

(111 photos analyzed)

I have around 30 findings, some are based on the Islamic Imagery report as well as “the culture of Jihad” writing by Afshon Ostovar, and others are through my observation.

Fighter - Mujahid ->

- “In Islam, there is no greater spiritual act than martyrdom for one’s faith”. Therefore, a martyr is singular and is elevated above other believers in the eyes of God.
- This preference consists of forgiveness, an assurance of paradise, safety from the suffering of the grave and the terror of resurrection, placement of a crown on the head of the martyr, his marriage to 72 young virgins, and finally intercession for relatives.
- The direct access to the vision of paradise signifies that martyrs possess superhuman qualities (Cook 2017, p. 153).
- Moreover, according to Ostovar (2017), a fighter/mujahid elicits notions of bravery, virtue, strength, and religious devotion, heroism, and divine reward” (Ostovar 2017, 93).
- **Looking Away** -> evokes heroism of a jihadi in the name of faith furthermore elevating his status as soon to become a martyr.

All Black Dress ->

The colour black is regularly used as a colour of protest (Ostovar 2017, p. 100).

The black suggests suggests operating in secrecy and working from the shadows to attack the enemy (Ostovar 2017, 96).

The masked, faceless fighter evokes an intimidating sight, which projects strength, mystery, violence and anonymity (Ostovar 2017, 96).

in the first photo - (the jihadist as a shadowy but impressive fighter)

in the second photo - this concept contradicts itself with the big smiles the fighters have on their faces.

Clasped Hands -> hands together in a team-like manner represents -> unity

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Circle -> in Islam represents unity

The photograph of fighters' hands grasped together in a team-like manner is shot from God's-Eye View camera angle that evokes circle, which in its turn also represents unity in Islam additionally reinforcing the unity representation of the clasped hands.

Finger pointing upwards

is the Finger of Tawhid (right index finger)
the Tawhid is the belief in the oneness of God and is a key component in Islam.

The tawhid comprises the first half of the shahada, which is an affirmation of faith, one of the five pillars of Islam, and a component of daily prayers: "There is no god but Allah, and the second half is accepting Muhammad as God's prophet.

It is used as a salute by the Prince of the Caliphate, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

Like the Nazi salute or the communist raised fist, this gesture has become an integral part of the IS propaganda.

According to a director in an intelligence group called SITE, "the gesture has been used by jihadis for years, including Osama bin Laden. Within jihad, this finger takes on political meaning as well, widely rejecting any form of government not under Shariah law," which is the religious law forming Islamic traditions.

Depicting a fighter in a pre-modern appearance such as on a horse or with a sword suggests notions of Islam's past (Ostovar 2017, 94) specifically associating with the legacy of Islam's founding generations (Ostovar 2017, 95) and their early successful jihadi campaigns, which also grants legitimacy to modern jihad and the group itself.

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Children

According to Brachman et al. (2006), children are employed in jihadi visuals to call forth notions of pride, honour, as well as, the need to protect Islam from outside harm for generations to come. Photographs of young boys also propose the rise of a new generation of jihadi fighters (Brachman et al. 2006, 90), and the invitation for newcomers.

Greenery (i.e. trees, forests, and other plants) usually used as a background element is very common in jihadi imagery (Brachman et al. 2006, 24). This element elicits notions of the Islamic concept of heaven being a lavish garden.

- **ascension to heaven... through jihad**
- **showing also the vast land of the Caliphate... await the new comers**

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Sun

In jihadi imagery, the sun is generally used to evoke association with the divine, legitimizing themselves spiritually as well as religiously, and it also evokes association with the afterlife.

Body of water

According to the report, a body of water , generally used as a background element in the jihadi visual composition is generally employed with the intention of evoking notions of purity, the divine, paradise (i.e. the afterlife), and religious piety.

- **for photo of fighter marching** - A call to Paradise - a path of jihad - a path to paradise

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Movie-poster like photographs

The smoke-like air coming out of the fuel vent tanks of the airplanes. What is interesting is that the designer has placed the fighter in this photo-montage under the strips of air, which give the impression of sun rays.

Moreover, I will re-employ the pre-iconographic analysis for the IS's discontinued magazines such as Dar al-Islam (French language), Constantinople (Turkish language), and Istok (Russian language) to compare with Rumiya.

Depending on the findings, I will decide whether to analyze all the magazines or not. Afterwards, I will move from the IS portraits to its rival magazines such as al-Qaeda's Inspire 7 English magazine; again, the findings of each magazine analysis will dictate whether I analyze other magazines.

Iconology

... such as the photographs produced by and of the IS, was produced in, while possibly comparing them to other photographs from other terrorist organizations or even popular culture. For example, some photographs are inspired by comic books cultivating armed heroes such as a jihadist photograph adapted from a Marvel Universe drawing of The Punisher, which is a popular character and famous for his violent vigilante campaign against organized crimes.

In this case, the designer resorts to the familiar symbolism of the comic character to reimagine a jihadist as a hero in a menacing and an unmistakable way to be relatable and attractive to young men engaged in popular culture on the Internet.

Moreover, possible questions to ask in this level could be: "What might the role of this photograph have been in society? How is it situated in society? What does this photograph tell us about the society this picture has been made in?"

This step communicates characteristics that the producer of the photograph may not have consciously been thinking about. And through the knowledge of the world and the

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connection of elements and cultural codes in the photograph, this level allows to reveal underlying "basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion – unconsciously qualified by one personality and condensed into one work". For Panofsky, this level or step is the "ultimate goal of iconology".

Visual rhetorics analysis

A qualitative analysis of visuals from the perspective of persuasion methods that aim to have an effect on the target audience.

Through this method, I will attempt to find unintended elements in the portraits that contradict the Islamic State's narratives.

I find this a bit irritating...

It implies a researcher that is smarter than the people s/he researches and implies an element of ridicule...

