

The Integration of Religious Elements into ISIS Textbooks

Olivier Arisais, Professor at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), Canada.

Olivier Arisais is a professor in the Department of Didactics at the Faculty of Education of UQAM and Scientific Director of the Canadian Observatory on Humanitarian Crises and Assistance (OCCAH). His research is divided into two main areas. First, they focus on the didactics of the humanities and social sciences at the elementary and post-secondary levels. Secondly, he is also an expert for education in emergencies. In this field, his research focuses on educational initiatives in refugee camps, child protection through socio-emotional learning and education under armed groups or totalitarian proto-states. Finally, Professor Arisais regularly works as a research consultant for several international organizations, including the education sector of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Mathieu Guidère, Professor at the University of Paris 8, France.

Mathieu Guidère is a professor at the University of Paris 8, France. He is aggregate in Arabic, a PhD from the Sorbonne University, and is Director of Research at and Director of the Department of Arab Studies. A translator and Islamologist, he has written some thirty books on the Arab language and culture, but also on radical Islamism and global terrorism.

Abstract

This article explores ISIS's concept of education and teaching. More precisely, we examine how religious elements were integrated into textbooks written and published by the group. We then present the results of codifying religious elements found in textbooks. We conducted a precise, targeted study of religion-integrated teachings through a didactic and critical lens. The textbooks analyzed in this article were published by ISIS. Printed copies were found and recovered by our team in a number of schools around Kirkuk after its liberation. The dogmatism of these teaching methods is apparent because it meant not to develop students' critical thinking.

Keywords

ISIS ; curriculum ; textbooks ; dogmatism ; religion-integrated teachings

Introduction

Since the early 2000s, integration has been one of the primary education strategies introduced to curricula in science, medicine, and the arts (Beane, 2016; Krug & Cohen-Evron, 2000). This integration takes many forms, ranging from "awareness" of other disciplines to "multidisciplinarity," "harmonization," "coordination," "correlation," and "complementarity" between disciplines (Harden, 2000). Integrated education has been wending its way into Western curricula in a variety of ways depending on the subject, but it has always remained secular, never including religion as a structural component.

But in countries with a state religion—for instance, in Muslim member countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC, 57 members¹)—the religious aspect is fundamental to curriculum design and central to its implementation as well as to the evaluation and review of educational programs (Che Noraini & Langgulung, 2008).

The trend of integrating religion into education and learning is taken to the extreme in radical groups and organizations in the Muslim world, such as Islamic State (ISIS). The group, which originated in Iraq, succeeded in instituting an educational system in areas under its control between 2014 and 2017, imposing integrated teachings based on a specific religious doctrine heavily marked by violence (Guidère, 2017).

In this article, we will first explore ISIS's concept of education and teaching before examining how religious elements were integrated into textbooks written and published by the group. We then present the results of codifying religious elements found in textbooks. We conducted a precise, targeted study of religion-integrated teachings through a didactic and critical lens.

1. Corpus and Methodology

The textbooks analyzed in this article were published by ISIS and distributed in northern Iraq between 2014 and 2017. All of the material was posted online by ISIS itself. Printed copies were also found in a number of schools around Kirkuk after its liberation. In fact, some schools still have materials from the time when they operated under ISIS. The corpus was also supplemented by digital copies of textbooks found online.

Together these documents form a set of teaching materials that can be divided into two categories: subjects of a purely religious nature (textbooks on Doctrine, the Qur'an, Tradition, the Life of the Prophet, and Islamic Education) and traditional subjects (textbooks on science, mathematics, history, geography, physics, etc.). The corpus analysed correspond to this second category (traditional subjects) for the five years of primary school as proposed by the reform of the school pathway by the ISIS.

Religion plays an important part in both categories of textbooks, and its role merits an in-depth analysis to help us understand the methods and objectives of ISIS's integrated teaching.

1.1. Content Analysis Method

We chose to employ a content analysis method to reveal the most appropriate units of meaning (Gauthier and Bourgeois, 2016). We use the definition given by Berelson (1971), which states that content analysis is “a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication.” We worked to “detect and quantify ideas present in the corpus, which is typically formless” (Gauthier and Bourgeois, 2016).

All of the documents were analysed in their original Arabic version by the researchers. We conducted both quantitative and qualitative studies of the corpus to collect the religious elements sprinkled throughout the teachings. We collected data in two ways.

¹ Visit the OIC's website at <https://www.oic-oci.org/home/?lan=en>.

The first method focused on collecting religious references. To do so, we worked from a list of quotations from the Qur'an (segments from the Qur'an), as well as from a list of quotations from prophetic traditions (segments from the hadith).

The second method focused on collecting religious concepts. We did this by working from a list of the most frequently used religious terms and a list of teaching objectives for each subject.

Both data collection methods helped characterize in a detailed manner the religious elements used in the textbooks. Below is a table summarizing the collection methods and a list of the data analyzed.

<i>Study Type</i>	<i>Collection Type</i>	<i>Content Analyzed</i>
Quantitative study	References	Number of Qur'an quotations
		Number of quotations by the prophets
	Word frequency	Number of full words
		Most common categories
Qualitative study	Concepts	Concepts from the Qur'an
		Concepts from the Tradition
	Teleology	Teaching objectives
		Related pedagogical activities

Table 1: Chart analyzing religious elements in textbooks.

The data could be collected manually, but it would take a very long time. Instead, we used document analysis software to help us count word frequency. One of the rare pieces of software² capable of efficiently handling Arabic is SDL MultiTerm, terminology software for professional translators. It contains statistical features that allow the user to explore documents through the words they contain. In particular, it can count words in standard Arabic, determine their frequency, and offer potential equivalents by drawing from a translation memory (Kockaert & Steurs, 2015).

Below are the main results of the semi-automated³ collection of religious elements.

1.2. Coding Religious Elements

² There are many types of software capable of handling Western languages, but as a Semitic language, Arabic has a specific (root- and scheme-based) structure that makes it more complicated for existing software on the market to manage. That is why we chose to use a computer-assisted translation tool that includes Arabic and to utilize its statistical calculation and terminology extraction features.

³ The content was analyzed semi-automatically because as things stand currently, there is no automatic corpus analysis software able to handle complex, specialized Arabic texts, especially ones containing elements of a religious and/or ideological nature.

The number and diversity of ways in which religious elements are integrated into ISIS's textbooks must be coded rigorously. We chose to do so using a "mixed approach" that employs a deductive technique that uses abstract categories to generate data, and an inductive technique that constructs general categories out of concrete data. The first method required the use of ontology in the field, while in the second, what mattered was the quality of the tallying.

Data collection performed prior to analysis shows that the religious elements most relevant for coding are the Qur'an (surahs and Qur'anic verses), the hadith (oral traditions and practices), and the exegesis (written and verbal commentary).

Each religious element can be categorized in multiple ways. First is the nature of the religious element, that is, how it is qualified based on its place of origin. For example, each chapter of the surahs in the Qur'an would be categorized by whether it was revealed in Mecca or Medina, which affects its content (whether it is a warring verse or a peaceful one).

Then there is the position of the religious element, meaning where it falls in the general structure of the lesson or textbook. For example, the position of a Qur'anic verse may be "introductory" and appear at the beginning of the lesson, "median" and appear during lecture, or "conclusionary" and appear at the end of the lesson as a word of explanation.

Finally, there is the meaning of the religious element, that is, its purpose or function in a given educational sequence. For example, the exegesis can aid in "comprehension" (the commentary sheds light on the subject), "reproduction" (the commentary repeats the content of the lesson), "transformation" (it modifies the subject content), "clarification" (it explains the subject) or "redirection" (it refers the reader to sources deemed appropriate on the subject).

By making use of specialized ontologies, we can clarify the nature or meaning of other religious elements. For example, the nature of the traditions (authentic *versus* apocryphal) can be specified using classic categories defined internally by Muslim theology. But this coding method would leave too many boxes unchecked, given that ISIS's textbooks are limited to using only traditions deemed "authentic" or on which there is "consensus" within Sunni Islam (traditions reported by Bukhari and Muslim).

See **Table 2: Coding religious elements found in textbooks** in the Appendix.

1.3. Quantitative Analysis of Religious Elements

Let us take the example of the science textbook for grade 1 of primary school (MASCIEEN 1). *From a quantitative point of view*, we can create the list below.

The most frequently used words in the textbook are: Allah (God); *al-Nabi* (the Prophet); *Ta'ala* (the Powerful); *al-Hadith* (the Tradition); *al-Salaf* (the Righteous Predecessors), *al-Jihad* (Holy war), *al-Tawhid* (oneness), *al-Kufr* (infidelity), *al-Wala* (allegiance), *al-Bara* (rejection), *al-Janna* (heaven), and *al-Nar* (hell).

Among the most frequent segments of text, there were two types of sequences.

These quotations from the Qur'an (Verses): Qur'an 3:96; 24:27; 16:80; 16:72; 96:1-5; 5:6; 95:4; 46:15; 2:60; 26:80; 17:40; 11:6; 16:69; 29:41; 2:26.

And these quotations by the Prophet (Hadith): Bukhari 39:2; Bukhari 13:1; Ahmad: 46:1.

In other ISIS textbooks, data collection revealed the presence of the following religious elements, with the same elements *integrated* and *reused* from one textbook to another:

<i>Qur'anic Verses (Aya qur'aniyya)</i>	<i>Prophetic Traditions (Hadith nabawi)</i>
4:48; 25:23; 2:30; 15:30–31; 15:34–35; 15:36; 15:76–40; 2:38–39; 43:22; 11:40; 16:36; 48:23; 5:3; 3:85; 43:22; 2:98; 26:192–195; 15:9; 7:54; 4:36; 20:8; 10:31; 51:56; 2:256; 7:180; 42:11; 87:1; 20:5; 10:31; 27:65; 2:255; 47:19; 43:86; 49:15; 43:14; 29:1–3; 39:14; 2:165; 38:5; 37:35–36; 31:22; 2:256	Muslim (p. 10, 25, 25, 28) Bukhari (p. 26, 26) Ahmad (p. 28) Consensus (p. 27)

Table 3: Quotations from the Qur'an and from prophetic traditions occurring in all textbooks.

<i>Concept</i>	<i>Theme⁴</i>
Allah, oneness, worship, Islam, jihad	God/Allah
Allah, oneness, creation, angels, submission, jihad	The individual
Allah, oneness, creation, allegiance, rejection, salaf, jihad	Community
Allah, oneness, final judgment, destiny, deity, sovereignty, names, attributes, salaf, jihad	Faith
Allah, oneness, destiny, conditions, submission, obedience, rejection, truth, salaf, jihad	Relationships

Table 4: Religious themes and concepts occurring most frequently in the textbooks.

<i>Nouns</i>	<i>Verbs</i>	<i>Adjectives</i>
Allah, oneness, faith, Islam, final-judgment, destiny, divinity, sovereignty, names, attributes, conditions, submission, obedience, surrender, rejection, fight, truth	Is (Allah), creates, resurrects, knows, possesses, questions, governs over (the universe)	Unique, incomparable, unequaled, unattainable, all-powerful (Allah)

Table 5: Grammatical categories occurring most frequently in the textbooks.

The lists and comparisons of religious elements (quotations from the Qur'an and the Prophet, concepts and themes, grammatical categories) show that the elements all stem from a single source and actually come from Doctrine textbooks (for grades 1 through 5 of primary school). It becomes clear to us that a database of religious references must have been created so that they could then be integrated and used over and over again by authors of textbooks for each subject.⁵

In any case, collecting religious elements demonstrates the benefits of critical analysis and of comparing the data to teaching methods used in ISIS's schools.

⁴ These themes can be used in other textbooks via biographies, such as the biography of the Prophet Muhammad (*sira*) or in stories about martyrs or animals (bees, ants, spiders, etc.).

⁵ We are in the process of reverse engineering the database, which will be highly useful for teachers and educators who work with children who are victims of ISIS's system to help remedy the cognitive damage caused by its teachings.

2. Critical Analysis, Overview, and Discussion

A quantitative and qualitative analysis of textbook content reveals a particular approach to education and teaching based on redundant religious elements. No matter the subject, education is presented as a form of adoration of God (*`ibada*). In the sciences, the search for knowledge is considered “the best way to understand God and his creation” (the universe and its creatures). In other subjects, it is explicitly stated in the textbooks that knowledge and understanding should help students learn to “fear God,” and this objective is consistently supported by quotations from the Qur’an, the most frequent of which is the verse Qur’an 58:11⁶.

2.1 Legal Standing of Lessons

This unusual approach to education results in different legal standings for each subject. For instance, knowledge of the “religious sciences” is considered “compulsory” (*wajib*). From a theological point of view, such knowledge is presented as an individual obligation (*fard `ayn*), that is, an action required of every believer living in the regions controlled by ISIS. In other words, failure to follow religious teachings is punishable by law and leads to public punishments, generally flogging.⁷

On the other side of the coin, understanding the “secular/non-religious sciences” is presented as a collective obligation (*fard kifaya*), meaning that it is not required of all believers; rather, it may be achieved by only some believers, while others engage in jihad (holy war). This idea is legitimized by a popular prophetic tradition that says that “the quest for knowledge is a form of jihad” (*Talab al-`ilm jihad*). The primary objective is to train “soldier-students” (*talib/taliban*).⁸

As a result of this theological and legal distinction, each grade of school is subdivided into two sections: a religious (*shar`iyya*) section and a secular or scientific (*`ilmiyya*) section. However, textbooks may be used in both sections. For example, in grade 1 of primary school, there is a single textbook for geography, but there are two separate textbooks for history. The two textbooks differ in *degree* rather than in *nature*. The difference resides in the *quantity* of religious information included in each textbook, and not the *quality* of the information itself.

2.2 Education in Space and Time

Of the religious elements integrated into textbooks, the number and importance of mentions of prayer spaces in the books demonstrate that ISIS’s preferred educational space is undeniably the mosque. However, there is some conflation in the texts and in other teaching materials between “educational spaces” and “religious spaces.” The apparent objective of the textbooks’ authors is to

⁶ It should be noted that the “educational intent” is not much different from the one stated at the first World Conference on Muslim Education: “The ultimate aim of Muslim education lies in *the realization of complete submission to Allah* on the level of the individual, the community and humanity at large” (First World Conference on Muslim Education. Ashraf, 1985, p. 4).

⁷ The usual punishment for failure to fulfill this particular duty is 80 lashes, administered in public.

⁸ The idea of training “student-soldiers” (*talib/taliban*) dates back to the Middle Ages and is the response to the Christian training of “monk-soldiers” such as the Knights Templar. From that perspective, ISIS is only reviving a well-known medieval practice that has fallen out of favor.

“turn the mosque into a school/university” (*Jami`a*) and to “turn schools into mosques” (*Jami`*). In Arabic, the two words are very similar (*Jami`a/Jami`*)⁹.

Teaching activities and objectives also reveal not only that teaching is centered around the mosque, but that the mosque itself is the center of all education. By way of example, in the first lesson in the science textbook (grade 1 of primary school), titled “Our Mosques,” the instructions for the science teacher are clearly religious in nature: “Instructors must ensure that the meaning of the holy verse [24:27] is applied in class and at school. They must also teach students how to apply it outside of school. Instructors must explain the meaning of the Qur’anic verse by referring to *Ibn Kathir’s Commentary on the Qur’an*” (MASCIEEN 1:9).

The theme of “Mosques” comes up twice in Lesson 3, with a stated objective of “having students discuss the importance of mosques” (MASCIEEN 1:13). This objective is confirmed by a prophetic tradition frequently cited in the textbooks (hadith reported by Bukhari): “He who attends mosque is assured a place in heaven by God” (MASCIEEN 1:13). The theme is illustrated by example phrases such as “At mosque, we perform our compulsory prayer” and “At our mosque, we learn to read the Qur’an correctly” (MASCIEEN 1:13).

Mosques are discussed again on page 59, even though the lesson is about health (title: *al-Siha*). In the first text box, students read “Mosques are the house of God,” “Our mosque is clean,” and “Part of worshiping God is keeping the mosque clean” (MASCIEEN 1:59).

This massive integration of religion into educational sequences is also seen in activities that are a mandatory part of the course but that are not directly related to the subject (e.g., science). For instance, students must thank God (MASCIEEN 1:33) for giving them a body (p. 33), for giving his creatures eyes (p. 35), for mouths (p. 37), and for feet (p. 41).

Finally, in certain education-related activities, students are asked to “pray in school” (MASCIEEN 1:23) or even “perform their ablutions in class under the supervision of the instructor” (MASCIEEN 1:30).

These numerous and varied activities mean that teaching time in ISIS’s schools was at the mercy of religious activities, since prayer times were to be respected at all cost (five times per day¹⁰). No matter the subject or time of day, classes must stop when the call to prayer is heard. Classes resume afterwards if there is time left (prayer takes about half an hour, including ablutions). Otherwise, students move on to the next class, without finishing the lesson that was interrupted. The textbooks instruct teachers to always cede priority to religious activities, regardless of the subject.

The religious schedule always takes precedence over the school schedule—in terms of the daily timetable, by dictating the times of school activities; in terms of the weekly schedule, by designating Friday, the day of the main prayer, as the weekly day of rest (instead of Sunday, as is the case in regular schools); and in terms of the yearly calendar, by timing school vacations to coincide with the last 10 days of the month of Ramadan (the Muslim month of fasting—not a holiday).

⁹ There are still “university mosques” in the Muslim world today. The best known are the University of al-Qarawiyyin in Morocco, Al-Zaytuna Mosque in Tunisia, Al-Azhar University in Egypt, and the Islamic University of Madinah in Saudi Arabia.

¹⁰ In Islam, prayer times are defined by the position of the sun in the sky and therefore change and vary. But the number of prayers is always the same (five times a day).

2.3 Curriculum Structure

The authors of ISIS’s curriculum distinguish between two types of primary school programs. The first is called “Fundamental Programs” (*al-mawad al-asliyya*) and includes the following subjects: Doctrine, Qur’an, Tradition, Life of the Prophet, Calligraphy, Arabic, Islamic Education, and Physical Education.

The second is called “Complementary Programs” (*Al-mawad al-takmiliyya*) and includes the following subjects: science, mathematics, history, geography, computer science, and English.

Based on a well-known Muslim story called “the allegory of the cave,” in which a spider saves the Prophet Muhammad from certain death¹¹, ISIS’s curriculum is explicitly designed as a “spiderweb,” as shown below:

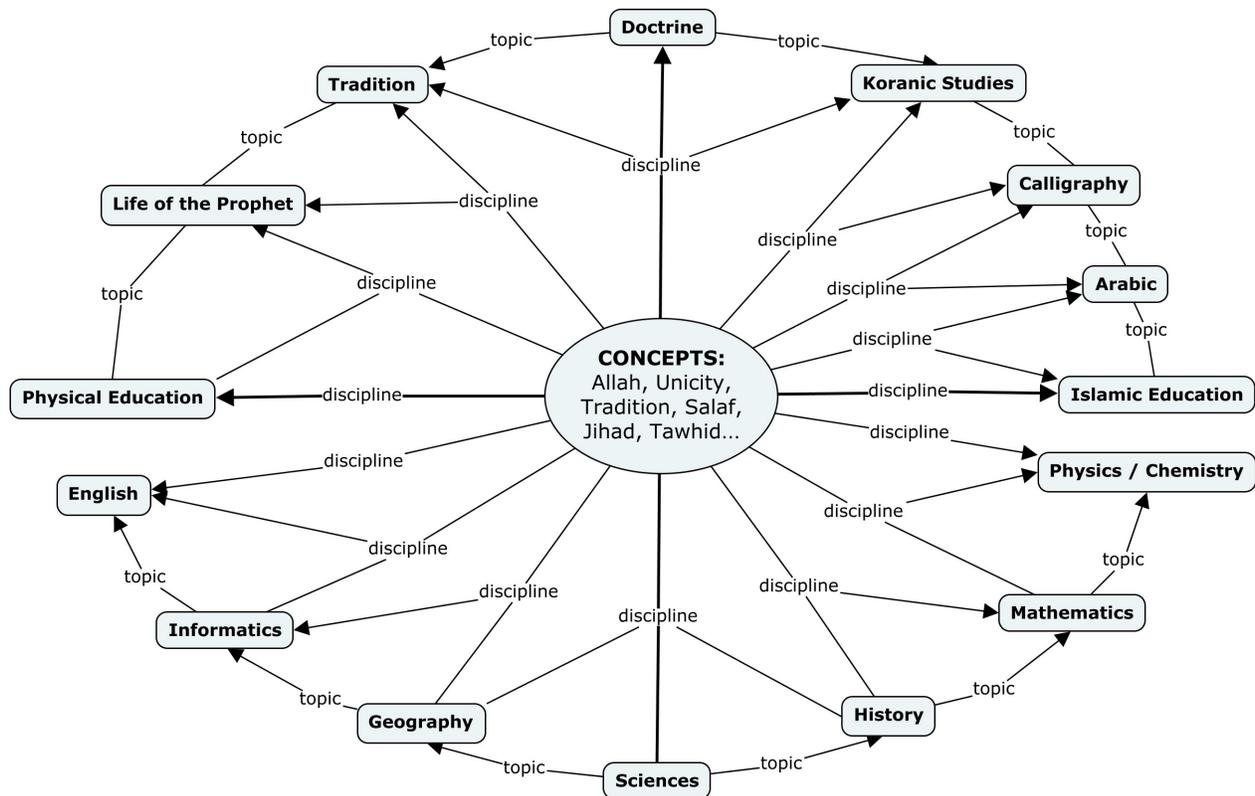


Figure 1: Integration of lessons using the “webbed” model.

As we can see, the spiderweb is centered around two axes (one vertical and the other horizontal) with the fundamental subjects “up above” (with an arrow pointing up towards the heavens) and the complementary subjects “down below” (with an arrow pointing down towards the earth). The

¹¹ As the story goes, the Prophet hid in the Thawr cave, pursued by enemies of Mecca who wanted to kill him. The story is mentioned in the Qur’an (9:40) and is recounted in detail by the theologian Ibn Kathir in his Commentary on the Qur’an.

relationships between subjects are themed in nature, with an indication of a hierarchy in each category of subjects. The top part of the web, “Religious Doctrine” (or creed), is considered the most important subject and the basis for other related subjects, while the lower part of the web, “the Sciences,” forms the basis for other secular subjects and non-religious material.

In reality, behind the spiderweb is an integrated teaching model that was used by regular teachers trained in it under the “old regime” (Iraqi and Syrian government). It was a classic teaching model (Fogarty, 1991; Harden, 2000), but under pressure from ISIS it was adapted in such a way that the integration revolved exclusively around “religious concepts” (at the center of the web in the diagram).

In this model, a subject is considered a “complementary program” if it contributes to the development of the conceptual theme of the “Fundamental Programs.” Its complementary nature can be analyzed through multiple aspects of the programs: through lesson titles, topics discussed, quotes cited, references used in lessons, the order of sequences and activities, intertextuality, exams, etc.

As a result, each subject is assumed to contribute to the conceptual theme in accordance with its method of integration, which can take the form of religious quotations in lessons or references to religious and theological authorities.

This integration of religious elements can serve purposes such as introducing a lesson, explaining its content, supporting a fact or legitimizing an activity. A list of elements integrated and an analysis of their function in each textbook helps us place each subject on a religious integration scale in the curriculum.

2.4 Integration Scale of Religious Elements

In ISIS’s textbooks, religious elements are integrated into non-religious subjects using a variety of methods and functions that allow us to sketch the outlines of a subject integration scale¹²:

<i>Transdisciplinary</i> (Sciences)
<i>Interdisciplinary</i> (History/Geography)
<i>Multidisciplinary</i> (Mathematics)
<i>Complementary</i> (Physics/Chemistry)

¹² With this perspective, the “integration ladder” introduced by Harden (2000: 552) based on the work of Fogarty (1991: 61-65) is a highly useful tool, even if he applied it to medical teachings instead of religious teachings.

Correlation
(Computer Science)

Figure 2: The “rungs” of the integration scale of religious elements.

Let us take the case of primary school science textbooks. In these textbooks, the religious elements are mainly integrated *into the instructions* given to the teacher. The instructions cut across disciplines and are not tied to a single topic or subject. They provide a general teaching framework and are to be taught to students using situations chosen by the teacher and presented in each textbook.

In other words, it is up to the teacher to construct the intended meaning using instructions provided in the textbook, with the final objective of the science textbooks being “to come to know Allah Almighty through truthful concepts that students study in science program units laid out for the primary school curriculum. [...] To make students understand that Allah Almighty is the Creator and benefactor of his creatures and that he gave them all sorts of blessings. He is the one who created us, who has nourished us, quenched our thirst, and who made us Muslims” (MASCIEEN 4:4).

The result of these instructions is the suppression in all textbooks of any allusion to the evolutionary theory of natural origin, the evolution of living organisms or natural selection. They are replaced by a theist and creationist vision in which God is at the origin of all creation and all life in the universe. In all of ISIS’s science books, God is explicitly said to be “the origin of the laws of physics and science” (MASCIEEN 4:4).

In history textbooks, the integration of religious elements is not visible in the instructions, but rather *in the concepts*, which are presented in an interdisciplinary manner. The books focus primarily on specific topics and concepts as the center of learning. In particular, this is the case for the concept of “Salaf” (righteous predecessors), found in both the general textbook introduction (“following the way of the Salafs”) and in the introduction to each subject. There exists also a conceptual integration of the concept of oneness (*al-tawhid*), especially when describing historic events related to the birth of Islam or the history of the Prophet Muhammad.

Religious stories and true historical facts are combined in a sort of “religious history” that supposedly encompasses all history lessons. In the tables of contents in history books, general history is not identified as such, and historical events are retold from a religious point of view, by picking and choosing events and historical figures, focusing on certain periods, manipulating dates and facts, etc.

In geography, the result of integration is the explicit ban on teachers’ use of traditional regional markers (i.e., country borders). They are also prohibited from making references to geo-historical concepts considered non-Muslim, especially those having to do with “homeland,” “nation,” “nationalism,” “patriotism,” etc. The instructions even emphasize the obligation to replace these concepts with others from “ISIS,” “the Caliphate,” “*Umma*” (the Muslim community), etc.

In mathematics textbooks, the integration of religious elements is not seen so much in the concepts as *in the images* that refer to them, images that are used in more than one discipline (same

background image). Indeed, there is a semiotic representation of oneness (*al-tawhid*), with constant references to the Qur'an.

There is also a *semiotic integration* of the concept of jihad via frequent, militarized images of weapons, assault rifles, airplanes, guns and revolvers, and tanks and rockets, (e.g., MAMATH 1:11, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22, 34, 35, 36, 55, 57, 58, 59, 65, 66, 67, 68, and 69).

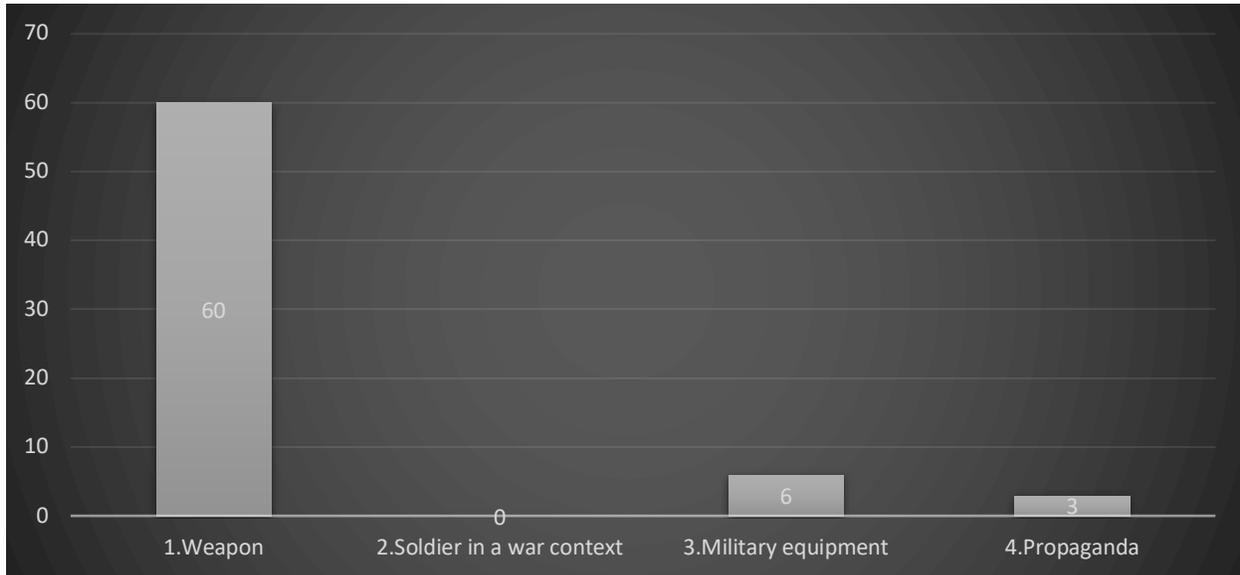


Figure 3: Distribution of warlike images in the first grade mathematics textbooks.

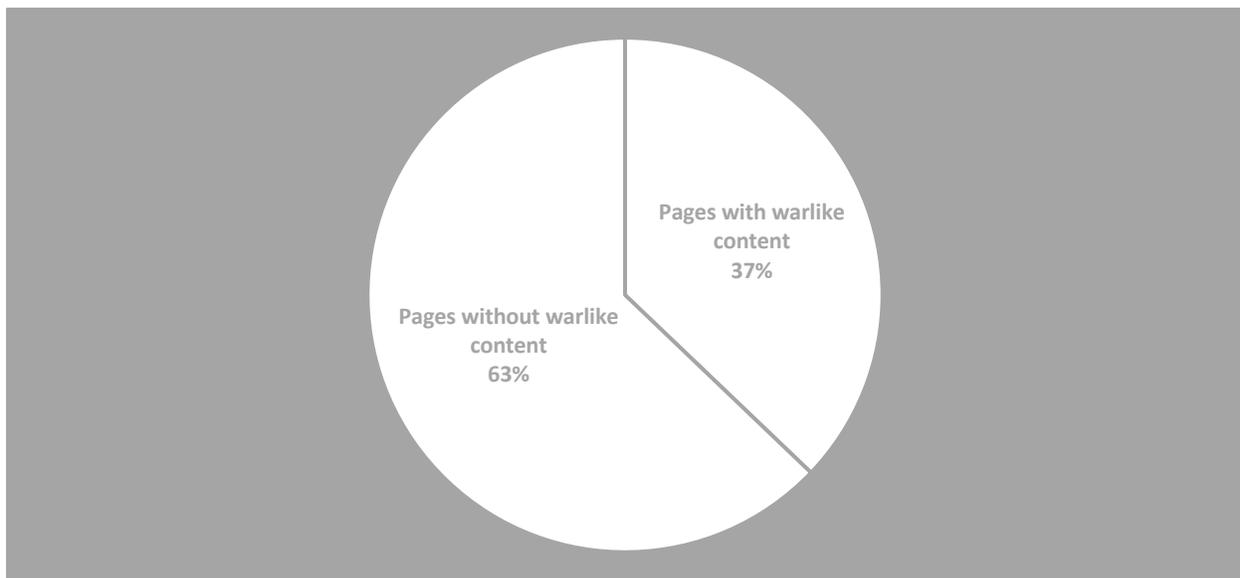


Figure 4: Proportion of pages containing warlike images in first grade mathematics textbooks.

In mathematics lessons, these themed images (or image themes) are used as a jumping-off point for lecture and a basis for students' problems and homework. For example, a problem may ask the

student to “calculate the number of people killed by an ISIS commando out of the total number of infidels.” Learning is thus not only a question of mastering skills; it is also a matter of integrating the contextual meaning of images related to the problem—including, in this case, the appropriate names of types of weapons and attacks. This means that instead of teaching, for example, abstraction skills through mathematics, lessons remain centered on practical skills of a military kind.

This aspect is all the more insidious in that the subject’s contribution to the general jihadist objective is not stated explicitly in mathematics textbooks. Instead, it is transmitted implicitly through images and exercises associated with the images. We also noted the absence of any reference to ideas other than “holy war”, references which normally abound in mathematics, such as calculations of interest rates, bank transactions, and calculations related to elections and democratic systems.

In physics and chemistry textbooks, religious elements are integrated using a dual method that combines topics typically related to the subject with themes that are exclusively religious. For example, in a lesson on water, in the first part the teacher discusses the physical properties and chemical composition of water. But in the second part, religious quotations are inserted on the divine gifts of water and its importance to life and living creatures. In this way, the subjects (physics and chemistry) contribute to a common theme that is religious in nature (gifts and divine blessings).

Finally, in computer science textbooks, religious elements are integrated by “correlation.” Lessons remain focused on computer programming topics, but students meet on Fridays, the day of the main prayer, to work together on a group programming project using the software Scratch. In this way, “computer science homework” given to students is “correlated” with “religious homework,” both in terms of the final product (purification by ablutions, prayers of thanks to God) and in the way they are carried out, since the projects are presented in front of everybody, in public, in exactly the same way as the main prayer.

Conclusion

Coding the religious elements helped us tease out two essential aspects of the education provided by ISIS in its schools: that the education is integrated with and centered around select religious elements from the Salafi doctrine of Sunni Islam, and that the ideology and aim of the education is action-oriented. The “tasks” are oriented not towards educational goals but ideological and political ones. Of course, this represents a paradigm shift in comparison to the previous education system in public Syrian and Iraqi schools, which were dominated by nationalist and Baathist ideology, but at the same time it is a step backwards in education and hearkens back to medieval Muslim teaching methods.

The main finding points towards the dogmatic nature of the educational curricula developed under ISIS-controlled territory in both religious and non-religious subjects. The integrations of the religious element in the textbook shows that the Qur’an and its content are considered as a form of “Scientific Truths.” Indeed, the Qur’an is seen as a book of natural, human and social sciences. It is a curricular model designed around religious concepts and implemented through disciplinary themes. The discipline itself is considered a tool because it contributes to the development of the conceptual theme of the so-called core programs which is a doctrine that is part of Sunni Islam. A doctrine marked by Salafism which is mainly oriented towards jihad, with a strong takfirist

propensity and finally with a caliphal focus. It is an indoctrination curriculum developed. In this educational system, education and teaching are at the heart of major theological, political and ideological challenges. Textbooks are major tools for indoctrination and radicalization.

Even if it is possible that results obtained in extreme contexts might very well be restricted to their own contexts. However, we think that, through our analysis and our results might be useful to all educators willing and striving to develop and maintain the quality of education, whether in the West or not.

Our results showed that the ISIS teaching methodology seems to be downright traditional and stems from the premise that instructors are delivering the “holy word” from their “pulpits.” Their role is to transmit “divine knowledge” to students, who must memorize and regurgitate it. The method of presentation is guided first and foremost by the Qur’an, which is considered a book of natural, physical, and social sciences. Finally, student exams are based on a system of rewards (*al-jaza’*) and punishments (*al-`iqab*), both here on earth (e.g., prevention of marriage) and in the afterlife (e.g., promises of houris¹³). The dogmatism of these teaching methods is apparent in its complete lack of any “task” meant to develop students’ critical thinking or scientific remove. That is why it is important to study ISIS’s textbooks in detail: to be able to create a “counter-curriculum” designed not only compensate the education received, but also to build a foundation for critical learning in the return to formal education in Syria and Iraq.

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¹³ A houri is a beautiful young woman, especially one of the virgin companions of the faithful in the Muslim Paradise.

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Appendix:

1 QUR'AN (also spelled Koran)	Category	Sub-category	Coding	Definition
1.1. SURAH (chapter)	1.1.1. Nature	1.1.1.1. Meccan (<i>makkiyya</i>)	QSN-Mec	Chapter revealed in the city of Mecca (before 622)
		1.1.1.2. Madaniy (<i>madaniyya</i>)	QSN-Med	Chapter revealed in the city of Medina (after 622)
		1.1.1.3. Mixed (<i>mukhtalita</i>)	QSN-Mix	Chapter whose revelation is controversial
	1.1.2. Position	1.1.2.1 Order in the Qur'an (<i>Raqm al-sura</i>)	QSP-Ord	Surah number/Qur'an chapter
	1.1.3. Meaning	1.1.3.1. Dogma (<i>ibadat</i>)	QSM-Dog	The surah/chapter is predominantly dogmatic
		1.1.3.2. Rite (<i>mu'amalat</i>)	QSM-Rit	The surah/chapter is predominantly practical
		1.1.3.3. Judgment (<i>ahkam</i>)	QSM-Jug	The surah/chapter is predominantly legal
1.2. VERSE (segment)	1.2.1. Nature	1.2.1.1. Unequivocal (<i>muhkam</i>)	QVN-Uni	The verse is formulated clearly/explicitly
		1.2.1.2. Equivocal (<i>mutashabih</i>)	QVN-Equ	The verse is formulated abstrusely/ambiguously
		1.2.1.3. Revoked (<i>mansukh</i>)	QVN-Rev	The contents of the verse were replaced by another
	1.2.2. Position	1.2.2.1. Introductory	QVP-Int	The verse comes at the beginning and introduces the lesson
		1.2.2.2. Median	QVP-Med	The verse comes in the middle of the lesson
		1.2.2.3. Conclusionary	QVP-Con	The verse comes at the end and concludes the lesson
	1.2.2. Meaning	1.2.2.1. Question	QVM-Que	The verse expresses a question about the topic
		1.2.2.2. Answer	QVM-Ans	The verse offers an answer to the topic
		1.2.2.3. Affirmation	QVM-Aff	The verse expresses an affirmation on the topic
		1.2.2.4. Clarification	QVM-Cla	The verse offers clarification on the topic
		1.2.2.5. Judgment	QVM-Jud	The verse expresses a judgment on the topic

2 TRADITION (HADITH)				
2.1. VERBAL	2.1.1. Nature	2.1.1.1. Divine (<i>qudsi</i>)	TVN-Div	“The Prophet says: Allah says...”
		2.1.1.2. Elevated (<i>marfu`</i>)	TVN-Ele	“I heard the Prophet say...”
		2.1.1.3. Sunni (<i>Sunni</i>)	TVN-Sun	Tradition reported by Bukhari, Muslim or Ahmad, or arrived at by consensus
	1.2.2. Quality	1.2.2.1. Authentic (<i>sahih</i>)	TVQ-Aut	Tradition that leaves no doubt, reported by Bukhari or Muslim
		1.2.2.1. Controversial (<i>da`if or other</i>)	TVQ-Con	Tradition on which there is no consensus, that was not reported by Bukhari or Muslim
	2.1.2. Meaning	2.1.2.1. Comprehension	TVM-Com	Tradition that aids in understanding the topic
		2.1.2.2. Reproduction	TVM-Rep	Tradition that repeats the contents of the topic
		2.1.2.3. Transformation	TVM-Tra	Tradition that transforms the contents of the topic
		2.1.2.4. Clarification	CVM-Cla	Tradition that offers clarification on the topic
3 EXEGESIS (TAFSIR)				
3.1. Written	3.1.1. Nature	3.1.1.1. Salafi (<i>Salafiyya</i>)	EWN-Sal	Commentary written by a Salafi perceived authority (Ibn Kathir)
		3.1.1.2. Sunni (<i>Sunniyya</i>)	EWN-Sun	Commentary written by a Sunni authority (other than Ibn Kathir)
	3.1.2. Meaning	3.1.2.1. Comprehension	EWM-Com	Commentary that aids in understanding the topic
		3.1.2.2. Reproduction	EWM-Rep	Commentary that repeats the contents of the topic
		3.1.2.3. Transformation	EWM-Tra	Commentary that transforms the contents of the topic
		3.1.2.4. Clarification	EWM-Cla	Commentary that offers clarification on the topic
		3.1.2.5. Redirection	EWM-Red	Commentary that refers the reader to sources deemed appropriate on the topic

Table 2: Coding religious elements found in textbooks.