

Analysis of *Rumiyah* Magazine

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Abstract: This paper purposes to provide an in-depth content examination of *Rumiyah*, the monthly magazine published by Al Hayat Media Center, the official Media Department of ISIS. The main aim of the paper is to find the kind of articles published in this magazines and the propaganda the magazine promotes. For this research 8 issues of the magazine will be studied from 1st publication on Sept 5, 2016 to the 8th publication on March 7, 2017. Today due to new media the concept of freedom of speech and expression has reached new heights. This magazine *Rumiyah* can be seen as the use of freedom of speech and expression by the extremist. The interest to do this research arose from understanding the kind of information shared by ISIS through this medium. The main objective of the study is to understand the messages propagated through this magazine

Keywords: *Rumiyah*, Message, Content, Analysis, Terrorism, ISIS

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I. INTRODUCTION

'*Rumiyah*' an Arabic name for 'Rome' is an online magazine by the Islamic state that communicates teachings of Islam, stories, strategies and news of the ISIS also recognized as Islamic State or Iraq and Levant (ISIL). It's first published was on September 2016. This magazine is also available in several languages such as French, German, Russian, Indonesian, Uyghur and English. *Rumiyah* can be considered a replacement and a continuation to *Dabiq*. Other magazines like *Dar-al-Islam* and *Dabiq* were only released until mid-2016. *Rumiyah* is similar to *Dabiq* in its form and content.

It is also seen that similar to *Dabiq* the first issue of the magazine opens with a quote to 'Abu Hamza al Muhajir' that states "oh muwahidin, rejoice, for by Allah, we will not rest from our jihad except beneath the olive trees of *Rumiyah* (Rome)." As per an article titled *ISIS in Italy? Jihadis launch twisted 'Rome' magazine as flag is seen flying from house* published by Express Newspapers "Arabic for Rome, the magazine's title has been seen as a reference to the fall of the Roman Empire"

It can be considered an organized media strategy by the group. The group explains three motives in justifying their attacks:

- To harvest a large kill count
- Disrupting financial stability of a nation
- Terrorizing enemies of Allah

The motives of their attacks are justified by their urge to be acknowledged by leaving behind a message after each attack with significant meanings that communicate to the people in such a way that the attacks are justified. "An appropriate way should be determined for announcing one's allegiance to the khalifah of the Muslims and the goal of making Allah's word supreme, so that the motive of the attack is acknowledged. An example of such would be simply writing on dozens of sheets of paper "The Islamic State will remain!" or "I am a soldier of the Islamic State!" prior, and launching them from the vehicle's window during the execution of the attack". (*Exclusive; Pg-12: Issue-3*)

The magazine contains justifications based on attacks in the name of 'Allah' and his prophet, 'Muhammad' including religion-based preaching. The magazine communicates mass killing strategies inflicting fear among men and strict Islamic beliefs conveying rigidity among their soldiers.

The magazine constantly reminds its readers that there is no God except Allah, "the lord of creation", and there are no friends of Allah. He is only one, 'alone'. The Official Spokesman of the Islamic state, 'Abul-Hassan al-Muhajir', has been quoted in the fourth issue of *Rumiyah*, stating, "I bear witness that there is no God but Allah alone, without partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and messenger" (*Exclusive: Pg-4; issue-4*), with no strong grounds or explanation followed by the comment.

The purpose of the Islamic state is to attain power based on religion and in the name of Allah, to establish only one religion ruling all, i.e. Islam. Therefore, the most significant feature of the magazine is its content based on religion.

The most influential and repeated quote in the magazine states “Whomsoever Allah guides, none can misguide, and whomsoever He misguides, none can guide” in a speech by Amirul-Mumnin Abu Bakr al-Husayni al-Baghdadi (*exclusive: Pg-4; issue-3*) establishing rigidity and their devotion towards their purpose. The magazine directly points out the targeted groups as “Indeed the enemies of Allah – the Jews, Christians, atheists, Rafidah, apostates and all the nations of disbelief – dedicated their media, wealth, armies and vehicles to wage war against the Muslims and the mujahidin in Ninawa Wilayah after seeing it as one of the bases and beacons of Islam in the shade of the Khilafah” (*exclusive: Pg-5; issue:4*) therefore clearly stating revenge against these groups followed by a paragraph that states:

“Therefore, O battalions of inghmasiyyin, O caravans of istishhadiyyin, and detachments of iqtihamiyyin, o seekers of shahadah, the best reward and more than that, O you who strive towards gardens and the pleasure of Allah, go forth with Allah’s blessing, for indeed, this war is your war. Turn the disbelievers’ night into day, bring destruction to their homes, make their blood flow like rivers, for therein you will find the richest share of reward and means of achieving great success, attaining the companionship of those upon whom Allah has bestowed favor: the prophets, the truthful, the martyrs, and the righteous” (*exclusive: Pg-5; issue:4*) influencing people to destruct the enemy groups in order to attain pleasure and success. It is noticed that each and every killing and terror acts have been justified and named as ‘HARVEST’.

II. BRIEF REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are many researches on terrorism as a whole however there is a dearth in the study of the publication content of terror organizations such as ISIS.

An article titled *ISIS: Assessing Rumiayah* (2016) published by the Australian Institute of International Affairs written by Dr Haroro J Ingram states that "Rumiayah, provides an insight into the role of Australians in ISIS and is a reminder of how misguided counter-terrorism initiatives can do more to assist extremist appeals than counter them". This article focuses on the message given to the Australians by ISIS. The article also states that "Rumiayah is an attempt to more efficiently disseminate news from its heartlands to multilingual audiences". As this article was published after the first issue of Rumiayah, there is/has been no follow up on the other issues to understand its messages.

There has been another study titled *Release Of Two Suspicious Fifth Issues Of ISIS's 'Rumiayah' Magazine – Timeline, Characteristics, And Takeaways* (2017) published by The Middle East Media Research Institute and written by M. Khayat. This article compares the two fake issue of the 5th issue of Rumiayah. This comparison is mainly in terms of the design, similarities or differences in the publications.

Another study on how terrorism is spreading its wings in the cyberspace was done by Gabriel Weimann in his book *Terror on the Internet* (2006). Weimann through this book explains how the real war is going on in the cyberspace where all the terror organizations are spreading their propaganda and connecting with people and influencing them with their ideologies. He states how terrorism has expanded with the help of internet.

There are various other books on ISIS such as *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror* (2015) by Michael Weiss & Hassan Hassan, *Rise Of Isis A Threat We Can't Ignore* (2015) by Sekulow Jay etc. All these books have given an insight into terrorism and ISIS, however, there were very little information available on the publications of terror organization thus leading the researchers to bridge the gap by studying the content of Rumiayah.

III. BASIC FEATURES OF THE MAGAZINE

In this research, the study of the seven issues of Rumiayah has been done. The magazine was launched to camouflage the losses after the fall of the Syrian town (DABIQ) by ISIL (Islamic state of Syria and Levant). The reason behind this name (Rumiayah meaning ‘Rome’) is to promote itself on a global scale as the group lost ground in Iraq and Syria.

The relation has been explained in the 3rd issue of Rumiayah stating, “Thus, from events that will occur prior to the Major Malhamah of Dabiq is a treaty between the muwahhidin and the Romans, thereby each of two nations will free itself up to fight a common enemy” (article: Pg-26; issue-3).

The content is categorized as following:

- **Foreword:** Issues 1,2,3,4,5,6,7 (Present in all seven issues)
- **Exclusive:** Issues 2,3,4,5,7
- **Interview:** Issues 1,5,6
- **Articles:** Issues 1,2,3,4,5,6,7 (Present in all seven issues)
- **Sisters:** Issues 5,6

- **News:** Issues 1,2,3,4,5,6,7 (Present in all seven issues)

The purpose of the magazine is mainly to inflict fear among people. They not only target non-Muslims but also liberal Muslims.

The magazines contain the following information:

- Most issues contain a **column based on the women of the society**. This column passes generalized statements based on the ways women can contribute to the group or abide by their rules. Recently a **category based on women has been named Sisters in the 5th and 6th issue**
- Articles related to **significant personalities** and their stories of victory are mentioned
- The group publishes **interviews** that involve **influential preaching, information, direct and indirect messages**
- **Just Terror Tactics** are articles that come under the exclusives and **are about their arms and strategic equipment based on strategic killings**
- Articles named ‘Paths to victory’ have been published in parts with each issue
- Articles on scholars (Example: **The wicked scholars are cursed;** Pg-28; issue-1) **are significant in most issues.**

IV. MESSAGES/INFORMATION

The researcher has studied the content/articles in the publication under the following category and issues:

Issue 1

Articles	Article 1	Article 2	Article 3	Article 4	Article 5	Article 6	Article 7	Article 8	Article 9
Informative			Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Influential	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Religious	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes		
Direct message		Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	
Indirect message		Yes					Yes		

In issue 1 we can see that out of 9 articles 8 articles are influential in nature, 5 articles are informative, religious and have direct messages.

Issue 2

Articles	Article 1	Article 2	Article 3	Article 4	Article 5	Article 6	Article 7	Article 8	Article 9	Article 10
Informative	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes			Yes
Influential	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Religious	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Direct message	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Indirect message			Yes			Yes		Yes	Yes	

In the second issue also the focus is on influencing the readers. Likewise following are the details for all the issues studied.

Issue 3

Articles	Article 1	Article 2	Article 3	Article 4	Article 5	Article 6	Article 7	Article 8	Article 9	Article 10	Article 11	Article 12
Informative	Yes	Yes	Yes				Yes			Yes		Yes
Influential	Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Religious	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Direct Message		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Indirect Message	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	

Issue 4

Articles	Article 1	Article 2	Article 3	Article 4	Article 5	Article 6	Article 7	Article 8	Article 9	Article 10
Informative	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes				Yes		Yes
Influential	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Religious	Yes	Yes	yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Direct Message		Yes		Yes	Yes				Yes	
Indirect Message		Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		

Issue 5

Articles	Article 1	Article 2	Article 3	Article 4	Article 5	Article 6	Article 7	Article 8	Article 9	Article 10	Articles 11
Informative		Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
Influential	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Religious	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Direct Message	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	
Indirect Message	Yes			Yes	Yes		Yes				

Issue 6

Articles	Article 1	Article 2	Article 3	Article 4	Article 5	Article 6	Article 7	Article 8	Article 9
Informative	Yes			Yes			Yes		Yes
Influential	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Religious	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Direct message		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes	
Indirect message						Yes		Yes	

Issue 7

Articles	Article 1	Article 2	Article 3	Article 4	Article 5	Article 6	Article 7	Article 8	Article 9
Informative	Yes		Yes			Yes	Yes		Yes
Influential	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Religious		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Direct Message	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes		
Indirect Message	Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes			

a. INFORMATIVE MESSAGES

Informative messages are present in all issues, mostly the news sections that give out information about the operations and the killings conducted. It is also notified that significant indirect informative messages are also present in the articles.

Example;

“The sad state of the murtad Sahwat doesn’t end there, as anyone who followed the statements of their leaders in recent days would have found them speaking about Russians as if they were speaking about friends, not about Crusader Russia – the ally of the regime – which killed thousands of helpless people, destroyed cities and villages, and aided the Nusayri army in retaking the city of Halab and expelling them from it. But today, among them is he who calls them a “peacemaker”, hoping to ally with them and fight the Islamic state. The friendship between the martadd Sahwat of sham and the Russian Crusaders comes after years of the murtaddin allying with America, which has killed countless Muslims, aided the tawaghit against them, and protected the Jewish state occupying lands of Muslims. But when they lost hope in America, it wasn’t difficult for them to replace it with Russia. In fact, there’s nothing to even prevent them from befriending the Jewish state itself over the course of a few days as long as wala and bara remains utterly broken within them. So, there’s nothing easier for them than allying with the Jews, the Christians and the mushrikin or their desire to obtain some benefits which they hope to acquire from them” (Foreword, Pg-5, issue-6) ‘Just Terror Tactics’ belonging to the Exclusive category is mostly informative. The informative based on the equipment, arms and ammunitions and the description of the process of the killings is intentionally classified to inflict fear amongst readers.

Example :

“Observing previous vehicle attacks , it has been shown that smaller vehicles are incapable of granting the level of carnage that is sought. Similarly, off-roaders, SUV’s , and four-wheel drive vehicles lack the weight and the wheel span required for causing a blood bath”. (exclusive, Pg-11: Issue-3)

b. INFLUENTIAL MESSAGES

The magazine has innumerable messages that are highly influential and communicate to the readers in both negative and positive ways. It is also seen that most influential messages are religious.

Example:

“O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you – then indeed, he is [one] of them” (Foreword, Pg-6; Issue-6)

This statement influences and therefore warns the readers about Jews and Christians. This message can therefore be considered a direct message to the readers including Christian and Jew readers.

“My heart is sure and my soul is free.

It refused degradation and my sword is sharp.

Why would a man fear the parting of his soul?

Is not the end of every life parting?

Elevate your soul while it is still in its garments.

if not in Sham, then there is Iraq

There is no good in the life of a coward,

A life surrounded by humiliation and destitution.

They criticized my zeal and sprite.

But fire is not to be criticized for burning.” (Exclusive, Pg-5, Issue-4)

The following poem is highly influential and can also be considered as an indirect message justifying their acts.

Another example would be:

“Indeed, Allah has purchased from the believers their lives and their properties [in exchange] for that they will have Jannah. They fight for Allah’s cause, so they kill and are killed.” (Article; Pg-21; Issue-5)

c. RELIGIOUS MESSAGES

The religious messages in the articles strategically and efficiently play with the religious sentiments of the believers influencing them into violence and disapproval of other religions. Some statements have been quoted from the Quran with reference to its chapters and manipulated with descriptions relating to them to influence the readers. The main motive behind the religious manipulation is to make the weaker souls and nations surrender and to recruit an army as agents of destruction naming them as soldiers of Allah. It has been mentioned in the magazines that ‘one must fear Allah’. It therefore results to be way different than the god-fearing approach. ‘This’ kind of fear indicates towards fear of punishment, fear of feath, and fear of destruction.

“They have yet to grasp what it means when the Islamic state calls Muslims to fight their enemies as much as they are able to and for this call to then be answered by dozens of hidden soldiers of Allah, sending fear into the east and west using their knives, explosive belts, vehicles, and any other weapons they can get their hands on or means to which they have access by Allah’s permission”. (Foreword; Pg-3, Issue3)

Some texts are religious as well as influential:

Example:

“Allah has ordered the killing of all mushrikin- whether military or civilian – in His saying, “Then kill the mushrikin wherever you find them.” (At-Tawbah)” (Exclusive; Pg-6, Issue-5)

d. DIRECT MESSAGES

Direct messages are directed towards specified readers. They are messages are either to a particular group or the readers from all over the nation as a whole. Such messages influence the group concerned. They maybe informative or influential in both positive and negative sense.

“O soldiers of the Khilafah in Turkey! O you whose path to performing hijrah to Dar al-Islam has been blocked by the murtadd, Turkish border patrol forces! You must strike the Turkish taghut and his murtadd followers. “Fight them; Allah will punish them at your hands, He will disgrace them, He will support you against them, and He will heal the breasts of believing people” (at-Tawbah 14). Start with the imams of the kufr and the pillars of taghut therein. Attack the police, judges, and military. **Attack the scholars of taghut and the supporters of Erdogan’s political party (AKP) as well as other mutadd parties allied to him. And in the midst of your war against these people, do not forget to kill the citizens of the Crusader nations wherever you find them.** Make examples of them for those behind them to be terror-struck and take revenge by killing them for the crimes perpetrated against your brothers.” (Foreword; Pg-3: Issue-3)

The following passage is specifically directed to the Turkish taghut along with crusader nations and it has been made very clear that the only purpose of the Islamic State towards them is purely revenge by the name of Allah.

“And to the murabitin on frontlines against the Turkish army and its allies: Be steadfast before them. Let them see the harshness from you, **as perhaps Allah will restrain them through you. Allah is mightier than them and more severe in torment.**” (Foreword; Pg-3; Issue-3)

Therefore, here Allah has been used as a terrorizing weapon to both the readers and their own community.

e. INDIRECT MESSAGES

Indirect messages are usually hidden messages in informative or influential texts leaving behind hints to the concerned section of readers. These messages are usually indicated to terrorize enemy parties. As a whole the magazine itself indirect targets the weaknesses of the readers to influence them to fear their strength.

“O you who believe! When you encounter an enemy, stand firm and remember Allah much that you may be successful. Obey Allah and his messenger, and do not dispute, lest you falter and your strength departs; and be patient. “Indeed, Allah is with the patient.” (Al-Anfal 45-46). So disputation is a cause of faltering and of the enemy’s victory over you. And disagreement is a means for evil and enmity to come between you.”

Here this statement has been used along with a text quoted from the Quran, manipulating the information by linking it with their own text with the quote considered from the Quran.

“Beware of disagreeing with your leaders. Listen to them as a means to get closer to Allah, and obey them as an act of worship for Allah, as long as they do not command you with sin.” (Exclusive; Pg-8, Issue-3)

V. ARTICLES ON WOMEN

The researchers have also studied the articles on women. Separate articles have been published on women and their roles in the Islamic community.

“Allah’s messenger said, “Wage jihad against the mushrikin with your wealth, your souls and your tongues (Reported by Abu Dawud from Anas).” (Article; Pg-18; Issue-1)

“It is known that women- other than those whom Allah protects, and they are very few- often engage in nonsense, showing ingratitude towards their husband, backbiting and other grave sins.” (Article; Pg-19; Issue-1)

The Islamic States appeals to women to provide charity for their equipments to fight the enemy and cause mass destruction. They expect women to supply them with charity for their arms and ammunitions and souls as children taking forward Islam and providing with strength in its population.

“Furthermore, widows have before them a door to fitnah that is necessary- for one who fears Allah concerning herself and those around her to endeavor shut. So the woman who rejects her proposals and seeks her needs and the needs of her children from her friends’ husband or from her in-laws, who are her children’s uncles, should fear the slippery slopes of Shaytan and keep herself from any shubudat (questionable matters).

And one who avoids shubudat has protected her religion and honor from being tainted, and there is none more relentless than Shaytan in pursuing an unmarried woman that has experienced marriage.” (Article; Pg-33; Issue-4)

The Islamic State encourages a second marriage for widowed women in order to reproduce and have children to serve for Islam. The text is targeted to Muslim women who chose not to get married after the death of a husband to manipulate and brainwash them justifying an unsafe environment that may have them sin. This statement can also be considered a good example of an indirect message.

VI. CONCLUSION

Through this study it can be concluded that the purpose of Rumiyah is to inflict fear among people who do not follow Islam and to influence people to follow the ideology of ISIS and join them. This study has also opened up many other possibilities to study further, such as representation of women in Rumiyah; a study on use of pictures, graphics and design in the magazine to promote the ideology of ISIS.

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