

JIHADI AUDIOVISUALITY AND ITS ENTANGLEMENTS: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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With his political cartoons, the Copenhagen-based Sudanese artist Khalid Albaih offers his analyses of the socio-political situation and everyday life in the Middle East and North Africa. Many of his cartoons criticise militant movements in the region and the global military and political involvement of local and international actors in conflicts such as that in Syria. In one of his recent cartoons, ‘Scarecrow’ (Figure I.1, overleaf), he responds to US President Donald Trump’s announcement via Twitter of the killing of Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī. Alongside the image, Albaih’s comment on Facebook on 28 October 2019 relates his cartoon to the killing of Bin Laden:

#Khartoon - The Scarecrow -#Trump announces the killing of #albagdadi (he was announced dead 8 times as I remembered) this person was seen twice in two videos years apart. Just like Bin Laden this operation took place close to the election and of course just like Bin Laden another a [*sic*] scarier scarecrow emerged very soon after. Treat the cause not the illness.

Albaih’s comment points to the social construction of evil antagonists like bin Laden and al-Baghdādī. Unlike the widely circulated iconic image of Osama bin Laden, the depiction of al-Baghdādī’s face on the scarecrow is based upon one of his few video appearances in jihadi video productions,



Figure I.1 'Scarecrow' (© Khalid Albaih).

the rarity of which stands in stark contrast to the frequency of references to him in Western news media. The image of al-Baghdādī's head stuck on the scarecrow alludes to imagery of the penal-code atrocities of Islamic State (IS) decapitation videos, and at the same time threatens to scare off any actors planning to rebuild the devastated landscape.

Albaih publishes his work via his own Facebook website *Khartoon!*, as well as through Instagram and other social media platforms, and interacts with his followers. Incorporating the different viewpoints he has encountered living in Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Denmark as a Muslim artist and activist, through his work Albaih engages with very different kinds of actors. With his stated aim of '[talking] to people that don't agree with you' he has also encountered supporters of different jihadi movements on social media. In a conversation with Larissa-Diana Fuhrmann, Albaih noted that 'some of them retweet my stuff' (16 December 2017) and said that he had also chatted with them about the meanings of his cartoons.

The cover of this book, with Albaih's cartoon, and the opening of this Introduction showing it embedded in the Facebook post raise the central

issues of the edited volume *Jihadi Audiovisuality and its Entanglements*. Not only does Albaih appropriate global and jihadi image repertoires in his work in order to articulate his critical comments on social and political developments; he also harnesses social media to circulate his work, reaching militant jihadi as well as Muslim activist and Western audiences. Like Albaih, actors from jihadi groups and movements are part of media infrastructures and actively appropriate global media for their own purposes. The forms of media and audiovisuality they create cannot be seen in isolation from the manifold entanglements they are embedded within.

With this volume, we put forward the notion of *jihadi audiovisuality* as a relational heuristic with which to examine the visual and auditory practices of individuals and collectives who either identify themselves and their actions as epitomes of the contemporary jihadi current or reference such practices in their work. We see these as interrelated within the framework of jihadi audiovisuality's entanglements, which encompass, inter alia, the output of global media as well as different journalistic and scientific fields, and the domains of security authorities.

For our purposes here, we use the adjective 'jihadi' to describe a specific realm of human experiences set within particular socio-political trajectories that are established through social interactions, the simultaneity of bodily and technical mediation and cultural artefacts in the form of texts, sounds and (moving) images. The term 'jihadi' does not thereby define the inherent quality of any of these elements, but rather is an attribute that is ascribed by a range of actors – internet users, artists, activists, militants, journalists, politicians, ideologues and researchers – to a certain kind of ideology, doctrine, habit, attitude, and the media through which this is expressed. In other words: while this volume focuses strongly on jihadi imagery and audio, we situate these articulations within a global communicative web, and we seek to provide perspectives that relate the production, dissemination and formative audiovisual linkages of jihadi imagery and sound to various forms of engagement and appropriation.

By bringing the historical and cultural entanglements of jihadi audiovisuality to the fore, we aim to transcend disciplinary boundaries and go beyond the limits of analyses that focus on jihadi ideology. The contributions to this volume provide complementary perspectives that locate ideology

and doctrine in aesthetic practices integrating, for example, material and embodied perspectives. Many of the contributions provide rich examples of ethnographic or fieldwork-based research, showing that empirical studies of jihadi audiovisuality do not only produce knowledge of ideas and their manifestations in texts, images and sounds. They also exhibit a thorough consideration of ethical and methodological challenges (see Sold, Abay and Junk, Chapter 2, and Carvalho, Chapter 3), make it clear that researchers and journalists are part of the entanglements and the politicised and securitised discourses they study (e.g. de Koning, Moors and Navest, Chapter 1), and provide insights into how different groups of Muslims respond to discourses about jihadism (e.g. Salzbrunn, Chapter 7). Moreover, our volume opens a wider perspective that extends beyond the ideologies, strategies and media output of the contemporary jihadi current, to take into consideration the expressions of culture and aesthetics that evolve around them. This includes examining how jihadi actors establish their discursive authority by appropriating religious symbols, media and texts, and addressing specific publics, as well as how such components are (re-)appropriated by activists, artists and religious authorities as a means of contestation (see e.g. Dick and Fuhrmann, Chapter 12).

Calling for a focus on the cultural and aesthetic aspects, as well as everyday practices, of jihadi thinking and action, we wish to draw attention to the ways in which religio-political movements that invoke the Islamic notion of jihad to legitimate their (violent) actions deploy a rich audiovisual symbolic repertoire to appeal to adherents from diverse contexts. This repertoire ranges from a focus on materiality and matter – ‘clothes, beard, haircuts, face-veil, manners of walking, greeting, drinking water, [and] eating’ (Svensson 2012: 197) – to expressions of belonging like poetry, singing, diction, and certain forms of communitarianism. Additionally, specific concepts of the social and the political are also part of this repertoire, like the staging of flags, military equipment and other signifiers of soldierly prowess as both markers of social identity and expressions of *ittibā*, that is, the imitation of the early Muslim community. Borrowing from Stoevers’s (2016) conceptualisation of the *sonic color line* as ‘the process of racializing sound’ where ‘listening became a racialized body discipline’ (2016), we understand this expression of dominance and resistance as the drawing of an *audiovisual faith line* enacted in the realm

of the quotidian by means of different forms of media to distinguish ‘true’ Muslims from everyone else.

Jihadi groups and movements such as IS have become media-savvy *entrepreneurs of identity* (Günther 2021, forthcoming). With the increasing accessibility of ‘new’ forms of media like video and audio cassettes since the 1980s, and digital communication technologies from the 1990s onwards, jihadi actors have used such technologies to promote their cause, distribute their messages to win support and intimidate their opponents (Corman and Schiefelbein 2006; see also Atwan 2015; Bunt 2003, 2018). Especially since the rise of IS and its digital media strategy of producing and disseminating professional and high-quality images, videos and sounds for a wide variety of audiences, journalists, policy groups and researchers alike have paid heightened attention to jihadist media production intended to antagonise (e.g. Winter 2015, 2017; Krona and Pennington 2019). What is more, Gruber (2019: 126) cogently observes that ‘many of us have proved liable in boosting the group’s global presence and appeal’ through our work and our own comport as consumers of these digital audiovisual media.

The vast body of policy briefs, reports and strategy papers that document jihadists’ online activities and media strategies are produced within a political and military framework committed to combating terrorism (a few recent examples include Almohammad and Winter 2019, de Leede 2018 and Ayad 2019). This volume, however, dedicates more space to building on the efforts of more rigorous scholarship focused on the ‘symmetric dualism’ and mutual referencing of audiovisual regimes and practices between jihadi groups and their opponents (Gruber 2019; Mitchell 2011; della Ratta 2018; Shaw 2015). For our conceptualisation of *Jihadi Audiovisuality and its Entanglements*, research is therefore essential that firstly focuses on the jihadi audiovisual lexicon and its logics (Ostovar 2017). It is this sonic and visual repertoire, with all its local, historical, social and cultural contingencies, that shapes the ability of jihadi actors to powerfully manifest their ideas of the world and the transcendent through audiovisual means. This perspective affords drawing attention to the operational qualities of images of violence in general (Eder and Klonk 2017) and the agency of images of terror in particular (Kraidy 2017). These images stand for the events in which they were taken and ‘the event of viewing it’ (Azoulay 2012: 252). The visibility and

public display of these images (Friis 2018) relate the different events to the specific digital publics. This leads to the examination of how jihadi media and communication have both modified and been changed by the technologies of the social web (e.g. Ramsay 2015; Lohlker 2019) and discussions about the transformative dimension of ‘fast-moving, self-propelled’ imagery on the internet that evades regulation and control (Bolt 2012). Secondly, we have been inspired by recent scholarship which highlights how people’s experiences are productive of and produced by the digital sphere (e.g. Mühlhoff et al. 2019), and which draws attention to different actors’ engagements with the jihadi audiovisual claim for dominance, including (but not limited to) forms of creative dissent such as satire and humour (Ramsay and Alkheder 2020; Kraidy 2018).

Whereas a focus on military strategy and related ideology characterises most scholarship on the jihadi current, recently interest has emerged to examine ‘the everyday life’ and the cultural and social dimensions of jihadi groups and movements. Most notably, the edited collection *Jihadi Culture* (Hegghammer 2017b) focuses on poetry, music, dreams and cinematography (see also Krona and Pennington 2019). Hegghammer (2017a: 2) differentiates ideology in terms of doctrine and aesthetics, remarking that ‘the literature on jihadism has mostly treated ideology as synonymous with doctrine that is a set of ideas transmitted through language and internalized through cognition’. While we welcome Hegghammer’s insight, we do not see the military, ideological and cultural productions of knowledge and meaning as distinct domains but instead emphasise their intermingling. We therefore take his apt statement as a starting point from which to develop jihadi audiovisuality as a field of research in itself that is not restricted to the analysis of the role of religion and/or ideology. This also means complementing and deepening the examination of various aspects of jihadi iconography, aesthetics and sonic representation with qualitative empirical and ethnographic approaches that focus on the practices and contextualisation of the everyday lives of opponents and supporters of jihadist groups.

While some ethnographic research has pointed to aspects of identity and of belonging to a ‘counterculture’ (Hemmingsen 2015), and to the gendered dimensions of online jihadi engagement (Carvalho 2018), others are concerned with historical contextualisation and a shift in perspective, not only to

explain why European Muslims support militant movements and depart for war, for example, to Syria (Kublitz 2019), but to analyse how jihad is being presented as a solution to, for example, missing supranational interventions to humanitarian crisis (Li 2020). What is common to this anthropological-ethnographic engagement is a critical and reflexive stance towards socially constructed categories such as radicalisation or securitisation (Fadil et al. 2019). In line with this critical approach to research, we recognise the importance of addressing the ethical challenges that arise when conducting empirical research in the field of jihadi audiovisuality.

Methodology, Ethical and Legal Framework

The methodologies underlying the chapters in *Jihadi Audiovisuality and its Entanglements* are as varied as the disciplinary backgrounds of their authors. These range from visual and musical analysis to iconology and more theoretical investigations to covert observation and digital ethnography. Since scholarship on the jihadi current is highly politicised and securitised, a reflective approach to security, violence and Islam has become a major issue of debate. The three contributions in the section on the *Methodological and Ethical Challenges of Empirically Grounded Research on Jihadism* (A) seek to inspire critical self-reflection and to raise awareness among researchers about the possible consequences of doing empirical (online) research on jihadi audiovisuality, addressing issues such as transparency and anonymity. They also provide an ethical basis for understanding contributions to the volume that relate to similar methodologies, for example Salzbrunn's examples from Tunisia and Switzerland in her theoretical contribution (Chapter 7) or Berg's chapter (Chapter 11), which draws on extensive fieldwork in Lebanon with Hamas and Hizbullah. Each approach comes with its own trajectory of engagement in ethical debates, three branches of which are of particular interest for this volume.

A first stream of research in terms of ethical considerations can be identified here that critically engages in the trajectories of terms such as radicalisation (see e.g. Fadil et al. 2019) and reflects on the ethical challenges of researchers' positionality as part of this field (Gauvain 2018). The contribution by de Koning et al. (Chapter 1) demonstrates how researchers themselves are part of the entanglements of politicisation and securitisation. The authors

indicate how the interests of governmental, university and media institutions can have significant consequences for researchers and their interlocutors. They emphasise the need for researchers' institutional protection, especially when researching controversial topics like the visibility and aurality of jihadi communication. Furthermore, de Koning et al. explore the limits researchers face and the possibilities they have to resist the identities imposed upon them and to defend the principles of privacy and non-discrimination.

Second, empirical social science and ethnographic fieldwork-based research on jihadi audiovisuality demands a thorough consideration of ethical challenges. Engagement with the digital in militant fields is particularly critical, as it often involves generating research data by accessing (online) spaces that are not intended for a broad public (see also Ess 2009; Zimmer and Kinder-Kurlanda 2017) or relate to the challenges of digital ethnography while being part of the securitised research funding system (Fuhrmann and Pfeifer 2020). In her contribution, Carvalho (Chapter 3) is particularly concerned with the role of the researcher in digital research as she examines access to the field, and the gendered dimensions of fieldwork via Facebook and offline. Carvalho also outlines the legal frameworks pertaining to digital research and recounts how she was obliged to comply with different regulations imposed by nation-states and universities, and different platforms' terms of services. Sold et al. (Chapter 2) also address the close interrelationships between ethical and legal challenges that emerge when tracing new trends and engagements by jihadi actors in social media and digital environments. Focusing on the requirements of the European General Data Protection Regulation and related ethical considerations when working with data obtained via social media platforms, they provide examples from their own research in the field of radicalisation and extremism. Relating their ethical considerations of privacy, transparency, trust and security to the legal principles of proportionality, adequateness, data economy and anonymisation, they develop a framework for designing research with social media data.

The third branch follows the tradition of questioning the ethics of aesthetic projects that deploy images of violence and atrocities, as has been most notoriously done by Sontag (2004), as well as by art historians and in cultural studies research (see e.g. Batchen et al. 2012). With regard to the visibility of violence in IS videos, Krona (Chapter 5) points to viewers'

ethical responsibility towards the victims portrayed in such videos, which leads him to the broader question of whether researchers who show and further circulate such audiovisual material contribute to the reproduction of the violence and humiliation. Additionally, Pfeifer, Fuhrmann and Wevers (Chapter 8) discuss the active and participatory but nonetheless ethically questionable role of victims in re-enactments of violence in which their participation is not always voluntary, especially in cases where it is unclear whether performing victims knew the script of videos that they would live to survive or were subjected to genuine mortal fear. Taken together, these ethical and methodological considerations form the basis of our understanding of *Jihadi Audiovisuality and its Entanglements* that we will explore in the three following subsections.

Sensation, Mediation and Audiovisuality

In his now-classic edited volume, Foster proposed the dialectics of vision as the physical process of sight and visibility as a ‘social fact’ (Foster 1998; see also Rose 2011: 6). Mirzoeff (2006: 76) complicated this dialectic and, shifting attention back to the original meaning of the term coined in mid-nineteenth-century England, proposed that visibility should be understood as a complex ‘engagement with the politics of representation in transnational and transcultural form’, encompassing forms of resistance. Expanding on discussions about vision and visibility, Grasseni’s (2004) theoretical and methodological notion of ‘skilled vision’ conceptualises vision as a multi-sensual practice that is neither an individual activity nor a social representation of experiences, but is rather a learned and situated social activity: ‘a sensory practice that needs “educating and training in a relationship of apprenticeship and within an ecology of practice”’ (Grasseni and Gieser 2019: 6, citing Grasseni 2004: 41).

Extending beyond the initial emphasis on vision, these considerations have recently been re-examined, with Grasseni and Gieser (2019: 12), Willkomm (2016) and others introducing the concept of ‘skilled listening’ as a learned practice that makes sense of, orders or categorises audible impressions. This addition not only reflects the observation that ‘audition and inaudition are [...] equally learned capacities that are constantly being honed’ (Daughtry 2015: 19). It also feeds into a paradigm shift in sound studies

where greater attention is being paid to the ways in which ‘environments, spaces or processes are not simple vehicles, coordinates, or channels of auditory perception, but parts of feedback loops in which matter and meaning mutually influence one another’ (Erlmann 2018: 12; authors’ translation; see also Daughtry 2015: 122). Consequently, audition and inaudition are, just like vision and not seeing, embedded in specific mediating formations, routines and contexts.

To further define these contexts, we suggest that skilled listening and vision are practices that are produced by and productive of the different sensory regimes that ‘produce, reproduce and change power relations’ (Pels 1996: 378). Expanding on Metz’s ([1977] 2000) notion of scopic regimes and Daughtry’s (2015) work on auditory regimes, we use the concept of sensory regimes to refer to socially acquired, culturally learned, technologically extended and highly dynamic techniques of sensation. They are sometimes local, sometimes global, often interconnected, always historically, culturally and epistemologically contingent, and intersect in complicated ways.

Together with collective and individual bodies of knowledge, sensory regimes are key to the ways in which ‘interpretive communities’ (Fish 1982) collectively produce the meaning of any cultural artefact. They mediate the sonic and the visual through learned, performative and socially embedded techniques of (not) looking and (in)audition as well as through (political) ideologies, life histories, memories and experiences. As such, sensory regimes shape the ways in which we do or do not listen to and see ourselves, others and the world around us, and hence our capacity to perceive, appreciate, classify and interpret certain sounds and images. Discussing the Hollywood-esque style of Islamic State’s videos as an appropriative strategy, Zywiets and Beese (Chapter 4) make it clear that the potentiality of jihadi audiovisuality lies in the group’s ability to imitate aesthetic practices and viewing habits. These have evolved around visual patterns, motifs, codes and metaphors, as well as around narrative devices and technical tools used in film and television across the globe. Moving images are both communicative acts and aesthetic practices.

They not only connect to many sensory regimes simultaneously through their composition of visuals and sounds, use of lighting, camera angles, volumes, tonality and editing, but also provide hooks for latching onto familiar audiovisual codes. It is exactly these audiovisual codes of IS videos that Ali et

al. (Chapter 9) respectively apply in their web videos and pedagogical digital youth work.

The configurations of people's sensations and their receptivity thus shape the ways in which images and sounds are accorded specific qualities and assume a certain kind of status (e.g. as truth or evidence). This applies regardless of any 'power' inherent in a medium itself to change the social reality by 'enchancing or affecting people', that is, to spark emotional, intellectual and physical responses. It should be remembered, however, that these configurations are contingent on 'a recursive feedback loop, subject at any given time to stabilising and destabilising influences' (Grayson and Mawdsley 2019: 433). Expanding on Bleeker's (2008: 1–2) observations on the visual, we want to further emphasise that our (in)abilities and (limited) horizons of knowledge result in us always perceiving more, and always perceiving less, than what is there to be heard and seen, because our sensations are 'rerouted through memory and fantasy, caught up in threads of the unconscious and entangled with the passions'. Furthermore, our sensations appear to alter the mediations we encounter and to transform us at the same time. In other words, the creation of knowledge and meaning through the sonic and the visual is never static, but rather always in the making, resonating between people and their socially acquired and culturally learned (in)abilities, material artefacts, cultural contexts and technological mediators.

Despite this highly volatile structure, we suggest that many actors seek to control the meanings attributed to the audiovisual media they produce by tailoring content to accustomed modes of seeing as outlined above. They also deploy auditive and visual elements such as postures, 'costumes, props, make-up, hairstyle, spaces as a stage or scene (*setting*, in Goffman's terms) to construct images for their sensitive effects' (Mandoki 2007: 146; emphasis in the original). Many of the contributions to this volume address the workings of such elements in terms of how our attention as viewers is potentially managed and how we are implicated in what we see. For example, Günther (Chapter 6) shows how specific settings are affectively loaded and accorded a certain meaning by the use of particular colour schemes to brighten or darken scenes. Krona's (Chapter 5) analysis of the ways in which violence is staged for the camera reveals the techniques by which producers invite distant audiences to relate to and understand what they are shown. Ali et al.

(Chapter 9) compellingly demonstrate how strategies of ambiguity, used in their online youth work to combine familiar elements like jihadi *anāshīd* (a cappella chants or hymns) with new ideas and contexts, have successfully won the critical engagement of young viewers.

Similarly, accessibility, and their audiences' experiences of immediacy, are further regulated through the use of voice and words, and the style chosen, as well as the rhythm, tone volume, intonation and many more variables that are all produced by and productive of body posture and motions – hence displaying markers of social identity that people can relate to. Reflecting these considerations, some of the contributions to this volume attend in particular to the ways in which listening 'can orient people within their environments, connect them with affective stimuli, and open their bodies up to violence and pain as well as to knowledge and pleasure' (Daughtry 2015: 6). Weinrich (Chapter 10) and Berg (Chapter 11), as well as Dick and Fuhrmann (Chapter 12), all show how the discursive and formal aspects deployed in the production and performance of *anāshīd* render the chants powerful modes of production of meaning and knowledge while simultaneously intermingling with other modalities. These three chapters, in varying degrees, also illustrate what Eisenlohr (2018) has called 'sonic movements', that is, the capacity of various acoustic parameters to trigger a sense of being moved, felt as an embodied experience by the listener. This is not a matter of a simple stimulus–response chain, but of a resonance sensed in the listener's body, which blurs the boundaries between subject and object and is particularly significant in the experience of acoustic forms of expression in religious contexts (Allesch 2013: 49–52). Eisenlohr (2018: 49) also emphasises this when he writes that the acoustic movements resemble the spatial movements of an imagined or actual person. Just as many other examples, such as various forms of religious processions, testify, Berg's contribution (Chapter 11) makes it clear that, especially in public performances of *anāshīd*, correlations and overlapping of physical, spatial and acoustic movement can be observed. For a co-present audience, the sensory experience is moulded by 'the natural and architectural environments that absorb, reflect, amplify, and distort sounds' (Daughtry 2015: 35) as well as by visual, olfactory, haptic, thermal and other stimuli.

Producers' endeavours to allow us to see and hear some things but not others do not necessarily result in unambiguous representations, however.

There are many instances where efforts are made to limit the polysemy of specific lexic, spatial, sonic and visual components as much as possible. In doing this, producers seek to prove their capacity to construct an audiovisual presentation that expresses their authority and aestheticises their classificatory power. At the same time, they play with the full creative repertoire that produces ambiguity, in order to cater to the diversity of their audiences' capacities, horizons of knowledge, memories and emotions. Weinrich (Chapter 10) demonstrates this lucidly when she traces the allusions to (and appropriations of) various musical genres and styles found in the development of jihadi *anāshīd*. These are, in turn, potentially destabilising factors that offer potential for the contestation of authority asserted through audiovisual presentations. In discussing several forms of appropriation of Islamic State's nashīd *Ṣalīl al-Ṣawārim*, Dick and Fuhrmann (Chapter 12) offer one case that illustrates such contestation very vividly and shows the subversive force of creativity and humour. More often than not, however, the relational character inherent in these mediations is obscured so that it becomes difficult to discern the ways in which we as an audience are implicated in what we see and hear.

Against this complex backdrop, we define audiovisualities in the plural as a relational heuristic for analysing the multiple and highly volatile links between people's sensation, the mediations they encounter, and the modes deployed to create meaning and knowledge. These links are established through distinct manifestations of visual and auditory experiences and practices: the use of specific tonalities and styles of speech, representations of certain habits, the deployment of certain technologies, and the creation and appropriation of mediations and various forms of engagement with them. This involves (inter alia) significant parts of the sensory field and essential modalities of knowledge and meaning-making through which individual and collective identities are enacted. Hence, we attend to discursive and embodied practices that have material effects and are often hard to distinguish from the prosthetic technologies that connect one's body to the world outside (Jay 2008). The contributions in this volume therefore not only scrutinise the discursive and embodied modes of (moving) images and sounds, but also explore their specific forms of mediation, focusing on the performativity, materiality and audiovisuality of media productions. This also necessitates a focus on the formal aspects of images and sounds, as well as attention to the

dynamics that emerge through the reciprocity of matter and meaning in the spatial, technical, processual or bodily contact zones between images, sounds and human actors.

The *Jihadi* in Audiovisuality

While the constellations described above are applicable to many instances of human interaction, this collection sheds light on the specificities of *jihadi audiovisuallities*. In order to identify the inherent particularities, we draw on Gilbert Ramsay (2015: 55), who suggests that ‘the sum total of all that is “jihadi” does not add up to jihad, but rather to its man-made allegory’. Li (2020: 108) further helps to clarify this point: ‘what requires understanding is not jihad’s “Islamicness” or lack thereof, but rather how the jihad performed the work of universalism, of processing difference.’ Following this assertion, the concept of *jihadi audiovisuality* enables us to distinguish and examine the ways in which people identify visual and auditory practices and experiences as an expression of jihad. Jihadi audiovisuality in our sense encompasses how people’s auditory and visual practices and experiences are productive of and produced by: the visualisation and sonification of contemporary forms of jihadi engagement; the set of ideas, norms and values transmitted through audiovisual media; the processes of production, distribution, collection and consumption of jihadi audiovisual content; the discursive and non-discursive practices of processing and engaging with them; and ‘even the way in which information is ordered and structured by the Web’ (Ramsay 2015: 77). These material and immaterial configurations are, significantly, not inherently bound to any specific region, culture or even religion, although jihadi ideologies and some of their critics routinely argue otherwise. On the contrary: rephrasing Deborah Poole (1997: 8–10), we suggest that the affective potency of *Jihadi Audiovisuality and its Entanglements* is contingent upon an audiovisual economy that interrelates people in disparate places who may not share a common language, geographical origin or class, but nonetheless share a common identification with the Arabic nisba *jihādī* or the active participle *mujāhid* as an allegory that helps to relate their social identities, practices and experiences to a wider collective.

In the case of Islamic State, for example, it could be argued that – at least in the territories under its command – the group managed to shape and

control a distinct body public not only by exerting a range of authoritative measures, but also through its creation of a soundscape comprising a range of sonic events. Calls to prayer sung by members of the *hisba* forces, the public performance of *anāshīd*, the screams of victims of atrocious violence and people shouting to warn others against immediate aerial bombardments can all be considered part of these sonic events – all the more effective in combination with the simultaneous silencing of certain musical instruments, musicians, church bells, and versions of *adhān* different from jihadi variants of the Muslim call to prayer. Add to this the sounds of drones, fighter jets, weapons, and the various other ‘belliphonic’ (Daughtry 2015) expressions brought about by the war between IS and its opponents, and the transformation of the soundscape becomes overwhelming. In many instances, members of IS have cited such sonic events as evidence of the group’s existence and power. Considering the sound of an American fighter jet to be equally integral to this soundscape as the voice of Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī, they construct an ontological framework within which all of these sounds are inherently bound to the *mujāhidīn*’s modes of creating knowledge and meaning – hence jihadi by their very nature.

The establishment of a scopic regime as part of jihadi audiovisuality can be described in a very similar way. Many of the examples mentioned above also rely on visual components – as well as haptic, olfactory and other sensual stimuli. Members of jihadi forces who regulate public life on the ground are usually identifiable from their demeanour and uniforms, while public performances of *anāshīd* are just as carefully stage-managed, as are public corporal punishments or burnings of destroyed musical instruments. The remains of civilian houses clouded in black smoke are as prominent in the visual field as the fighter jets (and sometimes drones) that caused such devastation. Further features of the scenery include the remnants of obliterated shrines, mausoleums and graveyards, as well as the military defences, bureaucratic buildings and IS media kiosks – most of which bear the black banner that is the jihadi totem. When audiovisual representations of these and similar scenes are circulated, they not only provide evidence that jihadi life is a reality, but also testify to the power of jihadi actors to impose upon audiences their particular interpretation of what is to be seen and heard. Moreover, the camera’s gaze (and the ways in which it is sculpted in post-production) shapes

the link between the sensations experienced by *mujāhidīn* and the mediations they encounter. It manifests their visual experiences and relates the persons depicted to their ideology, actions, cultural practices, experiences and modes of creating knowledge and meaning, all of which are rendered jihadi.

The same argument can be made with reference to (moving) images appropriated from a range of TV and film productions (see Zywiets and Beese, Chapter 4). These are not only incorporated to save jihadi groups from having to stage monumental battles at great expense. They fulfil an important function, because they evoke well-known ways of how global audiences perceive historical or contemporary events, developments and people. Dislodged from their original context and transposed into jihadi audiovisuality, they offer an audiovisual experience that is filtered through specific lenses toned by jihadi ideology. A similar effect also feeds into a very simple, yet powerful intermingling of several modalities in the use of the epigraphy and/or recitation of the *shahāda*, that is, the Muslim profession of faith, as the audiovisual opening of videos. Jihadi actors use this device to instil in the audience a sense that they participate in a sanctified event created and performed by ‘true’, authentic Muslims to perform and enact ‘true’, authentic Islam. This marks the video as not only conforming to but also (re)asserting the self-evident, natural superiority of divine ordinances and those who serve them – the *mujāhidīn*. Using the *shahāda* as an integral element of jihadi audiovisuality is thereby a means to exert classificatory authority, the power to define social order, and a source of aesthetic self-legitimation.

Although the work done by jihadi ideologues and their supporters to shape jihadi audiovisuality relies on the production, appropriation and dissemination of various audiovisual elements, it does not end with the manifold forms of incorporation traced by several contributors to this volume. Rather, it includes the possibility of exerting authority by (re-)classifying any image or sound within the jihadi ideological framework, for example by assigning it a position within binary categories such as *ḥarām/ḥalāl* or *kuffār/mu’minīn*.

Entanglements and the Performativity of Images and Sounds

As outlined above, our title *Jihadi Audiovisuality and its Entanglements* is to be understood in a double sense. First, we locate audiovisual media productions and their dissemination by jihadi groups and movements within a field

of global media aesthetics and practices with culturally distinct manifestations. This helps us to identify the ways in which jihadi actors incorporate various artefacts and techniques of material and immaterial culture, re-codify them, and appropriate them to articulate their cause. Practices of cultural and aesthetic appropriation have been productive lenses with which to analyse IS's use of the orange prison jumpsuit as rhetorical resistance (Richey and Edwards 2019) or the co-option of constitutional discourses for legitimising the state project of IS (Bruscella and Bisel 2019). With their analytical intervention, Zywiets and Beese (Chapter 4) describe three different types of interpretive, practical-technological and expressive appropriation that they apply to IS media output to '(en-)counter the Islamic State'. Refining this theoretical underpinning, Günther (Chapter 6) examines the specific format of narratives of conversion to show how key concepts of Islamic intellectual history are appropriated to attract followers. Similarly, *anāshīd* have been appropriated by IS supporters in order to, for example, legitimise the claim for a 'righteous' caliphate, as Dick and Fuhrmann (Chapter 12) show.

Secondly, we consider cultural and aesthetic expressions that evolve in response to jihadi media output as part of the wider field of jihadi audiovisuality. This includes examining how various people use aural and visual means to engage with jihadi expressions in multiple acoustic, visual and audiovisual forms to subvert or resist jihadi audiovisuality. Again, the different sonic and visual appropriations circulated in various – mainly digital – contexts, using techniques like memes, humour or re-enactments, are discussed in several contributions to this volume. The producers of these contestations range from Muslim activists and religious authorities (Pfeifer et al., Chapter 8) to anonymous authors of digital content (Dick and Fuhrmann, Chapter 12) and artists or publicly-funded social workers and former supporters of jihadi groups and movements (Ali et al., Chapter 9). These contributions also highlight and problematise researchers' institutional entanglements – for example, in educational programmes to counter radicalisation or in work intended to undermine the effectiveness of IS's visual output. De Koning et al. (Chapter 1) reflect on how their own roles and performances are part of public discourses about 'jihadism' and demonstrate their entanglements with jihadi audiovisuality as researchers.

In short, the contributions point to the logics and techniques of different

forms of appropriation and the linkages forged by jihadi audiovisuality that connect supporters, religious leaders, civil society actors, artists, activists, journalists and researchers. Mimesis, memetics, re-enactment, camouflage and humour are just a few of the strategies various actors use to engage with, subvert, or resist. We propose framing this setting as *Jihadi Audiovisuality and its Entanglements*: as a communicative web that is shaped by socio-political contexts, by the ways in which actors deploy practices of appropriation, media technologies and rhetorical strategies and by the interaction of multi-sensory stimuli.

Examining audiovisual artefacts as ‘products’ of media practices (Dang-Anh et al. 2017; Schüttpelz 2006), we consider the performativity of images and sounds that are at play in practices of engagement with jihadi images and sounds. This performativity is at least twofold: Pfeifer et al. (Chapter 8) describe the embodied and performative practices involved in the production of re-enactments of IS decapitation videos as one link in a media chain that connects embodied experiences of spectatorship to the production of new aesthetic forms. Building on Jeffrey Juris’s (2005) concept of the ‘performativity of violence’, Krona (Chapter 5) combines practical-instrumental dimensions with symbolic-expressive characteristics to shift from a focus on the embodied practices towards the representational interpretation of the performative violent act. In his view, the violent acts in the decapitation videos are re-mediated and re-contextualised by visual means. Taken together, the two approaches to the performativity of the visual and the bodily and performative engagement inherent in audiovisual practices recognise the ‘mutual reflection between objects, images and bodies’ (Bolt 2004: 8).

Organisation of the Book

While our considerations are based on an approach that emphasises the complex interweavings of multi-sensory stimuli and receptions, many of the contributions to this volume are based upon examples that focus on specific auditory or visual processes. We have therefore structured the book into four thematic sections: (A) Methodological and Ethical Challenges of Empirically Grounded Research on Jihadism; (B) Visualising Jihadi Ideology and Action; (C) Appropriating and Contesting Jihadi Audiovisuality; and (D) *anāshīd*: Soundscapes of Religio-Political Experience.

The contributions in section A are devoted to the ethical and methodological challenges of doing empirically based and ethnographic research in the highly contested and politicised field of jihadi social media environments involving different groups of people engaged in and with these environments. The contributions firstly draw attention to how the position of the researcher in relation to research ethics and security has become a major issue of debate (Fadil et al. 2019). Secondly, they address the new questions that arise regarding research design and strategies, data management and legal aspects when doing digital research in this field. Thirdly, the chapters in this section review how the internet, particularly social media and messenger services, have proven to be fruitful ground for new and experimental research into the workings of online jihadi networks.

Contributions in section B focus on the ways in which jihadi ideologies, groups and movements use audiovisual media to articulate their cause. Groups such as IS have explicitly announced that media work is akin to jihad on the battlefield, and therefore have invested heavily in the cinematic sophistication and aesthetic quality of their communicative productions by employing skilled professionals. They appropriate the practices and conventions of global media production and adapt formats and aesthetic trends from television, film and popular culture. Contributions to this section employ theoretical and methodological approaches from film studies, media studies, Islamic studies and the sociology of religion to examine the visual rhetoric, graphic and cinematic design principles, and the techniques of meaning construction used in jihadi videos and imagery.

Contributions in section C are concerned with the practices through which activists and artists appropriate jihadi videos, images and sounds to defy, resist or oppose jihadi ideology and action. The chapters focus on examples of civil society commitment and artistic creativity that engage with and react to jihadi image, video and sound production. The different forms of engagement with jihadi material work as a form of cultural resistance, and they shed light on the interlinkages between different groups of actors opposed to jihadi movements. These groups nonetheless differ in the narratives and discourses they relate to and the digital publics they engage with. Ultimately, this section also points to the dynamic interrelations between

anti-Muslim and militant Islamist discourses and strategies (see Ebner 2017), with a focus on audiovisuality.

Section D brings together contributions that examine the often understated but highly significant aural dimension of jihadi mediations. The contributions focus on a cappella hymns (Arab. *anāshīd*), which comprise a widespread genre of cultural and religious expression by Muslim actors, ranging from Sufi chants to Indonesian Pop-*anāshīd*. The chapters delineate the compositional conventions used in jihadi *anāshīd* as well as the ways in which they reflect pre-Islamic traditions of music, song and poetry. This also reveals how *anāshīd* tie in with extra-textual characteristics such as rhythm, vocal timbre and melodies, which are influenced by nationalist songs, military marches and global pop culture. They thereby help to forge a connection between the listeners and the songs – even before the lyrics are considered. Contributions to this section draw on theoretical and methodological approaches from musicology, ethnomusicology, Islamic studies and cultural studies in order to better understand the musical and poetic structure of *anāshīd*, as well as the religious, cultural and social contexts within which these chants and corresponding performative practices are embedded.

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