

## RESEARCH

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## JOURNALISM AS A TERRORISM CAPTATION WEAPON

### EL PERIODISMO COMO ARMA DE CAPTACIÓN TERRORISTA

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## ABSTRACT

This actual work pretends to explain how useful journalism for Daesh is to gain followers. In first place, it approaches the theoretical framework to position the terrorism organization in the actual context, it inquires in their financing to know about their authority. It researches which media they have, through those who share their blurb; it analyzes the message that transmits, to the spectators it refers to, recruitment methods they use; it studies the use they make of Internet, in particular the social media achieving repercussion and power; it analyses videos with a lot of quality produced from the organization through which spreads propaganda and try to terrorize; it addresses the violent radicalization who reunites to the queue of Daesh, like their motivations and the data that reveals the quantity of foreigners that moved away to Siria or Irak to fight with the terrorist group. And finally, conclusions show that the terrorism group, had know to take advantage to the new information and communication technologies inside a date they are highly developed, appeal to anybody that wants to join their cause, create their caliphate. Therefore, the results that the yihadist organization have been reaping are overwhelming, they have achieved individuals all around the world to follow their rows.

**KEY WORDS:** Daesh – terrorism – yihadism – mass media – propaganda – Internet – violent radicalization – recruitment – captation.

## RESUMEN

El presente ensayo pretende explicar el uso que hace el Daesh del periodismo para captar adeptos. En primer lugar, se aborda el marco teórico para situar a la organización terrorista en el contexto actual; se indaga en su financiación para entender su poder; se investigan los medios de comunicación que tienen, a través de los cuales distribuyen su propaganda; se analiza el mensaje que transmite, al público al que se dirige y los métodos de captación que emplea; se estudia el uso que hace de Internet, en especial de las redes sociales, consiguiendo así gran alcance y

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repercusión; se analizan vídeos de gran calidad producidos por la organización a través de los cuales difunden propaganda y tratan de sembrar el terror; se aborda la radicalización violenta de aquellos que se unen a las filas del Daesh, así como sus motivaciones y los datos que revelan el número de combatientes extranjeros que se han trasladado a Siria e Irak para luchar con el grupo terrorista. Y finalmente, las conclusiones demuestran que la agrupación terrorista ha sabido sacar el máximo partido a las nuevas tecnologías de la información y la comunicación en una época en la que están sumamente desarrolladas, para hacer un llamamiento a todos aquellos que quieran unirse a su causa, crear su califato. Por tanto, los resultados que ha ido cosechando la organización yihadista son abrumadores, puesto que ha conseguido captar a individuos de todo el mundo para unirse a sus filas.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Daesh – terrorismo – yihadismo – medios de comunicación – propaganda – internet – radicalización violenta – reclutamiento – captación.

## **O JORNALISMO COMO ARMA DE CAPTAÇÃO TERRORISTA**

### **RESUME**

O presente artigo pretende explicar o uso que dá ao jornalismo o grupo de terroristas Isis para captar adeptos. Em primeiro lugar, se aborda o marco teórico para situar essa organização terrorista no contexto atual; se indaga em seu financiamento para entender seu poder; se investigam os meios de comunicação que tem, através dos quais distribuem sua propaganda; se analisa a mensagem que transmitem, ao público que se dirigem e os métodos de captação que empregam; se estuda o uso que fazem da internet, em especial das redes sociais, conseguindo assim um alcance e repercussão; se analisam vídeos de grande qualidade produzidos pela organização através dos quais difundem propaganda e tratam de plantar o terror; se aborda a radicalização violenta daqueles que se unem a esta banda, assim como suas motivações e os dados que revelam o número de combatentes estrangeiros que se trasladaram a Síria e Iraque para lutar com o grupo terrorista. E finalmente, as conclusões demonstram que esta agrupação terrorista soube tirar o máximo partido das novas tecnologias da informação e da comunicação em uma época na qual estão superdesenvolvidas, para fazer um chamamento a todos aqueles que queiram unir-se a sua causa, criar seu califado. Portanto, os resultados que foram colhendo esta organização são assustadores, uma vez que conseguiram capturar a indivíduos de todo o mundo para unir-se a sua banda.

**PALAVRAS CHAVE:** Isis – terrorismo – jihadismo – meios de comunicação – propaganda – internet – radicalização violenta – recrutamento – captação.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The relevance of this piece of research lies in the great impact of Daesh on the current panorama, making a masterful use of the new information and communication technologies to make itself known worldwide and, this way, to expand and get followers, at the same time trying to sow terror. The threat of global terrorism represented by the organization thanks to the visibility it obtains through the media and Internet, social networks standing out, causes debates and raises worldwide concerns about this mutation of traditional terrorism. There are numerous theorists who analyze this phenomenon and consider it a paradigmatic model of the "hybrid war". It is, therefore, essential to know its propaganda apparatus, since it is one of the fundamental pillars on which Daesh draws.

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

The objectives that arise with this study are the following:

- Know how Daesh is financed to develop its activity.
- Discover what media are part of the propaganda apparatus of that terrorist group.
- Know the scope and impact of its communication skills.
- Inquire into the importance of the use made by the organization of social networks and their effectiveness.
- Study the profile of its target audience and the radicalized.
- Analyze its audiovisual productions.
- Study the causes of radicalization and the forms of recruitment.
- Obtain quantitative data on the effectiveness of catchment.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

Regarding the methodology followed in the article, the information is obtained mainly from various authors specialized in Arabism and jihadist terrorism, which provide different points of view analyzing this phenomenon. Some of the most prominent researchers are:

- Luis de la Corte Ibáñez, director of the Strategic Studies and Intelligence area of the Institute of Forensic Sciences and Security ICFS-UAM, full professor of the department of social psychology and methodology. His main research deals with security and defense issues, in particular, terrorism and other forms of political violence and organized crime, strategic studies, intelligence analysis and social psychology.
- Javier Lesaca, journalist specialized in Arabism and visiting researcher at the Faculty of Communication and Public Affairs of George Washington University, where he is investigating the audiovisual engagement strategy of Daesh.
- Fernando Reinares, senior researcher and director of the Program on Global Terrorism of El Cano Royal Institute, and Professor of Political Science and Security Studies at Georgetown University in Washington. In addition, he was president of the Group of Experts in Violent Radicalization of the European

Commission (2007-2009) and advisor for matters of counter-terrorism policy of the Minister of the Interior (2004 and 2006).

- Javier Jordán, professor of the Department of Political Science and Administration at the University of Granada and director of the Master's Degree in Strategic Studies and International Security and of the journal *Studies on International Security (RESI)*. In addition, he is a member of the International Observatory for Studies on Terrorism of the Group of Victims of Terrorism (COVITE) and the Group for Studies on International Security. (GESI)
- Patrick Cockburn, an Irish national, is one of the most prestigious correspondents in the Middle East, first for the *Financial Times*, and currently for *The Independent* (Cockburn, 2015).
- Loretta Napoleoni, an Italian national, is an economist, writer, journalist and political analyst. She is an expert in terrorism and its financing (Napoleoni, 2015).

On the other hand, it is necessary to go to some agencies to obtain certain data, such as:

- *The Institute for the Study of War (ISW)*, it is a study center headquartered in the United States, which offers research and analysis on defense and foreign relations.
- The International Observatory for Studies on Terrorism (OIET), it is an organization that promotes the development of research projects focused on the prevention of violent radicalization and the diffusion of democratic principles.
- The Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies (IEEE), it is an agency of the Ministry of Defense of Spain under the Higher Center for National Defense Studies (CESEDEN) and the General Secretary of the Ministry of Defense.
- El Cano Royal Institute is a think-tank of international and strategic studies that analyzes the world from a Spanish, European and global perspective.
- Soufan Group is a company that provides intelligence and strategic security services to governments and multinational organizations.

In addition, in some cases it has been necessary to consult some newspapers to obtain information about the media that Daesh has, since in the documentary search there is scarce information about it, with the exception of the journal *Dabiq*.

Regarding the structure that is followed in this paper, it is necessary to begin with the theoretical framework to know the meaning of jihad, what global jihadism represents and what its phases have been, the role of Al Qaeda and how Daesh emerged. In addition, it is important to know how the group is financed to develop its activity and how it has achieved its economic independence. On the other hand, the media that the organization has and uses to distribute propaganda content, as well as the use it makes of social networks with the same objective, are addressed. And as a result of these communication processes of Daesh, it is intended to know its impact on its public, causing the radicalization and the recruitment of individuals from all over the world, being a process that is consummated at high speed.

## 4. DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Media and propaganda

According to Javier Lesaca, a researcher at the International Observatory for Studies on Terrorism, Daesh "*has become one of the most important phenomena in the field of public communication since the beginning of the century*". He says that terrorist organization has generated a new type of terrorism that uses marketing and digital communication not only to spread terror globally, but also to transform terror into something popular, desirable and imitable (Lesaca, 2015).

Gonzalo Caretti, an expert on the conflict in the Middle East, explains that the objective of Daesh propaganda is threefold: "*to terrorize the adversary, recruit followers and try to rescue the Sunni utopia of the creation of a new political order that puts an end to what they consider to be centuries of humiliation*". To achieve this, it uses technical resources, management of information flows, social networks and knowledge of Western media as channels to unintentionally expand their messages. In addition, the organization plays with two important cards, such as the total control of all information that enters and leaves the areas under its control and the demand for information about everything that happens in Syria and Iraq. That journalist adds that, since Daesh was al-Qaeda in Iraq, it had already made important investments in the media because of its interest in creating its own content. In fact, in 2009 the organization founded its first media division called Al Furqan. At present, Daesh has three large divisions from which it spreads its propaganda and more than 30 audiovisual producers<sup>2</sup>.

#### 4.1.1. Television

According to Sputnik news agency, Daesh has its own satellite television channel to broadcast propaganda content. It is called Bein HD4, which is broadcast on Nilesat, an Egyptian company, and has more than 500,000 viewers, according to the newspaper *Mirror*. Among its programming you can find military information related to attacks, lectures on Islam, weather forecasts, etc. On the other hand, the terrorist group has been in charge of confiscating the parabolic antennas of all the houses that are in the areas under its control. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights has also reported that terrorists set the Ramadan as the closing date for merchants who sell these devices to stop doing so permanently. In addition, the members of the group distributed leaflets among the population to prohibit the use of antennas. The intention is to prevent the population from gaining access to contents beyond their control, under the pretext that said contents may contaminate and divert spectators from the Islamic "good practice", the justification for taking this measure being supported in twenty religious motives. In addition, they encourage the consumption

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.rtve.es/noticias/20160805/propaganda-del-daesh-arma-mas-eficaz-del-califato-terrorista/1381785.shtml>

of the “Islamic media” and the audiovisual products produced and disseminated by Daesh to keep informed.<sup>3</sup>

#### **4.1.2. Radio**

Daesh has a radio station in Mosul, called Al-Bayan, which is its main broadcasting station and covers all military operations in Syria and Iraq. The broadcasts are in Arabic, Kurdish, French, Russian and English, according to the Middle East newspaper, *Albawaba*. In addition, it had another in Afghanistan, called "The voice of the Caliphate", which was destroyed in February 2016 during a US attack. The radio station operated in Nangarhar and broadcast propaganda messages to attract followers, especially the youngest, and thus bring about an uprising against the Afghan government. The objective was to exert psychological pressure on the inhabitants. As for language, it initially broadcast in Pashtun<sup>4</sup> and more recently it had included Dari<sup>5</sup> and English.<sup>6</sup>

#### **4.1.3. Publications**

The organization has an important official magazine, called *Dabiq*, which has been created as a tool for recruitment. It is a publication of high quality, comparable to others in the market of the stature of *National Geographic*. This magazine is published by al Hayat (Daesh media center), is published monthly and distributed through the Internet. As for the layout, it is elegant, bold, gives prominence to the big headlines and photographs, following the line of *Time* or *The New Yorker*. The language used is very ornamented and the discourse is apocalyptic, distorting reality and threatening the West. The language he uses is English, since its target audience is the western Muslims, especially the adolescents (Caretti, 2016). Its content is varied: information about its activity, incitement to hatred and violence, recruitment, criticism of Western leaders, self-aggrandizement, interviews with the leaders of the organization, etc. In addition, it has a weekly called *Al Naba*, which follows the same propaganda line.

#### **4.1.4. Agencies news**

Daesh has a news agency, called Amaq, which has become a very important piece in the propaganda strategy of the organization. Felipe Sahagún, a journalist specializing in international politics, says that this agency is the first to report the attacks perpetrated by the terrorist group and that it is also the one that does it best. *"It receives the exclusives directly from ISIS and, for those who follow violent*

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.antena3.com/noticias/mundo/daesh-lanza-campana-prohibir-antenas-parabolicas-siria-irak-porque-siembran-rumores\\_20160601574f45694beb28110c2a31f6.html](http://www.antena3.com/noticias/mundo/daesh-lanza-campana-prohibir-antenas-parabolicas-siria-irak-porque-siembran-rumores_20160601574f45694beb28110c2a31f6.html)

<sup>4</sup> According to the DRAE: "Eastern Iranian language spoken in Afghanistan and Pakistan".

<sup>5</sup> Persian language spoken in Afghanistan. Dari and Pashtun are the two official languages of Afghanistan.

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.abc.es/internacional/abci-dron-eeuu-destruye-califato-emisora-radio-estado-islamico-afganistan-201602021717\\_noticia.html](http://www.abc.es/internacional/abci-dron-eeuu-destruye-califato-emisora-radio-estado-islamico-afganistan-201602021717_noticia.html)



*jihadism closely, it has become a must reading every time a bomb explodes”*, adds Rukmini Callimachi, international affairs journalist for the *New York Times*. That journalist also states that Amaq gives voice to the Daesh and that, although the agency is not, officially, part of the propaganda apparatus of the jihadist organization, it acts as if it were so.

According to Sahagun, the researchers of SITE, one of the main monitoring bodies of Daesh, were aware for the first time of the existence of Amaq in 2014 at the Battle of Kobani, but the true link that it had with the jihadist group was not known until the attempt in Saint Bernardino, California. Rita Katz, boss of the team of monitoring of the grouping in SITE, points out: *“ISIS is considered a State and uses Amaq as its state agency”*.<sup>7</sup>

#### **4.1.5. Social networks**

Francisco Martínez, the Secretary of State for Security of the Spanish government, has highlighted in the “Symposium on Salafism, Jihad and Behavior Analysis” that took place in March 2016, the novel management that Daesh makes of social networks and the Internet, much like commercial advertising<sup>8</sup>. There are numerous social networks used by the organization to attract new members, spread terror and despise Westerners, thus turning these platforms into weapons of war. The jihadists are very active in these networks, publishing content and creating new accounts, as, for example, on Twitter, since once the terrorists are detected to be behind them, they are eliminated. Everything that Daesh produces is distributed through social networks in a very professional manner. It is the most effective and quick way to spread its propaganda to all corners of the world. Its effectiveness is such that, after the takeover of Mosul, its Twitter accounts sent more than 40,000 tweets in 24 hours. Some of the social networks they use are: Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, Whatsapp, Telegram, Skype, Diaspora, Kik, etc.

#### **4.1.6. Producers**

Lesaca mentions that Daesh has created a network of 29 audiovisual producers, three of which are responsible for making productions aimed at a global audience (AL Furqan, Al Ittissam and Al Hayat), and the other 26 create segmented products for each region controlled by the terrorist group in Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, West Africa and Afghanistan. The number has been extended, as is the case of the Caucasian producer in Russia and two more in Yemen (Lesaca, 2015). For his part, Francisco Martínez says that, at present, the organization already has *“a network of 36 audiovisual producers that produce videos, in which 16% show executions where more than 1,500 people are killed, most of them Muslims”*.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.elmundo.es/television/2016/01/18/569a809b22601dca238b4667.html>

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.interior.gob.es/prensa/noticias/-/asset\\_publisher/GHU8Ap6ztgsg/content/id/5732932](http://www.interior.gob.es/prensa/noticias/-/asset_publisher/GHU8Ap6ztgsg/content/id/5732932)

#### **4.1.7. Applications**

The terrorist group has developed several applications for Android, such as “Fajr al-Basha'ir” (Dawn of Good News / The Down of Glad Tidings), which was available through the Google Play store from 2014 until its withdrawal. This mobile application in Arabic language disseminated the latest news about Syria, Iraq and the Islamic world. On the other hand, the Amaq agency also has its own application to disseminate 24-hours-a-day first-hand news concerning the jihadist organization<sup>9</sup>.

#### **4.1.8. Other platforms**

Daesh also makes use of other platforms such as JustPaste to paste texts, SoundCloud for audios, VideoPress to host videos in compatible blogs, Instagram as a showcase for images, Whatsapp for chatting, Ask.fm which is a very simple network that links Internet users through questions and answers, etc.

On the other hand, the group creates other products that it uses to make propaganda, like its own video games, posters, CD's, DVD's, merchandising, etc., according to James Comey, director of the FBI.

### **4.2. Scope and repercussion**

#### **4.2.1. Message**

The message that Daesh disseminates to young Muslims radicalized or vulnerable to it, in Muslim majority states or among Muslims living in the West, is to form a new jihadist society. They refer to a caliphate territorially limited, but with expectations of expansion, with a social and political order to start a new life, with a new collective identity that represents them and is recognized by all. They send an attractive message, full of promises, giving a halo of hope to those groups that seek to change their lives and become part of something big (Reinares, 2015).

According to Harleen Gambhir, a counterterrorism analyst at the Institute for the Study of War, the communicative capacity of the organization is highly effective, thanks to its skillful use of technologies and the use of the media. All the content that they publish through different media emphasizes their main claim, that of creating a caliphate, which all believing Muslims are obliged to defend. In addition, Daesh has a central base from where it controls the messages and the propaganda it launches to the world, and where it establishes an order of priorities in the information and media campaigns that it will carry out under the supervision of al-Baghdad and its Council. These messages are then distributed through different channels, including official Daesh media, provincial information offices, unofficial media groups and the Internet. When there is a heterogeneous receiver, the

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.albawaba.com/slideshow/radio-broadcasts-mobile-apps-here's-how-daesh's-propaganda-machine-works-773434>



message has to adapt according to the audience they are trying to persuade. Therefore, the communication will not be the same for the Syrians and Iraqis than for the West. This way, they gain credibility in front of the different populations, even repeating their central message. Although the organization is a leader in the use of the media to spread terror and gain support, other jihadist groups also follow the same steps. So they will have to keep reinventing themselves in order not to lose that advantage (Gambhir, 2016).

According to Jordan, Daesh has known very well how to transmit its successes through an extraordinary use of propaganda through the Internet, achieving long reach and repercussion thanks to social networks. It has combined a message of victory with one of extreme brutality against its enemies, and, in addition, with a form of death cult. "Although at first glance, it may seem irrational, this exaltation of violence and its magnification through propaganda have played a paramilitary role of the first order, undermining the morale of its adversaries" adds the analyst. This way, the terrorist group has turned its modus operandi into a paradigmatic example of what has been called hybrid warfare<sup>10</sup> (Jordán, 2015, p. 126).

Daesh tries to convey that it wants to be for the Sunni Muslims what Israel means to the Jews, a State in a territory that once belonged to them and they have to recover; a great religious state that will always protect them (Napoleoni, 2015, p. 18).

In the magazine *Dabiq* there are examples of its call to all Muslims of the world: "*the resurgence of the caliphate provides each Muslim individual with a concrete and tangible entity to satisfy his natural desire to belong to something big*" points out Reinares (Reinares, 2015).

The propaganda carried by the armed organization also focuses on creating and spreading the myth of Baghdad and the new caliphate, since in Islam the time of the Prophet's return is still unknown. This way, it frightens the West with cruel murders and makes its Muslim adepts believe that the Prophet has become personified in Baghdad (Napoleoni, 2015, pp. 20-21).

Napoleoni points out that Daesh shows its ability to act through violence, sharia and propaganda social networks, and through popular social measures that would favor the situation of the Sunnis trapped in the territory of the caliphate (Napoleoni, 2015, p. 21).

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<sup>10</sup> There is no consensus regarding the denomination or the definition of this term. Pedro Sánchez Herráez, quoting Hoffman, refers to a hybrid threat as: "*any adversary that simultaneously and adaptively employs a mixture of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism and criminal behavior in the battle space to achieve its political objectives*". Other theorists refer to this kind of situation as "composite war" or "combined war", while some like Alberro define hybrid war "as one in which at least one of the opponents resorts to a combination of conventional operations and irregular warfare, the latter being mixed with terrorist actions and connections with organized crime" (Alonso, 2015, p. 65).

#### 4.2.2. Público

According to statements by Shiraz Maher, a former member of the International Center for the Study of Radicalization at Kings College in London, Daesh leader admits any individual wishing to join their ranks, unlike other organizations that are reluctant to incorporate any fighter. for fear of possible leaks. Although it should be noted that their main objective is young people (Napoleoni, 2015, p. 35).

The jihadist group tries to draw the attention of the young Muslims lacking future, who live in countries plagued by corruption, inequality or injustice of the current Islamic governments. As it was the cruel dictatorship of Bashar al Assad, the rejection of Maliki to integrate the Sunnis in the political life of Iraq and their continued persecution, the frustrated attempt to recover the socioeconomic infrastructure devastated by the war and the worrying unemployment rate. These facts make these groups more vulnerable and they want to get out of the situation in which they find themselves (Napoleoni, 2015, p. 19). The same happens with young Muslims who live in European or North American countries, who see themselves without a future, who cannot manage to integrate into Western society, and in which they see fewer and fewer opportunities for their generation. The organization takes advantage of the frustrations of Muslims around the world, making an appeal for them to join its struggle and help build their caliphate (Napoleoni, 2015, p. 19).

According to David Garriga Guitart, an expert in jihadist terrorism, there is difficulty in classifying these terrorists, due to the variety of profiles. However, some peculiarities have been observed to be repeated in several of the members, *"like the radicalization in boys and girls of second and third generation, non-practicing Muslims, basic level of studies, users of social networks and increase in converts"*, explains Garriga. On the other hand, a recent study with different countries in Europe in which radicalized and recruiters investigated for terrorism crimes have been analyzed, it has been detected that there are certain variables that are modified over time, such as *"the average of age that decreases, recruitment is not only via social networks but video games appear, most of the children do not travel to Syria or Iraq as the last stage of radicalization and the percentages of common crime history increase"* adds Garriga (Garriga, 2016).

De la Corte, referring to Reinares and García Calvo, mentions that, although the number of women joining the ranks of Daesh is increasing, the vast majority are men, who are usually not older than 35 or 40 years. In the West, most of the individuals who join the ranks of the organization are usually over 25 years old, born and raised there, and they may also have ancestry from Muslim countries. Also, there are cases of radicalized individuals in Europe who are converts or first generation immigrants. According to Sageman and in the words of the Court investigator, most subjects have little religious instruction and do not follow the precepts of Islam, but there are also individuals who were very religious before acquiring an extremist orientation. Regarding the educational and the socioeconomic levels and the occupation, there are people ranging from those with university studies to others with low academic training; from cases with scarce resources to

middle class individuals; from unemployed subjects to some with stable jobs and high salaries. As for the marital status, it is normal to be single, but there have also been many cases in which they marry, have offspring and then become radicalized. Many jihadists, before their transformation, had committed crimes, says the Court, citing Ranstorp; others came from broken families or had suffered some kind of mental disorder, although these last two factors have not happened frequently. In short, you cannot talk about a single profile, but there is a variety, adds the Court referring to Kimhi and Even and Nesser (de la Corte, 2015).

### **4.2.3. Recruitment**

Napoleoni explains that, when the Baghdadi was elected Caliph, he developed with great skill a propaganda campaign with which he managed to attract many fighters from abroad (Napoleoni, 2015, p. 35). Daesh makes use of the "propaganda of fear", since it knows the power of sowing this feeling, much greater than the religious sermons preached by al-Qaeda. Daesh knows well that barbaric violence incites expectation and becomes news, especially in a world in which there is such an abundance of information, in which the flow of news is constant twenty-four hours a day and in which a large number of images is demanded (Napoleoni, 2015, pp. 19-20).

For its part, de la Corte, based on Sageman, and in reference to the recruitment process, points out that the first contacts with radicalized people, radical speakers or members of terrorist organizations do not have to be looked for, but they can also occur in an unforeseen and fortuitous way. In addition, this analyst adds, relying on Bakker, that the most typical scenarios for engaging in such contacts tend to be mainly urban, usually neighborhoods that bring together a significant number of members belonging to a diaspora. These spaces are almost always places of Islamic worship, mainly mosques. But they can also be places of leisure where Muslim customs are practiced (such as *halal* teahouses or butcher shops) or spaces that are often frequented by Muslims (such as parlors or cybercafés). Other scenarios can be training- (universities) or work-related ones (especially small shops of Muslims). And prisons, where there have also been cases of radicalization. Some of the recruitment networks do not develop in a single physical space, which is evidenced in cases that derive from friendship and kinship relationships and through Internet interaction. Other relevant networks are those composed of followers and sympathizers of Islamist movements and organizations and, of course, recruitment networks of jihadist groups (de la Corte, 2015). However, according to the results of an investigation carried out by Scott Atran, a terrorism expert at the University of Oxford<sup>11</sup>, 95% of the radicalized foreigners who decide to join Daesh are recruited by friends and family. In turn, of that percentage, 75% is influenced by friends and the remaining 20% by family members. He also assures that, exceptionally, the

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<sup>11</sup> Meeting about foreign terrorist fighters, carried out by the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the UN Security Council.

recruitment takes place in mosques, thus disagreeing with de la Corte and, consequently, with Bakker.<sup>12</sup>

### **4.3. Internet, the main jihadist propaganda distribution channel**

De la Corte states that both jihadist groups and their followers exploit the Internet and all its utilities to the maximum, such as social networks, websites, forums, chats, blogs, electronic messaging, multimedia publications, virtual communities, etc. (Denoting the global need for an effective media education, as defended by Marta-Lazo, Grandío Pérez and Gabelas Barroso, 2013). This way, the Internet has been for years the main channel for the distribution of jihadist propaganda. The Network provides facilities for building links between those who are vulnerable to radicalization and others who are on the way to convert or have already converted and, this way; culminate with its conversion extremist. In addition, the fact of being able to connect people from any part of the world affects the belief of being part of a transnational movement as proclaimed by jihadist propaganda. On the other hand, the Internet has also favored the possibilities of collaboration between terrorist organizations and radicalized ones, since it is useful for the latter to contact and capture the attention of the former, and for terrorist groups, in turn, to recruit new members (from the Court, 2015).

Some experts predict that there will be an increase in the number of radicalized online, reaching the final stages without having to establish physical contact with extremist individuals. For the time being, the cases that have occurred have been exceptional, but this does not mean that it will not happen in the future in which social messages and links on the Internet will continue to proliferate, as has been the case for more than ten years (de la Corte, 2015).

On the other hand, explains Napoleoni, the terrorist organization makes use of social networks to disseminate painstaking videos of its macabre performances and, this way, sow panic. Through this platform, it is really easy to spread content in different formats and, in addition, thanks to its immediacy, it can reach a multitude of people in a very short time. This journalist also points out that, due to the massive and highly qualified use Daesh makes of social networks, it has raised false myths to gain followers, add combatants and raise funds within the Muslim world (Napoleoni, 2015, p. 20).

In the words of David Garriga, there is currently a greater number of people who are radicalized than a few years ago, because with the use of social networks there is a greater scope. Likewise, the terrorist propaganda exhibition is continuous and intensive through this route (Garriga, 2016). This use of the Networks has influenced when it comes to making the concept of social responsibility of the Media come to the digital environment, alluded to by Viñarás Abad (2010).

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.infobae.com/2015/11/26/1772404-el-95-los-yihadistas-extranjeros-isis-son-reclutados-amigos-y-familiares/>

According to data provided by the *Brookings Institution*, which emerged from an investigation carried out by Jonathan Morgan and JM Berger, from September to December 2014, there were 46,000 accounts on Twitter that controlled followers of Daesh, and through which their messages arrive immediately to the electronic devices of its audience. One out of five followers chooses English as the main language on Twitter and three quarters prefer Arabic. Much of the success of the organization in the social network is due to the hyperactivity of a relatively small group of users, who have from 500 to 2,000 accounts. Many detected accounts have been suspended by Twitter, but this does not stop them from continuing to create new profiles and continue with their activity (Morgan and Berger, 2015).

Lister, following Lorenzo Francheschi-Bicchierai, adds that, through a network of accounts at the provincial level and several central media departments, Daesh significantly outperformed any other group of militants on Twitter until August 2014, when the entire structure of this social network was eliminated, probably at the request of the government of the United States (Lister, 2014, p. 24).

The contents disseminated by the terrorist organization get important audiences. As, for example, the one-hour video entitled "Salil al-Swarim", broadcast by the production company Al-Furqan in March 2014, which was viewed by 56,998 different accounts on Youtube in a 24-hour interval. Two months after its release date, the video was tweeted 32,313 times in a 60-hour period, generating 807.25 tweets per hour. These data demonstrate the great scope and impact of the activity of terrorists through the Internet (Lister, 2014, p. 24).

#### **4.3.1. Propaganda videos**

According to Patrick Cockburn, the intention of Daesh is to establish terror, expanding through the Internet macabre images of the crimes they commit, as, for example, produced videos of great harshness, in which their fighters executed Shiite soldiers and truck drivers with the intention to subdue and demoralize the Shiite soldiers at the time of taking Mosul and Tikrit (Cockburn, 2015, p. 15).

They create a multitude of high quality audiovisual products with punishments, extreme tortures and murders, using very sophisticated techniques, on a par with Hollywood productions. They know very well how to exploit new technologies at the service of terror and do not miss anything, to the point that they adapt videos so they can be viewed in mobile phones (Napoleoni, 2015, p. 20).

The organization is aware that the content it disseminates arouses the curiosity of the voyeuristic and virtual society of which we are a part. This way, it knows how to take advantage of the sadism it offers with an attractive appearance and turn it into a show (Napoleoni, 2015, p. 20).

According to Javier Lesaca, since Daesh began in 2014 with its audiovisual strategy, it broadcasts a monthly average of 41 propaganda campaigns, a figure that has been increasing. Since the 1 of January, 2014 until the 24 of January, 2016, the



terrorists of Daesh have created 1,060 videos, distributed from 46,000 to 75,000 Twitter accounts, adds Lesaca. In addition, it highlights the segmentation of audiences and themes present in its communicative campaign, demonstrating its astonishing sophistication. In terms of audience segmentation, Daesh productions are elaborated by its central producer Al Hayat as well as by its territorial delegations in areas over which they exercise some kind of domain with the aim of creating specific messages for each target. Regarding the thematic diversification, this researcher takes as an example the month of September 2015, in which, out of the 84 videos produced and disseminated, 25% showed battles in which Daesh fighters face the Iraqi and Syrian armies; 18% had a fantastic life in the territories dominated by the organization; 14% was related to the governmental and administrative management carried out by Daesh in the areas under its control; 25% were interviews with mujahideen from all over the world, inciting other Muslims to be part of the terrorist Jihad; the remaining 13% exhibited some execution. Lesaca adds that *"22% of the videos broadcast contained some type of audiovisual image inspired by popular cultural products of Western culture, such as video games, music videos or movies and series"*. It is a strategy that the organization uses constantly since it began its campaigns with the intention of adapting to the tastes of the youngest and, this way, capturing their attention. For his part, Gonzalo Caretti distinguishes up to six formats with different objectives: the harangues and religious discourses, the *nashid* videos (songs with images)<sup>13</sup>, executions<sup>14</sup>, false documentaries and false news reports, which imitate with great mastery the reports of the BBC or CNN to create confusion in the audience. Among the most outstanding works are those made by the North American journalist, John Cantlie, who was kidnapped by that terrorist group. Laura Díaz, director of TVE, after analyzing one of the videos, comments that they use a very advertising technique, as they employ a very quick montage in which there is a bombardment of images that does not allow thinking. Caretti continues saying that the videos of the terrorist organization have some common characteristics: *"a sophisticated and gimmicky visual style, inspired in movies or videogames, an apocalyptic and distorted message about the interpretations of Islam and the same distribution strategies"* (Caretti, 2016). In addition, the group creates the videos in different languages according to the target audience, such as English, Russian, French or German. Therefore, according to Lesaca, the communication strategy of Daesh is an important factor, almost as much as the military or its terrorist threat (Lesaca, 2015).

#### **4.4. Violent radicalization**

De la Corte explains that radicalization refers to the *"process of change through which we can advance from moderate political and / or religious positions towards radical or extreme ones"*. However, as ideological radicalisms do not have to be all

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<sup>13</sup> Caretti: *"they aim to motivate the sympathizers, appealing to emotions, and create a false mythology of special impact among young people and adolescents"*.

<sup>14</sup> the intention is to frighten the western population or show their power.



violent, some authors prefer to use the expression "violent radicalization" to refer more precisely to cases in which the change of ideology entails the use of force, as is the current case of jihadist terrorism (de la Corte, 2015).

Following Wiktorowicz, de la Corte speaks of the radicalization occurring gradually through several stages. It is necessary that there be a mental openness to receive and consider new ways of giving meaning to one's existence and to the world. This way, a first phase of awareness arises, in which individuals begin to get used to the discourse and vision of the jihadist world. Then they will follow one or more phases in which they internalize those ideas and precepts. This analyst continues saying:

In particular, radicalization leads to the consolidation of a perspective based on the moral opposition between "believers" and "non-believers", generally accompanied by the consolidation of a "pious" and hostile attitude that guides the scrupulous observance of Islamic rites and grants legitimacy to violence presumably interpreted in terms of jihad: effort to follow the path and desires of Allah, defend Islam from all its enemies and preserve its purity (de la Corte, 2015).

The process of radicalization can also be interrupted and not consummated. In such a way, that there are many more people who start than those who complete all the phases. Regarding the speed at which radicalization occurs, it depends on the case, although lately there is evidence that a certain speed has been experienced in this process (de la Corte, 2015).

De la Corte, relying on Toboso, says that, in the early stages of radicalization of an individual, it has been proven that there is always a relationship with one or more people who already have some kind of connection or belong to a terrorist group. And as the process develops, the subjects distance themselves from their previous friendships and their reference groups in order to strengthen ties with those already radicalized or on the way to becoming one. A very favorable situation for this is that in which immigrants from Muslim countries arrive in another host country alone, without relatives and without any acquaintance (de la Corte, 2015).

Among the radicalized, there is a figure that should be noted, known as "lone wolf". These are individuals who suffer an extremist conversion and act on their own. According to the police inspector, José María Benito, the profile of these individuals usually corresponds to a male, Muslim or convert, who is self-taught, active in social networks, usually does not have any schooling or work and usually comes from depressed neighborhoods. In recent times there have been many cases of "lone wolves" who have perpetrated attacks and aggressions against Western and Muslim targets that do not promulgate the ideology of Daesh.

#### **4.5. Motivation**

De la Corte notes that radicalization is not produced by a single motivation but by a mixture of lacks, emotions, feelings and personal experiences. In addition, an

individual cannot become radicalized if he has no interest in it, if he has not moved through these environments or if he has not been related to radicalized subjects or groups. This way, the need for belonging and social recognition can be a stimulus to be part of radicalized groups, as well as to carry out certain behaviors in search of recognition or admiration on the part of the leaders and peers of the group. And, at the same time, the need for meaning can motivate us to make a new interpretation of the world and to give value and meaning to our own existence. Other incentives that can push violent radicalization can be the search for new sensations, adventures, the desire for notoriety, etc. This author concludes with the following:

Among the experiences and personal circumstances that can activate the previous needs, motives, desires and feelings are experiences of marginalization or social exclusion; episodes (punctual or repeated) of interpersonal or intergroup discrimination; mistreatment or abuse because of one's national, ethnic or religious identity; traumatic experiences of socio-political origin (repression and persecution, armed conflicts); and family crises (loss of relatives) or personal crises (falling into delinquency, sentimental disappointments) (de la Corte, 2015).

According to Napoleoni, one of the facts that has made the popularity of Daesh rise abroad, especially among the young Muslims of the West, is the few obstacles existing to join its ranks, which is linked to its advanced communicative profile (Napoleoni, 2015, p. 35).

Reinares affirms that the triumphs of Daesh and its power are a great incentive for the individual motivations in the participation of jihadist activities, which are internalized through radicalization. On the other hand, the terrorist organization makes use of the psychological factor to constantly feed the hatred for those it considers apostates, and it also tries to remove feelings of humiliation and frustration from large fractions of Muslim populations affected by injustices (Reinares, 2015).

For his part, De la Corte adds that there are different factors that can determine the jihadist radicalization:

The most repeated approach regards the violent expressions of Sunni Islamist extremism as the symptom of some kind of dysfunctions, conflicts or social grievances. By confronting future radicalized subjects with situations, experiences or undesirable and outrageous events (frustrating, humiliating, cruel, etc.), these dysfunctions, conflicts or grievances can create affinities with the Manichean and aggressive arguments and stories of jihadist Salafism (de la Corte, 2015).

This analyst expands the information by listing some of the causes that influence radicalization in both Muslim and Western territories: *"repressive and corrupt political regimes, poverty, divisions and sectarian tensions, armed conflicts, inequality and widespread discrimination suffered by members of Muslim diasporas established in non-Muslim countries, etc"*. (de la Corte, 2015).

On the other hand, there is also another series of specific events that can be misinterpreted by Muslims, thus promoting feelings of hatred for the West, (the very definition of what for PR in the West is a crisis of malevolence or, appropriately, terrorism. García Ponce and Smolak-Lozano, 2013) according to de la Corte *"the beginning of a war between Western and Islamic countries, repression of Islamist parties or associations, prohibition of the veil, publication of opinions and works critical of Islam, etc."*. In a context in which the population has a democratized access to knowledge, but not standardized mechanisms to manage, interpret and screen these data, as suggested by Alonso Mosquera, González Vallés and Muñoz de Luna (2016). In addition, two events that have made an amazing contribution to the increase in the number of radicalized persons in recent years must be taken into account, such as the protests that took place at the end of 2010 in several Muslim countries, especially those where the revolts have resulted in strong repression or internal wars and the emergence of Daesh in June 2014 (de la Corte, 2015).

According to Cockburn, many young Iraqis join Daesh out of hatred for their government, as it does nothing to prevent the terrorist organization from murdering the Sunni population (Cockburn, 2015, p. 17). A similar situation is that of Syria, where, according to Karen Koenig Abu-Zaid, member of the United Nations Commission of Inquiry in Syria, there are more and more Syrian rebels who are deserting to join Daesh: *"The see that they are better, that these guys are strong, that they are winning battles, that they are taking the money, that they can train them"*(Cockburn, 2015, p. 18).

A very motivating aspect are the military successes that they have harvested in territories in which the population is tired of decades of despotic governments, supported by the West; of the corruption of the PLO<sup>15</sup> and Hamas<sup>16</sup>; of sanctions, sectarian struggles and wars that never end (Napoleoni, 2015, p. 37). According to statements by Richard Barrett, former counter-terrorism officer of the British intelligence service, for the agency France-Presse, the Baghdadi has carried out a surprising campaign: *"it has taken cities, it has mobilized an extraordinary number of people, its murders in Iraq and Syria are relentless ... Anyone who wants to fight will join Al Baghdadi"*(Napoleoni, 2015, p. 37).

In the West, the call of Daesh has a greater effect on States in which the Muslim population is mainly composed of descendants of immigrants from Islamic nations, who are the so-called second and even third generations. Therefore young people are the most vulnerable, who, in a moment of weakness in their lives, suffer crises of identity, for which Daesh proposes a way out (Reinares, 2015).

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<sup>15</sup> Organization for the Liberation of Palestine: *"Nationalist Movement of Palestine and central organization of all Palestinian movements"* says Napoleoni. Since its birth in 1964, it has been aimed at "the creation of an independent Palestinian state in the territory currently occupied by Israel, or at least in the areas occupied by Gaza and the West Bank" (Napoleoni, 2015, p. 126).

<sup>16</sup> Organization created in 1987 as a Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, the pretense of which is to constitute an Islamic State in Palestine replacing that of Israel (Napoleoni, 2015, p. 122).

De la Corte affirms that another of the motivations is the economic one, since the fact of belonging to these extremist groups serves to satisfy the basic needs of the radicalized ones or to obtain an income, in the cases in which these individuals lacked employment or economic support, situations that may be the consequence of an immigration process (de la Corte, 2015).

#### **4.6. Recruitment**

The propaganda campaigns carried out by Daesh through different media are being fruitful, since, according to data derived from an investigation conducted by Soufan Group, it is estimated that around 31,000 people from more than 100 different countries have traveled to Syria and Iraq to join Daesh and other jihadist groups. Such has been the boom that, in the first study conducted by this agency, dated June 2014, foreign fighters were 12,000 from 81 countries. This figure has doubled despite the efforts of the international community to prevent it, especially in the case of individuals from Western Europe, while the number of Americans has remained relatively constant. However, the most notable growth is that of foreign fighters from Russia and Central Asia, since it is estimated that since June 2014 the figure has increased almost 300%. On the other hand, it is estimated that around 20% and 30% represents the rate of returnees to the West, which poses a great threat and a difficult challenge for the security forces and bodies.<sup>17</sup> However, in recent months, according to the Pentagon, the number of foreign fighters has been declining, accounting for an average of 200 individuals per month. *"It is a drastic decrease compared to about a year ago, when from 1500 to 2000 foreign fighters joined the group in Iraq and Syria every month,"* said US Air Force General Peter Gersten.<sup>18</sup>

On the other hand, Napoleoni warns that recruitment and radicalization is very economical to the terrorist group, since everything is done through the Internet and social networks, eliminating, in addition, any physical barrier. Therefore, it is not necessary to travel to Syria and Iraq to become radicalized and return to perpetrate attacks. The organization, unlike Al Qaeda, which followed a pyramidal command structure and was centralized, follows a horizontal model in which it gives total freedom to anyone who wishes to join its ranks to act on their own behalf in the name of the caliphate. The rapid process of radicalization and recruitment is also a great concern for governments around the world, since it is consummated in just a few weeks and can be done in a self-taught way through the propaganda content spread by Daesh (Napoleoni, 2015).

### **5. CONCLUSIONS**

- Daesh uses journalism as a propaganda tool to expand its ideas, get sympathizers and spread terror at the world level.

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<sup>17</sup> [http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG\\_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf](http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.hispanictv.com/noticias/ee-uu/253744/pentagono-combatientes-extranjeros-ei-siria-irak>

- The enormous financial power of this organization allows it to create high-quality propaganda products.
- The propaganda products that the terrorist group transmits have great diffusion and impact.
- The communicative capacity of Daesh is highly developed and effective in its purpose of recruitment.

Jihadist terrorism poses a global threat, making society aware of the magnitude of the phenomenon it faces. Like all the advances that have taken place over the years, this type of terrorism has also evolved, adapting to the new situation in which information and communication technologies play a very important role. Daesh has known how to use the technological advances of the western world, adapting them to its primitive world to sow terror, create its caliphate and attract followers.

- It has been found that Daesh uses journalism as a propaganda tool, since it has all kinds of media to spread its ideology, swell its ranks and sow terror. It has an iron grip on the media and information circulating within the territories under its control to prevent the population from having another perspective. Therefore, on the one hand, the information alien to this organization is censored in its territories and, in turn, it floods its inhabitants with propaganda and, on the other hand, it spreads its ideology to the rest of the world through the Internet and others of its media, such as its magazine *Dabiq*.
- The financial power it has makes it one of the richest terrorist organizations in the world. At present, Daesh enjoys economic independence and that makes it even more dangerous. Thanks to this solvency, it has been able to create its own communication media, which are quite sophisticated and, in addition, create high-quality propaganda products.
- The propaganda products of Daesh have great diffusion and impact because the group has created an entire marketing strategy around them, adapting to the tastes of the youngest, looking for the impact, which leaves no one indifferent in a society in which it demands the morbid and the strong emotions. In addition, it has the channel of diffusion par excellence, Internet, through which it can distribute all its contents without temporal or spatial limits and favored by immediacy. But if something should be noted in this regard, it is the social networks, through which contents become viral in a matter of minutes. And despite the struggle of the security forces and bodies to stop the organization, the jihadist members are very active, so the flow of content is constant.
- The communicative capacity of the group is, without a doubt, impressive. The achievements it has achieved in this regard have been reflected in the high number of individuals it has recruited to move to Syria and Iraq. This fact has aroused great concern among experts for the danger it entails, not only for those who will fight alongside Daesh to extend their caliphate and, in some cases, return trained to the West to perpetrate attacks, but above all, for a much more complicated fact of controlling the self-radicalization that occurs in the West through the Internet and that is consummated in a very short time. This is another of the dangers that society had not faced



before, a terrorist group that gives carte blanche to all those who want to fight for its cause.

Since Daesh emerged and proclaimed its caliphate in 2014, it has been able to prove his ability to act, highlighting his propaganda apparatus.

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