

Islamic State's Perspective on the Muslim Brotherhood



Durham
University

School of
Government and
International
Affairs

The Narrative of the Islamic State

Briefing paper VIII

This briefing series builds on the research conducted on political Islam at DU to shed light on the narrative of Islamists and jihadis in the MENA region and beyond.

This short briefing reviews IS' newsletter, *al-Naba'*, and the three magazines *Dābiq*, *Rumīyyah* and *Dār al-Islam*, to analyse the group's view of the *Ikhwān* or Muslim Brotherhood.

IS often depicts *Ikhwān* as apostates (*murtādīn*), referring to those Muslims who rejected to pay charity (*Zakat*), to Caliph Abū Bakr (see of example *Rumīyyah* 3, p. 6; *Dābiq* 14, p. 28; *al-Naba'* 46, p. 8; 53, p. 9). Moreover, the group discredits the Islamic credential of the Muslim Brotherhood by putting the word "Muslim" with quotation marks as linguistic sign of disapprobation and sarcasm (*Dābiq* 8, p. 25 and 53; *Dābiq* 14, p. 35).

IS argues that *Ikhwān* "*al-Shayatin*", or brothers of Satan (*al-Naba'* 39, p. 9), do not follow Islam, and that their religion is "a hodgepodge of deviance bequeathed by the Ottomans combined with the various tenets and rites of democracy, liberalism, pacifism, and socialism borrowed from the pagans of the West and the East" (*Dābiq* 14, p. 28). According to the group's former spokesperson al-'Adnani, "The *Ikhwān* are nothing but a secularist party with an 'Islamic' cloak. Rather, they are the wickedest of the secularists" (cited in *Ibid*, p. 43).

In a fifteen-page article published in *Dābiq* (14, pp. 28-43), the group lists the several reasons why *Ikhwān* is not Islamic. The article starts, "Over the last few decades, a devastating cancer has emerged, mutated, and spread, attempting to drown the entire Ummah in apostasy" (*Ibid*, p. 28). The same reasons are stated in a long article of *al-Naba'* (11, p. 14). The first reason is the Muslim Brotherhood's alliances with Western countries. *Rumīyyah* explains, "the *Murtādd* Brotherhood has emerged as a poisoned spearhead carried by the Crusaders in their war against the *Khilafah*" (3, p. 6). *Dābiq* echoes this criticism, accusing them to have hosted "Western intelligence agents in the "Islamic" centers of the West to partake in the war against *jihād!*" (*Dābiq* 14, p. 28). A similar discourse is also narrated in several issues of *al-Naba'* (i.e. 39, p. 9).

Likewise, IS accuses the Muslim Brotherhood of historical support to the "[taghūt] kings of Egypt" (*Dābiq* 14, p. 38), namely Fuad I and Farouk I – who IS believes were secularists, corrupted and subservient to British rule. They are also accused of supporting Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak: "the *Ikhwān* would defend him and his government, even cooperating with his regime against the Muslims" (*Dābiq* 14, p. 39).

IS also points out the alliance between the Muslim Brotherhood and other sects of Islam and other religions. The group argues that *Ikhwān*'s call to interfaith peace and dialogue annihilates the obligation of war on Jews and Christians until they pay the tax (*Jiziyah*) (*Ibid*, p. 31). Furthermore, IS blames *Ikhwān* for trying to bring all different sects of

Islam together, especially the Sunni and Shia, in an attempt to unite and strengthens Muslims against potential enemies.

A second main argument used by IS to delegitimise the Islamic nature of the Muslim Brotherhood is the latter's participation in the political process, namely in "legislature", "democracy", "constitutional rule" and "pluralism" (Ibid, pp. 33-35; see also *Dār al-Islam* 8, p. 59). As they engage in such activities, IS argues, the *Ikhwān* compete with God's rule. *Dābiq* continues, "the Ikhwān call Muslims to commit apostasy by choosing individuals to represent them in the parliaments as legislators besides Allah!" (*Dābiq* 14, p. 34). It concludes, "The Ikhwān did not only admire an existing [tāghūt] constitution, but even penned their own for Egypt in '1952'" (Ibid, p. 35).

Finally, IS claims that the Muslim Brotherhood rejects two of the most important obligations in Islam: *irja'* and *jihād*. *Irja'* is the implementation of *takfir*, the fact of excommunicating somebody from the Muslim community, or to declare another Muslim a disbeliever. Indeed, the Muslim Brotherhood are strong opponents of *irja'*. Worse, IS argues, "They even disavow former members merely because those members declared [takfir] upon [tāghūt] [tyrant] regimes!" (Ibid, p. 40).

Moreover, instead of encouraging *jihād*, IS blames *Ikhwān* for promoting pacifism and censuring "terrorism" (quotation marks are used by IS). This, according to IS, makes "the swords on their logo and the slogan of 'Prepare' – in reference to the 60th verse of Sūrat al-Anfāl – completely meaningless" (Ibid, p. 38).

IS coins the expression "Ikhwānisation of Jihad" (*Dābiq* 11, p. 53) to describe the politicisation of Iraqi tribal factions who military supported the Iraqi government and the Western alliance in the war against the Islamic State. *Dābiq* explains, "their [the tribal factions] 'jihād' became the releasing of political statements having no reality on the ground. Their only active war was against the Islamic State [sic: when it should have fought those endangering the *Sunnah*]" (Ibid). This politicisation of Sunni rebel groups is deemed responsible for the successive formation, merger and break up of various Sahwat factions in Iraq and Syria (Ibid). According to IS, the same "Ikhwānisation" process took place in Palestine, Libya, Egypt, Somalia and Afghanistan. IS deplors the penetration of the *Ikhwān*'s jihadi doctrine into the Salafi movements. Abu Musab as-Suri and az-Zawahiri – two main ideologues of Salafi *jihād* – are criticised for cooperating with the *Ikhwān*, in spite of their un-Islamic nature (*Dābiq* 14, pp. 40-42).

Finally, *Ikhwān* is strongly associated to the state of Turkey in IS' discourse. The group uses '*ikhwān*' as an adjective that refers to the 'apostate Ikhwani Turk', as a discursive tool to delegitimise the Turkish government's attempt to portray itself as an Islamic country (*Rumīyyah* 4, p. 6; *Rumīyyah* 8, p. 32).

Bibliography

- AL-NABA'. (2015). *Al-Furqān Foundation* (11: December). [Online] Available at <<https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2016/01/the-islamic-state-e2809cal-nibacc84-newsletter-1122.pdf>> (accessed 10 February 2019).
- AL-NABA'. (2016). *Al-Furqān Foundation* (39: July). [Online] Available at <<https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2016/07/the-islamic-state-e2809cal-nabacc84-newsletter-3922.pdf>> (accessed 10 February 2019).
- AL-NABA'. (2016). *Al-Furqān Foundation* (46: September). [Online] Available at <<https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2016/09/the-islamic-state-e2809cal-nabacc84-newsletter-4622.pdf>> (accessed 10 February 2019).
- AL-NABA'. (2016). *Al-Furqān Foundation* (53: November). [Online] Available at <<https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2016/11/the-islamic-state-e2809cal-nabacc84-newsletter-5322.pdf>> (accessed 10 February 2019).
- DĀBIQ. (2015). *Al-Hayāt Media Centre* (8: March) [Online] Available at <<https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/the-islamic-state-e2809cdc481biq-magazine-8e280b3.pdf>> (accessed 10 February 2019).
- DĀBIQ. (2015). *Al-Hayāt Media Centre* (11: August) [Online] Available at <<https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/the-islamic-state-e2809cdc481biq-magazine-11e280b3.pdf>> (accessed 10 February 2019).
- DĀBIQ. (2016). *Al-Hayāt Media Centre* (14: April) [Online] Available at <<https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2016/04/the-islamic-state-22dacc84biq-magazine-1422.pdf>> (accessed 10 February 2019).
- AL-ISLAM. (2016). *Al-Hayāt Media Centre*, (8: February). [Online] Available at <<https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/dacc84r-al-islacc84m-magazine-8.pdf>> (accessed 10 February 2019).
- RUMĪYYAH (2016). *Al-Hayāt Media Centre*, (3: November). [Online] Available at <<https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2017/06/rome-magazine-9.pdf>> (accessed 10 February 2019).
- RUMĪYYAH (2016). *Al-Hayāt Media Centre*, (4: December). [Online] Available at <<https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2017/06/rome-magazine-9.pdf>> (accessed 10 February 2019).
- RUMĪYYAH (2017). *Al-Hayāt Media Centre*, (8: April). [Online] Available at <<https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2017/04/rome-magazine-8.pdf>> (accessed 10 February 2019).