (US Operation Desert Shield), a country containing two of the most holy sites in Islam, Mecca and Medina, as well as the Iraq invasion in 2003 (US Operation Iraqi Freedom). IS was officially an Al-Qaida affiliate until 2014,<sup>37</sup> hence many political pre-narratives derive from Al-Qaida's, as well as the World Islamic Front's interpretation of the political Islamic world.<sup>38</sup> In reaction to the first Gulf War, Osama bin Laden issued a declaration of war against "Jews and Crusaders" in 1998, stating: "The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies – civilians and military – is an individual duty for

every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it, in order to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque and the holy mosque [Mecca] from their grip, and in order for their armies to move out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim."<sup>39</sup>

This fits neatly into the narrative of Salafi-Jihadists defending Muslims righteously against foreign aggressors and the cultural hegemony of the US. The enemy was the United States, "perceived as the greatest enemy of the faith" by the "international brigade of jihad veterans, being outside the control of any state, [which] was suddenly available to serve radical Islamist causes anywhere in the world."<sup>40</sup> The invasion of Iraq reinforced this narrative of defense. The ideology of IS was coherently and ideologically formed and shaped from 2003. As seen in the political pre-narratives of WWI and the IS, the justification is the same: we are only defending ourselves and/or proxies from the evil attacker. The pre-narratives point strongly in the direction of the frames used by propagandists later in the conflict. The narratives of the barbarous German Hun and the evil Christian/Jewish crusader, as well as one's right to defend themselves and their people against these aggressors, can be used in propaganda to justify any action deemed necessary, while the consumer of the propaganda will feel righteous, as the narrative has been ingrained culturally in him or her and has formed a Manichean us versus them world view long before the actual conflict. Using this ingrained view in propaganda is vital when recruiting men.

## RELIGIOUS PRE-NARRATIVES

*"Some saw, indeed, that behind the moral issue lay not only a question of life and death for England and the Empire, but a struggle between two incompatible conceptions of civilization, between the Prusso-Napoleonic and the Christian, between the Militarist and the Liberal. Germany had become virtually pagan, worshipping a deity more akin to Odin than to Christ."*

– Henry Wickham Steed<sup>41</sup>

The most important religious pre-narrative is to establish a distinctive line between believers (us) and non-believers (them). This happens in both cases using the interpretation of intellectuals. While this

is one of Morelli's commandments, namely "our cause is sacred", the narrative does not appear suddenly during the time of war or conflict, but needs deeper roots in the understanding of the culture to sink effectively into the minds of the people. While the cultures of the pre-war Christian British Empire and pre-IS Muslims differ greatly, a theme can be identified, which both pre-war narratives share: the propagandists' side is always that of the true believer, while the target has strayed from the path of God by following the wrong teachings. The following pages will examine the religious pre-narratives of the British Empire and IS.

Pre-war narratives were largely developed in the British Empire by non-state actors as no form of propaganda ministry had been established. In the religious pre-narrative, Germans were framed as infidels, as a lack of Christianity had been identified in the new German philosophy, making Germans heretics. The works of Nietzsche, Fichte, Treitschke and Schopenhauer proposed a new "cult of the superhuman, the worship of the human animal" in the eyes of British philosophers. In a paper published in 1914 called *The German Spirit*, Emperor William II was equated with a "Teutonic Jehovah, in place of Jehovah read Odin", and a "warrior high priest", with the Germans having gone back to an "ancestral religion of blood and iron."<sup>42</sup> The concept of German Kultur, in which lurked an "untamable brutishness"<sup>43</sup>, was placed far outside the reach of civilization. J.A. Cramb, in lectures given in 1913, even went so far as to say "that the last 500 years of European history have been dominated by Germany's struggle to cast off not only the yoke of Roman Catholicism, but also the 'alien' dogma of Christianity itself."<sup>44</sup> This pre-narrative played an important role in propaganda during the war and gained significant traction, as it appeared in pamphlets, newspaper articles and books during the war. The works of some German philosophers, previously unbeknownst to the English public, became "English classic[s], hurried through the press like the newest society novel."<sup>45</sup> While this is only a part of the pre-war narrative and has to be seen in the context of British society a century ago, which was a lot more religious than today,<sup>46</sup> it relates to the religious pre-narrative of IS, predominantly framing the opposition as non-believers. This appears to play a major role in the delegitimization of the enemy. It is only a small step from this narrative to extrapolate that one is defending a sacred cause,

which is not only the ninth commandment of Morelli's analysis, but also appeals strongly to the emotions of potential recruits.

The IS in comparison to the British Empire a century ago is far more ideologically founded in religion, namely in Salafi-Jihadism, a revivalist branch of Sunni Islam. While there is a political aspect to the group as well, the following pages will focus solely on the theological argument of the pre-narrative. Shiraz Maher has analyzed Salafi-Jihadism in his monograph *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea* and identifies five defining characteristics discussed in detail below: jihad, al-wala' wa-l-bara, takfir, tawhid and hakimiyya.<sup>47</sup> Particularly relevant for the comparison of the religious IS pre-narrative to the British Empire is the overarching concept of dividing the world into non-believers and believers, which is aligned with the same religious framing in British propaganda (it has to be noted though that the British Empire was a mercantile empire and not a religious one and the religious pre-narrative played a far minor role in the propaganda itself). The three characteristics of jihad, al-wala' wa-l-bara and takfir are key to this concept and these will be described to demonstrate how the Salafi-Jihadist interpret the Quran to push their agenda through the framing of their narratives.

Branding someone as a non-believer or kufr has several advantages. Firstly, it frames a Manichean worldview, creating an in- and out-group in a narrative, which can then be used in later conflicts to reinforce belief in a fight of good versus evil, or God against the Devil. When the pre-existing concepts in a culture or faith are changed to aggressively promote these pre-narratives, it may be an indicator that a conflict is about to start. Kufr is defined by the shari'a by "absence of faith, or the belief in anything other than Islam."<sup>48</sup> Jihad literally means struggle, while it also has a legal meaning relating to combat.<sup>49</sup> Jihad has been an important factor in Islamic history and dates back to the times of the prophet Mohammed. In the words of al-Zawahiri, the current leader of al-Qaida, it "takes precedence over feeding the hungry, even if the hungry would starve as a result."<sup>50</sup> Defense, by way of fighting the non-believer, thus becomes a duty of all Muslims. This pre-narrative rooted in the Muslim faith is ultimately twisted and used by Salafi-Jihadists to legitimize violence against all non-believers.

Al-wala' wa-l-bara is translated as “‘loyalty and disavowal’ for the sake of Allah.”<sup>51</sup> In Islamic theology, it used to signify a highly-personalized concept to set apart Muslim conduct such as greetings, clothing and appearance from that of non-Muslims. The concept was cultivated over the last two centuries and like Jihad and takfir, was first meant to protect the Ummah (Muslim community). Al-wala' wa-l-bara promotes the Manichean worldview of Salafi-Jihadists by dividing the world between “‘loyalty and disavowal [...] truth and falsehood [...] faith and disbelief’.”<sup>52</sup> Again, this is a pre-narrative, which existed in one form or another long before Salafi-Jihadism, and came into use by the IS in its propaganda as a means of framing the world into true believers, i.e. their followers, and non-believers, i.e. the rest of the world.

Finally, the concept of takfir, signifying excommunication, became a powerful tool wielded by Al-Qaida during the 2003 invasion of Iraq. When a Muslim leaves the faith through action or words, the individual can be deemed a non-believer through excommunication. This does not necessarily stem from a decision by the person itself, but is decided by others, in this case the Salafi-Jihadist groups who expel the person into an out-group.<sup>53</sup> The principle purpose of takfir, and hence its importance for the IS, is to define “‘precisely what the Muslim community is and who its constituents are.’”<sup>54</sup> Takfir constitutes a tool to expel believers, who are politically or otherwise opposed, from the in-group on the basis of religious argumentation. To some extent this is comparable to the pre-narrative in WWI where the British expelled the Germans from the good Christian faith due to their aforementioned interpretation of philosophical thought within Germany, despite Germans still considering themselves to be faithful Christians.

In conclusion, the religious pre-narratives of both the British and IS show that an amplified Manichean us versus them worldview, pitting believer against non-believer, can be an important factor when recruiting men in certain types of conflicts. The binary worldview of good against evil is firmly rooted in pre-modern and modern societies and “‘insofar as narratives can be understood as ‘organising principles’, ‘acts of mind’ and ‘cultural systems’ that render human existence meaningful’”<sup>55</sup> is an ancient powerful tool for propagandists. The pre-narratives embedded in societies influence the perception of reality, and religious narratives in particular appeal to our emotional connection through an in-group

love. While a more holistic approach in propaganda is needed, promoting the idea that one’s own group is the only one in possession of the truth, along with the support of a higher entity, makes it easier to justify a war for any political reason.

## NARRATIVES

*“All recruitment failed to be explicit about the war. It was not the intention to be explicit. The object was to pressurize men into enlisting by evoking the familiar images and symbols of war and thus exploiting the emotions of potential recruits.”*<sup>56</sup>

The following pages will examine the narratives of the propaganda used by the British during WWI and the IS utilizing the three core framing types identified by Benford and Snow. While none of the topics are necessarily only promoting one of the frames, for analytical purposes they are considered solely within the boundaries of one of the three ascertained framing types: diagnostic frame, prognostic frame and motivational frame. Framing is most important for recruiting and enlisting the men at which the propaganda is aimed. This will not be a holistic analysis of all narratives, but rather a carefully chosen selection to illustrate certain themes in the propaganda. For diagnostic framing, atrocity stories and the cruelty of the enemy will be analyzed, while prognostic framing will examine the topic of utopia. Finally, the topics of honor, shame and belonging will be used to explore motivational framing.

## DIAGNOSTIC FRAME: ATROCITIES AND THE CRUELTY OF THE ENEMY

Diagnostic framing entails applying blame for the source of the identified problem by the propagandist to the envisioned enemy. It blames the opposite party for starting the conflict and for behaving immorally, as Morelli’s second commandment states: “‘The opposite party alone is guilty of war.’” The attack by the German Empire on Belgium was the ideal event to be framed by British propagandists and blame could be easily assigned to Germany and the alleged atrocities committed by her troops. Dissemination through the press and by individuals enabled effective framing of the atrocities for the British population. To incite anger, atrocity propaganda has always had a place

historically. O'Shaughnessy reasons: "one of the most important aims in propaganda is to demonstrate, indeed, that the enemy is not like us, is a ruthless, amoral monster, in order to incite the mobilising emotion of anger."<sup>57</sup>

The IS blames the US for starting a war against all Muslims and doing so with strong military power against a near defenseless Ummah. Airstrikes and the presence of troops in Iraq, Saudi Arabia and other countries increase the possibilities to frame actions taken by Western forces as atrocities against civilians and small defenseless populations. Framing this narrative right leads to the same reactions as it did a century ago in the British Empire: anger and empathy lead men to decide to fight for the cause propagated. Several parallels can be found between British and the IS atrocity propaganda: firstly, the framing of incidents to fit an atrocity story. Secondly, taking advantage of ill placed words from the enemy, and thirdly, the strong urge of men to join the cause after having been indoctrinated with these stories. The actors claim the moral high ground and in the words of Morelli's fifth commandment: "The enemy systematically commits cruelties; our mishaps are involuntary."

### THE FRAMING OF INCIDENTS TO AN ATROCITY STORY

In WWI atrocity propaganda was widely spread, with the sinking of the *Lusitania*, the execution of the nurse Edith Cavell, and the Bryce report serving as the most prominent examples. The torpedoing of the *Lusitania*, an ocean liner, by a German U-boat, alongside the unfortunate minting of a medal by a German artist became propaganda coups to promote anti-German sentiment after the devastating attack.<sup>58</sup> The medal was reproduced and the original incorrect date of two days before the actual sinking was propagated as evidence that the sinking of the ship had been planned. The British narrative also stated that the medal was awarded to the sailors serving on the U-boat, thereby implying that the German government promoted the attack.<sup>59</sup> This is a classic example of propagandists framing an event into an atrocity story to stir up emotions of hatred towards the enemy. The military tactics of zeppelin raids and the use of gas entrenched the narrative of the battle between the barbaric German Kultur and the righteous Christians. The story, invented in 1917, of a so-called

corpse factory, in which the Germans rendered the corpses of soldiers for fat, was the ultimate show of enemy barbarity.<sup>60</sup> The atrocity stories propagated by the British were a strong motivational factor for men to enlist and served the purpose of justifying the war.<sup>61</sup> It resonated with pre-narratives familiar to the men and the emotional framing of the barbaric acts showed that the Germans were evil and to blame. This example is supported by the numerous British soldiers who carried a picture of Edith Cavell into battle, inclined to revenge her death.<sup>62</sup>

In the IS propaganda, US airstrikes prove a useful source for propagandists to frame the coalition as being oblivious to civilian casualties. In videos distributed by the IS, the damage of these airstrikes is shown, while the narrative is enforced that the US does not care about, or even intentionally targets, religious sites and civilians. A good example of the framing of airstrikes as atrocities is a clip from 2015 showing a child's corpse at an unnamed bombsite and injured, crying children in hospitals.<sup>63</sup> Whether the child died at the site of the airstrike as the propagandists claim or not is irrelevant for the effect of framing the bomb strikes as inhumane. Additionally, the airstrikes targeting the Grand al-Nuri Mosque are used as content for atrocity framing.<sup>64</sup> Again, it is not important whether it was destroyed by the IS itself or by airstrikes, it is the framing of the incident and the narrative that is fed to sympathizers of IS which makes it capable of inciting hatred towards the West, while simultaneously evoking sympathy for the Muslims in the affected area. This is particularly effective as it links to the pre-narrative of the evil unbelievers, a great emotional appeal on top of emotions incited through the atrocities committed against children and civilians generally. Showing injured and dead civilians is as effective for the IS as it was for the British. The IS claims the moral high ground and again the conflict is framed as a fight between good and evil, supporting the Manichean worldview.<sup>65</sup>

A good example of using the words of the enemy against himself is taking statements made by prominent figures in the West out of context, similar to what was done with the original German *Lusitania* medal, and framing them within one's own narrative. The magazine *Dabiq* devotes a whole chapter to this practice in every issue.<sup>66</sup> People cited range from Barack Obama in issue 3 to Pope Francis in issue 15.<sup>67</sup> Accompanying the citations are pictures of the person being cited and additional referents, framing the words

# IN THE WORDS OF THE ENEMY



On 7 August 2014, the crusader, apostate Barack Obama announced to the world the continuation of the American crusade against Islam and the Muslims of Iraq, only to prove to his followers that there is no difference between his partisan politics and that of his predecessor – Bush – apart from cosmetic, superficial touches. His decisions also expose the hypocritical politics of America that only serve the interests of their Jewish ally, Israel, and their own capitalist gluttony. So while genocide is committed by the Maliki, Asadi, and Israeli forces against the Muslims via systematic massacres, chemical warfare, rape, and starvation by siege, Obama watches with euphoria. However, when his brothers in Yazidi Satanism and Peshmergan Zionism are killed, he panics. Obama had this to say:

35

Fig. 4: *Dabiq* Issue 3, “In the Words of the Enemy”, depicting Barack Obama and connecting him to genocide, systematic massacres, and the Jewish conspiracy.

of the enemy into the narrative of the “crusaders” and “apostates”, who wish to harm all Sunni Muslims and the constructed Ummah.<sup>68</sup> These are additionally used to emphasize the legitimacy that the enemy’s words lend the IS. This serves a different purpose, but is beneficial for recruitment as the IS must appeal to potential recruits and appearing like a state-like entity gives the claims propagated credibility in the eyes of Westerners. In issue 1 of *Dabiq*, Douglas A. Ollivant is cited with the following statements: a) “ISIS has created a multi-ethnic army”, b) “ISIS no longer exists in small cells that can be neutralized by missiles or small groups of commandos. It is now a real, if nascent and unrecognized, state actor” and c) “The group does not have a safe haven within a state. It is a de facto state that is a safe haven.”<sup>69</sup> This enforces the credibility of the IS narrative, especially for Westerners. It is a powerful tool, arguing that if even the enemy admits it, it must be true. The parallel of using the enemy’s output whilst framing it differently for one’s own narrative, be it “In the Words of the enemy” section of *Dabiq* or the reproduction of the Lusitania medal, is astonishing. For the framing of atrocities, it is important to have the most credibility in the official narrative, while rumors and hearsay distributed by individuals and the press facilitate the promotion of atrocity stories and dehumanization of the enemy.

### IMAGES OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Children, women and the elderly played a major role in atrocity propaganda in WWI. The Bryce report describes in detail how German soldiers bayoneted three and four year olds. An example of one such story among many is the account of an alleged incident in Haecht, Belgium where “several children had been murdered, one of two or three years old was found nailed to the door of a farmhouse by its hands and feet”<sup>70</sup> as well as a multitude of rape stories and general disregard for the life of elderly people. Adding to that are horrible stories of mutilation (e.g. breasts of young woman chopped off) and churches being burned down while priests were tortured and shot. These accounts of heinous acts by the Germans, whether they occurred or not, increased sympathy for the Belgians, aiding the narrative of the British propagandists of a fight against a barbaric, unchristian Hun already identified before the war. This immoral Hun needed to be beaten, putting the British on

higher moral ground. In order to strengthen British recruitment efforts, the framing of atrocities was very important. With the help of posters like “REMEMBER BELGIUM/ENLIST TO-DAY” and “Have you any/women folk worth/defending?/Remember the women of Belgium/JOIN TO-DAY”<sup>71</sup> the narratives of the atrocities were exploited for recruitment purposes, appealing emotionally to men. They are trained to hate the enemy and feel the need to defend their closest family, triggering an inherent urge to protect through diagnostic framing of the evil and



Fig. 5: A recruitment poster appealing to men’s sense of protection, referring to atrocity stories of Belgian women being raped and murdered in 1914.

inhumane German.

In IS propaganda, atrocity stories of children, women and elderly people being killed by airstrikes are a major incentive for sympathizers to follow, which aligns with Morelli’s rule for propaganda that “the enemy systematically commits cruelties”. Videos of suffering Muslims in Chechnya and Palestine, as well as in Iraq and Afghanistan have been widely distributed by Islamist groups to incite hatred towards the West and promote empathy and sympathy for the Muslims in the areas depicted.<sup>72</sup> The material is used to build a narrative of a crusade conducted by the West against all Muslims, to which logically follows that Muslims must defend themselves and

their woman and children against the identified threat. The material is also used to delegitimize the Assad Regime and other enemy organizations. In *Dabiq*, graphic pictures of dead children are displayed with descriptions such as: “The regime continued its aggression against the city of Ar-Raqqah, carrying out an airstrike on Wednesday, the 27th of Sha’ban, which targeted the market and resulted in 30 shuhada’ and 36 wounded including women and children.”<sup>73</sup> Other videos feature footage of executions and of dead or mutilated children.<sup>74</sup> These graphic images facilitate the justification of the brutality of executions as well as help frame the narrative as one of defending the population.<sup>75</sup> Among other reasons, such as the utopia narrative further explained below, this was one of the main recruitment narratives before 2016 as mentioned by many foreign fighters who have returned, who claim to have joined for humanitarian reasons. Hence, the propagandists use the narrative of atrocities being committed against Muslims, whether true or not, to claim the moral high ground and evoke emotions in consumers of the propaganda. This emotional appeal is important for recruitment as men identify with the victims and feel a need to act. Diagnostic framing enables propagandists to convey the image of a barbaric adversary, who is the source of all evil and the sole obstacle to realizing a utopian scenario. The promise of a utopia leads us to the prognostic frame.

### **PROGNOSTIC FRAME: UTOPIA AND THE LAST STRUGGLE FOR PEACE**

In prognostic framing, a solution must be found and provided for the problem identified in the diagnostic frames. The problems identified by propagandists of both actors considered in this article are the moral inferiority of the enemy, his animosity towards the peaceful group, and finally his will to brutally destroy everything that is sacred, through committing atrocities and killing women and children. Once this has been established in the propaganda, a solution must be found, i.e. what needs to be done to change the status quo and to develop a consensus among the group or population. The solution is the eradication of the source of the pain so the world can finally live in unity and peace as defined by the propagandists. Hence, a holistic propaganda narrative must also contain a utopian vision for one’s own side. While no unified vision of a utopia exists, propaganda is

“usually an articulation of idealism and idealism is unthinkable without some vision of that end, the world picture, which is the object of idealist striving.”<sup>76</sup> The theme of utopia is prevalent in both IS and WWI propaganda. There needs to be a strong urge for the creation of narratives that explain the aim of the final struggle, which is to achieve a peaceful world.

During WWI, H.G. Wells’ slogan, “The War that will end War”, became hugely popular and framed a utopian vision in the narrative.<sup>77</sup> First published in newspapers, and shortly after, in October 1914, in his book *The War that will end War*, Wells argues: “Every soldier that fights against Germany now is a crusader for peace. This, the greatest of all wars, is not just another war – it is the last war!”<sup>78</sup> This theme appeared in recruitment posters, stating “EACH RECRUIT BRINGS PEACE NEARER”.<sup>79</sup> According to Wells, after eradicating Prussian Militarism, upon which all guilt for the war should be attributed, the world and all peoples would finally have peace and there would never be a war again.

For the IS, the theme of utopia is considered of higher importance, with roughly 50% of all material found to be concerned with the topic according to Charlie Winter, who analyzed propaganda material distributed in the summer of 2015.<sup>80</sup> One reason for the utopian narrative is the strong need to display the caliphate as a state-like entity, which provides a happy life for the people living within it, as it is generally not seen as a state within the global community. Hence, the propaganda needs to legitimize the state’s existence to its sympathizers and followers as well as locals, pushing the unique selling point of the group in comparison to other Islamist actors, i.e. being in control of territory. To do so the propagandists show scenes of children playing, people baking bread and general footage and pictures of people going about their everyday activities peacefully in the caliphate.<sup>81</sup>

While British propagandists did not have the problem of legitimizing the state itself, they also had to legitimize the actions taken by the government to their people, as the British were not directly attacked and as such had no direct reason to enter the war. The legitimization was found in the appeal that fighting in the Great War would ultimately lead to everlasting peace, making it worth great sacrifice. This ultimate fight, or final struggle, before the peaceful paradise arrives is the second part of the IS’s utopian promise. In the first issue of the IS magazine *Dabiq*, published by the Al Hayat Media Centre, the millenarian view-

point of the organization is explained. The name of the magazine derives from “the greatest battle between the Muslims and the crusaders” which will take place at a small town called Dabiq, according to a prophecy by Abu Hurayrah.<sup>82</sup> When the “armies of Rome” have been defeated, the Muslims will take “Constantinople”, the fight will be over and a great caliphate established. The utopia leads to a peaceful and free life for all Muslims after having fought the enemy. This is something that is worth fighting for in the minds of the sympathizers and the duality of blaming the US for all evil in the world as well as providing a vision for the group is a reason for potential recruits to ask themselves how they can get involved. This parallel of the last fight for peace is found in both narratives, which enables the propagandists to plead for sacrifices to be made urgently by the generation of fighting age to bring peace for all future people to come. To do so motivational framing is employed.

### **MOTIVATIONAL FRAME: HONOR, SHAME, BELONGING, AND THE IMAGES OF THE CULTURE**

Motivational framing provides a rationale for action. While other factors such as the sociological, economic and religious context of the recruit play vital roles in the push factors to join, this is the most important point in the propaganda effort itself to recruit sympathizers and soldiers. In British and IS propaganda, several narratives are framed to motivate men to join or enlist to the cause. These include appealing to the honor or sense of duty of the men as well as shaming them into action. Additionally, positive enforcement is used in the narrative as a sense of belonging is propagated and images familiar to the recruits are used to interest them.

### **HONOR**

In the British Empire, propagandists used the narrative of a glorious, honorable conflict to enlist men into fighting and sell the war effort to the population at home. According to the propaganda, a British man was a volunteer: a “brave knight who took himself off on a crusade of chivalry and sacrifice; who fought for liberty and the innocent population of women he left behind”.<sup>83</sup> This theme is depicted in a poster showing a knight in shining armor fighting

a dragon with the text “BRITAIN NEEDS/YOU AT ONCE”.<sup>84</sup> Even after conscription was introduced, the concept of honorable volunteers and great men doing their duty persisted in the narrative in British culture.<sup>85</sup> Recruitment posters, which were the focus of home front propaganda until the introduction of conscription in 1916, emphasized the need for men to join up, as it was their duty as a citizen. Posters posed the question: “What in the end will/settle this war?/TRAINED/MEN/It is/YOUR DUTY/to become one”.<sup>86</sup> Another poster stated: “Wake up England/It is the duty of/Every fit man to Volunteer/Are you doing your/Duty?”<sup>87</sup> Arie Kruglanski views these appeals as a “quest for significance” posed by the concept of duty which appeals to young men throughout all ages.<sup>88</sup> Fighting for the group to which one belongs gives the individual purpose and the feeling of participating in something greater than themselves.

In IS usage, honor spans various contexts within propaganda. As the Salafi-jihadists see themselves as underdogs fighting the mighty West, there exist several themes promoted through honor: the first lies in the restoration of the honor of the Muslim population as defined by the IS while the second lies with the honor of individuals themselves. In the first issue of *Dabiq*, the topic is made clear from the beginning. The first chapter is entitled “a new era has arrived of might and dignity for the Muslims”, which is introduced by a quote of Amirul-Mu'minin: “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.”<sup>89</sup> The narrative is that honor and dignity will be brought to believers through the establishment of the caliphate. On an individual level, honor is brought to the fighting men through the same narratives as it was to the British. Fighters are regularly described as lions, animals that stand for bravery, courage and chivalry in Islamic tradition,<sup>90</sup> the same characteristics the brave knight symbolizes in European tradition. Per Lasswell and O’Shaughnessy, symbols such as these are very important as they appeal to an emotional rather than a rational level. Pictures disseminated via the internet show fighters in heroic poses, weapon in hand, proudly presenting an image of a warrior with the title “REAL MEN are known in times of HARDSHIP.”<sup>91</sup> Nasheeds recant of honor and defending the caliphate: “They are coming from everywhere!/The soldiers of HONOR/Unstoppable on [the; sic!] battlefield/Let’s go for the



Fig. 6: Appealing to the honor of men, this picture depicts what men should really do when faced with difficulties: fight.

defense of the Messenger.”<sup>92</sup> Again, it is the quest for significance that appeals to young recruits from the West. Men are attracted by the possibility to leave their sometimes boring and deprived lives for a greater cause, which is being sold to them using the mystifying concepts of honor, duty and glory to be found in action-laden battles.

## SHAME

When duty alone did not sufficiently affect the targeted men in the British Empire, the propagandists introduced new methods to make use of the duality of honor and shame to influence the potential recruits into volunteering. While the concept of honor is a pull factor, shame is a push factor through social exclusion and marginalization. As early as August 1914 advertisements in the *Times* were taken out by individuals asking for “Petticoats for all able-bodied youth in this country who have not yet joined the army”, while another one from the same period announced: “Englishwoman undertakes to Form and Equip a Regiment of Women for the Firing Line if lawn tennis and cricketing young men will agree to act as Red Cross nurses in such a Regime.”<sup>93</sup> Posters were designed to “induce women to spur their menfolk to enlist.”<sup>94</sup> A particular good example is the poster “To the Women of Britain,” which states four questions to the female readers ending with: “Won’t you help and send a man to join the army today?”<sup>95</sup> The British women were involved yet more by a campaign started by an admiral in 1914, which

urged women to hand white feathers to men who did not wear a uniform in the streets.<sup>96</sup> The symbol of cowardice intended to pressure men into enlisting due to their public humiliation and shame.<sup>97</sup> Children were also used to induce shame into men who had not yet enlisted with the most prominent example being a poster in which the silhouettes of a young child and a man are depicted next to the text “WHAT WILL YOUR ANSWER BE When your boy asks you – ‘Father, – what did you do to help when Britain fought for freedom in 1915?’ ENLIST NOW.”<sup>98</sup>

As with the British recruitment propaganda, if the appeal through honor and glory is not enough, shaming potential recruits is used to try and motivate men into joining the IS. The messages distributed by individuals on different channels have clear parallels to the advertisements taken out by individuals during WWI claiming: “There are women who are already here [in the territory of IS] before you and look, they are already doing more than you have for the Islamic State.”<sup>99</sup> Another message deprives men of their perceived manhood accusing them of cowardice much like the order of the white feathers: “Stop sitting behind your screens posting [sic] couple of dawlah [ISIS] videos, getting yourself ‘caught’ because of it. You are not men. You are an embarrassment for the Ummah.”<sup>100</sup> The other way in which women are used to motivate men is that they can achieve paradise for their supporting wife as well, as shown in one poster depicting a man that walks towards the horizon in full battle gear with a woman in the foreground next to the text: “Go and

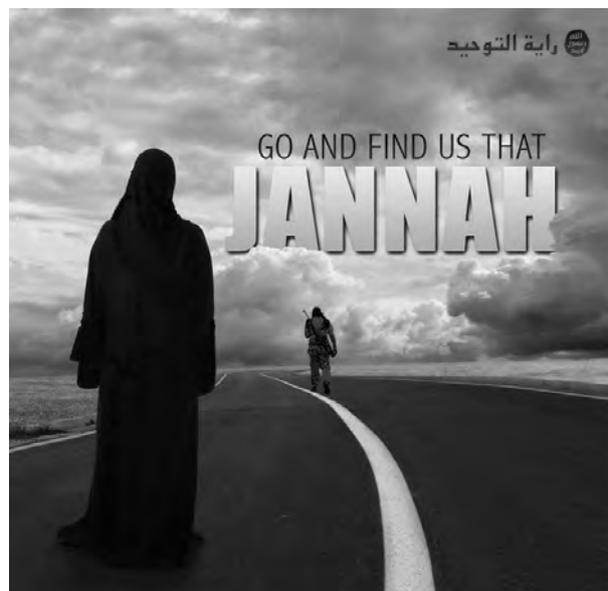


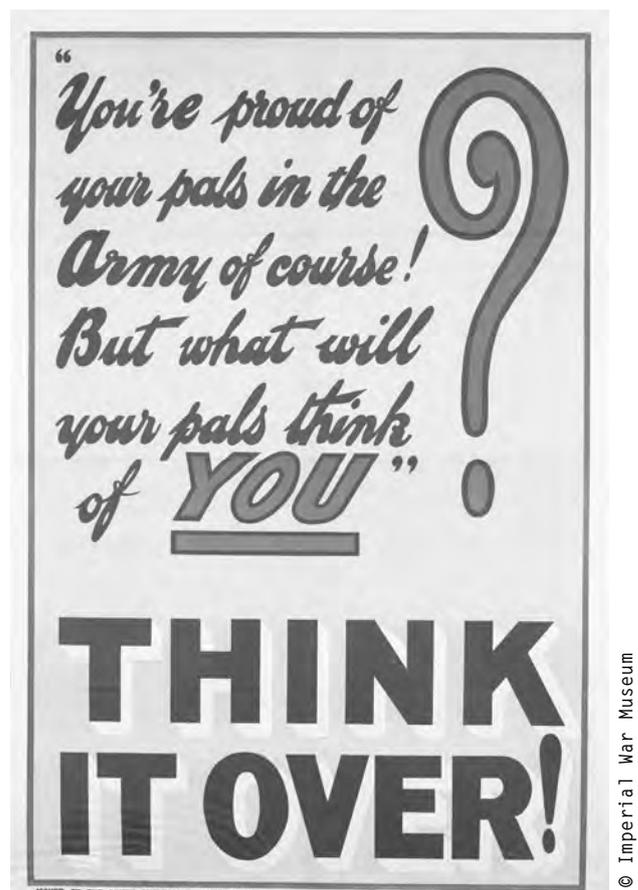
Fig. 7: Appealing to a sense of pride while referencing imagery of pop culture (in this case Sparta): Go and find us that Jannah.

find us that Jannah.”<sup>101</sup> All the while children are used throughout propaganda, though in a different function than in British propaganda. Depicting child soldiers in some videos as well as featuring children performing executions in full combat dress “lays on the discomfort many men experience at the thought of a child being more empowered than themselves to avenge Muslims’ perceived humiliation.”<sup>102</sup> This shaming is a strong motivation for sympathizers to act. The narrative that women will respect the individual only if they take action, yet they will love him if they follow the narrative of a lion for the caliphate, exerts a forceful push factor on the recruits. This push factor is based on the aforementioned quest for personal significance, which constitutes a “fundamental desire to matter, to be someone, to have respect [...] this quest constitutes a major, universal, human motivation variously labelled as the need for esteem, achievement, meaning, competence, control, and so on.”<sup>103</sup> The men are supposed to perceive themselves through propaganda as defenders of Islam (ergo of a higher moral standpoint) and of helpless women and children, thus feeling powerful.

### PEER PRESSURE

Another prominent way in the British Empire in which men were both shamed and instilled with a sense of pride and duty (ultimately driving enlistment) was peer pressure, exemplified by the poster entitled: “You’re proud of your pals in the Army of course! But what will your pals think of YOU! THINK IT OVER”.<sup>104</sup> The mechanism of peer pressure can be explained by Scott Atran: “People don’t simply kill and die for a cause. They kill and die for each other.”<sup>105</sup> The motivational framing of unity and belonging to a group to which men want to belong was fostered in the recruitment propaganda of the British.

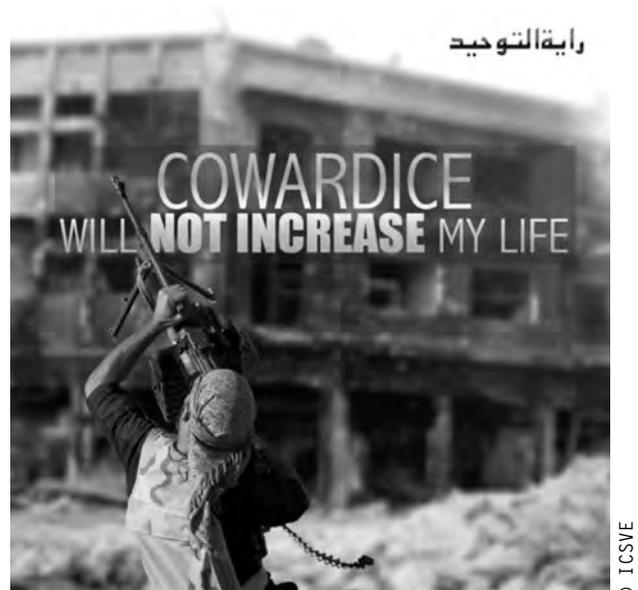
As with the British, peer pressure was also used by IS propagandists who try to compel men to either join because everybody else is doing it or by providing incentives for other men to exert pressure on those less convinced to join in. Usually groups leave after one person alone has undertaken the journey to the territory of the IS and then others follow, sometimes feeling pressured to join so as to not look like a coward to other men. This is enforced by pictures of fighting men next to the writing “COWARDICE will NOT INCREASE my life,” as well as by use of the inclusive “we” in the slogan “We are all ISIS” and “Why would we want to leave PARADISE LIES AHEAD”.<sup>106</sup>



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Fig. 8: In alarming colors this poster appeals to a sense of duty as well utilizing peer pressure to compel men to join: Think it over!

Video messages taken of foreign fighters already in the area appeal to the brothers to join the fight and defend the women and honor of Muslims: “There are two types of people those who will fight every single excuse to come to jihad and those who will fight every single excuse not to come to jihad.”<sup>107</sup>



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Fig. 9: Accusing a man of cowardice is used to pressure him into joining the fight: Cowardice will not increase my life.

According to Sageman, cliques “are the social mechanism that puts pressure on prospective participants to join, defines a certain social reality for the ever more intimate friends, and facilitates the development of a shared collective social identity and strong emotional feelings for the in-group.”<sup>108</sup> Propagandists try to invoke this feeling by disseminating action-laden videos showing men, calling each other brothers, fighting, depicting explosions and emphasizing success on the battlefield. Other videos aim to show the military might of the IS by showing training camps and parades.<sup>109</sup> These videos are then watched by small groups of men who encourage each other in a tit-for-tat cooperation with the other members, each trying to outdo the next with their extremist views. Watching disseminated videos enforces the group bond, as can be seen in the example of the 7/7 bombers who consumed under-the-counter videos before going paintballing.<sup>110</sup> It is clear that motivational framing of the narrative of duty was prevalent in the propaganda of WWI and was enforced through positive and negative incentives. IS propaganda uses the same imagery and narratives to persuade young men to become fighters.

### BELONGING AND THE IMAGES OF CULTURE

A feeling of belonging was a strong motivational factor for many men to enlist in the army of the British Empire, as it is to join an organization such as the IS. The emotional appeal of friends joining leaves the potential recruit feeling left out and they want to be part of something bigger alongside their peers. Emotional appeals can win people over to a cause, even though the message has no rational content at all as long as the “appeal is simply to social and emotional satisfaction.”<sup>111</sup> The British and the IS both learned how to utilize this feeling early and capitalized on it through their propaganda narratives using two major themes.

### BELONGING

On the one hand British propagandists cultivated the feeling that the whole nation was in the struggle together, through recruitment posters featuring texts such as “SINGLE MEN/Hundreds of Thousands of married men have left their homes to fight for King & Country/SHOW YOUR APPRECIATION/BY

FOLLOWING THEIR/NOBLE EXAMPLE”<sup>112</sup> while other posters depicted people from all walks of life marching in a column, in which the men portrayed further away are all shown wearing khaki, symbolizing equality in the ranks once one puts on the uniform while the text reads “STEP INTO YOUR PLACE.”<sup>113</sup> The establishment of pal regiments, as well as the publishing of the list of volunteers in the newspapers every week “excited tremendous interest” and supported this narrative.<sup>114</sup> Other posters show three happy men relaxing and playing a card game in the trenches with the subtitle “Will you make/a fourth?”<sup>115</sup> The sense that the men all belong to a great cause and are part of something bigger than themselves, as well as camaraderie, are major themes in the propaganda during WWI.



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Fig. 10: Suggesting joining for a sense of belonging and for the camaraderie is a pivotal tool in motivational war propaganda: Will You Make a Fourth?

The IS fosters the same feeling of belonging in its narrative. By showing men relaxing with tea and singing together, a feeling of brotherhood and belonging is imparted.<sup>116</sup> Men from different countries are shown having a good time in parks, rejoicing in being part of the organization, joking with each other and playing with children.<sup>117</sup> Though subtler,

this is the same message as in the recruitment poster of the British titled “will you make a fourth?” The appeal of camaraderie and belonging, as well as the fun side of joining, is emphasized. The recruits are promised the time of their lives.

## THE IMAGES OF CULTURE

Another way for the British to promote this feeling of belonging was to use the interests of the men. This was achieved in two ways: the propagandists appealed to men to use their interests or hobbies for the war effort such as a poster by the Navy stating “YOU, WIRELESS FAN,/HELP THE NAVY/GET THE/HUN SUBMARINE”<sup>118</sup> or the poster distributed by the Divisional Cyclist Company: “ARE YOU FOND OF CYCLING?/IF SO/WHY NOT CYCLE FOR THE KING.”<sup>119</sup> The alternative way to use these interests included the use of the fondness of people for football, such as the poster distributed by the Football Association urging men “to show/that they are GOOD SPORTSMEN and/to ENLIST NOW and help the other GOOD SPORTSMEN”<sup>120</sup>, while a poster from Millwall appeals to the fans: “MEN OF MILLWALL/Hundreds of Football enthusiasts/

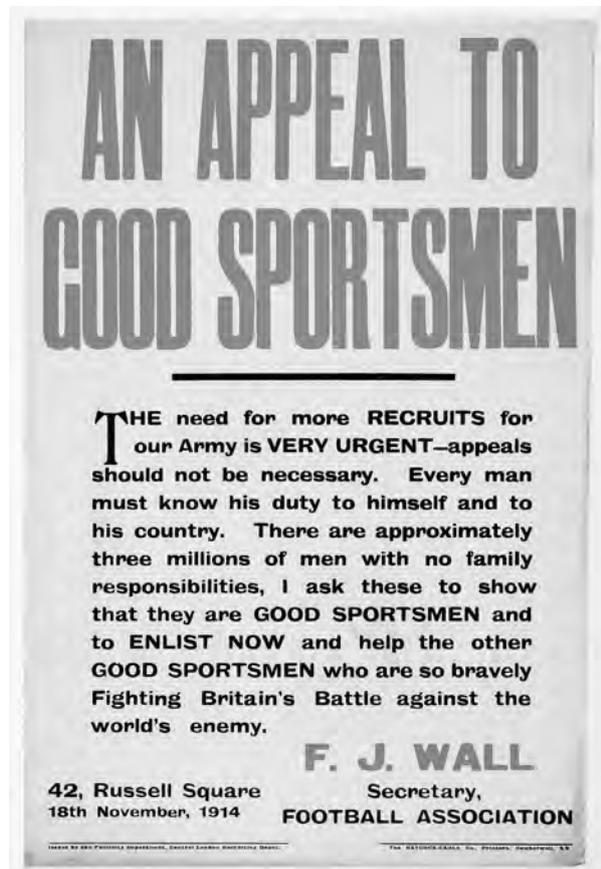


Fig. 11: This poster tries to entice men into enlisting by using their hobbies and interests. Many others like them appeal to footballers or rugby players or even cyclists.

are joining the Army daily./Don't be left behind./ Let the Enemy hear the 'LION'S ROAR.'/Join and be in at/THE FINAL/and give them a/KICK OFF/ THE EARTH.”<sup>121</sup>

Using the hobbies of potential recruits maximizes the emotional appeal and the feeling of belonging to a group of other enthusiastic individuals who share the same interests and goals. It is something that recruits can bond over and fosters camaraderie. Distributing the appeals at places of interest to the men to which they are emotionally attached also maximizes the emotional appeal of the call to arms. Groups such as the Millwall fans who have a strong bond through being united in a stadium before the war have an in-group love and join together after being riled up by an emotional game, while the language uses the same culturally appealing words as the men would use themselves.

IS propaganda also uses familiar hobbies and imagery in its narratives. Videos feature point of view footage like those of First-Person shooters such as “Counterstrike” or “Call of Duty”, games often played by young adults in the West. Others show an aerial view shot with the help of drones, familiar to gamers from strategy games like “Starcraft” or “Age of Empires” with windows popping up showing footage from the ground of suicide missions and big explosions.<sup>122</sup> The videos often resemble those of action films with short, hard cuts portraying fighting scenes. This familiar imagery is further supported by posters and memes shared on the internet, such as a poster in the style of the popular Hollywood movie “300”, rearranged to look like the troops of the IS pushing Iraqi and US troops over a ledge with the title “prepare for glory”.<sup>123</sup> Another image uses the concept of respawning, i.e. being reborn after a short period in a First-Person shooter using the actual game title of a famous game: “THIS IS OUR CALL OF DUTY/AND WE RESPAWN IN JANNAH.”<sup>124</sup> Other connections made by the IS propagandists are to the popular music culture of milieus in the West, producing nasheeds that resemble rap songs such as “There is no life without jihad!”<sup>125</sup> with a video that shares its style of editing with modern pop music videos. This mixing of popular culture with the intended message produces a strong emotional effect on potential recruits. The use of familiar images as well as cultural language provides a reflective background for the propagandists’ messages and the appeal looks interesting and cool to the young men



Fig. 12: Referencing a well-known first-person shooter game by name, which many young men in the target age group would have played. This picture circulated on the internet, appealing to men: this is our call of duty.

targeted. Overall, the IS are subtler in their approach, but one can identify strong parallels in the narratives of belonging and in the images of the culture used.

## CONCLUSION

This article set out to show parallels in the framing of events and narratives in British WWI and contemporary IS propaganda in order to better understand what motivates men to participate in a conflict. This was achieved by comparing and contrasting recruitment propaganda using frame analysis developed by Benford and Snow. Firstly, the political and religious pre-narratives were explored as these are especially relevant to the recruitment propaganda. Secondly, the framing of the narratives of atrocities, victimhood of women and children, utopia, honor, duty, shame, belonging, peer pressure and the use of images of the cultures were analyzed within Benford and Snow's three core types of framing. The findings are as follows:

1. Pre-conflict framing of the later adversary is of utmost importance to the construction of propaganda during conflict, because it prepares the ground for recruitment sociologically. It makes it easier to emotionalize the conflict in a manner in which sympathizers feel obliged and motivated to fight for the cause, because it adheres to well-known cultural prejudices. Both parties, despite their different ideological beliefs, appealed to the religious sentiments of potential recruits and incited strong emotional reactions by depicting the struggle with the enemy as a religious duty pitting good against evil. The narratives fostered before both conflicts are very similar and promote a Manichean worldview.

2. The propaganda used in WWI by the British and by IS today features similar diagnostic frames. Atrocity stories are used to blame the opposing side for immoral behavior and to promote a sense that one must defend oneself and those of the ingroup that has been created. Imagery of victims is used to simultaneously elicit emotions of hatred for the enemy while invoking feelings of love for the previously constructed ingroup. This and a sense of urgency may facilitate the recruitment effort by appealing to the wish to protect one's own culture.

3. Having established who is at fault for all evil in the world in both propaganda strategies, prognostic framing is used in similar ways. This is done by aligning frames to create an image of the fight as the last war before peace can finally be achieved, while creating a utopian vision in which the population will be able to live freely, peacefully, and in accordance with their own values. The diagnosed solution is to fight the enemy to achieve this aim. Imagining a peaceful world creates a potential endgame for recruits to strive towards. It provides a powerful vision to fight for a noble cause and for the in-group as defined by the propagandists.

4. To motivate sympathizers and potential recruits to join the military call to arms and a rationale for action are emphasized by both actors. This is done through motivational framing of the concept of honor and the shaming of men who do not act. Enforcing a narrative of belonging and promoting peer pressure are strong motivational factors used by the propagandists of both Britain during WWI and IS. By using images familiar to the men targeted, such as football or computer games, the motivational framing of the narrative fits in well with the prior experiences of the potential recruits and creates a familiarity with the topic. On top of that a strong sense of urgency is induced by the propagandists.

The parallels in the framing of the narratives, using similar means to secure recruits for their cause, shows the ease of manipulating men into following a cause through well placed propaganda. Under the right circumstances of existing pre-narratives, consistently exposing individuals to narratives can lead to a Manichean worldview and instill a need to act in them. This can make effective counter narratives promoted by other sides very difficult to enforce. In the aftermath of WWI, the propaganda of the British was analyzed, which led to a credibility crisis of the British government as perceived within their own

population, ultimately leading to the disbelief of atrocities committed by the Germans in World War II. This effect may be equally effective in counteracting IS propaganda. Hence, more research to understand how frames are constructed, along with how counterframes operate sociologically and psychologically, is needed to discover better means to construct counter-messages. The analysis in this article provides a

contribution towards developing new solutions and furthering understanding of trends in the utilization of propaganda by different actors as well as how framing affects susceptibility to radicalization and recruitment. Analyzing the propaganda of the past facilitates understanding of current propaganda trends, and this knowledge can be applied to the ever-evolving research of propaganda.

## ENDNOTES

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