

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

**NEW IMAGINARIES OF WAR:  
HOW HAMAS AND THE ISLAMIC STATE  
ADVANCE THEIR POLITICAL OBJECTIVES  
ON A VIRTUAL BATTLEFIELD**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Philosophy (College of Humanities and Social Sciences)  
at Massey University, Albany Campus, New Zealand

Francesca Annemarie Mold

2017

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis argues that Hamas and the Islamic State, two non-state armed groups located in the Middle East, each carefully calibrate their own war-fighting activities with their communications approaches in order to achieve their respective political objectives. Drawing on scholarship focusing on non-state armed groups and political communication, as well as other secondary sources such as specialist journalism, the thesis critically analyses online communications material distributed by Hamas and the Islamic State through official and affiliated websites, digital publications, YouTube clips, tweets, and other social media platforms. While there is a striking degree of conformity between the sophisticated, comprehensive, and disciplined communications approaches used by these two groups, the thesis argues that key differences during especially intense periods of conflict — specifically, between June and October 2014 — reflect the divergent ways in which Hamas endorses, and the Islamic State disrupts, the prevailing world order as each pursues their own cause. It also notes that much of the recent scholarship highlighting the use of social media by non-state armed groups overestimates the impact of the virtual world on the actions of their followers in particular and attempts to influence the hearts and minds of a global audience more broadly.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

My thanks go to my supervisors, Dr Nigel Parsons and Associate Professor Grant Duncan, for agreeing to supervise this project, as well as to Dr Vicky Walters for her expert guidance in helping me shape the research proposal. Particularly useful were the fantastic resources provided by the Massey University library and its staff who kindly helped me navigate my way through the research phase from a distance. The academics who dedicate their energy to critical studies on terrorism are appreciated for opening my mind to a new way of thinking about the world. I also pay tribute to the journalists who operate in the battlegrounds of the Middle East, risking their lives searching for a truth that may not actually exist. To my parents, Anne and Jim Mold, thank you for believing in me, despite being constantly surprised, and often dismayed, by my predilection for taking risks. Without you, I would not have achieved this or much else in my life. I'm also grateful to my wider family — Antoinette, Peter, James, Ruth, Caleb, Arianna, Luke, and Andrew as well as Lois Holden — for your unwavering support and patient acceptance of my absence from your lives. My gratitude goes to Trisha McLean for her wise counsel during dark times and my furry babies are thanked too for the constancy of their love (even if it is of the cupboard variety). Most of all, my immeasurable gratitude goes to Dr Damien Rogers for, firstly, his professional support in proof-reading drafts and giving free-and-frank feedback, as well as allowing me to pillage his extensive collection of international relations and conflict literature. Secondly, for being my companion in life, inspiring me with his intimidating intellect, critical and creative thinking, passion for the things that are good and right about humanity, constant thirst for knowledge, and search for ways to be a better person. I thank you because, with you, I am the best that I can be.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
Acronyms and Abbreviations.....	vi
Glossary of Arabic Terms.....	vii
<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Literature Review: Conceptualising Non-State Armed Groups</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3. Research Methodology and Analytic Approach.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>4. Hamas and the Islamic State: Searching for Statehood.....</b>	<b>26</b>
(a) Historical Contexts	
(b) Governance Arrangements	
(c) Political Objectives	
(i) <i>Statehood</i>	
(ii) <i>Jihad</i>	
(d) War-Fighting Capabilities	
<b>5. Hamas and the Online Frontline.....</b>	<b>50</b>
(a) Political Communication	
(b) Frame 1: Statehood	
(i) <i>Self-determination</i>	
(ii) <i>Islamic Reference</i>	
(iii) <i>Place in the World</i>	
(c) Frame 2: <i>Jihad</i>	
(i) <i>Conflict</i>	
(ii) <i>The Enemy</i>	
(iii) <i>Victimhood</i>	

<b>6.</b>	<b>Islamic State and the Online Frontline.....</b>	<b>69</b>
	(a) Political Communication	
	(b) Frame 1: Statehood	
	(i) <i>Self-determination</i>	
	(ii) <i>Islamic Reference</i>	
	(iii) <i>Place in the World</i>	
	(c) Frame 2: <i>Jihad</i>	
	(i) <i>Conflict</i>	
	(ii) <i>The Enemy</i>	
	(iii) <i>Victimhood</i>	
<b>7.</b>	<b>Key Findings.....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>8.</b>	<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>96</b>
	<b>References.....</b>	<b>101</b>

## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

EU	European Union
IDF	Israeli Defense Force
IS	Islamic State
ISIL	Islamic State in Iraq and Levant
MEMRI	Middle East Media Research Institute
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NSAGs	Non-state armed groups
PA	Palestinian Authority
PKK	Kurdistan Workers Party
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNWRA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East
US	United States of America

## GLOSSARY OF ARABIC TERMS

<i>Ahlul-halli-wa'l-'aqd</i>	people of authority
<i>Al-dawla al Islamiyya fi Iraq</i>	Islamic State in Iraq
<i>Aqidah</i>	creed
<i>Baqiya wa tatamadad</i>	remaining and expanding
<i>Bay'ah</i>	transaction or traditional contract
<i>Dawla</i>	state or dynasty
<i>Dhimmi</i>	protected person
<i>Din wa dawla</i>	an all-embracing governance system
<i>Fahish'ah</i>	fornication or adultery
<i>Fard 'Ayn</i>	individual duty
<i>Hajj</i>	pilgrimage
<i>Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya</i>	The Islamic Resistance Movement
<i>Hijrah</i>	migration
<i>Hudud</i>	punishments mandated by Allah
<i>Intifada</i>	uprising against oppression
<i>Istishhadiyyin</i>	suicide bombers
<i>Jama'a</i>	congregation or congregational prayer
<i>Jama'at al-Tawhid w'al-Jihad</i>	The Group of God's Unity and <i>Jihad</i>
<i>Jihad</i>	holy war
<i>Jizya</i>	tax
<i>Khalif</i>	caliph
<i>Khilafah</i>	caliphate
<i>Kuffar</i>	unbeliever
<i>Kufr</i>	denial of truth



<i>Majlis ash-Shoura</i>	Shura Council
<i>Manhaj</i>	path
<i>Muhajadeen</i>	one engaged in <i>jihad</i>
<i>Muqawama</i>	resistance through constant combat
<i>Nasheed</i>	vocal music
<i>Qu'ud</i>	abandonment of <i>jihad</i>
<i>Rafidah</i>	rejectionists/refusers
<i>Safawi</i>	pejorative term for Shi'ah Muslims
<i>Sahwa</i>	awakening
<i>Salafi</i>	adherents to 'true' Sunni Islam
<i>Salah</i>	prayer
<i>Sawm</i>	fasting
<i>Shahada</i>	bearing witness to Allah
<i>Shahid</i>	martyrdom
<i>Shari'ah</i>	legal system of Islam
<i>Shirk</i>	idolatry
<i>Shura</i>	consultation
<i>Taghut</i>	cross the limits/idolatry
<i>Takfir</i>	excommunication
<i>Tamkin</i>	consolidation
<i>Tawhid</i>	oneness of God
<i>Ummah</i>	community of true believers
<i>Usrat</i>	small organisational cells
<i>Waqf</i>	inalienable charitable endowment
<i>Wilayat</i>	province
<i>Zakat/Zakah</i>	alms-giving as a religious obligation