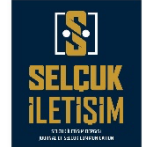


# Ummah as an Imagined Community: How Islamic State Built a Nation?\*

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## ABSTRACT

IS (Islamic State), which rose to the top of the global agenda with the capture of Mosul in 2014, maintained this position for a long time. The organisation's communication strategy and pragmatic policies were effective in its rapid rise in a short period of time. Foreign fighters from all over the world flocked to Iraq and Syria to join IS, which took over the leadership of the "Global Jihad" with its propaganda activities. After the declaration of the "caliphate", the organisation focused on the goal of statehood and had to create a nation out of its members with different languages, cultures and ethnic identities. In this context, the study focuses on the discourse of "ummah" in Konstantiniyye, a Turkish-language publication of IS. In this study, which employs Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, all occurrences of the word "ummah" in the issues of Konstantiniyye magazine were scanned. Direct quotations from religious texts such as the Qur'an and Hadith, as well as usages that do not involve a discursive construction, were excluded from the analysis. According to the findings of the study, IS constructed the "ummah" in two ways: a community limited to its own members and sympathizers, and a military unit fighting together against the enemy. By doing so, the organisation has created, albeit temporarily, a nation out of a mass that cannot be united on the basis of language, ethnic identity or culture; it has positioned itself as the protector of Islam; it has united and motivated its members, who have the potential to conflict with each other, against a common enemy.

**Keywords:** Islamic State, propaganda, ummah, imagined communities, nation building

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# Hayali Bir Cemaat Olarak Ümmet: İŞİD Nasıl Ulus İnşa Etti?\*

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## ÖZ

2014 yılında Musul'u ele geçirerek dünya gündeminin zirvesine oturan İŞİD (Irak Şam İslam Devleti), uzunca bir süre bu konumunu korumuştur. Örgütün kısa sürede hızla yükselişinde izlediği pragmatist siyaset kadar yürüttüğü iletişim stratejisi de etkili olmuştur. Yürüttüğü propaganda faaliyetleriyle "küresel cihat"ın liderliğini ele geçiren İŞİD'e katılmak için dünyanın dört bir yanından yabancı savaşçı Irak ve Suriye'ye akın etmiştir. Hilafet ilanı sonrası devletleşme hedefine giderek daha fazla odaklanan örgüt için farklı dil, kültür ve etnik kimliklere sahip üyelerinden ortak bir ulus yaratma zorunluluğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma İŞİD'e ait Türkçe bir yayın olan Konstantiniyye dergisindeki "ümmet" söylemine odaklanmaktadır. Foucaultcu söylem analizinin kullanıldığı bu çalışmada Konstantiniyye dergisinin tüm sayılarındaki "ümmet" kelimeleri taranmış, ayet ve hadis gibi doğrudan alıntılar ve söylemsel bir inşa içermeyen kullanımlar analizin dışında bırakılmıştır. Çalışmada elde edilen bulgulara göre İŞİD, incelenen metinlerde "ümmet"i kendi üye ve sempatizanlarıyla sınırlı bir topluluk ve düşmana karşı birlikte mücadele eden askeri bir birlik olmak üzere iki biçimde inşa etmiştir. "Ümmet" in bu şekilde inşa edilmesiyle örgüt, bir dil, etnik kimlik yahut kültür üzerinden birleştirilmesi mümkün olmayan bir kitleden geçici de olsa bir ulus meydana getirmiş, kendisini İslam'ın koruyucusu pozisyonuna yerleştirmiş, birbiriyle çatışma potansiyeli barındıran üyelerini ortak bir düşmana karşı birleştirmiş ve onları motive etmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İŞİD, propaganda, ümmet, hayali cemaatler, ulus inşası

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## INTRODUCTION

With its origins dating back to the 90s, IS (Islamic State) first expanded its sphere of influence from Iraq to Syria after the Arab Spring spread to Syria, and then gained a global character by declaring a caliphate. Especially in 2014, the organisation captured Mosul with live footage broadcasted by the Western media and became the world's agenda, and maintained this position for a long time by turning its sensational terrorist acts into professional media outputs. IS has carried out highly professional propaganda activities in order to maintain its position at the top of the global agenda, recruit new members, take over the leadership of the "Global Jihad" from Al-Qaeda and intimidate its enemies. New media tools have a central place in the organisation's propaganda strategy. The importance it attaches to digital propaganda has become one of the features that characterise the organisation over time, which is why many researchers have used terms such as "Digital Caliphate", "Virtual Caliphate", "Cyber Caliphate" to describe the organisation.

Online magazines such as Dabiq, Rumiya and Konstantiniyye are among the propaganda activities carried out by the organisation through new media tools. Konstantiniyye magazine, which will be analysed in this study, started to be published in 2015. The publication language of the magazine, which has appeared in a total of 7 issues, is Turkish. Aimed at a Turkish-speaking audience, the magazine states that Istanbul has not been "conquered" in the true sense of the word and that one of the aims of the organisation is to achieve this "conquest". In addition to issues related to Turkey, the magazine also covers regional and global actions carried out by the IS (Şenol et al., 2016). Emphasising that the Konstantiniyye magazine professionally employs basic propaganda techniques, Türkoğlu (2017) summarises the purpose of the magazine as justifying the ideology of IS, legitimising its actions and revealing its goals.

In this study, which examines the discourse of 'umma' in Konstantiniyye magazine, Benedict Anderson's concept of 'imagined communities' used to define nations is taken as the centre. IS is known to have members from many different countries. At the peak of its power in 2015, the organisation hosted approximately 30 thousand fighters from at least 85 countries (Benmelech and Klor, 2018). Although IS benefits from advantages such as money, technical knowledge and logistical support provided by its foreign fighters, such diversity also has challenging dimensions for the organization.

Especially with the declaration of the caliphate, the organisation became more and more 'state-like' and had to create a nation for this new "state". This study aims to reveal how IS, which includes members from different geographical areas, with different cultures and ethnic identities, speaking different languages, utilises the concept of 'ummah' in nation building. In the first part of the study, the IS organisation and its transformations from the 90s, when it found its origins, to the present day will be examined, and in the second part, the communication strategy of the organisation will be discussed. In the third part of the study, the concept of imagined communities and its relationship with nation building will be explained. In the application part of the study, the discourse of 'ummah' in Konstantiniyye magazine will be subjected to discourse analysis.

### **FROM ORGANISATION TO THE "STATE": IS**

The origins of IS were laid by the Jordanian foreign fighter Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Zarqawi, who travelled to Afghanistan in the 90s like many other foreign fighters and was arrested when he returned to his homeland Jordan, was released in 1999 and went to Afghanistan again. After the US ousted the Taliban from power in 2001, Zarqawi left and travelled first to Iran and then to Iraq (Byman, 2016). Here, Zarqawi, who carried out activities with his organisation called Tawheed and Jihad Jamaat, wanted to move his organisation to the position of the protector of Iraqi Sunnis by taking advantage of the chaos that emerged after the US occupation (Lister, 2014), and in a short time, he brought it to an important position among the anti-American Sunni resistance groups (Acun, 2014).

In 2004, Zarqawi pledged allegiance to Al-Qaida and its leader Osama bin Laden, and the name of the organisation was changed to Al-Qaeda Between Two Rivers, commonly known as Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Following his allegiance to Al-Qaeda, Zarqawi received many economic and logistical benefits, paving the way for new recruits to the organisation (Zelin, 2014). Despite this allegiance, the relationship between Al-Qaeda headquarters and Zarqawi has been strained due to a number of religious and strategic disagreements. AQI's attacks on Shia civilians were particularly prominent among these disagreements (Lister, 2014). Al-Qaeda's headquarters had many secret correspondences with Zarqawi to prevent such attacks (Al-'Ubaydi et al., 2014). Nevertheless, Zarqawi did not heed Osama bin Laden and Zawahiri's calls to stop the attacks against Shiites and turn the barrel towards the West, and continued to target Shiites (Gerges, 2014). The Al-Qaeda-Zarqawi relationship, shaped by tensions that

were constantly trying to be suppressed, developed largely in Zarqawi's favour to the detriment of the Al-Qaeda centre. Although Zarqawi pledged allegiance to Al-Qaeda and benefited from the organisation's global popularity and its many financial and logistical opportunities, he pursued his own agenda. On the other hand, Al-Qaeda, which aimed to dominate the 'Iraqi Jihad', suffered an image loss due to the actions of first Al-Qaeda in Iraq and then the Islamic State of Iraq, which were contrary to its policy.

Al-Qaeda in Iraq, which gradually increased its power in the period until 2006, had the support of many Sunnis in the region in accordance with Zarqawi's plan. One of the most important reasons for this support is the exclusion of Iraqi Sunnis from the political sphere both during the American-led Iraqi Interim Government and the subsequent Nouri al-Maliki government (Laub, 2016). After Zarqawi was killed by the US in 2006, Abu Hamza al-Muhajir became the leader of the organisation, which gradually started to lose power, and then the name of the organisation was changed to the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) and Abu Omar al-Baghdadi was appointed as its leader. Especially after 2007, America's change in Iraq policy with David Patreus and the establishment of Sahwa Councils to fight against ISI by arming some Iraqi Sunni tribes led to the rapid weakening of the organisation (Acun, 2014). According to al-Tamimi (2014), one of the important factors that led to the establishment of the Sahwa Councils was the aggressive attitude of the ISI towards the local Arab tribes in the process.

By 2010, ISI had lost most of its senior leaders (Hashim, 2014), and after the death of Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi took over (Acun, 2014). The organisation, which continued to lose power until 2011, regained power after the Maliki government excluded Sunnis from the political sphere again following the American withdrawal from Iraq (Gürler and Özdemir, 2014), and increased its area of activity with the spread of the Arab Spring to Syria. One of the reasons that strengthened the organisation in both Iraq and Syria was the policies of Shiite and Alawite governments towards Sunnis in both countries. In particular, the objections of Iraqi Sunnis against the government were not taken into consideration by the US, and Sunnis living in the region were pushed into the arms of ISI in a sense. For this reason, many Sunnis in both Iraq and Syria joined the ranks of the IS, despite the fact that they did not share the same ideology and agenda with the organisation (Gerges, 2014).

The organisation's ties with al-Qaeda came to a breaking point in April 2013 when Baghdadi changed the name of the Islamic State of Iraq to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) and expanded the organisation to include Syria. In the same statement, Baghdadi also announced the dissolution of Jabhat al-Nusrah; in response, Jabhat al-Nusrah leader Abu Muhammad al-Jawlani, who released an audio recording in response to this, objected to this and reiterated his loyalty to Zawahiri. In response, Zawahiri released an audio recording in which he told ISIS to return to Iraq, leaving the Syrian field to Jabhat al-Nusrah, but Baghdadi opposed this order and completely severed his ties with Al-Qaeda (Zelin, 2014).

The policy pursued by the Assad regime was also influential in IS' rise to power in Syria. According to Byman (2016), the Assad regime, which arrested tens of thousands of opponents for peaceful demonstrations, released many jihadists, militarily targeted the moderate Islamist opposition while turning a blind eye to the statehood of IS, and pursued a policy that can be summarised as "either Assad or IS". Considering both the war it waged against the Syrian opposition, which did not pledge allegiance to it, and the terrorist acts it carried out inside and outside the country, it can be said that IS acted in line with this policy.

On the first day of Ramadan 2014, in an audio recording released by its spokesperson Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, the organisation announced that it had changed its name to the Islamic State, declared a caliphate and called on all Muslims to pledge allegiance to "Caliph" Al-Baghdadi ("ISIS Declares 'Caliphate'", 2014). With its declaration of caliphate, IS presented itself as the 'only legitimate jihadi movement' on earth (Liang, 2015). In 2015, the organisation reached its largest borders in Iraq and Syria (Karklis and Meko, 2017), and in this period, it experienced its golden age with the size of the areas it controlled in Iraq and Syria, the allegiances it collected from some jihadi organisations in different geographical areas, and the place it occupied on the international agenda.

One of the factors that contributed to the growth of IS has been the wrong policies in the fight against the organisation. According to Byman (2016), the perception of IS as a group of fanatics has led to a lack of understanding of the organisation's highly pragmatic strategies and a failure to formulate the right policies against it. IS has differentiated itself from many other organisations, particularly Al-Qaeda, by pursuing increasingly pragmatic strategies, especially as the influence of former Baathists

within its ranks has increased. The fact that the majority of the organisation's attacks took place in oil regions (Burch and Pizzi, 2022) is noteworthy in this sense. Another point that differentiates the organisation from Al-Qaeda is its targets. While Al-Qaeda aimed to change Western policies towards Muslims through its actions, IS' main goal was to establish a state and caliphate (Novenario, 2016). Being aware of the necessity of financial power to realise its goal of statehood, IS, unlike Al-Qaeda, has developed many different sources of income, from underground resources to agriculture, from tax collection to antiquities black market, instead of relying on voluntary donations. In fact, by September 2014, the daily earnings of the organisation reached approximately 2 million USD (Lister, 2014). Among the reasons for IS' rise to power is an ironic situation regarding the sociology of the organisation. According to Gerges (2014), unlike the two jihadist waves of the 80s and 90s, IS' core cadre is composed of provincial and uneducated people, making it easier for the organisation to win over disenfranchised poor Sunnis.

After 2015, IS rapidly lost power, first through the air strikes carried out by the US-led coalition and then through the operations carried out by Turkey in the border region, losing the territories it held one by one. The organisation lost 43 of its founders and many commanders in the period between 2017-2019, including the "Caliph" Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Afterwards, Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi was appointed as the leader of the organisation (Al-Hashimi, 2020). Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi and two subsequent leaders were killed in 2022 and 2023, and Abu Hafs al-Hashimi al-Qurashi has been the leader of the organisation since the summer of 2023. The organisation, which has been restructuring after the devastation it has experienced, is trying to create space for itself by causing chaos in the region through terrorist acts, as in the past, instead of seizing new lands and establishing dominance as in the bright days of the "caliphate" (Özdemir, 2019).

## COMMUNICATION STRATEGY OF IS

IS has been at the top of the global agenda for a long time not only because of its actions but also because of its communication strategy. By using both new media tools and traditional media effectively, the organisation has created an IS brand that almost the whole world is aware of. IS' use of digital media in particular is highly professional and strategic and has played a key role in the rapid

growth of the organisation. Atwan (2015) emphasises that IS would not have grown as much as it has without digital technologies and therefore calls the organisation a “Digital Caliphate”.

According to Farwell (2014), IS' communication strategy aims to convince Muslims that it is their duty to fight to revive the caliphate. The organisation has succeeded in recruiting many people living in both Islamic countries and Western states, especially through its propaganda activities on social media. However, IS has used social media not only to recruit new members but also to create an ideological stance that aims to create fear (Awan, 2017). According to Ayhan and Çifçi (2018), IS aims to recruit new members to the organisation, motivate its members, mobilise the target audience to carry out terrorist acts, and put the organisation at the top of the global agenda through propaganda activities. Gartenstein-Ross et al. (2016) identified 9 narratives in ISIS propaganda:

- 1) Winner's message: Projecting an image of strength and concealing weaknesses.
- 2) Discrediting the competition: Undercutting the legitimacy of rival jihadist groups, including al-Qaeda and the Taliban.
- 3) The illegitimacy of political Islamists: Accusing political Islamist groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, of possessing a deviant methodology.
- 4) Sowing discord within enemy ranks: Spreading misinformation in an effort to highlight, exacerbate, or create fissures within the ranks of rival groups.
- 5) Exploiting sectarian tensions: Fueling conflict between Sunni and Shia, often with the intent of forcing Sunnis to seek IS' protection.
- 6) The caliphate as an Islamic utopia: Presenting the caliphate as a pious, harmonious, and thriving Islamic state.
- 7) Jihadist adventure and camaraderie: Glorifying jihad as an opportunity for brotherhood and excitement.
- 8) Driving a wedge between Muslims and the West: Inflaming tensions between Muslims living in the West and their societies in order to galvanise Muslims to support the caliphate.
- 9) Religious obligation to join the caliphate: Invoking religious doctrine to pressure Muslims to align with the caliphate (p. 5).



Although digital technologies play a vital role in IS' communication strategy, the organisation has distributed its media products not only over the Internet but also in print or on CDs, DVDs and USBs through the media outlets it has established in the regions it controls (Zelin, 2015). The organisation circulates the content it produces through media outlets such as Al-Hayat Media Centre, Al-Furqan, Al-I'tisam and Al-Ajnad media outlets and Amaq News Agency on social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Youtube and Ask.fm. Although IS continues to produce propaganda through its own channels, it relies on Western media organisations to disseminate its messages to large masses. Mainstream media outlets take the organisation's content from these platforms and publish it, thereby enabling it to reach wider audiences (Williams, 2016). In addition, Western media outlets' coverage of IS has also strengthened the narrative developed by the organisation (Courty et al., 2019).

There is a direct correlation between IS' success in the field and the amount of propaganda activities it carries out. Zelin (2015) conducted a study in 2015, when IS reached its maximum power, and found that the organisation produced an average of 18 media outputs on a daily basis. In a longer study conducted in the same year, Winter (2015) found that the organisation published an average of 38.2 propaganda activities per day. In another study conducted in 2018, Winter (2018) emphasised that as the organisation lost power, the productivity of its media units gradually decreased. The devastation it experienced affected the organisation's media strategy along with the number of propaganda activities. The organisation's media, which mostly covered its successive victories in Iraq and Syria during its period of strength, publishes publications that prepare its followers for a long war in the new period (Munoz, 2018).

## IMAGINED COMMUNITIES

The idea of nation, whose influence increased after the American and French revolutions, has been one of the most fundamental elements that gave the modern world its political, sociological and cultural character. Although thinkers such as Wallerstein, Gellner and Anderson offer different explanations about the dynamics that triggered the nation and nationalism in this period, they generally agree that nations are constructed. For example, according to Wallerstein (1987), who states that states preceded nations in the historical process, "it is debatable how deep a root 'nation' as a communal sentiment took before the actual creation of the state" (p. 384).

Gellner (1983) emphasises that although belonging to a nation is not an innate characteristic, it has become so in the time in which we live. According to him, both the nation and the state have developed independently of each other, and just as the nation has no influence on the formation of the state, some nations have developed without the help of their states. When it comes to the relationship between nations and nationalism, Gellner, who talks about a strong relationship between the two phenomena, thinks that it is not nations that create nationalism, but on the contrary, it is nationalism that creates the nation.

In Anderson's (2006) ideas on nation and nationalism, the concept of 'imagined communities' is central. Anderson, defines the nation as 'an imagined political community'. According to him, all communities are imaginary, except for the communities living in primitive villages where face-to-face communication is at the centre. The following evaluations made by Anderson (2006) about nations will shed light on the next sections of the study:

- It (nation) is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.
- The nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind.
- It is imagined as sovereign because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm.
- Finally, it is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship (pp. 6-7).

## RESEARCH

### Methodology

This study aims to reveal how IS, which includes members from different countries, with different cultures and ethnic identities, speaking different languages, utilises the concept of 'ummah' in nation building. For this purpose, Foucauldian Discourse Analysis technique was used in this study.

Discourse can be defined simply as “the ways in which linguistic practices are used” (Karaduman, 2017, p. 33). In discourse analysis, where the relationship between the text and the context that creates it is examined, the text itself is seen as a discourse (Türkdoğan and Gökçe, 2015). In general, discourse analysis, according to Willig (1999), examines how objects are constructed through the use of language. Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, on the other hand, “is concerned with the way in which discourses shape our social worlds and personal experiences” (Budds et al., 2017, p. 2). Foucault, who approaches discourse not only in its theoretical dimension but also as a social practice, thinks that discourse produces not only knowledge but also power. (Demir Güneş, 2013).

The object of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis can be a text, but anything that carries meaning can also be subjected to analysis (Arkonaç, 2017). Willig (2013) also states that any symbolic system can be the subject of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis. In this study, in order to conduct a more systematic analysis, Willig’s six-stage Foucauldian Discourse Analysis model will be used. These six stages are as follows (Willig, 2013):

#### Stage 1: Discursive constructions

In this stage, where the construction of the discursive object in the text is analysed, the discursive objects identified according to the research question are highlighted. Here, not only the discursive object itself but also the expressions that refer to it are considered.

#### Stage 2: Discourses

This stage examines the differences between constructions and analyses the discursive object within the wider discourses in which it is used.

#### Stage 3: Action orientation

This stage involves analysing the discursive contexts where the object's different constructions are used.

#### Stage 4: Positionings

This stage focuses on how the discourses position the subject.

#### Stage 5: Practice

This stage focuses on the relationship between discourse and practice.

#### Stage 6: Subjectivity

This stage focuses on the relationship between discourse and subjectivity, exploring what can be felt, thought and experienced from different subject positions.

The magazine Konstantiniyye, which is the subject of analysis in this study, was published in a total of seven issues during 2015 and 2016. The term 'ummah' was scanned across all issues of the magazine, which is published in Turkish. Direct quotations from religious texts such as the Qur'an and Hadith, as well as usages that do not involve a discursive construction, were excluded from the analysis.

### Findings

#### Stage 1: Discursive constructions

In the texts analysed, the ummah is constructed as something that is 'undeterred', 'fertile', 'undefeated' even in the face of difficulties, 'does not forget' what happened to it in the past, is 'subject to a unifying "imam"', is "unlike the infidels" and is at war with them as a whole. As these references point out, the ummah constructed in the text is a unity that shares the same feelings, has the same friends and enemies, and fights as a whole.

#### Stage 2: Discourses

In the texts analysed, the ummah is constructed in two forms: as a community limited to IS members and sympathisers, and as a military unit fighting together against the enemy. When both constructions are analysed within wider discursive structures, it becomes clear that the religious-political discourse and the confrontational-military discourse dominate the texts.

##### a-Religious-political discourses

The religious discourses used by IS, which bases its legitimacy on religion, are highly political, and the political discourses it uses also refer to religious references. For this reason, religious discourses and political discourses in the texts were analysed together. Religious-political discourse is the most common type of discourse in the texts analysed. The construction of the addressed 'ummah' as a community limited to IS members and sympathisers was also achieved through the use of religious-

political discourse. For example, in the first issue of the magazine, the ummah is used as a community that does not give up despite being tested with various difficulties and is rewarded by Allah with a state as a result:

Allah has tested this ummah. This ummah did not abandon patience and endeavour in this test. They stayed away from shirk and polytheists. They endured all the oppression and torture of the Taghut. They lost thousands of martyrs, but they did not lose their determination on this path and deserved Allah's help. And Allah made them dominant in the earth. He turned their fear into confidence. He granted them a caliphate and a state in accordance with the tradition of the Prophethood (Konstantiniyye, 2015a).

The religious-political discourse also includes some warnings to the 'ummah', which is limited to IS members and sympathisers. The organisation, which has militants adhering to various radical interpretations of Islam and has even experienced internal conflicts for this reason, presents Baghdadi as a unifying figure and decision-maker by reminding the 'command of Allah and His Messenger' in order to prevent possible divisions:

In every opportunity that will ensure the unity of the Ummah, abandoning disagreement and going to the opinion of the Imam of the Muslims is one of the factors that will unite Muslims on one side.... Especially in war and in a newly established state, this factor gains a much more distinct meaning. The command of Allah and His Messenger is to follow the imam in times of dispute (Konstantiniyye, 2015b).

In the texts, the negativities that happened to the "ummah" such as rape, torture and captivity were reminded, all of these were attributed to the absence of a unifying leader - in the words of the organization, the "Commander/Imam of the Believers" - and thus the importance of the organization and its leader for the "ummah" was emphasized:

After a long time, Allah relieved the suffering of the ummah and gathered them around an imam. This ummah remembers very well the days it spent without an imam. It knows very well what happened. We have not forgotten, we will not forget, the defiled chastity, the cries of our sisters rising from prisons, the lives wasted in dungeons, our brothers who died under torture (Konstantiniyye, 2015b).

By limiting the "ummah" to its own members and sympathisers through its religious-political discourse, the organisation has directly equated Islam with its own actions. In this way, the organisation gives the message that everyone who opposes it is against Islam:

After the infiltration of the Taghut into the Islamic Ummah, many of the rules of Islam lost their practicality in the lives of Muslims.... The Islamic State is a living example of Islam in practice. Those who are dissatisfied with the actions and deeds of the Islamic State are, in fact, those who are dissatisfied with the legal rules of Islam (Konstantiniyye, 2016a).

#### b-Confrontational-military discourses

In the texts examined, the confrontational-military discourse was frequently used for purposes such as identifying the "other" of the organization, its enemies, and motivating the militants of the organization for the ongoing war. However, it is also observed that the confrontational-military discourse is sometimes supported by religious-political discourse. For example, with the confrontational-military discourse used in the first issue of the magazine, IS defined Jews and Christians as enemies and placed itself as the representative of Islam and Muslims with the ummah discourse it developed here. Again in the same text, with the use of religious-political discourse, the 'ummah' is limited to the members and sympathisers of the organisation:

Remember, O Jews! Remember, O Crusaders! It is in blood that our ummah comes to life. Every time our blood is shed, we become stronger and more powerful. If you kill one of us, dozens of others will come to life with his blood... The ummah of jihad and istishhad will not be defeated! They are not dead. They have been given life. We have won, O crusaders, and we have returned the caliphate by the grace of Allah alone (Konstantiniyye, 2015a).

Historical narratives were also utilised in the construction of the confrontational-military discourses developed in the texts. The organisation presents the attacks carried out against it by the coalition forces as an unprecedented Muslim-non-Muslim war unprecedented in history, going beyond the Crusades. With this discourse, the identity of IS' enemies is once again made clear and the militants of the organisation are motivated by saying that their struggle is in the name of Islam and against the enemies of Islam:

Today's war is not just a crusade. This war is the war of all the nations of disbelief against the Islamic Ummah. Never in the history of our Ummah have they gathered against it in such a way as the whole world has gathered against the Muslims in a war today. This war is the war of all infidels against all Muslims (Konstantiniyye, 2016a).

Similarly, IS presents the attacks against it as a fight against the so-called "caliphate" it has established, and limits the "ummah" to its members and sympathisers who are trying to keep the "caliphate" alive:

Inshallah, no matter how much you gather, no matter how many traps you set, no matter what you do, you will not be able to stop the progress of the caliphate. The ummah of Muhammad is fertile (Konstantiniyye, 2015a).

In order to motivate the militants of the organisation, the theme of 'Muslim-Infidel conflict' was frequently used in the texts, and they were reminded that the "ummah" expected from them in this war:

May Allah enable you to do righteous, the best, the most perfect deeds in this month. In this month, be worshippers at night and warriors during the day. In this blessed month, the Islamic Ummah is waiting for you to go to the field and wage jihad, reassure the hearts of the believers and show the disbelievers what they are afraid of. So, revitalise and come to your senses. You are fighting ummahs for the Ummah (Konstantiniyye, 2016b).

### Stage 3: Action orientation

The construction of the ummah as a community limited to IS members and sympathisers through religious-political discourses reflects the desire to ensure unity within the organisation's multinational, multilingual and multicultural structure, thus creating a nation for the new 'state'. The construction of the 'ummah' as a military unit fighting together against the enemy through confrontational-military discourses, on the other hand, points to IS's need to constantly present 'enemies' to a group that contains potential for internal conflict in order to unite them within a dynamic structure and keep them motivated in the ongoing war.

### Stage 4: Positionings

The construction of the 'ummah' as limited to the members and sympathisers of the organisation positions the IS as a subject that decides who belongs to the 'ummah' and who does not.

Such a position also places IS as the sole representative of Islam. This construction also places its members and sympathisers in the position of elite individuals who have entered the 'Islamic ummah' with the IS' approval.

Constructing the 'ummah' as a military unit that fights together against the enemy positions the IS as the protector of Islam, while positioning its members as sacrifices fighting for this cause and all other subjects as anti-Islamic enemies.

#### Stage 5: Practice

Within this subject position, IS has a say over all Muslims as the sole representative and protector of Islam. The organisation has put this discursive position into practice through its actions. Its declaration of a caliphate and the religious obligation of all Muslims to adhere to it, and its slaughter of Muslims who do not adhere to it, declaring them 'apostates', are among the results of this subject position.

IS members and sympathisers, who are altruistic members of the 'ummah' in the subject position in which they are placed, are also members of a new and elite nation. The practice expected of a subject constructed in this way is to 'migrate' to the lands of the 'caliphate' ruled by IS and to fight the 'enemies' to the last drop of blood. This positioning of the subject has also found its fulfilment in practice; tens of thousands of fighters from different parts of the world travelled to Iraq and Syria to join the newly established state and died in the ranks of IS.

The last subject of the analysed texts, 'enemies', refers to everyone who is not affiliated with IS, regardless of their religion, sect or ethnic identity. However, the 'enemies', who are claimed to be against Islam because they are against the IS, include millions of Muslims living both in Iraq and Syria and in different regions of the world. The subjects positioned as 'enemies', especially the Muslims living in the region, have been the open targets of the organisation in practice.

#### Stage 6: Subjectivity

It can be assumed that members and sympathisers of the organisation feel and think many different things due to the subject position they are placed in. For example, the subject who is part of an 'ummah' limited to IS members and sympathisers is likely to feel elite and privileged. It is possible that



Western foreign fighters who do not feel a sense of belonging to the societies in which they grew up may have experienced a sense of belonging, albeit temporary, by joining ISIS. It can be said that fighters who are constantly reminded, through a confrontational-military discourse, that they are fighting for Islam take pride in their work. In the context of its leaders, it is also possible that IS, which can mobilise a large number of members and sympathisers in the subject position it has placed itself in, which can declare anyone it wants an enemy and send tens of thousands of fighters against them, and which is at the top of the world agenda with the actions it carries out, feels extremely powerful and proud. The subjects positioned as 'enemies' in the text, on the other hand, may feel threatened. It is possible to say that especially the 'enemies' who live in the regions where IS is active live in fear because of the position in which they are placed.

## CONCLUSION

IS, which stepped out of Iraq for the first time with the Arab Spring, gained a global character after the declaration of the caliphate and at the same time focused more on the goal of becoming a state. The fact that IS includes members from many different cultures, languages and ethnicities has made it necessary to create a new nation for the "state". IS, which effectively uses media tools and carries out highly professional propaganda activities to achieve its goals, has also resorted to the power of propaganda in nation building. According to the findings of this study, which analyses the discourse of 'ummah' in Konstantiniyye magazine, IS has constructed the 'ummah' in two forms: a community limited to its own members and sympathisers, and a military unit that fights together against the enemy by resorting to religious-political discourse and confrontational-military discourse. By doing so, IS created a nation, albeit temporarily, from a mass that could not be united through a language, ethnic identity or culture, positioned itself as the protector of Islam, united and motivated its members, who had the potential for conflict with each other, against a common enemy.

Given Anderson's assessments of nations as imagined communities, it is possible to say that the "ummah" constructed in the texts analysed is a nation created by IS. Like other imagined political communities, the members of the IS' 'ummah' do not know each other, do not see each other, and even cannot communicate with each other because they do not speak the same language, yet the idea of this imaginary community called 'ummah' continues to live in the minds of each of them. Like all other

nations, the 'ummah' of IS is imagined to be limited and includes only the members and sympathisers of the organisation. As with other nations, the 'ummah' of IS is imagined as sovereign; it has absolute sovereignty over the territories it captured in Iraq and Syria during the relevant time period. The 'ummah' of IS is also imagined as a community because despite the strict hierarchy within the organisation, it is assumed that there is 'Islamic brotherhood' among all members and sympathisers. As a conclusion, IS has constructed a nation for itself with the 'ummah' discourse it developed in the Konstantiniyye magazine, it has tried to overcome a major obstacle to its goal of becoming a state in this way.

## GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Kökenleri 90'lı yıllara dek uzanan IŞİD (Irak Şam İslam Devleti), Arap Baharı'nın Suriye'ye sıçramasıyla önce etki alanını Irak'tan Suriye'ye doğru genişletmiş, ardından hilafet ilan ederek küresel bir nitelik kazanmıştır. Özellikle 2014 yılında Batı medyasının canlı verdiği görüntüler eşliğinde Musul'u ele geçirerek bir anda dünya gündemine oturan örgüt, gerçekleştirdiği sansasyonel terör eylemlerini profesyonel birer medya çıktısına çevirerek bu konumunu uzunca bir süre korumuştur. Örgüt, dünya gündeminin zirvesindeki konumunu korumak, yeni üyeler kazanmak, "Küresel Cihat"ın liderliğini El-Kaide'den devralmak ve düşmanlarına gözdağı vermek gibi amaçlarla son derece profesyonel propaganda faaliyetleri yürütmüştür. Gerek yeni medya araçlarını gerekse geleneksel medyayı etkin bir şekilde kullanan örgüt bu yolla neredeyse bütün insanlığın haberdar olduğu bir IŞİD markası yaratmıştır. IŞİD'in özellikle dijital medyayı kullanımı son derece profesyonel ve stratejik olup, örgütün hızla büyümesinde kilit bir rol oynamıştır. Dijital propagandaya verdiği önem zamanla örgütü karakterize eden özelliklerden biri haline almış; birçok araştırmacı, örgütü tanımlamada "Dijital Hilafet", "Sanal Hilafet", "Siber Hilafet" gibi kavramlara başvurmuştur.

Örgütün yeni medya araçları üzerinden gerçekleştirdiği propaganda faaliyetleri içerisinde Dabiq, Rumiya ve Konstantiniyye gibi çevrimiçi dergiler de yer almaktadır. Çalışmada incelenen olan Konstantiniyye dergisi 2015 yılında yayımlanmaya başlamıştır. Toplamda 7 sayı olarak çıkan derginin yayın dili Türkçedir. Türkçe konuşan kitleye hitap eden dergide İstanbul'un gerçek anlamda "fethedilmediği" ve örgütün amaçlarından birinin bu "fethi" gerçekleştirmek olduğu söylenmektedir. Dergide Türkiye ile ilgili meseleler dışında örgütün gerçekleştirdiği bölgesel ve küresel eylemlere de yer verilmiştir (Şenol vd., 2016). Gerçekleştirdiği çalışmada Konstantiniyye dergisinde temel propaganda

tekniklerine profesyonelce başvurulduğunu vurgulayan Türkoğlu (2017), derginin amacını, IŞİD'in sahip olduğu ideolojiyi temellendirmek, gerçekleştirdiği eylemleri meşrulaştırmak ve hedeflerini ortaya koymak olarak özetlemektedir.

Konstantiniyye dergisinde yer alan "ümme" söyleminin incelendiği bu çalışmada, Benedict Anderson'a (1995) ait "hayali cemaatler" kavramı merkeze alınmıştır. Ulusların da tıpkı ulusçuluk gibi kültürel bir inşaa olduğunu düşünen Anderson, ulusu "hayal edilmiş bir siyasal topluluk" olarak tanımlar. Ona göre yüz yüze iletişimin merkezde olduğu ilkel köylerde yaşayan topluluklar haricindeki bütün cemaatler hayalidir. Bu anlamda uluslar da hayalidir çünkü bir ulusta üyeler birbirlerini hiçbir şekilde tanımayıp, birbirlerinin varlıklarından bile haberdar olmayacakları halde "herbirinin zihninde toplamalarının hayali yaşamaya devam eder" (Anderson, 1995, s. 20). Bilindiği üzere IŞİD, bünyesinde birçok farklı ülkeden mensuplar barındırmaktadır. Örgüt, gücünün zirvesinde olduğu 2015 yılında, en az 85 ülkeden yaklaşık 30 bin savaşçıyı bünyesinde barındırmıştır (Benmelech ve Klor, 2018). Örgüt, bünyesindeki yabancı savaşçıların sağladığı para, teknik bilgi, lojistik destek, Batılı devletlerde saldırı gerçekleştirebilme fırsatı gibi avantajlardan yararlansa da bu denli bir çeşitliliğin örgüt açısından zorlayıcı boyutları da olmuştur. Özellikle hilafet ilanı ile birlikte gittikçe daha da "devletleşen" örgüt için bu yeni "devlet"e bir ulus yaratma zorunluluğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu çalışmada, bünyesinde farklı coğrafyalardan, farklı kültürlerle ve etnik kimliklere sahip, farklı dilleri konuşan üyeler barındıran IŞİD'in ulus inşasında "ümme" kavramından nasıl yararlandığını ortaya koymak amaçlanmaktadır.

Çalışmada bu amaçla Foucaultcu söylem analizine başvurulmuştur. Söylem en basit haliyle, "dilsel pratiklerin kullanılma biçimleri" olarak tanımlanabilir (Karaduman, 2017, s. 33). Metin ile onu var eden bağlam arasındaki ilişkinin incelendiği söylem analizinde, metnin bizzat kendisi bir söylem olarak görülür (Türkdoğan ve Gökçe, 2015). Genel olarak söylem analizi, Willig'e (1999) göre, dilin kullanımıyla nesnelerin nasıl inşa edildiğini inceler. Foucaultcu söylem analizi ise "söylemlerin sosyal dünyalarımızı ve kişisel deneyimlerimizi şekillendirme biçimiyle ilgilenir" (Budds vd., 2017, s.2). Bu çalışma kapsamında da IŞİD'e ait Türkçe bir yayın olan Konstantiniyye dergisinin tüm sayılarındaki "ümme" kelimeleri taranmış, ayet ve hadis gibi doğrudan alıntılar ve söylemsel bir inşaa içermeyen kullanımlar analizin dışında bırakılmıştır.

Çalışmanın sonucuna göre IŞİD, dini-politik söylem ile çatışmacı-askeri söyleme başvurarak "ümme"i kendi üye ve sempatanlarıyla sınırlı bir topluluk ve düşmana karşı birlikte mücadele eden askeri bir birlik olmak üzere iki biçimde inşa etmiştir. "Ümme"nin bu şekilde inşa edilmesiyle örgüt, bir dil, etnik kimlik yahut kültür üzerinden birleştirilmesi mümkün olmayan bir kitleden geçici de olsa bir ulus meydana getirmiş, kendisini İslam'ın koruyucusu pozisyonuna yerleştirmiş, birbiriyle çatışma potansiyeli barındıran üyelerini ortak bir düşmana karşı birleştirmiş ve onları motive etmiştir.

Anderson'ın hayali bir cemaat olarak uluslar hakkında yaptığı değerlendirmeler dikkate alındığında, incelenen metinlerde inşa edilen "ümme"nin IŞİD'in yarattığı bir ulus olduğunu söylemek mümkündür. Diğer hayal edilmiş siyasal topluluklar gibi IŞİD'in "ümme"nin üyeleri de birbirlerini tanımamakta, görmemekte hatta aynı dili konuşmadıkları için anlaşılamamakta fakat buna rağmen "ümme" adı verilmiş bu hayali cemaat fikri her birinin zihninde yaşamaya devam etmektedir. Diğer bütün uluslar gibi IŞİD'in "ümme"i de sınırlı olarak hayal edilmiş olup yalnızca örgütün üye ve sempatanlarını kapsamaktadır. Diğer uluslarda olduğu gibi IŞİD'in "ümme"i de egemen olarak hayal edilmiştir; ilgili zaman aralığında Irak ve Suriye'de ele geçirdiği topraklarda mutlak egemenlik sahibidir. IŞİD'in "ümme"i aynı zamanda bir cemaat olarak hayal edilmiştir çünkü örgüt içindeki katı hiyerarşiye rağmen bütün üye ve sempatanlar arasında "İslam kardeşliği" olduğu varsayılır. Sonuç olarak, IŞİD'in Konstantiniyye dergisinde geliştirdiği "ümme" söylemiyle kendisine geçici de olsa bir ulus inşa ettiğini; devlet olma hedefinin önündeki büyük bir engeli bu yolla aşmaya çalıştığını söylemek mümkündür.

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Yazar çıkar çatışması olmadığını beyan etmiştir. /The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

**Yazarların Katkıları/Author Contributions**

Makale tek yazarlıdır. /The article has a single author.

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