Terror in pictures: Dabiq, a graphic analysis

Terror en imágenes: Dabiq, un análisis gráfico

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ABSTRACT. Dabiq is an example of how Jihadism has used magazines as a tool for propaganda. One of its goals was to legitimize the Daesh and images haven been an important tool towards achieving this goal. The present paper aims to quantitatively assess the importance of the photographic image in the narrative generated by Dabiq. The use of color, image size, position within the page, use by sections and use according to information genres will be analyzed. Results suggest that images are more important in Dabiq than in prior jihadist publications. The image of Daesh it portrays is modern and solid, supporting the idea of a consolidated state.

RESUMEN. Dabiq es un ejemplo de cómo el yihadismo ha usado las revistas como herramientas para la propaganda. Uno de sus objetivos era legitimar al Daesh, y las imágenes han sido un factor fundamental para lograrlo. La presente investigación trata de mostrar cuantitativamente la importancia de la imagen fotográfica en la narrativa generada por Dabiq. El uso del color, el tamaño de la imagen, la posición o las secciones y géneros serán analizadas, para demostrar que Dabiq es cualitativamente una revista más cuidada que otras publicaciones yihadistas, dando una idea moderna y sólida, que ayudó a consolidar el proyecto estatal del Daesh.

KEYWORDS: Dabiq, Terrorism, Image analysis, Photography.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Dabiq, Terrorismo, Análisis de imagen, Fotografía.

1. Introduction: What is Dabiq?

Dabiq is a small but important town in northern Syria, located next to the Turkish border. It belongs to the Aleppo Governorate, the most populated in the country, and is in the district of Azaz, which totals a quarter of a million residents. However, Dabiq as such barely had 3,000 inhabitants before the war. Why has a poverty-stricken village given its name to the magazine of a regime that has terrorized the world? In Muslim eschatology, Dabiq is where the battle of the end of times will take place between the infidels and the chosen. According to the Islamic apocalypse, it will be the place of the complete and utter defeat of the Crusaders. That is why the Islamic State, the Daesh, took its name for its online magazine. From August 2014 to October 2016 the city was in their hands, and when it fell and its symbolism was lost, the Islamic caliphate decided to change the magazine's name.

Jihadism has consistently paid attention to magazines as a tool for propaganda. Studies have been made of many prior examples (Ceballos-Becerril et al., 2019), such as Al-Shamika, edited by Al-Fajr Media Center and belonging to Al Qaeda, or the previous Al-Khansa (Usher, 2004), published in 2004 by The Women's Media Bureau in the Arabian Peninsula, a cover for the jihadist publisher Sawt Al-Jihad (the voice of Jihad) and directed by Abdelazid al-Muqin. Both magazines were aimed at Salafist women, a good example of audience segmentation, which can give an idea of how comprehensive jihadist propaganda strategies are.

The direct example taken by Daesh to develop Dabiq magazine was Inspire. In fact, this magazine was the first attempt at Jihadist expansion in English. It was led by Anuar Al-Awlaki, a Yemeni cleric and member of Al Qaeda (Apuzzo & Goldman, 2010). Beginning in 2010, with a frequency ranging from half a year to two months, it was published with a decidedly propagandistic intent. On the one hand, it was aimed at a captive audience, educated and instructed in Islamism, which did not need to be radicalized because it was already convinced (Aguilar Franco, 2018). On the other hand, it instructed radicalized second or third generation young Muslims living in the West in Jihadist Salafism, as Islamist propaganda had been doing before this magazine (Sageman, 2008). Surprisingly, Dabiq uses English because that made its contents accessible to whoever was interested, this being an innovation in the field of jihadism. Up until them, language was a barrier for intelligence services and scholars interested in these media.

Dabiq makes its content accessible for the Muslim diaspora but presents a great deal of differences. Firstly, the organization behind the magazine is not Al Qaeda but the caliphate. Therefore, it is not interested in training lone wolves in autonomous terrorism techniques (open source jihad) in order to maintain a delocalized terrorist organizations, as advocated by Al Qaeda. In this case, the priority is legitimizing the Daesh caliphate. Content is thus more thought-provoking, but equally inflammatory. The editing is very professional - at least when compared to Inspire - and great care is shown in the layout, graphics, photography and overall design. For obvious reasons, its distribution began in secret through the Deep Web, but its popularity soon brought it to the public domain. Today it can be retrieved through scientific repositories, such as the Clarion Project. The magazine had several headings in different languages: Dar al Islam in French, with ten issues, Konstantiniyye in Turkish or Istok in Russian.

The Daesh's strategy has varied significantly over the years, shifting from insurgency and guerrilla warfare to territorial conquest and defense, exporting combatants and training terrorists in sleeper cells (Ballesteros Martín, 2017). Daesh has outgrown Al Qaeda, because although it also uses all the tools at its disposal, both information and propaganda and traditional kinetic military power, in Berardinelli's words:

Daesh created a modern blueprint for how an insurgency can emerge as a regional power. That a previously amorphous group could establish a proto-state, giving form and physical substance to an ideology stoked through decades of strife in the Levant, is a testament to success (Berardinelli, 2019).

The different strategies used by Daesh relate to different communication and propaganda goals, both to "espouse its divisive and apocalyptic narrative; to recruit combatants and inhabitants for ISIS inside and

outside of the 'state'; and for military and strategic reasons" (Oosterverl et al., 2017). In the words of these same authors,

> The principal means by which ISIS has managed to gain local support is by playing into the fears of the local Sunni population. In fact, "many Sunnis preferred ISIS rule to accommodation with the chauvinist Shia state-building project that (...) has systematically excluded Sunnis (Oosterverld et al., 2017: 13).

Dabiq magazine supported these policy shifts and adapted to the changing objectives. When the offensive against Akhtarin began on September 28, 2016, Daesh felt that the symbolic value of Dabiq was at stake, given that the town of the same name was at risk of being lost during the attack. That was when magazine was re-established with a new name, Rumiya, while editions in most languages were closed down. This new magazine was shorter and more concise. Its topics focused once again in justifying the caliphate and the need to keep the fight alive (Table 1).

	Cover title	Publication date
1	"The Return of Khilafah"	July 5, 2014
2	"The Flood"	July 27, 2014
3	"A Call to Hijrah"	September 10, 2014
4	"The Failed Crusade"	October 11, 2014
5	"Remaining and Expanding"	November 21, 2014
6	"Al Qa'idah of Waziristan: A Testimony from Within"	December 29, 2014
7	"From Hypocricy to Apostasy: The Extinction of the Grayzone"	February 12, 2015
8	"Shari'ah Alone Will Rule Africa"	March 30, 2015
9	"They Plot and Allah Plots"	May 21, 2015
10	"The Law of Allah or the Laws of Men"	July 13, 2015
11	"From the Battles of Al-Ahzāb to the War of Coalitions"	August 9, 2015
12	"Just Terror"	November 18, 2015
13	"The Rafidah from Ibn Saba to the Dajjal"	January 19, 2016
14	"The Murtadd Brotherhood"	April 13, 2016
15	"Breaking the cross"	July 31, 2016

Table 1. List of published issues. Source: Self-made.

2. Materials and methods

The analysis of international Jihadist media is somewhat frequent given the importance of the phenomenon. However, systematic analysis of their graphic information is not as usual, as noted by Watkin and Looney (2019) in one of the few studies of this kind, focused on children's imagery in jihadist digital magazines.

It is well known that images are an attention trigger in informative media and attract the eye, making them stand out from articles or information without graphic media attached to them. Roland Barthes considered press photography to be, other than both a product and a tool, an object with its own structural autonomy (Barthes, 1986: 12). However, according to Susan Sontag (Sontag, 2006: 152), they establish a syntax that can give new meaning to the context of a photographed image in a game where both the photographer and the reader take part. Panofsky (1972: 24), on the other hand, notes that there are three levels of interpretation of a photograph as a document: pre-iconographic, iconographic, and iconic. This study will follow these guidelines. Based on Panofsky's interpretation, in the first section we will perform a formal analysis - fundamentally quantitative -. In the second section we will question the reasons behind the inclusion of these photographs and will try to categorize them - qualitative study. Finally, we will interpret their symbolic meaning within their context in Dabiq. The research hypothesis is, therefore, to quantitatively assess the journalistic and visual importance of the photographic image in the narrative generated by Dabiq.

The ultimate goal of this study is not only to undertake a quantitative and qualitative study of graphic information. Dabiq is assumed to be carefully edited, which is verifiable as soon as the magazine is opened. It is much more striking than its predecessors in the Jihadist world since it uses technical resources captured in

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Mosul, one of the hubs of the Iraqi media industry, after it was taken in June of 2014. We will also try to answer questions regarding photographic quality, if its usage is consistent with the layout, if there are two roles - propaganda and information - with equal prominence or if one prevails over the other, and which are the main themes of the magazine and, therefore, what is the public ideology of Daesh.

The worksheet used for the analysis of graphic material (understanding it just as "photographs") is based on a series of formal items (use of color, image size, position within the page, sections) and others related to content analysis, such as the use of captions, signature, section title, information or story where the image appears, its relevance (as a unique image or as stock photography), and the journalistic genre (article, editorial, opinion piece, feature story or others). A number of common ways to use images are not found in Dabiq, such as advertisements, infographics, still photographs taken while shooting videos or back cover images. Each of these deficiencies has its explanation: the magazine does not include advertising, although it uses similar misleading elements in what can be called "pseudo-advertising"; it does not make use of computer graphics perhaps because an excess of transparency would not be appropriate in an ideological publication, or because perhaps it is a specialized format. The fact is that there are no maps or detailed contents based on photography mixed with text.

The use of color is limited to a classification into either black and white or color. For the division into columns, a four-column division was proposed as it is one of the most common designs used due to its flexibility. Pictures could be placed in six different positions within a page: 1 and 2 in the upper third, 3 and 4 in the middle third, and 5 and 6 in the lower third. Odd numbers belong to the left half to page and even number to the right side.

Samples were identified by a compound code comprised of the magazine's initials followed by the volume number, page number and a letter if there were several pictures. Letters were assigned starting from the upper left section and continuing clockwise.

Thus, photograph D101a would be the first Dabiq picture studied as it would belong to the upper left section of volume 1, page 1. Image D568c would belong to volume 5, page 68, third picture clockwise.

The work sample has been obtained by the method of information saturation. This method has been previously applied in qualitative-quantitative research on content analysis (Wimmer & Dominick, 1991). This method of sample definition implies that as long as relevant and significantly different results continue to appear, the analysis will continue to be applied. This will be done until results become redundant. The use of this methods means that the sample size will be substantially larger than what is required for statistical significance, making it more representative while never reaching the same size as the full population. This simplifies the analysis process when it aspires, such as in this case, to be a comprehensive study.

On the other hand, to know the limits of statistical significance, the confidence interval needs to be calculated, which depends on the significance level and the universe studied. For large values, as is the case of the present study, a normal approximation to the binomial distribution can be used (Martín Martín, 2001: 60) which leads to approximate confidence intervals (Ardanuy Albajar and Tejedor, 2001: 38). Statistical significance in this study can be measured at 95%, the usual value in social sciences (Berganza Conde and Ruiz San Román, 2005: 137), which allows a calculation of x^2 for the confirmation of statistical significance.

$$x^2 = \sum \frac{(o_i - e_i)^2}{e_i}$$

In the case of x^2, o are the observed frequencies, while e are the expected frequencies. Degrees of freedom are found by subtracting 1 to the total values of those categories studied (Wimmer & Dominick, 1991: 253). This way it will be possible to find an x^2 value for each category studied, which with a 95% reliability indicates

its statistical significance.

The sample was finally established at 10 issues which contained 716 images belonging to issues 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12 and 13, following the distribution shown in figure 1. The samples was randomly obtained. A list of precedence was generated to analyze the samples in order until the required information saturation levels for content analysis were obtained (Wimmer & Dominick, 1991: 78). Issues 4, 5, 9, 14 and 15 were not analyzed. It should be noted that the average amount of photographs per issue is 71.6 photos per issue; thus, 716 out of a total of almost one thousand photographs have been analyzed (Figure 1).
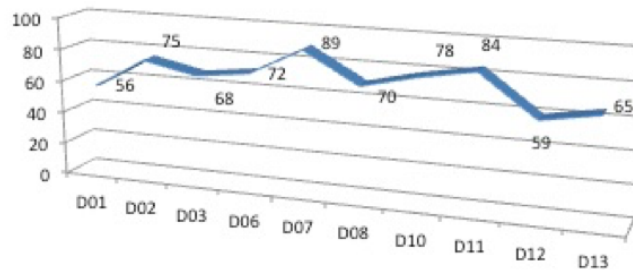
Figure 1. Issues studied and number of photographs. Source: Self-made.

Relevant results are described in two sections: quantitative and qualitative. In them the use of color, image size, position within the page, information content and usage depending on section within the magazine will be studied. In the qualitative section a thematic categorization is suggested and is demonstrated by applying it to a random issue of the magazine.

3. Results

3.1. Quantitative variables

Use of color

96% of images were published in color and only 4% in black and white. It is noteworthy that, given the magazine is distributed on-line and has, because of this, none of the budget limitations usually considered when publishing on paper, there were no monetary obstacles towards publishing in full color. A minimal number of images are published in black and white, duotone or sepia. These are artistic choices and unconditioned by technical reasons (Figure 2, 3 and 4).
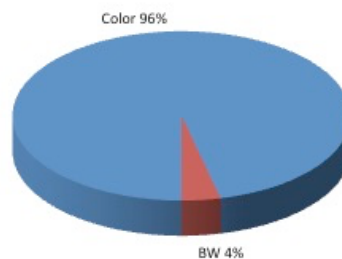
Figure 2. Use of color in Dabiq. Source: Self-made.

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Figure 3. From left to right, image 1, D729; image 2, D910; both in a black and duotone color. Image 3, D1205; image 4, D906a; in black and white. Source: Dabiq.

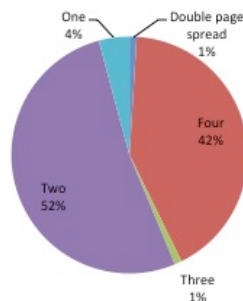Size and position within the page (Figure 4)

Figure 4. Photograph distribution by columns (percentage). Source: Self-made.

The size and position within the page refer to the importance given to the photograph itself. There are only seven cases of double-page images, almost all of them in the first issue (D0110, D0140, D0141, D1306). This could indicate a willingness to grant great relevance to graphic elements in this new publication. Almost half of the images (42%) span the total width of a page, four columns, which reinforces the same idea.

On the other hand, the rest of the photographs used display a conservative layout. The other half of the photographs (52%) occupy two columns, half the width of the page. Only a small percentage of the images are used in more complex ways, such as a single column (4%) or three columns (barely 1%) (Figure 5).
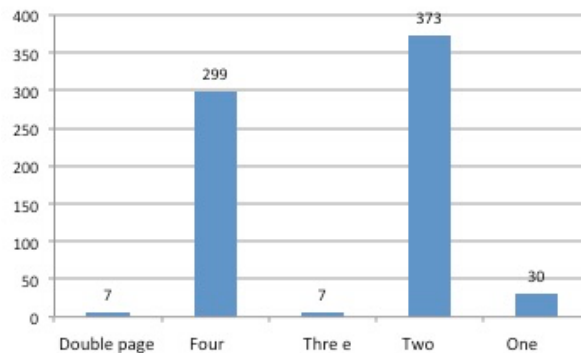

Figure 5. Distribution of photographs by columns (absolute values). Source: Self-made.

By combining columns and the division into thirds of a page we can study the size and position of images (figure 6). If the traditional distinction between even and odd pages is not considered, given the particularities of digital distribution, this is the resulting layout where we can clearly appreciate how the upper right size of the page is dominant, followed by the upper left and lower right. As a second tier, we find the middle right and

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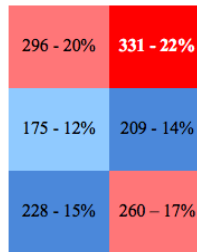lower left areas. The less used is the lower left side of the page.

Figure 6. Spatial distribution of photographs on a page (absolute values and percentage). Source: Self-made.

The reason behind this preference is likely to be related to its display on a browser and also to Arabic reading, which runs from right to left and from top to bottom. Although the magazine is written in English, it is necessary to consider that its production team (mainly Al Hayat) was made up of Syrian and Iraqi journalists, layout artists, designers and Muslims in general. The English texts were tailored to a Muslim magazine. This can be seen by the predominant use of photographs in the Arabic language headline. In fact, all the values on the right side are slightly higher than their left-side counterparts, although not in a statistically significant way.

If the magazine used two-page spreads, the distribution of images would follow the one shown in figure 7. Results endorse the idea of an Arabic reading system, with less content in the center of the double spread. However, the minimal occurrence of double spreads, as seen above, suggests that Dabiq is conceived to be read on digital devices, not printed.
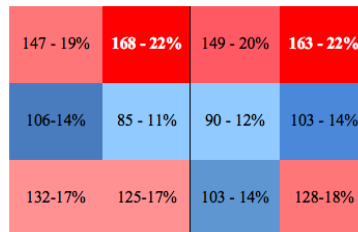

Figure 7. Spatial distribution of double page photographs (absolute values and percentage). Source: Self-made.

Finally, figure 8 shows that there is a special tendency towards small photographs (one or two modules of the six the page has been divided into for this analysis), while about 10% of photographs are full-page. As an anecdote, it should be noted that there are no photographs occupying 5 modules, which is consistent with conventional commercial design which are, in a sense, those that Dabiq imitates.
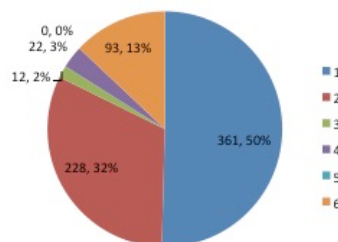

Figure 8: percentage of module usage in photographic layouts. Source: Self-made.

Informational content: stock photography

The term stock photography refers to those image that can be used in different pieces of news because their content is not exclusive to the topic being discussed and they can be reused in other pieces. Not having

pictures of the event, person or the story itself, and being forced to use stock images is detrimental to information quality. These stock photographs are almost half of those in the magazine (figure 9), and are indicative of Dabiq's informative lassitude (a medium with a monthly and indeterminate periodicity cannot necessarily have "the latest news"). They also suggest that we are not dealing with an informative tool, but with propaganda. Any self-respecting information channel tries to avoid using stock images because they diminish the quality of its information (Sánchez Vigil, Marcos Recio and Villegas Tovar, 2007).
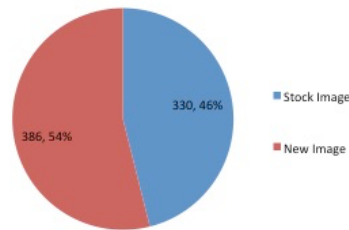

Figure 9. percentage of use of stock images and new images (unique link). Source: Self-made.

Another interesting fact is that only 56.98% (408) of the photographs have captions. This is also detrimental to information quality because photographs without textual information become a mere aesthetic ornament, used for decorative purposes. The aphorism that states that an image is worth a thousand words does not hold true in the world of information: without text, the image loses its distinctive character, and can be susceptible to multiple interpretations. This makes their informative value meaningless and, thus, the picture becomes superfluous.

Similarly, only 3 (0.42%) photographs state an author: Ibn Battah (D0839), Ayyūb As-Sikhtiyānī (D0849) and Al-Mukalla (D1206). Photographs signed by their authors are a standard in mainstream press and, in this case, this standard is not met. Together with the almost total lack of signed articles, it is one of Dabiq's shortcomings. One possible interpretation of this trait is the possible concealment of the author's identity. However, this could also be achieved through the use of pseudonyms or even random false names, in the interest of making their information seem trustworthy. The fact that it is not so indicates the little value that Dabiq gives to photography, treating it as illustration without informative value (even publishing them pixelated with poor printing resolution!). This is in line with a propaganda magazine, as it should be kept in mind that this is the kind of product we are facing.

Informative content: use according to informative genres

According to the classic theory of journalistic genres (Bernal and Chillón, 1985; Gomis, 1989; Martínez Albertos, 1992; Martínez Vallvey, 1996; Van Dijk, 1990), photographs illustrate the four main genres: report, information, article and column, in order of importance. A full list can be found in table 2. Photographs included in the two main information genres, report and information, monopolize more than half of the publication (58.8%). Other two categories, articles and the columns, have a joint presence of only 20%. Other much less represented genres are also accompanied by images. Admittedly, there are hardly any graphic essays, where most of the information lies in the image, but this is in line with commercial publications of this kind.

If this analysis is related to the previous one, the figures add up: half of the unique (non-stock) photographs match the information genre percentages, which are the ones that usually make use of them. However, a more detailed analysis finds further information. Although percentages are similar (58.8% of photos in informative genres and 54% of unique photos), their distribution is really not so even. There are resource photos in information pieces and unique photos in articles and other op-ed genres.

Information genre	Units	Percentage
Report	238	33,2
News / information	184	25,6
Article	85	11,8
Column / opinion	56	7,8
Interview	29	4
Chronicle	26	3,6
Editorial	15	2
Short Report / short graphic essay	14	1,9
Photo report / graphic essay	12	1,6
Back cover	4	0,5
Profile	4	0,5
Other	49	6,8
Total	716	100

Table 2. Photographs according to journalistic genres. Source: Self-made.

This underlines the journalistic categorization noted above, as the majority of photographs are used to illustrating these formats. Some categories could, in fact, be included within others. The chronicle or the short report, as well as the photographic one, could be considered sub-genres of the report. The editorial could also be considered a subgenre of opinion. The category "other" is mostly comprised of false advertising. Must be noted too, the poor use of the back cover: perhaps the online digital purpose of the publication let it down, not as in a printed paper; in that case, that section uses to be an important one.

The data suggests that Dabiq is a magazine in which reporting (238 reports, 14 short reports and 12 photographic reports) is dominant. This reinforces the idea that it's a corporate magazine. However, it is possible to delve even further in this regard by studying the distribution of images according to the taxonomy proposed by the titles of each section of the magazine itself, which is presented in the following section.

Use according to the sections of the magazine

A magazine generally names its sections, regardless of the journalistic genre to which they belong, according to its own criteria. Thus, in Dabiq there are sections that repeatedly appear issue after issue, and others that seem more circumstantial, appearing in only one or two issues. In this analysis we have considered as a section what the magazine indicates as such, although sometimes they seem to be the title of an article. However, they all have different titles.

Reports and articles are dominant, with their sections titled as such (around 20% of each), while the photographs that accompany pure information genres such as features or news do so in 8.6% and 6.8%. Two other opinion genres, foreword and interviews, have a percentage of 6% and 5.1%. The presence of others is marginal, as these sections are not recurrent and shouldn't be considered as such. In fact, a quarter of the articles cannot be included in sections as such as they appear alongside each other in what looks like an institutional or propaganda publications, which is unsurprising given that this is the genre of the magazine. It is not information, but propaganda. Daesh and Dabiq obey the classical terrorist logic of subordinating their essence to advertising (Hoffman, 1999). In this fashion, the rules of the media are distorted, in an attempt to present as information what is basically propaganda or advertising. No commercial magazine is allowed to publish content without presenting it under a section, in order to provide the publication with unity and continuity, so that the reader does not get lost. However, propaganda publications usually do allow themselves such luxuries. In Dabiq's case, almost a third of its photographs are attached to volatile sections, without continuity through its issues, to sections that only appear in a single issue or are even left without a section (Table 3).

Section	Units	Percentage
Report / Photo report	154	21,5
Article	148	20,6
Feature	62	8,6
News	49	6,8
Foreword	43	6
Interview	37	5,1
In words of the enemy / Enemy's words	18	2,5
The Rafidah: from Saba'to the Dajjal	16	2,2
Military Reports	14	1,9
Special	13	1,8
History / From the pages of History	10	1,3
The revival of Jihad in Bengal	9	1,2
A selection of military operations	8	1,1
Breaking news	8	1,1
Hikmah	8	1,1
The Allies of Al-Qa'idah in Yemen	7	0,9
The Allies of Al-Qa'idah in Sham	6	0,8
Ending	6	0,8
Amongst the believers are men Abu Junaydah Al-Almani	6	0,8
Wisdom	6	0,8
Portrait	4	0,5
Fatwa	4	0,5
From our sisters	4	0,5
You think they are together but their hearts are divided	4	0,5
Selected / Selected images	3	0,4
To our sisters	3	0,4
Do they not then reflect on the Qurán	3	0,4
Shuhada	2	0,2
Advice to the Mujahidin: listen and obey	1	0,1
And as for the blessing of your lord, then mention it	1	0,1
No section	26	3,6
Total	716	100

Table 3. Photographs according to sections of Dabiq. Source: Self-made.

3.2. Qualitative analysis

To complete the formal analysis, a series of thematic variables, recurrent in the issues studied, are noted. A future statistical analysis will be needed to assert whether and to what extent this subject-based taxonomy is present in all magazines, but there are some interesting features found throughout this study that are summarized in table 4.

Photographic themes found in Dabiq
Violent but not explicit images
Explicitly violent images
Scenic beauty
The good jihadist (pedagogy I)
Justifying violence (pedagogy II)
Punishing bad Muslims (pedagogy III)
Creation of collective state and military images
Use of video images

Table 4. Photographic themes present in Dabiq. Source: Self-made.

These variables were abundantly found throughout the research and their presence was measured within a random issue of the magazine, which was number 7. The presence of each of them was sufficiently verified, as presented below.

Violent but not explicit images.

Dabiq deals with violent subjects, and does so unambiguously. However, given the segmentation of its target audience, which is Muslim but Western, it uses the same journalistic constraints to which its target is

used to: violence is pixelated and subtle images are found. For that reason, and in a Western fashion they often avoid blood, gore and explicit violence. Some examples are the moment before an execution or the pixelation of the victim of an attack. Pixelated examples did where not present in issue number 7, so the example shown in figure 10-D703 belongs to another issue (Figure 10).

Figure 10. D703, D704 and D1228. Source: Dabiq.

Explicitly violent images

Explicit violence does appear in Dabiq, including severed heads, killing by various methods or particularly lurid executions. The presence of this type of photographs makes this magazine special, since this kind of content is rarely found in the market. Until now, this kind of images were shared privately, or at least, in publications with a limited, underground, circulation. Dabiq can be considered a pioneer in this sense, by trying to spread them all over the world. It may seem a contradiction with the previous section, but the fact that non-explicit images appear does not limit the inclusion of explicit ones. They can be understood to have a motivational role, exemplifying and underscoring the risk of opposing their ethical model (Figure 11).

Figure 11. D742a, D706b and 766. Source: Dabiq.

Staged beauty

Dabiq is produced by media professionals. Photograph editing shows examples of high knowledge of composition, technical parameters (such as depth of field) or lighting. These traits indicate both professional good taste and technical expertise. As has been previously shown, the use made of these images is another matter. As an example we can observe figure 12a, which belongs to issue number 7. In it we can observe a composition where the prisoners are smaller than the terrorists. In figure 12b we find the use of a wide aperture to create the out of focus effects. In figure 12c, the focus on a small detail and the image's low saturation can be noted as they are common in many images in the magazine.

Figure 12. D730, D746 and D709. Source: Dabiq.

Pedagogy I: the good jihadist

Dabiq provides the jihadist with argumentation and ideological reasoning. It gives guidance regarding who is and who isn't a good extremist. Photographs are an essential tool for this. Similarly, the enemy is clearly pointed out, to distinguish him from the good Muslim. Enemies can be takfir (impure) as well as apostates or bad Muslims. Photographs hold a twofold role: they highlight the written word in some cases and, in others, they identify people. They serve as a moral guide to know what a good Jihadi should be (Figure 13).

Figure 13. D720, D738 and D752. Source: Dabiq.

Pedagogy II: justifying violence

Within its discourse and the context of the Salafist doctrine, Dabiq justifies violence. Texts are again essential to this aim, as images are insufficient. The magazine speaks of NATO and Western countries and calls their soldiers "crusaders", reinforcing the negative connotation of this term in the Muslim world and associating it to murderous and terrorist elements. It also depicts Muslims as victims of those same soldiers or even of attacks by Muslim forces aligned with the enemy. Traitors and spies can also be found (figure 14). They are allowed to speak before being executed. This is when the spy acknowledges his guild and admits his wrongdoing, which does not save him from the death penalty.

Figure 14. D776, D778, D706 and D726. Source: Dabiq.

Pedagogy III: punishing bad Muslims

Once the good Muslim is clearly distinguished from the enemy, we are left with the final pedagogical warning: what happens to those who are not the enemy, but do not behave like good Muslims, from the Salafist point of view. That is to say, the rest of the Muslims in the "grey area", who are considered apostates, deviants... with all that this entails: condemnation and punishment. In the most radical interpretation of Islam, those who know of the true faith and reject it are worse than foreigners who don't know it. Modern jihadism does not require apostasy, simply being a non-Salafist Muslim is enough to be considered a deviant (Figure 15).

Figure 15. D701, D721 and D754. Source: Dabiq.

Rey-García, P.; Rivas-Nieto, P.; McGowan, N. (2023). Terror in pictures: Dabiq, a graphic analysis. *Revista de Pensamiento Estratégico y Seguridad CISDE,* 8(2), 21-35.

Creation of state and military imagery

One of Dabiq's goals is to be the voice of the caliphate, and this requires the recreation of state structures. The graphic part of the magazine is devoted to this, portraying perfectly uniformed soldiers as part of trained military units and not like a disorderly rabble. It also does so through the portrayal of acts of war accompanied by important-sounding names or which refer to specific actions as if they were real military operations: "operation Istishaddi", "operation Madrid", "operation London". This gives the impression of the existence of a control apparatus instead of them being unconnected acts of violence (Figure 16).

Figure 16. D723, D757 and D758a. Source: Dabiq.

Reusing images from videos

Synergies between the different propaganda departments of the Daesh are very common. The importance of the videos produced by Al Furqan or its subsidiaries is well known. The Daesh's magazines, led by Dabiq, unashamedly extract high-impact frames, despite their low quality. Some or their most representative videos can be recognized in these images. Sometimes these videos are "advertised" through previews of key scenes, in the style of film advertising (Figure 17).

Figure 17. D733, D783 and D767. Source: Dabiq.

4. Discussion and conclusions

After the quantitative study of the photographs in Dabiq magazine and a qualitative thematic assessment, a series of conclusions regarding the importance and quality of its photographs are reached. The first should refer to the initial hypothesis:

(1) The importance of photography in Dabiq, far superior to that in previous jihadist magazines, with professional editing and remarkable aesthetic taste, is confirmed. It is mainly used in reports and news pieces, without disregarding its usage in other formats such as interviews or editorials. It is worth noting the use of photography as the main subject of several formats ("Photo report", "Selected images", "History" section and other similar ones).

(2) Despite the number of photographs used and their color, there is no variety in their size and layout to help create an attractive and dynamic design. There is a tendency towards simple compositions, which in turn favors a balanced and sober layout. It is a low risk but effective type of design, especially when trying to give an image of solidity and strength, something that the Daesh seem to pursue and try to convey to the future inhabitants of the caliphate, or to their would-be martyrs.

(3) These strategies help Dabiq present a solid and modern image, far from guerrilla pamphlets published

by rudimentary means. Daesh intents to build a State and it must look strong and capable.

(4) Attempts are made to make the magazine informative as a whole, but the authors believe this is incorrectly done. The frequency of its issues (irregular) makes it impossible to communicate news and slow news pieces only use stock images, of little value. It cannot, therefore, be considered constant and reliable (last minute media), nor a means for in-depth development of the topics discussed in the magazine.

(5) The journalistic use of images can be greatly improved: photographs aren't signed by their authors, they don't fulfil the required information criteria and there is even carelessness in the use of photographs and videos, which appear pixelated due to lack of resolution.

(6) Daesh videos are used to reinforce articles. This is done by extracting frames and using them as pictures. There are no discussion about videos or films as could be found in a specialized publication.

(7) The back cover is unheeded as a relevant space. This could be due to the fact that Dabiq is conceived as a digital magazine and not on paper, which makes this space less relevant. On-line publications usually try to use the last page to close the issue in a worthy or striking manner, something that does not always happen in Dabiq.

(8) Further studies are suggested, such as the comparison between similar journals regarding the design and layout of their headers, in order to assess the similarity of their approach. A similar analysis could be applied to Inspire or Rumiya, two magazines of similar content (the latter is, in fact, Dabiq's successor). A comparative analysis of these magazines and of similar publications is needed, as would be a comparison between Western and Muslim publications, in order to assess if the conclusions found here follow cultural factors or are strictly a product of the jihadist propaganda that defines Dabiq.

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