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## ISIS' journals: A new existence in a universe against the other



Researchers from the Comress group at the UAB have explored how ISIS propaganda constructs identities and perceptions through its discourse. Based on the analysis of the terrorist organisation's English-language publication, *Dabiq*, the study shows how messages are articulated to divide the world between “us” and “them”, legitimize violence, and redefine group membership. The research reveals how propaganda narrative can not only persuade but profoundly transform the way readers understand their role in the world.

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There is no need to explain what went through our minds when young men born and educated in Ripoll signed up to carry out a massacre on Barcelona's Rambla, or when we read that women and men from all over the world enlisted in the Syrian war with Islamic militias, or when we see migrant women in our streets covering the heads of their daughters, barely two years old, something that the Koran does not indicate at any time, the same women who in the 21st century are covered up to their eyes in the West.

The article by two researchers from Comress group (Communication and Social Responsibility), Luisa Martínez and Carme Ferré-Pavia, and Nouran Khalil, a PhD student in the Media, Communication and Culture programme, discusses how persuasion and

propaganda move consciences to deceive, convince people of bizarre ideas or subvert human empathy. The research reveals the mechanisms used to manipulate human beliefs and actions. While in another part of the study we analyse the moral mechanisms, in this one we study it from the perspective of framing, or the journalistic framing that the Islamic State magazine applied to its texts for that purpose.

What would happen if propaganda not only persuaded people, but also told them who they are, who to love and who to hate? In this study, we analyse *Dabiq*, the English-language magazine of the Islamic State (ISIS), as a model of how identity is constructed through narrative, in how they tell what they tell. Throughout 206 articles published between 2014 and 2017, ISIS portrays itself as a sacred group—devout, heroic, and morally superior—while representing all outsiders as enemies of God, deserving of violence and extermination.

Using framing theory and social identity theory (two conceptual parts that guide the method), and through inductive content analysis, our article shows how ISIS systematically constructs a polarised “us versus them” universe in which violence is sanctified, opponents are dehumanised, and belonging to that group becomes both a moral and existential obligation.

The result is not just persuasion, but transformation: readers are offered not only a cause, but also a new identity through which to view the world. At a time when polarisation and identity conflict are reshaping politics, the media, and public life, tracing how identity is framed and used as a weapon is key to understanding the mechanisms of influence, ideological control, and the forces that divide and mobilise us.

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#### **References**

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