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**Studies**

**Comparison of Al Qaeda and ISIL**  
**Jihadist Narratives**  
Bachelor Thesis

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## **Abstract**

This thesis deals with both content and discourse analysis of narratives of Al Qaeda and ISIL. It focuses on comparison of goals and strategies of these terrorist organizations. The first half is dedicated to definition of theoretical and methodological background, basic terms, and structure of the thesis. The second half focuses on the aforementioned analyses and provides conclusions in this regard.

## **Keywords**

Narrative, Al Qaeda, ISIL, Terrorism, Comparison, Content analysis, Discourse analysis

## **Abstrakt:**

Tato práce se zabývá jak diskurzní, tak obsahovou analýzou příběhů Al Kajdy a ISIL. Zaměřuje se na porovnání cílů a strategií těchto teroristických organizací. První polovina je věnována definici teoretického a metodologického základu, základním pojmům a struktuře práce. Druhá polovina se zaměřuje na analýzy, z kterých je vyvozen závěr práce.

**Klíčová slova:** Příběh, Al-Kajda, ISIL, Terorismus, porovnání, Obsahová analýza, Diskurzní analýza

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. RESEARCH ISSUE

Terrorism is a threat that has accompanied us for many years now. According to Yonah Alexander, terrorism is "the use of violence against random civilian targets in order to intimidate or to create generalized pervasive fear for the purpose of achieving political goals."<sup>1</sup> Terrorist organizations use power and violence against people, governments, and states. Hence, terrorist strategies have always been aimed at frightening people by means of various terrorist acts, and the image below shows terrorist attacks between 1970 and 2015 by highlighting their concentration and intensity. Orange color represents the highest intensity, while green color stands for the lowest intensity. The intensity value is a combination of incident fatalities and injuries. One can, therefore, easily see that the greatest incidence of fatalities and injuries is concentrated in the Near and Middle East, and particularly so in states such as Lebanon, Israel, Syria, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. On the contrary, the lowest incidence of terrorist attacks is in Australia.

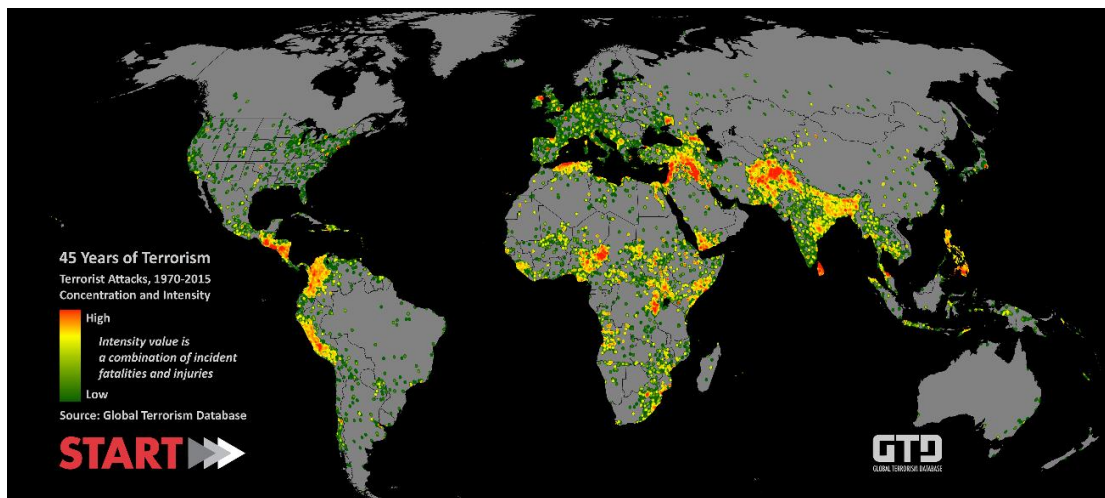


Image 1. GTD World Map: 45 Years of Terrorism

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<sup>1</sup> MATUSITZ, Jonathan Andre. *Terrorism and communication: A critical introduction*, (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publication, 2013), pp. 1-5.

In respect to what has been said, there are several well-known terrorist attacks that have influenced ways how security is understood today. 9/11 story is certainly one of the most well-known, with images of American Boeing 767 crashing into the tower of the World Trade Centre in the New York City still being very much alive. Let one be reminded of this particular event: nobody knew that the morning would be tragic. Passengers were checked at the security check. There was nothing suspicious, no guns, no knives, nothing. About 8 o'clock a.m. the passengers were preparing for take-off according to the schedule. Soon after departing, five hijackers stood up from their seats and stabbed two flight attendants with knives. The knives were supposed to have been screened and detected by the security control at the airport. Then a couple of hijackers took control of the airplane, took the passengers to the rear of the plane, and assumed full control over the aircraft. The hijackers changed the course and turned the plane to the south. Less than one an hour after departure, Boeing 767 smashed into the World Trade Centre. Everyone on the plane died.<sup>2</sup> Later on, it was Usama bin Laden who characterized the attack in the by saying: "The events of September 11 are a reaction to continuous injustice and oppression being practiced against our sons in Palestine and Iraq and in Somalia and Southern Sudan and in other places like Kashmir and Assam." Another well-known attack, though very recent, happened on 13 November 2015 in France. Attackers started shooting people during the performance of the Californian rock group Eagles of Death Metal in Bataclan hall in Paris, with several other attacks that unfortunately followed.<sup>3</sup> One of the terrorists at the time of Bataclan shooting was reported to have said: "*God is great.*" This attack was, of course, preceded by many other such events, such as the London bombings in 2005, sometimes referred to as '7/7,' as well as followed by many others. Hence, the spiral of terrorist violence unfortunately seems not to have ended, and recent attacks are proof of that.

It is, however, important to note that many terrorist attacks are not publicly hyped. On the image below one can see the map of terrorist attacks in 2016. In this particular year, 1813 attacks were registered in the world. This means that 15976 people died in these attacks. Colors on the map below indicate organizations responsible for the attacks.

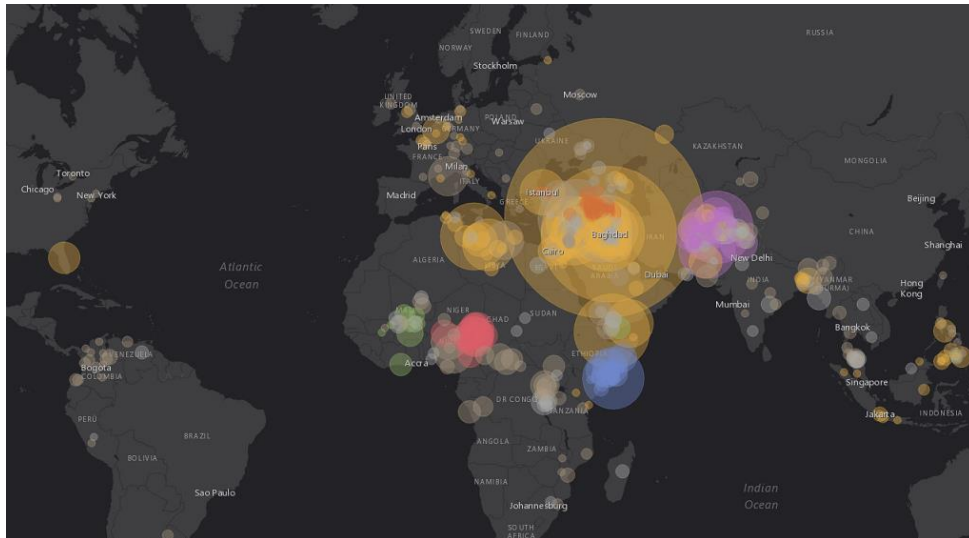
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<sup>2</sup> LANGLEY, Andrew, *11-September: Attack on America* (Minneapolis: Compass Point Books, 2006), pp. 8-13.

<sup>3</sup> BBC, „Paris attacks: What happened on the night“ 9 December 2015 is available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34818994>



The light orange stands for ISIL<sup>4</sup> as being responsible for most attacks. The orange color, on the other hand, belongs to PKK, while other colors are as follows: the green one represents Al Qaeda, blue stands for Al-Shabaab, red refers to Boko Haram, purple represents the Taliban, while light grey and dark grey belong to both unknown organizations and other less known terrorist organizations.



*Image 2. Map of Terrorist Attacks in 2016*

Further on, image number three indicates attacks only by ISIL and Al Qaeda in 2016. Attacks of ISIL are shown on the left side, while attacks of Al Qaeda are on the right side. It is clear that Al Qaeda is, or at least has been in recent past, much less active than ISIL. Most attacks by ISIL have been, for that matter, orchestrated in Syria.



*Image 3. Map of terroristic attacks by ISIL and Al-Qaeda in 2016*

<sup>4</sup> N.B. ISIL and ISIS are used interchangeably in the whole text.

When it comes to defining terrorism, there simply is no single definition of it. Basically, terrorist organizations are directly or indirectly involved in preparing, planning, and supporting various terrorist acts,<sup>5</sup> with the most well-known terrorist organizations of today being, on the one hand, Al Qaeda, and, on the other, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), sometimes also referred to as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), or simply the Islamic State (IS). Both organizations were made established in the Middle East and both have emphasized their obligation to jihad. This particular obligation to jihad, according to these organizations, refers to all able Muslims' duty to perform jihad.<sup>6</sup> These terrorist organizations are a threat to the whole world and are responsible for frequent attacks and significant number of deaths.

Roots of Al Qaeda are found in the Afghan War during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. A theory states that Al Qaeda was established in August 1988 during meetings in Pesharaw, Pakistan. It was during these meetings that Osama bin Laden met his top associates and outlines the idea of global jihad. On the other hand, Cruickshank and Bergen argue that Al Qaeda was formally established only in November 1989 after which Al Qaeda started building sizeable forces of militants and training camps in Afghanistan.<sup>7</sup> In any case, it seems fair to say that the organization was born sometime between 1988 and 1989. It has been known as a terrorist organization chiefly motivated by considerable hatred and opposition to the West, and has, for that matter, acted quite rationally in terms of respecting cold-blooded calculus of cost and benefit when it comes to its acts. Osama bin Laden was the key figure of Al Qaeda and was killed in mid 2011<sup>8</sup> in Pakistan by the United States special forces, with the organization being responsible for numerous attacks around the world.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), also known as Islamic State (IS), or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), started as an Al Qaeda splinter

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<sup>5</sup> Activist right, „Impact of counter-terrorism laws: Terrorist organizations” 2011 is available at <http://www.activistrights.org.au/handbook/ch02s19.php>

<sup>6</sup> FINK, CHOWDHURY, Naureen and Benjamin SUGG. „A Tale of Two Jihads: Comparing the al-Qaeda and ISIS Narratives,” Global Observatory (9 February 2015) is available at <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2015/02/jihad-al-qaeda-isis-counternarrative/>

<sup>7</sup> HOLBROOK, Donald. *The Al-Qaeda doctrine: The framing and evolution of the leadership's public discourse*, (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), pp. 1-12.

<sup>8</sup> RABASA, Angel, Peter, CHALK, Kim ,CRAGIN, Sara A. DALY and Heather S. GREGG. *Beyond al-Qaeda: Part 1, The Global Jihadist Movement*, (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2006), pp. 1-12.

<sup>9</sup> CCN, „Laden Fast Facts” 30 August 2013 is available at <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/08/30/world/osama-bin-laden-fast-facts/>

group. ISIL has been very well-known since 2014 when it seized large parts of Syria and Iraq. Their actions, such as acts of mass killings, abductions, beheadings, and other acts of brutality,<sup>10</sup> have attracted huge attention worldwide. Even Al Qaeda, for instance, at times refuted the actions of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. ISIS was for several years a growing force, but has been as of recently seriously challenged in military terms by both the West and its regional allies, particularly the Iraqi armed forces. ISIS ideology follows extreme version of Islam including use of violence and bloodshed to establish and maintain qur'anic hegemony. The leader of ISIS is Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Last but not least, ISIS is, in many ways like the Al Qaeda, responsible for countless terrorist attacks.<sup>11</sup>

In respect to what has been said, this particular thesis is aimed at discussing, comparing, and concluding on terrorist narratives of ISIL and the Al Qaeda. These narratives are revealed in their statements, which speak volumes on their approaches. This means that comparison of their individual narratives is possible with the use of both Content Analysis (CA) and Discourse Analysis (DA). Content Analysis is one of the research methods which uses a set of procedures to make valid conclusions from texts analyzed.<sup>12</sup> Discourse analysis, on the other hand, deals with researching patterns of language used in, for instance, texts, and also examines relationship between language, social, and cultural contexts in which this particular language is actually used.<sup>13</sup> In this particular thesis, both analyses focus on statements as specific form of texts and their comparison. Program which compares individual statements used in this thesis is called AntConc, which is essentially a concordance tool. Selected statements according to criteria provided in methodological section of the thesis were gathered and inserted into AntConc, with several different sorts of searches having been conducted. These were done to not only get initial information and create a picture on the language used, but chiefly to acquire evidence regarding similarities and differences. These were then further on analyzed and consequently explained according to the research questions.

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<sup>10</sup> BBC, „What is 'Islamic State'?" 10 December 2015 is available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29052144>

<sup>11</sup> Chosen people ministries, „A Brief History of ISIS” is available at <http://chosenpeople.com/main/index.php/ministry-news/926-a-brief-history-of-isis>

<sup>12</sup> WEBER, Robert Philip. *Basic Content Analysis*, (Newbury Park: SAGE Publications, 1990), pp. 5-13

<sup>13</sup> PALTRIDGE, Brian. *Discourse analysis: an introduction*, (New York: Continuum, 2012), pp. 2-5

It is in this particular discussion on narratives important to highlight that analysis of narratives in general is thought to play highly significant role in modern social research, particular in social constructivist agenda, as it inherently reveals how societies and groups operate both ideationally and practically. For that matter, narrative in essence can be simply defined as a sort of storytelling. Stories are told, they are (re)created, they disappear, and some even achieve an honorable place in society. As theorist and Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce put it in 1951: "Where there is no narrative, there is no history." Narratives gain power from their ability to change form easily and repeatedly, they are created and recreated, and they bear considerable social influence. In today's world, they both exist independently of media, but media can, for that matter, highlight, and thus sometimes even strengthen and abuse, narratives. Consequently, narratives are essentially important part of human strategy of expression and also significant part of human existence as such, which means that they can also direct our attention.<sup>14</sup> The same, of course, may be claimed about terrorist organizations, as they also have their narratives playing very important role in their functioning. Since, as with any social organization or group, narratives bear considerable social significance, behavior of these groups is likewise based on certain 'core' narratives that reveal their aims, values, and their goals and actions. Henceforth, it is necessary to define these narratives and analyze them as to reveal their nature.

In respect to that, as for the topic discussed in this thesis, it is significant to point out that common narrative of the terrorist organizations analyzed here is their obligation to jihad.<sup>15</sup> As already mentioned, this obligation refers to a general call to all able-bodied Muslims to perform jihad, which can be understood as three different kinds of struggle. The first struggle would be 'Holy War' in supposed defense of Islam and with no consideration to human cost. The second would be insistence on building a 'proper' Muslim society, while the last one is highly personal goal in terms of living up to requirements of the Muslim faith.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> ALTMAN, Rick. *A theory of narrative*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), pp. 1-5.

<sup>15</sup> FINK CHOWDHURY Naureen a Benjamin SUGG. „A Tale of Two Jihads: Comparing the al-Qaeda and ISIS Narratives”

<sup>16</sup> BBC, „Religion Jihad” 2009 is available at: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/beliefs/jihad\\_1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/beliefs/jihad_1.shtml)

British politician and activist Maddjid Nawaz, for instance, spoke in a short interview on the Islamic narrative. He defined this narrative as a specific version of events, whereby Muslims are called upon to join the extremists' fight and thus come to rule the world. This narrative is, therefore, essentially a version of stories told by the Islamic state and the Al-Qaeda, for instance, to attract recruiters to their ranks. Consequently, jihadist narratives are quite similar to, for instance, Nazi narratives, with the difference that the jihadist narrative is not aimed at Jews specifically but rather at the West, and particularly so the US and Britain. It is this struggle against the West that fits perfectly into the 'Holy War' meaning of jihad aimed against the West that is supposedly trying to destroy Islam.<sup>17</sup>

## 1.2. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Each chapter has several sections.

**1. Chapter one** consists of three following sections:

- Section one includes description of basic concepts used in the thesis and related to the issue of terrorist organizations and their respective narratives
- Section two defines the structure of this B.A. thesis
- Section three focus on the importance and interest of this particular work

**2. Chapter two** is divided into four following sections:

- Section one describes the aim of the research of this thesis
- Section two describes the research questions and provides information on them
- Section three focuses on primary and secondary resources used
- Section four highlights methods used in this research

**3. Chapter three** has three analytical sections

- Section one is the introduction to the analysis
- Section two provides analysis concerning the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and their narrative

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<sup>17</sup> MADDJID, Usman Nawaz. Interview. In: Youtube 25 April 2010 available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_dYgjQxZmk4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_dYgjQxZmk4)

- Section three does the same analysis as the section two but focuses on Al Qaeda instead

**4. Chapter four** includes answers to the research questions of this thesis

**5. Chapter five** introduces conclusion, whereby the most important points of the thesis have been briefly addressed

**6. Chapter six** is the last chapter of this thesis and it contains both primary and secondary sources used, as well as list of images, tables, charts and abbreviations

### **1.3. CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD AND SECONDARY SOURCES**

Terrorist threats still represent considerable security issue. This thesis is, therefore, the author's attempt to contribute to academic discussions on terrorism and related security threats, particularly when it comes to both Al Qaeda and ISIL. This contribution is done via both Content and Discourse Analysis, both of which have been used rarely in Czech academic sphere. Hence, the thesis is particularly interesting due to analyses it uses, as it searches for meanings created in and then also compares text statements of Al Qaeda and ISIS between 2010 to 2015.

In addition, this thesis aims to fill the knowledge gap that exists in regards to the research issue at hand. In that respect, it is very important to highlight that there is a considerably low number of analyses and volumes dealing with the topic discussed in this particular thesis. Hence, Czech academic sphere has so far seen only but a few projects of this kind, and most authors have tended to concentrate only on one particular set of topics by dealing with terrorism in general. Role of narrative in regards to analyzing terrorism has so far been largely left unaddressed. For instance, Radka Connelly Kohutová wrote her diploma thesis on interactive narrative in the era of digital storytelling. Her thesis is aimed at history of narrative, as well as role of narrative in media.<sup>18</sup> Eliška Buličičová, in addition, wrote her B.A. thesis about financing of the Islamic terrorist organizations of Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. The aim of her thesis

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<sup>18</sup> The thesis can be accessed at: [www.is.cuni.cz](http://www.is.cuni.cz), special her thesis is available at: <https://is.cuni.cz/webapps/zzp/detail/2164/23742153/>

is to characterize income and expenditure of both groups based on cash flow analysis, whereby she also presents a comparison of these organizations.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, when it comes to foreign authors, a couple of volumes and articles is to be mentioned here. To start with the volumes, the book entitled *Jihadism Transformed: Al-Qaeda and Islamic State's Global Battle of Idea* was written by Simon Staffell and Akil Awan and published in November 2016. This book discusses rise of ISIL and how jihadist narratives have changed globally adapting to these circumstances. The authors focus on transitions inside the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Europe, and show how successful narrative of ISIL has actually been. The other book entitled *The Master Plan: ISIS, al-Qaeda, and the Jihadi Strategy for Final Victory* has been written by Brian Fishman. This volume is about the narrative history of ISIL since 2005 with the main aim of reestablishing the Caliphate in its quest for Final Victory in 2020. It is a story of ISIL's complex and largely hidden past, and it also provides suggestions about its future. This book was also published in 2016. Additionally, *The Syrian Jihad: Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State and the Evolution of an Insurgency* was written by Charles Lister and published in 2016. This book describes emergence of Sunni jihadist organizations in Syria and their evolution since 2011, with charts included. The book also situates these organizations in the global Islamist project.<sup>20</sup> Last of all, one of the most interesting books also used in this project as well is called *September 11: Attack on America* by Andrew Langley. This book provides all details about the attacks on September 11, and it is definitely recommended for those interested in these particular events.

Likewise, there are articles dealing with terrorism and terrorist organizations. In 2015 Alex Schmid wrote a research paper on Al-Qaeda's "Single Narrative" and Attempts to Develop Counter Narratives: The State of Knowledge. This research paper tries to analyze and also uncover the truth about supposed attraction of Al-Qaeda's ideology. It is based on a broad review and analysis of open source literature.<sup>21</sup> Quite interesting article is by Naureen Fink Chowdhury and Benjamin Sugg called *A Tale of Two Jihads:*

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<sup>19</sup> The thesis of Eliška Bulíčičová is available at: [http://is.muni.cz/th/421236/esf\\_b/](http://is.muni.cz/th/421236/esf_b/)

<sup>20</sup> All these books, *Jihadism Transformed: Al-Qaeda and Islamic State's Global Battle of Ideas*, *The Master Plan: ISIS, al-Qaeda, and the Jihadi Strategy for Final Victory*, *The Syrian Jihad: Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State and the Evolution of an Insurgency* are available at: <https://books.google.com/>

<sup>21</sup> The research paper is available at: <https://www.icct.nl/download/file/Schmid-Al-Qaeda's-Single-Narrative-and-Attempts-to-Develop-Counter-Narratives-January-2014.pdf>

Comparing the al-Qaeda and ISIS Narratives. It provides information about jihadist narratives and compares them through the Dabiq, which is a magazine published by ISIL, and Inspire, a magazine published by Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. Esri, in addition, provides very well processed map of terrorist attacks in 2016. The map shows eight main terrorist group and their attacks. The map is available at [www.storymaps.esri.com](http://www.storymaps.esri.com). This map has been created in collaboration between Esri Story Maps team and PeaceTech Lab. It has been created on the basis of increasing number of terrorist attacks and growing security threats.

Last but not least, this thesis is also a sort of an invitation to authors in the field to use both Content and Discourse Analysis in research since these methods represent powerful tools. In this thesis, these methods are used to analyze statements and then to compare meanings created and maintained, as well as to conclude on particular similarities and distinctions in this regard.



## 2. METHODOLOGY AND THEORY

### 2.1. AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The main aim of this thesis is to increase public awareness of jihadist narratives of Al Qaeda and ISIL. This thesis answers the research questions which are specified in the next section by means of Discourse and Content Analyses aimed at comparing individual jihadist narratives. There is a considerably low number of analyses and volumes dealing with the topic discussed in this particular thesis, as it has already been mentioned. Based on terrorist organizations' activity and threats they still pose; these two organizations are often discussed topics in media nowadays. As it has already been remarked in the first chapter, 1.813 terrorist attacks were recorded in 2016. According to Techcrunch, the ISIS belonged to the top 10 most popular searches in Google in 2014. In the United States of America, for instance, the ISIS was seventh of top ten popular searches in Google. In global trending searches, on the other hand, the ISIS held an eighth place out of top ten popular searches in Google in 2014.<sup>22</sup> Hence, it is obvious that terrorism is a broadly discussed topic with huge interest of general public.

In that respect, understanding terrorist narratives is essential because they provide necessary info that allows for the understanding of functioning of these organizations to be formed, as well as information on goals to be achieved. In addition, general public is often uncertain about differences between terrorist organizations. By comparing the narratives of the two organizations discussed in this thesis, one can find differences between them by means of use of the aforementioned analyses. Analytical results are helpful in finding differences between individual narratives. As already indicated, there is a considerably low number of analyses and volumes dealing with the topic discussed in this particular thesis. As for the Czech Republic, the author has tried to find academic work on similar topics, but has been only partially successful in this regard as previously mentioned. This thesis, therefore, provides information that is not readily available in volumes or articles on this particular topic. Therefore, the thesis fills the research gap and also serves as an invitation for further research in this particular area. Considering the importance of understanding roots and forms of terrorism in order to

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<sup>22</sup> KUMPARAK, Greg. „These Were The Top 10 Most Popular Searches On Google In 2014”, Techcrunch (16 December 2014) is available at: <https://techcrunch.com/2014/12/16/these-were-the-10-top-trending-searches-on-google-in-2014>

fight against it in a more proper and efficient manner, this thesis is to serve its purpose in this particular respect. Greater awareness of terrorist narratives can help deepen their understanding and also our knowledge about these terrorist groups, ways they operate, and goals they seek to fulfill.

## 2.2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

There are two research questions in this thesis. The first question is: *Does Al Qaeda have same objectives as ISIL does?* This question is answered by examination of both of these organizations' narratives in terms of statements speaking of the organizations' goals being included in the analysis. The (jihadist) goals are significant because they are revealed in the statements, and it is necessary to compare them and understand meanings created and maintained in them, as one must not forget that these jihadist goals pose a threat for the whole wide world.

In order to achieve their objectives, these organizations are poised to do anything. If it is indeed shown, as the author suspects, that both of these have the same objectives, the space for the next research question is in this way created. This question is: *If both have same objectives, do they use same strategies to achieve them?* Hence, this question is to clarify whether resorting to same strategies is seen with both organizations. In order to answer this question, the statements discussing strategies of both terrorist organizations have been compared. The strategy is very important for these organizations to achieve their jihadist goals. As already mentioned, both organizations act rationally in the sense of calculating cost and benefits in their approach.

These research questions have been chosen because they are closely linked to each other. This means that hypothesis in this particular research revolves around the issue of same goals being equal to same strategies being used to achieve these goals. These research, therefore, questions provide quite interesting answers. Analysis of the texts statements of both organizations is not only crucial for answering the second research question, but potentially can lead to and open space for further debates in the field. Last of all, a couple of foreign authors having dealt with comparison of these two groups have highlighted that differences between these two groups are minor. Hence, it is

primarily their leadership that is different, which is easily revealed in their narrative/vision.<sup>23</sup>

### 2.3. PRIMARY SOURCES

As for the primary resources, they consist of the statements of both terrorist organizations, with the author keeping her focus on four main resources to locate these statements as primary source of information. The first resource is an organization which deals with Islamic extremism called Clarion Project. This organization wants to show people that the time is now to stand up, leave the comfort zone, and deal with extremism. On their website, Clarion Project provides information about various terrorist organizations including the two discussed here. This organization provides information even on the Dabiq, which is a magazine created by ISIL in spreading their propaganda. ISIL, for that matter, acts very coherently. For instance, the name Dabiq is not only the name of the magazine but also a place in Syria where, according to the Islamic apocalyptic, last battle between Muslims and non-Muslims will play out.<sup>24</sup> Clarion Project provides various sort of analysis and movies/short clips as well and is available at <http://www.clarionproject.org/>

The second resource is the Counter Extremism Project, shortly CEP. CEP is an international policy organization created to address growing threat from extremist ideologies. CEP focuses on research and analysis of extremist groups and their networks of support, providing an essential resource to, for instance, governments, media and general public. CEP uses modern communications, social media, and up-to-date technological tools to recognize and reveal extremist threats. Their website provides information about main terrorist groups, such as, for instance, Al-Shabab, Khorsan, Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, Al-Qaeda, ISIL, and Nusra Front. Each group has their available statements reported by CEP, which is available at [www.counterextremism.com](http://www.counterextremism.com)

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<sup>23</sup> STEED, Brian L. *ISIS: An introduction and guide to the Islamic State*, (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2016), pp. 21-23.

<sup>24</sup> Security Magazín, „Dabiq – seznamte se s propagandou islámského státu. “Islám je válka, islám není mír””1September 2015 is available at: <http://www.securitymagazin.cz/zpravy/dabiq-seznamte-se-s-propagandou-islamskeho-statu-zverstva-a-krutosti-online-1404043868.html>

The third resource is the Middle East Media Research Institute, shortly MEMRI. MEMRI is an institute which publishes and distributes free English language translations of texts written in Arabic, Persian, and other languages. Main aim of this institute is to fill the language gap between the Middle East and the West. The institute provides a multispectral view of the Middle East. In this particular thesis, MEMRI has been used a useful resource for obtaining statements of both terrorist organizations analyzed here. MEMRI is available at the following page <https://www.memri.org/> Statements provided by MEMRI are also available at CEP website.

Last of all, the fourth resource for accessing primary data is a website called <http://jihadology.net/>, which was created by Aaron Y. Zelin. Jihadology is Mr. Zelin's personal project. He tries to explain complex issues which are related to the Islamic and Middle Eastern world. Zelin provides jihadi primary source material and original analysis of it. Jihadology, in addition, provides full statement of terrorist organizations, and it also includes videos that are translated into English. This site is highly recommended to researchers since it provides original statements of terrorist groups.

#### **2.4. METHODS USED**

The methods used in this thesis are aimed at language analysis of the statements of Al Qaeda and ISIS. Both Content and Discourse Analysis are used in order not only to show picture of the language used, but also connections between words and chiefly meanings created and maintained in the given narratives.

A couple words about the Content Analysis (CA) should first be mentioned. Content Analysis is a research method which uses a set of procedures to make valid conclusions from texts analyzed. These conclusions mostly touch upon sender of the given message and provide details on his/her aims and goals, as well as characteristics of the message itself. Content Analysis essentially classifies words into different content categories. Each category consists of one word or several words, which means that there are different units in this particular regard.<sup>25</sup> Hence, this analysis represents a method of addressing different aspects of particular content and it aims at concluding on it. This, for that matter, allows researchers to perform comparisons of various kinds in terms of

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<sup>25</sup> WEBER, Robert Philip. *Basic Content Analysis*, pp. 5-13.

different contents and the language used in them. This method additionally speaks volumes on nature of the message itself, as well as the intended audience. Thus, the method is used in media research, research on propaganda, psychology, etc.

Discourse analysis, shortly DA, deals with researching patterns of language in different texts and also examines the relationship between language, social, and cultural contexts in which it is used. This method takes into account that use of language can incorporate different views and understandings of social reality. It also examines to some extent use of language influenced by various relationships between different social participants. Additionally, it takes into consideration social identities, relations, and ways they are understood in a social setting. Therefore, the method examines the relationship between language and context in which this language is actually used, i.e. how people interpret what somebody says in a particular situation. Thus, it is very important to understand what is said and what is meant in a context so as to understand the whole sentence. For example: 'The runway is full at the moment.' In this particular sentence it is understood that there is no possibility to land the plane now.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, this thesis analyses texts statements of the two terrorist organizations so as to reveal meanings created in them and thus compare their goals and strategies in this regard. Their statements have been chosen as they clearly speak of their objectives. It is worthy, last but not least, to mention that a program called *AntConc* has been used to compare the statements, whereby these statements have been inserted into the program in the form of doc. files, and various text searches including keywords, in order to gain knowledge of the language used and meanings created, have been performed. This has made the comparison and further conclusions on the language used possible and has influenced the overall quality of the thesis.

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<sup>26</sup> PALTRIDGE, Brian. *Discourse analysis: an introduction*, pp. 2-5.

### 3. ANALYTICAL PART

#### 3.1. BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE ANALYSIS

Analytical part of this thesis plays very important role as its main goal is to introduce analysis of the aforementioned statements. The statements were selected on the basis of credible resources they were gained from. It was not easy to find statements of both organizations through the credible resources, and all the primary resources used for the analytical part have been mentioned in the previous chapter. All primary resources have been labeled as credible and their credibility checked with experts in the field, such as Marek Čejka, Ph.D., Martin Kraus, Ph.D., both of which are lecturers at Masaryk University, and also Elliot Friedland, who is a dialogue coordinator at the Clarion project. These experts were contacted to find out the credibility of the resources used to gain primary data. The period between 2010 and 2015 has been chosen due to the highest frequency of the statements of both organizations. In total, this is 28 statements of both organizations: 14 statements by ISIL and 14 statements by Al Qaeda in this particular time period. Additional information on locating primary data has been provided in the beginnings of the following subchapters as well.

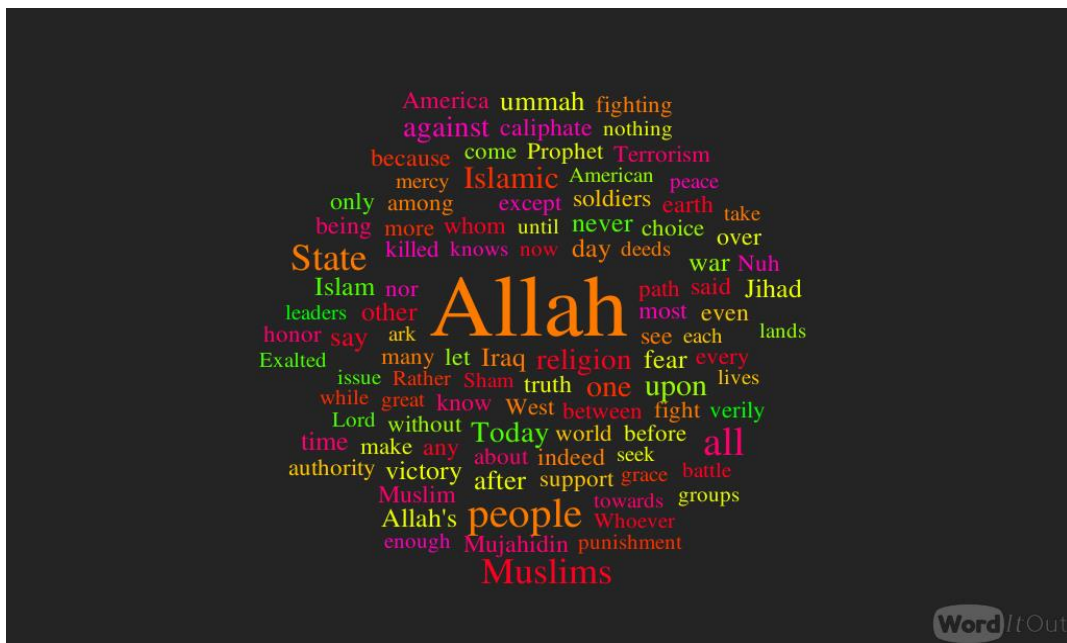


Image 4. Most common words as generated by Word It Out

Pre-analysis is shown on the image 4 and it presents the most common words used in statements of Al Qaeda and ISIL between 2010 and 2015. This figure has been achieved by inserting the statements of both organizations into an on-line tool called Word It Out. As it can be seen, the most often words are ‘Allah,’ ‘today,’ ‘Jihad,’ ‘all,’ ‘Islamic,’ ‘people,’ and ‘Muslims.’

Further on, both Discourse and Content Analysis are used, which has allowed for tables of words and their frequency to be created by means of the aforementioned program called *AntConc*. Some tables are shorter than others and have been created at the author’s own discretion and in accordance with the research aims. For example, table number 2 shows the most often used nouns. This table has been an inspiration for another table focusing on words that are connected to religion to be also created (table number 4).

### **3.2. ANALYSIS OF TEXT STATEMENTS OF ISIL BETWEEN 2010 AND 2015<sup>27</sup>**

Firstly, it is important to note that the statements of ISIL have been much easier to find than the statements of Al Qaeda. One of the best resources has undoubtedly been the magazine Dabiq. Dabiq is already in its 15<sup>th</sup> edition.<sup>28</sup> ISIL has published many statements which are available on the internet, many of these have been given by its key leaders and then reported by Aaron Y. Zelin on his website. The same number of statements of ISIL and Al Qaeda has been chosen for this research. Unfortunately, the range of Al Qaeda’s statements is much shorter. This may be caused by the fact that ISIL has used more modern technology influencing much greater availability of their statements. The table below introduces words which have been most often used by ISIL between 2010 and 2015. The first three words are further on analyzed below the table 1. These words are “Allah”, “you,” and “we”.

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<sup>27</sup> All tables presented further on have been done by the author herself.

<sup>28</sup> HARRIS, David. „The Islamic State’s (ISIS, ISIL) Magazine,” Clarion Project (10 September 2014) is available at: <https://clarionproject.org/islamic-state-isis-isil-propaganda-magazine-dabiq-50/>

Word	the frequency of occurrence
Allah	301
you	297
we	164
them	120
your	113
their	109

Table 1. Words with the highest occurrence as generated by AntConc

HIT FILE: 1 FILE: ISIL.txt



No. of Hits = 301  
File Length (in chars) = 99425

Chart 1. Use of the word “Allah” as generated by AntConc

The most often used word is “Allah” as can be seen above. From the fourteen statements, “Allah” is mentioned in ten. “*We had the ability to establish the caliphate, by the grace of Allah, so it became an obligation for us to do so.*”<sup>29</sup> ISIL puts huge emphasis on Allah as the god is mentioned in regards to Quran, whereby citations from Quran form considerable part of their particular statements. Some citations are repeated, and connection between ISIL soldiers and religion is repeatedly emphasized.

HIT FILE: 1 FILE: ISIL.txt



No. of Hits = 297  
File Length (in chars) = 99425

Chart 2. Use of the word “You” as generated by AntConc

In addition, the word “you” has a high frequency of occurrence also. “You” occurs 297 times. This personal pronoun is chiefly connected to Allah’s fighters/soldiers. “*For the time has come for you to free yourself from the shackles of weakness, and stand in the face of tyranny, against the treacherous rulers – the agents of the crusaders and the*

<sup>29</sup> MEMRI, „ISIS Declares Islamic Caliphate, Appoints Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi As 'Caliph', Declares All Muslims Must Pledge Allegiance To Him” 1 July 2014 is available at: <https://www.memri.org/reports/isis-declares-islamic-caliphate-appoints-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-caliph-declares-all-muslims>



atheists, and the guards of the Jews.”<sup>30</sup> This pronoun and the way it is used aims at Allah’s fighters as the meaning created in the narrative is that of Allah blessing his soldiers and giving them courage they need to continue in their fight.

HIT FILE: 1 FILE: ISIL.txt



No. of Hits = 164

File Length (in chars) = 99425

Chart 3. Use of the word “We” as generated by AntConc

The third most used word by ISIL is the pronoun “we”. “We” occurs in particular statements 164 times. The word “we” presents all Allah’s fighters. “*So let the world know that we are living today in a new era.*”<sup>31</sup> ISIL clearly states how their fighters should behave and how they should act. “*I say to America that the Islamic State has been established. And we will not stop.*”<sup>32</sup> The pronoun “we” is closely linked to the verb to be.

The second table below displays the most often used nouns that have been used in the statements. The word “religion” as already mentioned is very important and this terrorist organization highlights the connection between the soldier and the religion mainly through Allah. The word “state” is almost exclusively connected to the Islamic State. The combination of words “Islamic State,” occurs 38 times. The single word “state” occurs 86 times. Islamic State/state is then chiefly connected to the soldier of ISIL since the organization appeals to their soldiers to take action. The term “people,” for instance, is used to designate both those who follow Islam and those who belong to other religions. The word “Muslims” in its use is clear, and the table 5 provides more information in this regard.

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<sup>30</sup> Jihadology, Al-Husayini Abu Bakr, „A message to the Mujahidin and the Muslims Ummah in the month of Ramandan” 2014 is available at: <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/abc5ab-bakr-al-e1b8a5ussaync4ab-al-qurayshc4ab-al-baghd481dc4ab-22message-to-the-mujc481hdc4abn-and-the-islamic-ummah-in-the-month-of-ramae1b88dc481n22-en.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> A message to the Mujahidin and the Muslims Ummah in the month of Ramandan

<sup>32</sup> Counter extremism project, „Abu Moussa, ISIS press officer” 2014 is available at <https://www.counterextremism.com/content/abu-moussa-isis-press-officer-june-2014>

1.	religion
2.	State
3.	people
4.	Muslims

*Table 2. The most often used nouns as generated by AntConc*

Table 3 displays the most often used adverbs in the statements. The word “today” sends a message that Islamic religion is alive and well. “There” points out that there is only one good place and that is the place where Allah rules. The word “never” is above all connected to Allah. “Never” points out that Allah never fails, while the word “now” emphasizes the present moment.

1.	today
2.	there
3.	never
4.	now

*Table 3. The most often used adverbs as generated by AntConc*

The table 4 below shows the most often used words which are directly used in the jihadist narrative of ISIL, as well as the frequency of their occurrence.

1.	Allah	301
2.	Muslims	85
3.	Ummah	31
4.	caliphate	30
5.	Islam	26
6.	Jihad	26

*Table 4. Words used in jihadist narrative of ISIL as generated by AntConc*

It is not surprising that the most often used word which is highly connected to and used in the narrative of ISIL is “Allah.” The previous table has shown that Allah is the most often used word from the statements of ISIL between 2010 and 2015. It is here important to add that Allah is thought of in terms of being the god in all three Abrahamic faiths, and hence not only Muslim deity.<sup>33</sup> The word “Muslims,” for

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<sup>33</sup> God Allah, „Does it mean God?“, 2014 is available at: <http://www.godallah.com/>

example, has an unambiguous meaning. “Ummah” and “caliphate” are also often used words by ISIL. “Ummah” in Arabic word stands for a group of people or nations. According to Islam, “Ummah” represents word order through the Islamic government of Caliph in accordance with the “Law of God.”<sup>34</sup> Caliphate is as such accepted by ISIL and it means succession. Historically speaking, the caliphate is an institution which was created in the seventh century after the death of Muhammad<sup>35</sup> and in accordance with the three different kinds of struggle as defined by Jihad.<sup>36</sup>

Table 5 shows the most used nouns before “Allah” and the most used verbs after “Allah.” Analysis of this word is very important because “Allah” is a keyword which is used most often in the statements of ISIL in this particular time period.

<b>the most used nouns before "Allah"</b>	<b>the most used verbs after "Allah"</b>
religion of Allah	Allah knows
grace of Allah	Allah is
path of Allah	Allah has
cause of Allah	Allah will

Table 5. Use of the word “Allah” as generated by AntConc

“Support the *religion of Allah* through jihad in the path of Allah.”<sup>37</sup> ISIL gives its own followers very visible messages in its statements. Followers must perform for Allah and with the grace of and in the name of Allah. Hence, a huge emphasis is put on the religious aspects and these are connected to the concept of victory over enemies of Islam. In addition, ISIL highlights in its narrative that it is time to stop enemies of Allah and the focus is thus kept on the interaction between the religious followers of Islam

<sup>34</sup> The Christian Broadcasting Network, „What is the Muslim Understanding of "Ummah"?" 2014 is available at: <http://www1.cbn.com/onlinediscipleship/what-is-the-muslim-understanding-of-%22ummah%22%3F>

<sup>35</sup> BLACK Ian, „What is a caliphate?”, The Guardian, (30 June 2014) is available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/30/isis-caliphate-revival>

<sup>36</sup> BBC, „Religion – Jihad”, 3 August 2009 is available at: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/beliefs/jihad\\_1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/beliefs/jihad_1.shtml)

<sup>37</sup> AL-HUSAYINI Abu Bakr, A message to the Mujahidin and the Muslims Ummah in the month of Ramandan,

and their god Allah. Left side of the table 5 displays verbs which are often used after the word “Allah.” The most often used combination is “Allah knows.” ISIL has built its statement on the basis of sending a message to its followers that, when the followers/soldiers are acting, they are doing so through Allah. Hence, there is this religious element implemented here and it seems that ISIL presents its actions as being supposedly ordered by Allah. This is a very clear abuse of religion to gain certain advantages or achieve specific goals. The strategy is, therefore, very clear as it is very much enshrouded in a supposedly religious approach.

In addition, there are many words and expressions decidedly connected with war. In the table below one can see the most often used words, and their ranks of course, of this particular kind.

1.	against
2.	war
3.	fight
4.	battle
5.	kill

*Table 6. Words associated with war as generated by AntConc*

The word “against” is most commonly used with words “us,” “you,” “Allah,” “Islamic State,” “Ummah,” and “Mujihadeen.” In most cases the word “against” shows what values this terrorist organization is against and what values it actually stands for. Similar to this is usage of the word “war”. This word is most often used to mark followers of ISIL engaged in war predominantly with the West. In addition, the word “fight” is used to denote enemies of Allah who followers of ISIL shall fight against. The word “battle,” last of all, carries a very similar meaning to the word “fight” and it is used in a similar context.

The last table here includes a list of main enemies, i.e. those that have been mentioned in a negative context most often, and it clearly shows that the West collectively is understood as the main enemy (of Islam/Allah), that particularly America alone stands

for the greatest adversary, and that the East should also be ‘owned/repossessed’ by Allah according to ISIL.

1.	West
2.	East
3.	America

*Table 7. States labeled as “enemy states” as generated by AntConc*

“By Allah, if you disbelieve in democracy, secularism, nationalism, as well as all the other garbage and ideas from the west, and rush to your religion and creed, then by Allah, you will own the earth, and the east and west will submit to you.”<sup>38</sup> ISIL in the statements frequently mentions the “West” and the “East,” whereby Allah is presented as promising that both the “West,” characterized as nations of heathens/unbelievers, and the “East” will obey the followers of Allah. As for America, for instance, this particular word is not as used as the previous two words, but, when used, it is usually mentioned as the place where there is no safety. “America” must be ready (to suffer) because ‘sons of Islam are prepared’ (to attack it). If “America” thinks it is safe, then this is just, according to ISIL when mentioning Iraq and Afghanistan, nothing more than an illusion. Last but not least, both “Earth” and “caliphate” are frequently mentioned so as to send the message that Allah shall rule the Earth and that it belongs to him. Hence, the East and the West will belong to Allah and his soldiers, whereby ISIL puts emphasis on the establishment of the caliphate.

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<sup>38</sup> AL-HUSAYINI Abu Bakr, A message to the Mujahidin and the Muslims Ummah in the month of Ramandan

### 3.2. ANALYSIS OF TEXT STATEMENTS OF AL QAEDA BETWEEN 2010 AND 2015

It is at this point again important to mention that readily available resources on Al Qaeda have been much more difficult to locate. This is to be understood chiefly in terms of the fact that Al Qaeda is an older organization in comparison to ISIL and that it has been much harder to find resources because ISIL has laid particular emphasis on new technologies that Al Qaeda has not actually done. The author has invested considerable time in finding Al Qaeda statements, particularly those of its leaders, and has also found a magazine called *Inspire* that is published by Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. *Inspire* contains individual statements of Al Qaeda leaders in their original form.

Word	frequency of occurrence
Their	45
They	44
Allah	42
This	37
Who	32
Them	29
I	28
America	23

Table 8. Most frequent words as generated by AntConc

This table shows the words which have been used most often by Al Qaeda in their statements between 2010 to 2015. The most often words are “their,” “they,” “Allah,” “this,” “who,” “them,” “I,” and “America”. Further on, these words are analyzed to a much greater extent.

HIT FILE: 1 FILE: AL QAEDA.txt

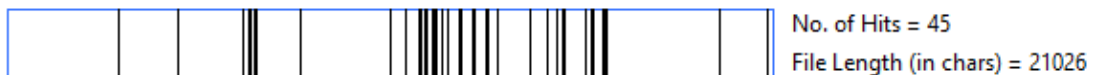


Chart 4. Used of the word “their” as generated by AntConc

The word “**their**,” to start with, has a very high frequency of occurrence as is already shown. This word is tightly connected to enemies: “*Their aggression, they usually start*

with the weakest links in the chain, which are the peaceful and pacifistic types.”<sup>39</sup> It is interesting that only on a few occasions is this word used to denote Muslims, for instance, and thus is almost always aimed at discussing enemies (creating a sort of an identity/image that is obviously opposite and hence negative/unacceptable).



Chart 5. Use of the word “they” as generate by AntConc

The word “they” occurs 44 times in the chosen statements. The word “they” is used in the same manner as the word “their” by referring to the enemies of Allah. “While our enemies are evil and depraved, *they* aren't stupid, and when choosing the targets of their aggression.”<sup>40</sup> Just in few cases is this particular word connected to Allah and his followers.



Chart 6. Use of the word “Allah” as generated by AntConc

“Allah” is the word which is used almost in each and every statement of Al Qaeda. The meaning of Allah is, of course, more than clear. Chart 6 above shows the frequency of the occurrence of this word. Al Qaeda refers to “Allah” as omnipotent (and mentions Quran). “That I call to Jihad for the sake of *Allah*, and in defense of the Islamic nation.”<sup>41</sup> Al Qaeda, much like ISIL, puts an obvious emphasis on Allah, and particularly the need to have Islam spread all over the globe and the Islamic state established on earth.<sup>42</sup> Hence, the organization is aimed at having a global reach by inviting Muslims to join its ranks.

<sup>39</sup> GADAHN Yahya, „Words of Wisdom”, Inspire, (2015) p.8, is available at: <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/inspire-magazine-14.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> GADAHN Yahya, Words of Wisdom, p.8.

<sup>41</sup> MEMRI, „Yemni-American Jihadi Cleric Anwar Al-Awlaki in First Interview with Al-Qaeda Media Calls on Muslim U.S. Servicemen to Kill Fellow Soldiers and says: “My Message to the Muslims...is that we should Participate in this Jihad against America” 23 May 2010 is available at: <https://www.memri.org/reports/yemni-american-jihadi-cleric-anwar-al-awlaki-first-interview-al-qaeda-media-calls-muslim-us>

<sup>42</sup> HUSSAM Sheikh, „Words of Wisdom”, Inspire, (2015) p.8, is available at: <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/inspire-magazine-14.pdf>

HIT FILE: 1 FILE: AL QAEDA.txt



Chart 7. Use of the word “who” as generated by AntConc

Chart 7 shows that the word “who” is used quite often. It occurs 32 times in the chosen statements and its frequency of occurrence has been shown here. “Allah loves those *who* deal with equality” it is said.”<sup>43</sup> The word “who” is used in the context with Allah and this is seen very often in many statements (Quran verses used to send particular messages). Al Qaeda also uses the term “who” when terrorists speak about those who pray or believe in Allah. “So where are the noble Mujahedeen *who* will return the battle to America in their own soil?”<sup>44</sup> The word “who” is also used for those who are enemies of Allah. Mujahedeen means a person who performs Jihad: these were originally guerrilla fighters in war with the Soviet army in Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>45</sup>

Table number 9 shows the most common nouns. The word “America” is synonymous to the term enemy. America is supposedly full of enemies, liars, and people who are bent on killing brothers of Al Qaeda. The word “Muslims” is, of course, clear. The term “people,” in addition, is generally related to all Westerners living their democratic lives, these are not Muslims or soldiers of Allah. The last word here is Jihad, the meaning of which has already been explained.

1.	America
2.	Muslims
3.	people
4.	Jihad

Table 9. Most common nouns as generated by AntConc

Table 10 displays common adverbs, such as “today,” “never,” “there,” and “now.” “Today” is chiefly connected to America. The word “today” points out what America is currently doing (in negative terms, of course). The words “never,” “there,” and “now”

<sup>43</sup> HUSSAM Sheikh, Words of Wisdom, p. 8.

<sup>44</sup> QADHI Bishr, „Remembering Boston”, Inspire, (2015) pp.34-35 is available at: <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/inspire-magazine-14.pdf>

<sup>45</sup> ZALMAN AMY, „Mujahideen”, Thought Co (25 November 2014) is available at: <https://www.thoughtco.com/definition-of-mujahideen-3209246>



are used quite often, but the meaning is not important as these words do not point out to anything that specific.

today
never
there
now

*Table 10. Most common adverbs as generated by AntConc*

The table below presents the most common words directly associated with the narrative of Al Qaeda. The first column contains the order of the word, the second shows the word used, and the last column indicates the frequency of occurrence.

1.	Allah	42
2.	Muslims	26
3.	Jihad	13
4.	ummah	10
5.	mujahideen	10
6.	Islam	10

*Table 11. Most common words associated with the jihadist narrative as generated by AntConc*

“Allah” is the most often word which is central to the narrative of Al Qaeda. It is exactly the same as with ISIL in this regard. It is common knowledge that the word “Muslims” is related to followers of Islam. The words “jihad” and “ummah” have already been explained in the previous analysis of ISIL. “Mujahideen” refers to a person who performs Jihad and originally refers to guerrilla fighters engaged in the fight against the Soviet army in Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>46</sup> The word “Islam,” for instance, is a derivate from the term “salam.” Salam refers to peace and safety, and it represents submission or surrender in a religious sense (surrender to God, that is). In this perspective, followers of Islam perform their tasks and thus peace is brought to all

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<sup>46</sup> ZALMAN AMY, Mujahideen,

Muslims. This is a sort of a contract between Allah and his followers: Allah’s follower give to him his/her will and Allah returns this through peace and safety in the world.<sup>47</sup>

Table 12 shows on the right side the most common nouns before the word “Allah” and the most common verbs after the word “Allah.”

the most used nouns before "Allah"	the most used verbs after "Allah"
the law of Allah	Allah is
enemies of Allah	Allah says
the religion of Allah	Allah has
path of Allah	Allah loves

Table 12. Use of the word “Allah” as generated by AntConc

Al Qaeda, as already discussed, has puts considerable importance on Allah. The most used nouns before "Allah" are: “law,” “enemies,” “cause,” and “path.” All is understood as on behalf of Allah or according to Allah. Al Qaeda presents its actions as order by or in accordance with (the will of) Allah. “As for our goal, it is to make the *religion of Allah established on earth.*”<sup>48</sup> This is an example of how the organization abuses the religion and influences its believers to support its terrorist actions as supposedly ordered by Allah.

On the other hand, the most common verbs after "Allah" are: “is,” “says,” “has,” and “loves.” Al Qaeda uses verbs after the word “Allah” in present (simple) tense. This is to characterize the interaction between Allah and his followers. Allah is the one who loves, who sees, and who also controls his followers. In addition, words associated with war

<sup>47</sup> PENNINGTON, Rosemary, „What is the meaning of the word "Islam"?", Muslim Voices (1 October 2008) is available at: <http://muslimvoices.org/word-islam-meaning/>

<sup>48</sup> SHEIKH, Hussam „Abdul-Ra’Uf, Words of Wisdom”, Inspire (2015) p.8, is available at: <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/inspire-magazine-14.pdf>

are quite important in the jihadist discourse also. Al Qaeda uses the same words as ISIL does but in a bit of a different order. The table below indicates the words that are most used in this particular regard.

1.	war
2.	against
3.	battle
4.	fight
5.	kill

*Table 13. Words associated with war as generated by AntConc*

The word “war” is mainly used in the context of America because of American involvement in both Iraq and Afghanistan. According Al Qaeda, Americans are involved due to their bad political leadership. The word “against” is chiefly connected to the enemies of Al Qaeda. Al Qaeda highlight that America has eliminated many of the organizations’ followers. These are supposed to unite against “America.” In addition, the words “battle,” “fight,” and “kill” are reserved for enemies of Allah, whereby Al Qaeda calls for combat against enemies of Islam in the name of Allah.

Down is the last table which has been created for the analytical part here. It is a table that includes main enemies that Al Qaeda mentions repeatedly. America, as it is suspected, tops the list of Allah’s enemies, with the West and Europe following immediately after.

1.	America
2.	West
3.	Europe

*Table 14. States labeled as “enemies” as generated by AntConc*

“America” is labeled by Al Qaeda as weak. The “West” and “America” lie, they hide the truth according to Al Qaeda. Al Qaeda emphasizes lives lost due to American involvement in the Muslim world, and also mentions both the US and Europe as being led by bad leaders. Last but not least, a very important word here is also “Earth” because Al Qaeda says that one of its goals is to make the whole world follow and obey the religion of Allah (and thus implement Allah’s law globally).

## 4. COMPARISON

### 4.1. DOES AL QAEDA HAVE SAME OBJECTIVES AS ISIL?

The aim of this chapter is to answer the research questions that have been previously mentioned. The first question aiming on same objectives is to be explained by focusing on the countries that are mentioned in the statements of Al Qaeda and ISIL between 2010 and 2015. Both organizations have referred to the West, East, Europe, and chiefly America in their narratives. These countries have been labeled as the enemies. Al Qaeda and ISIL have usually referred to these enemies as the ones that should be destroyed. The table shows the countries/continents that are labeled as the enemies in the analyzed statements of both organizations. Al Qaeda is given in green color, while yellow color stands for ISIL. The intensity of the color displays frequency of use. The most significant/dark color indicates the most frequently used phrases.

1.	America	West
2.	West	East
3.	Europe	America

Table 15. States labeled as “enemies” as generated by AntConc

One of the reasons why America is mentioned that often is because numerous chosen statements between 2010 to 2015 are indeed a reaction to events in both Iraq and Afghanistan. After 9/11, the United State declared war on terror. The United States invaded Afghanistan to remove the Taliban and Al Qaida, and then the second Iraqi operation happened in 2003 with the US involvement.<sup>49</sup> The US killed a large number of soldiers of both terrorist groups discussed here. Hence, both organizations have seen the US as its main enemy and its leaders as wrongdoers. This is why both organizations have aimed at punishing and destroying America as supposedly ‘sons of Islam are prepared’ for this war. Both organizations have highlighted American hypocrisy and it being responsible for false information fed by poorly elected US Administration.

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<sup>49</sup> KROEBER, Carlos Henrique, „Why was America at war with Iraq and Afghanistan?“, Quora (1 February 2016) is available at: <https://www.quora.com/Why-was-America-at-war-with-Iraq-and-Afghanistan>

For that matter, use of the word “Earth” in both organizations’ narratives is crucial because it refers to the whole world. Al Qaeda preaches that its goal is to make the religion of Allah established everywhere on the globe. Allah’s law should thus be implemented everywhere. ISIS, furthermore, states that the world belongs to Allah and that it must subdue to Allah as he is to rule the Earth. Here the word “establishment” comes into importance as it highlights the supposed need of establishing the caliphate by the grace of Allah.

Consequently, it can be seen that both organizations have the same enemies and their goals are pretty much clear. The main goal is for Islam to be a ruling religion in the world that is supposedly to be rid of all Muslim enemies. This is to be done without any particular attention paid to human cost as this is the “order of Allah.” Hence, both organizations present their main goals as the fight against their enemies that are in their narratives presented in very much religious light. This is a very important point to remember as it is obvious that both organizations have identified their common enemy that is recognized not only in the US, but more generally in Europe and democratic liberal values. However, they do not stop here only, but label all others, the whole world, as their enemies and seek to subdue the globe and establish an Islamic state.

#### **4.2. IF BOTH HAVE SAME OBJECTIVES, DO THEY USE SAME STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THEM?**

Answer to this particular research question, which is, by the way, very much connected to the first one, is discussed in this section. The table below shows on the right side the most used nouns before the word “Allah” and also the most used verbs after the word “Allah” by Al Qaeda in the period between 2010 and 2015. On the left side, in addition, there are the most used nouns before the word “Allah” and the most used verbs after the word “Allah” by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in the same period. The intensity of the color displays the frequency of use. The most significant/dark color again indicates the most frequently used phrases.

Al-Qaeda		Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant	
the most used nouns before the "Allah"	the most used verbs after the "Allah"	the most used nouns before the "Allah"	the most used verbs after the "Allah"
law of Allah	Allah is	religion of Allah	Allah knows
enemies of Allah	Allah says	grace of Allah	Allah is
religion of Allah	Allah has	path of Allah	Allah has
path of Allah	Allah loves	cause of Allah	Allah will

*Table 16. The most common nouns and verbs as generated by AntConc*

It is obvious that both organizations use very similar or almost the same nouns before the word “Allah” and same verbs after the word “Allah.” Both organizations know the important role of religion in achieving their goals. Based on this fact, it can be stated that these organizations more or less abuse religion in almost every statement, with many statements ending with “Allah blesses you.” Hence, their followers are induced to believe that everything happens as ordered by Allah and they blindly follow what is said to them. The reality, however, is much different and absolutely bears no religious aspect whatsoever.

Al Qaeda and ISIL abuse the religion to gain their own goals and often rely on their followers’ ignorance of Quran in this particular regard. For instance, an example where Al Qaeda and ISIL have used the same strategy, or very similar in that respect, are two magazines of theirs: Dabiq and Inspire. Inspire is published by Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and it is used as a propaganda tool. It includes interviews with the leader, various criticism of the West, and even instructions how to make one’s own explosive. Dabiq, on the other hand, is published by ISIL and focused on pretty much same topics as Inspire. One of the differences between the two is photography. ISIL publishes photography without censorship, which often includes graphic images, such as decapitated bodies and similar shocking scenes.

It is also useful to add that both organizations have developed their plans of action. Al Qaeda, on the one hand, has the plan called Al Qaeda’s seven-step plan. It is a strategy how Al Qaeda is to destroy the world. As the name already suggests, the plan is divided

into seven steps. The first step is referred to as the “awakening” that lasted from 2001 to 2003. It began with 9/11 when American Boeing 767 crashed into Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre in New York City (more information about the attack has already been included into Chapter 1) and fall of Bagdad later on. Al Qaeda wanted the United States to attack the Muslim world so to “awaken” the Muslims (this step was, in their opinion, a success). The second step ended in 2006. One of the goals of Al Qaeda was to become a worldwide movement and to achieve global presence. Iraq was the main point in this step, with hundreds of Islamic fighters entering Iraq to fight the West. The third step took place between 2006 and 2010. This step focused on Syria and attacks in Turkey and Israel so as Al Qaeda to get accepted and approved by other terrorist organizations and also Arab governments. The fourth step was in the period between 2010 and 2013 when the organization took measures by plotting attacks against Arab governments for not supporting terrorism. The fifth step was between 2013 and 2016. It revolved around the hope that ISIL would manage to win in a fight for a new world order against the West. The sixth step is supposed to be between 2016 and 2018. Al Qaeda hopes to establish the Islamic super-state in some sort of a world war. Some analytics even fear that this conflict could be nuclear. The last step should be around 2020 when the Islamic super-state will be able to declare the victory.<sup>50</sup>

ISIL, on the other hand, has a plan that includes six steps to defeat the West, mainly the United States. The first phase is also called “awakening” in the time period between 2000 and 2003. ISIS called for operations against the United States in this period and aimed at provoking Western crusade against Islam. The second phase was “shock and awe” between 2004 and 2006 when ISIS focused on luring the United States into multiple theaters of war. The main goal was to establish support for terrorist actions by majority of Muslims and the Arab world as a whole. The third phase was called self-reliance in the period between 2007 and 2010. ISIS focused on inference with Iraq’s neighboring states and had a particular focus on Syria. The fourth phase was extortion during the period between 2010 and 2013. Its main goal to attack the United States and Western interests. The fifth phase was declaring the caliphate between 2013 and 2016

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<sup>50</sup> LAVERY, Keith R, „Al-Qaeda’s 7 Step Plan: The New World Order According to Osama bin Laden”, *Civilus Defendus* (27 April 2009) is available at: <https://civilusdefendus.wordpress.com/civil-defense/al-qaedas-7-step-plan/>

according to the Prophet Muhammed. The last phase is seen as an open warfare between 2017 and 2020, whereby Allah would grant final victory to ISIL.<sup>51</sup>

Last of all, it is necessary to mention how these organizations communicate. A company called Trend Micro analyzed alleged terrorist accounts to see how terrorists communicate between each other. Trend Micro has figured out that the most popular email account is Gmail which creates 34% of alleged accounts. The next one is Mail2Tor with 21%, Sigaint with 19%, and Yahoo with 12%. This company has focused also on instant messaging. The most popular program/app is Telegram, which is widely available to the public. Other instant messages are sent through Facebook, WhatsApp, and also Twitter. Twitter has stopped more than 125000 accounts that were used by terrorists. Terrorist organizations have, in addition, also customized tools to communicate and have even created their own. Encrypted email, for instance, called Mojahedeen Secrets, a mobile app called Tashfeer al-Jawwal, and an Android-based app called Alemarah are a clear example of these.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> MONROE-HAMILTON, „Leaked Intel Reveals ISIS’ 6- Step plan to destroy America”, Patriot Update (18 August 2015) is available at: <http://patriotupdate.com/leaked-intel-reveals-isis-6-step-plan-to-destroy-america/>

<sup>52</sup> REISINGER, Don, „Changing Face of Security: The Many Ways Terrorists Communicate Online” Fortune (3 May 2016) is available at: <http://fortune.com/2016/05/03/terrorists-email-social-media/>



## 5. CONCLUSION

This thesis has dealt with two terrorist organizations, Al Qaeda and ISIL, and has analyzed their narratives. Hence, the aim has been to compare the jihadist narratives, whereby the first part of the thesis has provided fundamentals in defining the topic, aims of the research, contribution to the field, the research questions, as well as theoretical and methodological background in presenting basic concepts, the methods, and finally sources used. Therefore, this particular part of the thesis has emphasized that only a few studies of the kind presented in this thesis exist, particularly so in the Czech Republic, that, in addition, raising public awareness in understanding and confronting jihadist narratives is crucial in proper fight against terrorist and other similar security threats, and that, last of all, this thesis does not only fill the aforementioned research gaps but chiefly is an invitation for other researchers to use both Content and Discourse Analysis as powerful research tools, particularly in the field of narrative research.

The following sections have introduced both Content and Discourse analyses that have been defined and then used as methods in analyzing the statements of both terrorist organizations, whereby most important words and expressions have been identified, with word maps, tables, and images created to provide in-depth explanations. This has been done so as to answer two research questions touching upon jihadist goals and strategies used by the two terrorist organizations in achieving their objectives. It has already been mentioned that the program *AntConc* has also been put to use to provide insight into the language in the given statements, as well as to allow for further analysis to be performed. This analysis has indeed shown considerable emphasis on Islam in the terrorist discourse (for instance, usage of the word “Allah”), and has shown that both Al Qaeda and ISIL have had similar goals and also similar strategies in achieving them.

Hence, considerable emphasis with both organizations has been put on religion, with numerous terms such as “Allah,” “Muslims,” “Jihad,” “Ummah,” and “Islam” used by both Al Qaeda and ISIL. This indicates abuse of religion, whereby phrases such as “grace of Allah,” “Allah’s will,” and “Allah knows” have been used repeatedly so as to influence the followers and establish strong bond between the groups’ aims/goals and Islam. Unfortunately, many (soldiers of) both organizations are blindly following their leaders and think that they are following orders of Allah. The reality is, however,

different. They are in reality following orders of terrorist organizations abusing religion for the sake of their own goals.

Furthermore, it is important to note that both organizations have labeled the same countries as enemies: the West/America, East, as well as Europe. The main enemy for both organizations is (the United States of) America, with many statements highlighting bad American leadership and supposed American involvement in hiding truth from the world about its own 'evil' actions and plans in international affairs. Thus, fight against America is highlighted and often repeated with both organizations.

Highlighting their support of Islam in being spread all over the world by inviting Allah's law to be implemented everywhere is central when it comes to aims of both organizations. This, for that matter, is to be achieved, as the thesis has shown, by their respective plans. For instance, Al Qaeda has the seven-step plan how to destroy the world. This plan points out that, with the attack of 11 September 2001, Al Qaeda wanted the United States to attack the Muslim world so as to influence Muslims to 'wake-up' and start fighting the West. The last step should be achieved in 2020 when Islamic state is to declare victory. ISIL, on the other hand, has a similar plan to defeat the West. This plan has six phases. The first one is the same as the one of AL Qaeda and even the last phase is pretty much revolving around the same ideas. There is, however, a small difference as ISIL thinks that it will gain victory sometime between 2017 and 2020.

Therefore, as the thesis has shown, there is an obvious connection between objectives/goals and strategies of both organizations as they are in line with Islamic law ruling the world and all Islam enemies defeated in the same time.

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Image 4: *Most common words*, Generated by Word it out [online]. [cit. 2017-03-20]. Available at: <https://worditout.com/word-cloud/create>



#### **6. 4. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

(abbreviations are listed in chronological order)

ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
MEMRI	Middle East Media Research Institute
CEP	Counter Extremism Project
CA	Content Analysis
DA	Discourse analysis

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<sup>53</sup> All tables presented further on have been done by the author herself and generated by AntConc.

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<sup>54</sup> All charts have been processed and generated by AntConc.