

Framing Daesh: Failures and Consequences

by Benjamin K. Smith, Andrea Figueroa-Caballero, Samantha Chan, Robert Kovacs, Erinn Middo, Lauren Nelson, Richard Palacios, Supriya Yelimeli, and Michael Stohl

Abstract

The actual structures and motivations of terrorist organizations like Daesh (aka. IS, ISIS, ISIL) are often invisible to the general public, and given their clandestine nature, often opaque to all external actors (including governments, militaries, and others). For the general public, the ‘picture’ of terrorism and terrorist organizations is often painted by the media, with media framing having a direct influence on the American public’s understanding of the global terrorist threat, and in turn on the policies and actions the public expects and wants in response. We argue that the central disconnect between the preferences of the American public and the actions of the current administration – a disconnect that we argue did not exist in relation to al Qaeda – can in part be explained by media framing of Daesh. We compare media representations of Daesh, and al Qaeda, with a specific focus on the time period between January 1, 2013 and December 31, 2014 and find that Daesh has been framed as an existential threat, derivative of its framing as a singularly motivated militaristic group. Because of this framing, there is an inherent disconnect between public perceptions of the threat posed by Daesh and the response to Daesh being pursued by the Administration.

Keywords: terrorism; framing; al Qaeda; Daesh; Islamic State (ISIL, ISIS, IS); media discourse

Introduction

In the past year, attacks in Brussels and Paris by terrorists linked to Daesh (the Arabic acronym for al-Dawla al-Islamiya al-Iraq al-Sham – Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), and in San Bernardino and other places by persons who either declared allegiance to—or were characterized as linked to—Daesh, have helped to increase the fear of terrorism as demonstrated in opinion polls within the United States. The Obama administration has consistently argued that its counterterrorism strategy is working and that the fight against ISIS will be won. The public clearly is not convinced that this is the case – Americans are more worried today that they, or a family member, will be a victim of terrorism than at any point since October of 2001.[1]

The structures and motivations of terrorist organizations like Daesh are often invisible to the general public, and given their clandestine nature, often opaque to all external actors (including governments, militaries, and others). For the general public, the ‘picture’ of terrorism and terrorist organizations is often painted by the media, with media framing having a direct influence on the American public’s understanding of the global terrorist threat, and in turn on the policies and actions the public expects and wants in response. We argue that the central disconnect between the counterterrorism preferences of the American public and the actions of the current administration can in part be explained by media framing of Daesh. In what follows, we compare media representations of Daesh, and al Qaeda, with a specific focus on the time period between January 1, 2013 and December 31, 2014 and find that, unlike the framing of al Qaeda, Daesh has been framed as an existential threat. The result of this framing is an inherent disconnect between public perceptions of the threat posed by Daesh and the response to Daesh being pursued by the Administration. The public’s dissatisfaction (and heightened fear of attack and rejection of the administration’s response to Daesh) is predictable, given the media framing of the organization as an existential threat, because given that framing, only the complete elimination, not management of the threat, is an acceptable outcome.

In what follows we explore how the disconnect emerges in media texts through the framing of Daesh as an existential threat driven entirely by a singular, ideological motivation. We begin by first identifying and

explicating the repertoire of attributes, and attribute frames, used by journalists when writing about Daesh and al Qaeda. Second, we pinpoint similarities and differences between the framing of the two organizations. Finally, we explore how attribute framing serves to identify the disconnect between public opinion and specialist opinion.

Constant Comparison

Utilizing a constructivist approach, we argue that social understanding of terrorist organizations is discursively derived and socially constructed.[2] As a result, the public's knowledge of these organizations is affected by the media and the media's public discussions of terrorism and terrorist organizations.[3] Thus, an examination of media mentions of al Qaeda and Daesh can in turn help further understanding of the public's perceptions of these groups. Our focus turns specifically to how journalists use frames in this context and how consistently the same frames are utilized. Of note, the higher the frequency of, or the consistency with which, a frame is used, the more entrenched it is in the public consciousness.[4] For example, if time and time again journalists use the same framing package in relation to identifying the motivations of al Qaeda or Daesh, the greater influence that frame has in the public's understanding of that organization.

There has been a substantial amount of work looking at the how terrorism is framed in terms of organizational structure, 'The War on Terror,' 'Islam,' or 'Islamic terrorism'; but only recently have researchers begun to explore the role that some groups play in the framing of other terrorist organizations. One such study, found that al Qaeda has dominated terrorism discourse and was the primary referent in print media for understanding terrorism.[5] Specifically, the study's findings indicate that not only has the use of al Qaeda as a frame shaped public discourse of terrorism but it has also limited public understanding of other terrorist organizations such as Daesh. As Hülse and Spencer point out, the projection of a known entity (i.e., Al Qaeda) onto an unknown entity shapes the perception of the latter.[6] Put simply, the use of al Qaeda as the primary referent for terrorism and terrorist organizations situates it as the lens through which we see, understand, and form opinions about terrorism. As a result, the attributes associated with al Qaeda are subsequently associated with other terrorist organizations.

The detriments of such approaches (i.e., of using al Qaeda as a blanket heuristic for all terrorist organization) have far reaching implications, especially when considering that al Qaeda is unlike most other terror organizations.[7] One difference is the scope of the terror threat; al Qaeda is atypical in the target of its attacks when compared to other terror organizations. Specifically, at the height of its activity, the group focused on international targets as opposed to domestic ones which are more common among other terror organizations.[8] Further, unlike Daesh, al Qaeda did not focus on initiating in the near future an Islamic state or manufacturing feelings of alienation in the Muslim diaspora but rather emphasized pan-Islamism and argued against the persecution of religious minorities.[9] [10] Moreover, experts have argued that the structural and functional components of the two organization are quite different, despite Daesh originally being formally affiliated with al Qaeda up until early 2014.[11]

Despite these critical differences, Smith et al. found that print media mentions of Daesh frequently discussed the group as an 'al Qaeda offshoot' or an 'al Qaeda-linked splinter group.' This association, although understandable given the time period of the texts under consideration (2013-2014), ignores important nuances between the two groups. Further, because the public's knowledge of terrorism and the best way to combat it are inextricably linked to al Qaeda-centric solutions, the administration's failure to adhere to the same antiterrorism strategies to combat Daesh results in less support for the adopted approach. Recent public opinion polling indicates that American's today are more displeased with the administration's handling of the terrorism threat more generally than at any point since 9/11.[12] Specifically, since Daesh entered the public consciousness there has been a marked decrease in the belief that the U.S. government has the capability of protecting itself from future acts of terrorism. When comparing recent polling data to data collected post

9/11, the contrast is illuminating; today, about 50% of Americans believing that the government cannot protect the country from future attacks whereas in March 2002, about 80% believed it was capable of doing so and as Gallup reported, the public's worry about terrorism rose this year by 12 percentage points, from 39% who expressed a great deal of concern in 2014 to 51% in 2015.[13] These data indicate that, in marked contrast to the immediate post 9/11 situation, there is great dissatisfaction within the public about the country's strategy in combating the modern terrorist threat.

The current administration's chosen 'contain and degrade' strategy in the fight against Daesh is a long term one and as a result the already low public support for the strategy will likely continue to wane with time, particularly, as is likely, when additional attacks occur. Thus, an examination of the main source of terrorist information for most Americans, the media, can help elucidate the manner in which these groups are discussed and perhaps further inform as to how they are conceptualized as separate entities that are also intrinsically linked together.

The Current Study

Given the distinctions between al Qaeda and Daesh laid out above and findings by Smith et al. demonstrating the role of al Qaeda in media texts, there is an apparent disconnect between reality and what is occurring in the print media. However, although previous work has looked at the use of al Qaeda as a frame for other organizations, there has, to our knowledge, been (a) no study examining the framing of other terrorism organizations and (b) no comparison between how these frames are manifest in the print media. The goal of the current study is to identify the differences in the framing of Daesh and al Qaeda, paying particular attention to how the framing of Daesh in the print media explicates the motivations and structure the terrorist group.

Methods

This study relies upon two sets of analyses, one focused on Daesh and the other focused on al Qaeda. As part of a larger research project, we developed a database of newspaper articles from the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* that discuss terrorism, terrorist organizations and/or terrorist actors. The database includes all print articles on these topics published in either paper between January 1, 1996 and December 31, 2015. We obtained articles by using the ProQuest News & Newspapers databases.[14] Stories included in our database were located using a very inclusive search command (available from the authors upon request). In both instances, the current analysis focuses specifically on newspaper articles published between January 1, 2013 and December 31, 2014. The goal in selecting this specific time period was to sufficiently limit the influence of the 2012 U.S. Presidential Election, while allowing us to investigate the impact of the emergence of Daesh.

Al Qaeda Sample

For the al Qaeda portion of the study, articles were included in our sample if the words Qaeda, Qaida, or Qa'ida were mentioned anywhere in the article's file (e.g., anywhere in the title, body text, photo caption, etc.).[15][16] This resulted in a sample of 2,734 unique newspaper articles, 1,498 from the *New York Times* and 1,236 from the *Wall Street Journal*. To create a set of coding units, each article was searched to identify instances of the term al Qaeda, using the same procedure we used to identify relevant articles. Each time al Qaeda was mentioned, the paragraph containing the reference was recorded into a separate database for use in our analysis, resulting in a collection of 6,332 coding units. The actual coding was conducted on randomly selected units from the database. Each article was given a randomly generated unique object identifier, so that coders did not know the date the article was published, nor the newspaper from which the article was taken.

Daesh Sample

For the Daesh portion of the study, articles were included in our sample if the words Daesh, Islamic State, ISIS, ISIL, al Qaeda in Iraq or AQI were mentioned anywhere in the article's file (e.g., anywhere in the title, body text, photo caption, etc.).[17][18] This resulted in a sample of 2,341 unique newspaper articles, 1,268 from the New York Times and 1,073 from the Wall Street Journal. To create a set of coding units, each article was searched to identify instances of the term Daesh (or any of the akas for the organization), using the same procedure we used to identify relevant articles. Each time Daesh was mentioned, the paragraph containing the reference was recorded into a separate database for use in our analysis, resulting in a collection of 12,552 coding units.[19] The actual coding was conducted on randomly selected units from the database. Each article was given a randomly generated unique object identifier, so that coders did not know the date the article was published, nor the newspaper from which the article was taken.

Coding of Articles

Coding was conducted using a constant comparative method, as described below.[20] The coding teams were led by the lead author, who was present for all coding sessions, and a rotating team of twelve undergraduate research assistants, who were provided academic credit as compensation for their work.[21] The coding process was identical for both al Qaeda and Daesh. The coding teams were instructed to only code articles where the organization of interest (i.e., Daesh or AQ) was the subject of the coding unit, or where removing the reference to the organization would fundamentally alter the meaning of the coding unit. This limited the coding to articles that were serving to shape the applicable attributes of the organization, rather than simply instances where the organization of interest was being used to frame other organizations.

Although coders were provided with paragraphs containing references to either Daesh or al Qaeda, the coders were instructed to use the sentence in which the reference appeared as the unit of analysis, rather than the paragraph as a whole. Coders were instructed to note for each sentence how the organization proper was being described by the author, in as much detail as possible, and to note key words that were explicitly used as descriptors or modifiers of the relevant organization in the sentence in which the reference appeared. Paragraphs were provided to give additional context when needed.

The coders conducting this study relied upon three basic assumptions to guide their analysis. First, it was assumed that communication through language is based on the idea that words have a shared meaning within a set context; second, that the process of encoding information into language requires making choices from among the options available in grammar, and finally that the choices made while encoding information into language, though not always conscious, are deliberate. From this, we can state that the coders' primary concern was in identifying how the use of framing packages,[22] in context, served to communicate wider ideas, identities and attitudes. Coders were asked to note for each sentence the function the framing package played in creating meaningful narratives around the issues, events and actors being depicted. Additionally, coders sought to make interpretative judgments as to why certain choices were used to shape meaning, instead of others, and the implications of these choices.

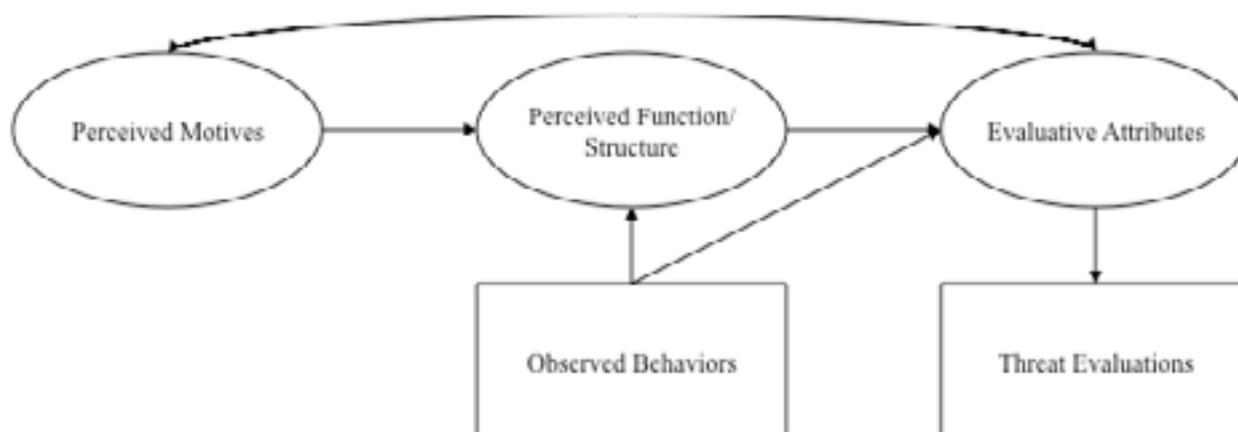
As prescribed by Glaser and Strauss,[23] each time a coder looked at a new randomly selected unit, it was compared to all previous units in an attempt to group units into similar categories. Once a framework of categories was developed, theoretical properties for each category (e.g., deep descriptions for each frame package) were noted. From that point forward, units were compared both to other units in the sample and to the theoretical properties of the frame package. As the units were coded, and as the theoretical properties took shape, categories were compared to each other to identify overlap, and units in each category were compared to identify instances where a category was too encompassing. This continued until the list of frame packages reached theoretical saturation. Theoretical saturation was reached after coding approximately 17%

of the al-Qaeda coding units ($n \approx 1,050$), and after coding approximately 14% of the Daesh coding units ($n \approx 1,700$).

Results

In our investigation of the framing of al Qaeda and Daesh, we observed a complex reciprocal relationship between the frames used to describe each organizations' motives, functions / structure and evaluative attributions, in concert with the documented (or observed) actions of each organization. The basic relationship is shown in Figure 1. The core of the argument given by this model is that, for any organization, behaviors are shaped by goals, or motives. To understand the motives of an organization is to understand most other parts of the organization as well. While it may not be possible to know the actual motives of complex organizations like Daesh or al Qaeda,[24] we believe that *perceptions* of motives play a large role in shaping public understanding of the organizations, as seen through the framing of motives.

Figure 1. Graphical Depiction of an Emerging Theoretical Model for Understanding the Framing of Daesh and al Qaeda



Legend: In this model, perceived motives are mutually caused by, and affects, evaluative attributions. In turn, perceived motives directly influence the perception of the organizations function / structure. Observed behaviors also directly influence perceived function / structure, as well as having a direct effect on evaluative attributes. In this model, threat evaluations are seen as a type of evaluative attribution (e.g., evaluative attributes is the latent variable, whereas threat evaluations is the observed indicator), and as such solely a function of evaluative attributes.

Continuing our discussion of the model, we argue that perceptions of motive, along with observed behaviors of the organization, drive perceptions of functional and structural attributes of the groups; in other words, how the organizations are perceived as operating, and the types of actions prescribed to them. Derivative of these perceived functional and structural attributes, and in relation with perceived motives, are evaluations of the organization, among these evaluations of the type of threat posed by groups like Daesh and al Qaeda.

There is not enough space in this article to fully discuss all of the attribute frames and classes of attribute frames used by the *Wall Street Journal* and *New York Times* when discussing al Qaeda and Daesh. Instead, our focus in this section will be on highlighting the core areas of distinction – frames used to characterize one organization, but not the other – which are relevant to the model shown in Figure 1, including the framing of each organizations (a) motives, (b) function / structure, and (c) evaluative attributions.[25]

Motives

As argued above, the way an organization is framed has a strong influence on the framing of the organization's function / structure, and the framing of the organizations' evaluative attributes. In congruence with the arguments and empirical findings of other researchers – showing that frames in text are manifestations of the writer's cognitive schema – we argue that these frames are indicators of the underlying perceptions of the organization held by the writer.[26] As such, it is our contention that the perceptions of the organizations' motives directly influence perceptions of the organizations' function / structure, and have a reciprocal relationship with evaluations of the organizations. Given this line of reasoning, it is especially striking that the strongest area of differentiation between al Qaeda and Daesh is in the framing of their motivational attributes.

Al Qaeda has been a functioning organization since at least 1996, and has been cemented within the general American consciousness at least since the attacks of September 11, 2001. As such, it is perhaps unsurprising that there is, relatively speaking, a robust representation of their motives. We were able to identify four distinct and entirely separate motivations differentially applied to al Qaeda: (a) idealistic / ideological motives, (b) Islamic / religious motives, (c) anti-American / anti-western motives, and (d) confrontational / reaction seeking motives.[27]

In contrast to al Qaeda, Daesh has only been in the public consciousness for a relatively short period of time, perhaps explaining the relatively simple understanding of their motives seen in the way they have been framed.[28] In fact, across the nearly 1,000 coding units we analyzed, Daesh was framed as having only one real motive: the creation of an Islamic utopia. Often, there was cursory acknowledgment that this motive was derivative of a larger ideological motive. However, in contrast to al Qaeda, the ideological motives of Daesh were almost never explicated and were solely manifest within the predominant framing of the organizations motive, the creation of the Islamic State. Derivative of Daesh's primary motive, we were able to identify two perceived sub-motives, which we are tentatively calling an expansionist motive, and a theistic motive. Importantly, these should not be considered motives on their own; these are best understood as two separate manifestations of the organizations primary motive.

Functional / Organizational Attributes

We next address frames which focus upon the function and organizational structure of al Qaeda and Daesh. In reference to the organizational structure, these frames often use organizational metaphors to link together separate organizations, or to describe the way the organization self organizes. The importance of organizational attribute frames cannot be overstated, in that identification of an organizations inter/intra-organizational structure serves to define the range of actions of which the organization is help to be capable of. In contrast (albeit equally important) are the functional identify attribute frames, which are used to shape an understanding of *how* the organization operates.

The framing of an organizations function / structure is often determined by the types of action being performed by the organization. However, as argued above, the framing of each organization's motives also helps drive the choice of functional / organizational attribute frames. This is especially clear in the texts describing Daesh. Derivative of the expansionist sub-motive, Daesh is differentially framed as having (a) a military function, (b) a government or administrative function, or (c) a criminal–or cartel like–function. Alternatively, and derivative of their theist sub-motive, Daesh is differentially framed as having (d) a proselytizing–or religious–function, (e) a branding function, or (f) a terrorist function.

Comparing this to al Qaeda, there are some rather stark differences, although there are also a number of similarities. The biggest difference between the framing of Daesh and al Qaeda is the large emphasis in the framing of al Qaeda of the way the group is organized – whether they are framed as a network structure,

a hierarchical-type corporate structure, or a franchise-type corporate structure. We did not observe any of this type of discourse when looking at Daesh. This may be because the organizational structure of Daesh is unknown, or because there is no interest among journalists in explicating Daesh's organizational structure. [29]

In addition to the framing of al Qaeda's organizational structure, we also observed four types of functional attributes attributed to the group: (a) a paramilitary function, (b) a government / corporate function, (c) a nefarious / shadowy function, and (d) a movement function. Looking specifically at these functional attributions, we begin to see some similarities with the framing of Daesh, but almost always with very slight differences. For example, al Qaeda is framed as a movement, whereas Daesh is framed as a brand. Both types of frames are similar, in that they discuss the more ephemeral functions of the organizations, but they are also starkly different in their connotations. Similarly, while we found Daesh framed as having a military function, we observed that the framing of al Qaeda was more characteristic of a paramilitary. Again, both types of frames are similar, in that they imply the use of an organized fighting force, but distinctly different in their connotations – a paramilitary is often perceived as less capable, more loosely structured, and more covert than traditional militaries.

Evaluative Attributes

The evaluative judgement attribute allows the author of a text to ascribe a “moral judgement” to both the “causal agents” of the news story (e.g., al Qaeda), the actions taken by the causal agent and the “effects” of said actions.[30] Evaluative judgements are attributed to these organizations through a range of mechanisms, both explicit and implicit, including metaphor, association and allusion. These frames, in contrast to the other classes of frames discussed so far, almost never stand alone in a text; assignment of an evaluative judgement attribute was usually done in connection with another attribute (e.g. motivation). As argued previously, functional / organizational attributes, in connection with perceived motives and observed behaviors, help to drive evaluative attribute framing.

Our investigation found that the evaluative attribute frames used when describing the actions of Daesh are much more contested and diverse than those attributable to the fact used when describing the actions of al Qaeda (see Table 1). This may be the result of al Qaeda being in the public consciousness for much longer than Daesh, and therefore there may be a more strongly shared conceptualization of the group.

Table 1. *Evaluative Attribute Frames Applied to Daesh and al Qaeda*

Evaluative Attribute Frames	
<i>Daesh</i>	<i>Al Qaeda</i>
Evil / Barbarians, monsters	Evil / Bad
Extremist	Extremist
Propagandists	Terrorists
Cult-like	Criminal
Complicated	
Modern (in capabilities and philosophy)	
Not serious	
Exemplar of Islam / Islamists (not holistic)	
Threat Evaluations	
Ideology as intrinsic threat	Extraordinary threat
Existential threat to...	Enemy
Status quo (especially within the region)	Destabilizing entity
United States	
West (e.g., Europe)	

Looking at Table 1, there are some clear differences in the evaluative attribute framing used to describe each group - for example, while both groups are framed as ‘evil’, the choice of language used when discussing Daesh tends to be much stronger (e.g., barbarians, monsters) than when discussing al Qaeda. However, many of the most interesting differences may be seen through which frames are applied to Daesh, but not to al Qaeda. For example, the members and leaders of Daesh are framed as being propagandists. This is clearly derivative of the branding function, which in turn is driven by the organizations theistic sub-motive.

Evaluative Attributes – Threat

Beyond the differences in evaluative attribute framing already discussed, there is one area that warrants further specific focus, as it applies directly to the question of why there is a disconnect between the general public and the US administration as to how best to combat Daesh: perceptions of threat. Both organizations are framed as being a threat, but the extent to which they are a threat—and the way in which they are a threat—is starkly different. In the case of al Qaeda, it is framed primarily as an extraordinary threat, and as an enemy. This framing implies that they are a group worth combating, to be sure, but it pales in comparison to the framing of Daesh.

Over and over again, we see discussion of the extent to which Daesh threatens to upend the status quo. The group’s ideology itself is framed as being an intrinsic threat, something not found in the articles which discussed al Qaeda. Additionally, whereas al Qaeda is seen as an extraordinary threat, Daesh is primarily framed as an *existential threat*, as it pertains to the ephemeral ‘status quo’ (especially within the Middle East), and more specifically an existential threat to the United States and the West in general. While the framing of al Qaeda implies the group must be combated, the framing of Daesh as an existential threat implies they must be eliminated or else they will remain a threat to the very existence of the United States.

Conclusion

The goal of this article has been to explicate the differences in the attribute framing of Daesh and al Qaeda, in order to gain additional insight into the continuing disconnect between the American public and the United

States administration about how best to combat the threat posed by Daesh. We have argued that the framing of these two organizations is driven by a complex reciprocal relationship between the frames used to describe each organizations' motives, functions / structure and evaluative attributions, as well as the documented (or observed) actions of each organization (as shown in Figure 1).

We focused our reporting of the results on the key differences between the framing of al Qaeda and Daesh. This began by noting the sharp contrast between the motive attribute frames used to describe Daesh as compared to those used to describe al Qaeda. We then showed how these sharp differences help to drive additional differences in the way each organizations function and structure are framed. We next discussed the derivative evaluative attribute frames, which again show hard contrasts between the two organizations, and which again demonstrate a more concrete and nuanced understanding of al Qaeda than is shown for Daesh. Most importantly, we discuss the key differences in the framing of each organization as a 'threat': whereas al Qaeda is framed as an extraordinary threat and an enemy, Daesh's ideology is framed as an extrinsic threat, while the organization is framed as an existential threat.

This difference is important, because it sheds insight into why the public is not satisfied with the current administrations strategy of 'contain and degrade,'[31] and why this dissatisfaction was not present as it pertained to the war against al Qaeda (specifically the war in Afghanistan). Further, it may help to explain why the vitriolic language of opponents of the current strategy has had such staying power. Speaking at the Naval Institute's 2015 Naval History Conference, retired Marine Corps Gen. John R. Allen, who at the time was Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL, described the goals of the U.S. this way:

"What we have to do is isolate the organization. That will require that we can contain it – and containing it is in many respects a military function - but containing it also means containing its access to the international financial system. Containing its access to resources. And they have to pay their people. They have to buy food.... It is a comprehensive effort to contain, degrade and then defeat the organization, not just a military one."[32]

If we accept the argument that the media has an influence on public perceptions, then the results of this study indicate that it will always be difficult for the administration to convince the public that the current strategy for combatting Daesh, as described by Allen, is a reasonable solution. If the group is an *existential threat*, as the media so often communicates to the public that Daesh is, then there is only one real solution: eradication. Thus the discussion of carpet bombing the entire region, rounding up all those who many have any sympathies to the group, etc. will always have greater positive resonance.

To be clear, the authors of this article are not of the opinion that Daesh actually is an existential threat. It is our position that while the organization must be combated, only a long-term strategy in line with General Allen's description of contain, degrade and then defeat, will work. However, given the framing of Daesh in the American media, it is hardly surprising that much of the US public seems to disagree. The problem, as indicated by the results of this study, is that the current policy of contain and degrade is not a natural fit to perceptions of the organization as an existential threat. In addition, where the predominate framing of Daesh is as a singularly motivated organization with a military function, statements like the one made by Allen (and others in the Administration)–arguing for a more holistic approach to combating Daesh, a solution not solely focused on a military solution–are anathema, because they do not fit with the perceived nature of the threat posed by the group. If the administration believes that their preferred policy really is the best policy for combating Daesh, then it must do a better job of framing the threat and response to the media as well as communicating more clearly to the public why and how their policy addresses the threats posed by the organization. This requires communicating a more nuanced understanding of the organization which explains why Daesh is not an existential threat and this begins with communicating a more nuanced

understanding of the group's motives. Unless this happens, there is little hope of obtaining the public's support for a long-term strategy.

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Notes

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- [14] Our database does not include articles published in the online version of either paper, or in magazines published by either paper (e.g., *The New York Times Magazine*), unless those articles also appeared in some form in the standard print edition of the paper.

- [15] In order to be as inclusive and complete as possible, we used wildcard search terms, which allow us to find articles with any version of these spellings / names, e.g. Qaeda, Qaedàs, Qaida's etc.
- [16] For this investigation, we did not limit the sample to only 'news' articles, opting instead for being as inclusive as possible.
- [17] In order to be as inclusive and complete as possible, we used wildcard search terms, which allow us to find articles with any version of these spellings / names, e.g. Daesh, Daesh's, ISIS's etc.
- [18] For this investigation, we did not limit the sample to only 'news' articles, opting instead for being as inclusive as possible.
- [19] It is worth pointing out that there are almost twice as many Daesh coding units than al Qaeda coding units, despite there being more articles about al Qaeda than Daesh. This is mainly because Daesh was mentioned more frequently per article than al Qaeda was.
- [20] See also: Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1967).
- [21] One of the five undergraduate coders who worked on the al Qaeda coding team is also a co-author, while five of the seven undergraduate coders who worked on the Daesh coding team are co-authors.
- [22] E.g., Baldwin Van Gorp, "The Constructionist Approach to Framing: Bringing Culture Back in," *Journal of Communication* 57, no. 1 (March 1, 2007): 60–78; URL: doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2006.00329.x.
- [23] B.G. Glaser and A.L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*.
- [24] Cynthia Stohl and Michael Stohl, "Secret Agencies: The Communicative Constitution of a Clandestine Organization," *Organization Studies* 32, no. 9 (September 1, 2011): 1197–1215; URL: doi:10.1177/0170840611410839.
- [25] For a more detailed discussion see: Benjamin K. Smith, Andrea Figueroa-Caballero, and Michael Stohl, "Al Qaeda in the American Consciousness: Communicative Construction of the Terrorist Actor through Attribute Framing" (66th International Communication Association Annual Conference, Fukuoka, Japan, 2016); URL: <https://www.icaheadq.org/conf/index.asp>
- [26] Bertram Scheufele, "Framing-Effects Approach: A Theoretical and Methodological Critique," *Communications* 29, no. 4 (2004): 401–428; Bertram T. Scheufele, "Frames, Schemata, and News Reporting," *Communications: The European Journal of Communication Research* 31, no. 1 (March 2006): 65–83; URL: doi:10.1515/COMMUN.2006.005; Dietram A. Scheufele and Bertram T. Scheufele, "Of Spreading Activation, Applicability, and Schemas: Conceptual Implications for Measuring Frames and Framing Effects.," in *Doing News Framing Analysis: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives*, Paul D'Angelo and Jim A. Kuypers (Eds.) (New York; London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 110–34; Dennis Chong and James N. Druckman, "Framing Theory," *Annual Review of Political Science* 10, no. 1 (2007): 103–26; URL: doi:10.1146/annurev.polisci.10.072805.103054; Dhavan V. Shah et al., "The Interplay of News Frames on Cognitive Complexity," *Human Communication Research* 30, no. 1 (2004): 102–120; URL: doi:10.1111/j.1468-2958.2004.tb00726.x.
- [27] For a more detailed discussion of these frames, see: Smith, Figueroa-Caballero, and Stohl, "Al Qaeda in the American Consciousness: Communicative Construction of the Terrorist Actor through Attribute Framing."
- [28] Arguably only since the August 2014 beheading of American journalist James Foley, although Daesh began to garner significant media attention in April 2013 following adoption of the moniker 'Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham' in connection with rapid military gains in northern Syria.
- [29] This is somewhat typical of clandestine organizations, see: Stohl and Stohl, "Secret Agencies."
- [30] R. M. Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 52; URL: doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x.
- [31] See, e.g.: Eckstein, "Allen: Global Coalition Making Progress in 5 Lines of Effort Against ISIS," *USNI News*, October 14, 2015; URL: <https://news.usni.org/2015/10/14/allen-global-coalition-making-progress-in-5-lines-of-effort-against-isis>.
- [32] *Ibid.*