

Hijrah of Our Time: Islamic Concept of Religious Emigration in Contemporary Salafism

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Jan Klik* 

University of West Bohemia, Czech Republic

Abstract

This study presents a comparison of the religious-legal concept of the hijrah in the approach of schools of Salafism, which are the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and the Muhammad al-Albani's and his disciples' teachings. The first, theoretical section of the submitted material, intends to provide a contextual ground on which the analytical chapter of this article is built up. The subsequent analytical section focuses on the breakdown of Salafist's take on the hijrah through a qualitative content analysis of several texts that include, on one hand, the production of Muhammad al-Albani and his students, and on the other hand, the magazines Dabiq and Rumiya, which were published on behalf of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. The reason for choosing these particular authors and their conception of hijrah as the main research intention of the presented study is that on one hand the Islamic State represents the latest entity that conceptually grasped the topic and, above all, made it one of the pillars of its general ideology and on the other hand teachings of al-Albani are extremely influential in mainstream Salafism. The analysis showed that in general, both scrutinized Salafist schools are similar in the main principles, ie. both consider the hijrah to be an ongoing religious duty. However, they differ in details and also in the emphasis on violence, with the Islamic State emphasizing that hijrah and jihad are two stages of a single process, with the only possible destination for the hijrah being Islamic State territory.

Keywords

emigration, Islam, Salafism, Abode of Islam, Abode of War, Islamic State, Dabiq, Rumiya, Muhammad al-Albani



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Introduction

The history of thinking about hijrah, about what it is and what it is not, about its legal requirements and spiritual significance, has been going on throughout the existence of Islamic civilization. We find two environments in which methodologically based views on hijrah were primarily born. The first environment was the work of “official” clerics and lawyers and the second was the movements and Islamic states, which aiming at reforming society and establishing “ideal” Islamic order reached for hijrah and incorporated it into their ideological corpus.¹ It was in these movements

* **Corresponding Author:** Jan Klik, Department of Historical Sciences, Faculty of Arts, University of West Bohemia, Sedláčková 38, 301 00 Pilsen, Czech Republic. E-mail: jklik@ksa.zcu.cz.

where the need naturally arose to bring as many followers as possible into their ranks and for this purpose hijrah was widely used as the means of persuasion and religious argumentation. On the contrary, in the works of theorists we find only cursory mentions and vague definitions of hijrah without a more detailed legal analysis and discussion. For most of Islamic history hijrah seems to be of peripheral professional interest of the clergy and used more widely as a practical tool when a situation arose that called for a solution concerning the first Muslim community and its struggle for survival with the forces of disbelief that surrounded the first Muslims.²

With the advent of the 20th and especially the 21st century the situation changed and hijrah became the main topic of publications by intellectuals, especially the Salafists. The so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (hereinafter referred to as the Islamic State) is a modern movement using to a great extent the religious-ideological conception of hijrah for its purposes. The aim of the following lines is to shed light on its position when it comes to the issue of the emigration of Muslims. If we want to examine the thinking of the ideologues of the Islamic State, we must necessarily have a look at the platform through which these ideologues systematically expressed their views. This platform is the magazines *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, which were published on behalf of the Islamic State, and therefore we attribute the ideas expressed there to the Islamic State. The ideology of the Islamic State is generally referred to as one form of so-called Salafism, and if we use the classification of Tariq Ramadan (Ramadan 2005: 25), then we are talking about literalist Salafism. This school is characterized by interpreting the primary religious texts (the Quran and the Sunnah, or set of narratives of the deeds of the Prophet Muhammad) in accordance with their literal meaning. According to literalist-minded Salafists intellectual abilities serve only to understand the text itself not to speculate on its “deeper”, allegorical meaning. However, the Islamic State is not the only representative of literalist Salafism at present that has commented on the issue of hijrah. The second such stream of Salafist thinking is represented by Muhammad al-Albani and his disciples. Incorporating them into our debate on the approach of contemporary literalist Salafism to the issue of hijrah is a necessary precondition for achieving a degree of coherence and foresight to avoid the simplistic notion that Salafism is an enclosed monolith lacking a plurality of views and a certain internal diversity. There is also a warning – the present article deals mainly with the view of Salafist-minded authors on the phenomenon of hijrah. This does not mean, however, that this school of Islamic thought is the only one who speaks of the subject. On the contrary! Even today we find a diverse range of authors holding liberal, conservative or mystical views (Madelung 1991). The fact remains, however, that in modern history hijrah has been theoretically, as well as in its practical application, mostly concerned by the literalist Salafism.

Another reason why attention is paid to literalist Salafism in this treatise is that it is this school of Islamic thought that, among other schools, has currently the greatest potential to affect the security situation in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries. While the Islamic State appeals to radicalized muslims, al-Albani’s Salafism appeals to a much wider Salafist audience including pietists (Wagemakers 2016), and it is therefore illuminating to address the similarities and differences between the two forms of literalist Salafism in their approach to Islam.

The hijrah debate in the texts of Islamic theorists, on the social networks of modern online preachers, in radical periodicals and, last but not least, in Muslim households, focuses in particular on whether a Muslim living in a non-Muslim country is obliged to move to a Muslim country

¹For example the Almohad dynasty in Morocco, the Sokoto Caliphate and the Tijiani state in West Africa and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

²As an example, here are some theorists who have studied Hijrah throughout history: Ibn al-Arabi, Muwaffaq ad-Din Ibn Qudamah, Ibn Taymiyyah, Muhammad al-Shaybani, Muhammad Zakariyah al-Kandhlawi and Mahmoud Shaltut.

or not. However, the subject of discussions is also what a “Muslim country” actually means, i.e. what requirements it must meet in order for emigration to it to be religiously justifiable.

Based on the above mentioned, it is clear that the hijrah, as a religious-legal concept, has an extraordinary overlap in international relations, can affect the coexistence of Muslims and non-Muslims, and as such is a useful tool for various religiously motivated movements that take advantage of unresolved scholarly debates about the precise definition of the hijrah.

The submitted paper aims to analyze the take on the hijrah in Salafist Islam, specifically the approaches of the Islamic State and the school of Muhammad al-Albani, a deceased prominent Islamic scholar.

Hijrah is one of the ideological pillars of the Islamic State. A deeper insight in the Salafist debate about its significance will give us another layer of understanding of this movement and its “theological” weapons that were successfully deployed and attracted many Muslims to join the organization. This paper cannot answer why those people willingly left their homes to join a war far far away but intends to illuminate what arguments were brought up by the Islamic state. Arguments that shall be better understood if compared with a stance of a related school of thought, but one that is different in its scope and shape and doesn’t engage in violent activities.

Although hijrah is a fundamental theme of Islamic theology and law, it is surprising that “Western” Islamology hardly deals with it. Exceptions to this “trend” are the contributions of Wilferd Madelung (Madelung 1991) and the extensive study of Zafarul-Islam Khan (Khan 1997). However, both the books *Hijra: Religious Emigration in the History of Islamic Countries* (Mendel 2006) and the treatise *Rethinking the Islamic Hijra: A Religious Paradigm or an Ideological Instrument of Political Action* (Mendel 2009) by Miloš Mendel deserve special attention. Mendel’s research in the field of the Islamic concept of emigration is unprecedented in European Islamology and from a heuristic point of view facilitates the work of any researcher who decides to stay on the beaten path.

Hijra and its relation to the Islamic concepts of Dar al-Harb and Dar al-Islam as presented by the Islamic State have recently been addressed in a paper by Matan Uberman and Shaul (Uberman, Shaul 2016).

The papers of Peter Wignell and his team (Wignell et al. 2017), Aziemah Nur (Nur 2016), Eitan Azani, and Francesco Dotti (Azani, Dotti 2021) deal with the propaganda of the Islamic State in its media platforms.

The importance of hijrah in Islam

Hijrah³ of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina is recorded in several versions, which differ from each other only subtly, especially with emphasis on the individual actors of the story. The oldest surviving account of the event can be found in a letter from Urwa Ibn az-Zubayr written down at the request of Caliph Abd al-Malik. The core of this letter is a well-known event: the pagan Meccans are in conflict with the Prophet Muhammad, who criticizes their deities, whereas Muhammad’s followers, the Muslims, are beginning to be subjected to oppression. To protect his fellow believers the Prophet encourages them to emigrate to Christian Ethiopia.⁴ The

³The word hijrah is a verbal noun (so-called masdar) from the root h-j-r and the verb derived has the meaning to leave, to separate. Possible masdars from this verb are the hajr and the hijran, which can be found holding the above-mentioned meaning in the Quran (verses: 4.34, 19.46, 25.30, 73.10, 74.5.).

⁴The third stem of the verbal root “hajara” means to leave the original residence in favor of a new place or a new community. In the Quran it is the meaning of leaving the territory of unbelievers and resettling in the territory of believers or any place that serves as a refuge from religious persecution. Thus, this verb is also translated as emigrating and the active participle muhajir then means emigrant, while the derived word “mahjar” means the place to which emigration takes place.

Muslims will remain here under the protection of the Abyssinian ruler for several years and will return when conditions in Mecca seem to begin to improve. At the same time some residents of the Jathrib oasis are converting to Islam, the so-called Aqaba Treaty is being negotiated, and after a new wave of oppression in Mecca the Prophet is urging the Muslims to emigrate to Yathrib. When the time comes for the prophet himself to leave, he informs Abu Bakr, who remained with him in Mecca, that they will travel together. Abu Bakr buys two camels and offers one to Muhammad, who insists on paying for it. They hide together in a remote cave, where they are brought supplies and information from Mecca by Abu Bakr's son. Afterward, both emigrants set out on a journey to Jathrib through uncharted territory, accompanied by a hired guide. In the end, they successfully reach their goal.⁵ This prophetic Hijrah was considered such a significant event that it became the beginning of the Islamic calendar (Raven 2018). Caliph Umar Ibn al-Khattab received a complaint that the documents he was sending were not dated and it was not possible to determine their order. So the Caliph had the people gathered and told them, "*Hijra has distinguished truth from falsehood, so use it to date*" (al-Bablawi 1985: 174). Some of the prophet's companions suggested the year of the prophet's birth or the year of the prophet's death as the beginning of a new calendar, and others advocated the year of the beginning of the prophetic mission. Without finding consent to any of these proposals the dating based on the date of the occurrence of Hijrah which was known obtained general recognition (al-Bablawi 1985: 174).

As for the arguments concerning the continuity or discontinuity of hijrah several mutually contradictory hadiths are used. After the Prophet emigrated to Medina, hijrah became compulsory for Muslims living in Mecca (and yet the Prophet made an exception in several cases, such as allowing his uncle al-Abbas to remain in Mecca) while the source material shows that Muslims from other parts of the Arab peninsula were not obligated to perform hijrah (Khan 1997: 60–62). After Mecca was annexed to the territory of Islam or the Dar al-Islam, the duty of hijrah ended. In his sermon after the conquest of Mecca the Prophet Muhammad declared from Kaba's stairs: "*There is no hijrah after the conquest [of Mecca], but Jihad and good intention remain. If you are called to fight, then go forth*" (Khan 1997: 64). The proponents of the opposite opinion base their argument on a series of similar hadiths, one of which says: "*Hijrah will not cease until repentance ceases and repentance will not cease until the sun rises in the west.*" In another hadith, the prophet says: "*Hijrah will not stop as long as there is a fight with the enemy*" (Khan 1997: 64–65).

There are several verses of a legislative nature in the Quran whose content touches on various aspects of hijrah.⁶ It also seems important that in seven cases hijrah is mentioned in the Quran in connection with jihad.⁷ This phenomenon became the argument for the view that hijrah is a prerequisite for subsequent Jihad (Khan 1997: 24). Since the later interpretations see hijrah as

⁵In contemporary Arabic the word hijrah means any individual or mass emigration. In order to distinguish it from this general use a historical event that has entered Islamic history as a major milestone is called al-Hijrah an-Nabawiyah or prophetic Hijrah, in Arabic. The emigration of Muslims to Ethiopia is often referred to as Hijrat al-Habasha. The form al-Hijratan then means both emigrations, to Ethiopia and to Medina.

⁶The word hijrah is present in the Quran through its various derivatives (participles, masdars, verbs in relative clauses) thirty times. In six cases derivatives are used in the sense of avoiding something. The verb "kharaja", which translates as to abandon, to leave something, also has a similar meaning as "hajara". The Quranic use of the word also suggests the meaning of emigration. It is worth noting here that one of the possible translations of the word Exodus into Arabic is Khuruj. The fact that the Prophet Muhammad himself was an emigrant is expressed in the Quran by the verb "hajara" only once and indirectly through the enumeration of the requisites that a woman must have in order for the prophet to take her as his wife: "*O Prophet, We have made lawful for you all your wives whom you have given their dowers, and those whom you own, out of the captives Allah has given to you as spoils of war, and daughters of your paternal uncle, and daughters of your paternal aunts, and daughters of your maternal uncle, and daughters of your maternal aunts, who have migrated with you*" (verse 33:50).

⁷Verses 2:218, 8:72,74–75, 9:20, 16:110, 22:58.

a compulsory act of emigration from a territory where a Muslim is unable to fulfill his religious duties, they emphasize verse 97 of Surah an-Nisa: “*Surely the ones whom the Angels take up, [while] they are unjust to themselves – [to them] [the Angels] say, in what [condition] were you? They say We were deemed weak in the earth. They [the Angels] say, was not the earth of Allah wide so that you [could] have emigrated in it? So, the abode for those is Hell, and what an odious Destiny!*” In other words, a persecuted Muslim who did not perform hijrah would not be able to make an excuse after his death unless (as verse 98 of the same Surah suggests) he was in a completely clueless situation. Later interpreters of this verse came up with various hypotheses about the so-called circumstances of revelation (Kamali 2005: 44–45).⁸ They can be summarized as two basic opinions (Khan 1997: 26). The first circle of Ulama, Muslim clerics, claims that hijrah was a duty limited in time by the historical context of emigration from Mecca to Medina, and after Mecca became part of the Dar al-Islam, this duty ended (al-Amir 2015: 96).⁹ The second view is that hijrah is a timeless principle that persists. The authors falling into the category of literalist Salafism are entirely supporters of the latter approach (Khan 1997: 53).

Hijrah according to al-Albani and his disciples

Muhammad Nasir ad-Din al-Albani promoted the apolitical concept of dawa as a call for the only true Islam through education, verification of hadiths, and purification of the faith from adverse influences, including political engagement. This al-Albani’s approach has become an official discourse and practice of Saudi Arabia’s institutions, and his books have played a significant part in the propagation of Salafism in the West since the mid-1990s through charities affiliated to Saudi Arabia. According to al-Albani an individual cannot apply to a particular jurisprudence school or teachings of an individual who is not inherently protected from an error and a sin. Only the companions of the Prophet were granted this “immunity.” A Muslim, therefore, is to profess the practice of the first Muslim generations, as-Salaf as-Salih, and thus follow an infallible pattern. Al-Albani also criticized some of the hadiths of al-Bukhari’s collection, generally considered authentic. Many of his views were considered highly controversial in the religious environment of Saudi Arabia. For example, he considered the veiling of women’s faces to be insufficiently substantiated by hadiths. Al-Albani’s reformistic views on legal theory and practice, which contrasted sharply with established jurisprudence schools, the so-called madhabs, and his criticism of traditional clergy for blindly following these schools, cast him into isolation until he was forced to leave Saudi Arabia. In the field of dogmatics, however, he strongly influenced the Saudi religious circles. He sharply criticized the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood and Sayyid Qutb, while in his book “Fitnat at-takfir” he unequivocally condemned the so-called takfirists. In line with the methods of as-Salaf as-Salih, al-Albani considered obedience to the ruler to be the right approach, whereas disobedience and political involvement of various groups of Muslims could lead to the disintegration of the Muslim community, fitna (Tůpek 2010: 109–113).

As for al-Albani’s views on hijrah in his lectures and texts dealing with the issue, he quotes in his book *The obligation of hijrah from the lands of shirk and kufr* (al-Albani 2004) well-known hadiths supporting the duration of hijrah, including the hadith: “*I am free from any Muslim who*

⁸Or the Asbab an-Nuzul are one of the characteristics of the legislative process in Islam. They explain the meaning of events related to specific passages of the Quran. These causes of revelation were traditionally transmitted by companions of the Prophet, and examining the authenticity of these reports is subject to the same rules as ordinary hadiths.

⁹According to the traditional Islamic understanding, the Dar al-Islam is a territory, or Islamic state, to whose authority every citizen, whether a Muslim or a person of another faith, is subordinate, and in whose territory God’s will is implemented through the legislative process. This state is responsible for the security of its citizens, regardless of their religion. The opposite of the Dar al-Islam is the Dar al-Harb.

lives among idolaters.” Hadith “*There is no hijrah after conquest*” comments on excerpts from the work of Ibn Taymiyyah. Hijrah from Mecca was a duty when Mecca was the territory of unbelievers, and after its incorporation into the territory of the faithful, hijrah lost its meaning. However, the legal status of a place is a changeable characteristic that alternates with the people who live in it and Muslims must take into account the current state of the place (al-Albani 2004: 15–20).

Al-Albani sees two reasons why new converts are not leaving the lands of unbelievers. First, these Muslims do not want to give up the comfortable material life provided to them by their countries of origin, even at the expense of not having a full spiritual experience. The second reason, and for which no one can blame these Muslims, is that they do not learn about the duties of hijrah from the works of Muslim authors translated into their languages. Remaining in the lands of unbelievers is permitted in the Quran and the Sunnah to those who travel there to spread Islam, which is a meritorious activity, for unbelievers from Western countries have a highly distorted picture of what true Islam is. But whoever goes to such a country must feel morally strong enough to resist the temptations of what God has forbidden (al-Albani 2004: 8). Furthermore, those who are unable to emigrate due to an illness, are imprisoned in the country or at risk in Muslim countries, as well as women and children who do not have the necessary experience, are exempted from the obligation of hijrah. However, if a woman is able to emigrate, then she does not need a legal male guardian to do so (al-Albani 2004: 14). Hijrah to a Muslim country is always a better option than staying in the territory of unbelievers, even if the government in a Muslim country has obvious shortcomings in the fulfillment of Islamic injunctions and does not keep to the ideals of Islam (al-Albani 2004: 9). Al-Albani also quotes Qur’anic verses 97–100 of Surah an-Nisa and adds a comment by Ibn Kathir: Muslims who remain among unbelievers while capable of hijrah and unable to practice Islam commit injustice to themselves and thus do what is forbidden by God. Furthermore, al-Albani relies on al-Qurtubi’s interpretation of the Quran, adding that these verses provide evidence of the obligation to leave the place where sins and disobedience to God are widespread (al-Albani 2004: 13–15). Hijrah from the territory of unbelief to the territory of faith is like the repentance of man and his transformation from an unbeliever to a believer and the obedient to God. This is a fact that remains true until the day of resurrection (al-Albani 2004: 24). Al-Albani interprets verse 110 of Surah an-Nahl in the sense that whoever falls into sin and then separates himself from evil deeds and fights the hypocrites by ordering the right and prohibiting the reprehensible, he will receive God’s forgiveness (al-Albani 2004: 24).

One of al-Albani’s students, a Jordanian scholar, Hussein Ibn Awda al-Awayisha summarized the Salafit concept of Hijra in his work, “al-Fasl al-Mubin fi Mas’alat al-Hijrah wa Mufaraqat al-Mushrikin”, which is proclaimed as a comprehensive compendium of views of the greatest Muslim scholars on the issue of hijrah. However, he clearly prefers the opinion that hijrah is ongoing duty, and the author even claims that it is a majority opinion, without, however, paying more attention to the views of the opposite claim proponents. The author states that he is not aware of any scholar who would believe that a Muslim unable to fulfill his religious duties due to the non-Muslim environment in which he lives should rather remain in the land of unbelievers (al-Awayisha 2002: 95–99). Furthermore, the author emphasizes that hijrah is a natural step on the path to Jihad. Jihad and hijrah are two inseparable concepts. He who emigrates because he has been harmed by unbelievers will not stop fighting in the way of God, hoping to gain God’s favor. In support of his claim the author cites all the Quranic verses in which jihad and hijrah are related (see above). For example, in verse 218 of Surah a-Baqarah: “*Indeed those who have believed and those who have emigrated and fought in the cause of God*” the words “emigrated” and “fought” relate to the same pronoun, and in addition, there is the conjunction “and” between them, so the quoted text must be read so that those who perform hijrah are the same ones who perform

the jihad (al-Awayisha 2002: 25–30). The author also points out that in theological works the subject of hijrah is usually discussed in the chapters on jihad. In the work of al-Awayisha great importance is attached to the views of al-Wansharisi, who fundamentally rejects the presence of Muslims in non-Muslim territories. According to al-Awayisha, most scholars who commented on the question of hijrah agreed that hijrah from Dar al-Harb to Dar al-Islam is a duty for the Muslim who cannot openly profess his faith but can perform hijrah. For a Muslim who can openly practice his religion hijrah remains a category of recommended deeds (al-Awayisha 2002: 5–11).

Dar al-Islam must fulfill the following qualities: a) open recognition of Muhammad as the prophet of God, b) open observance of God's orders and abstention from what God has forbidden, c) Muslims must be the dominant element of the state, d) the ruler must be a Muslim, e) expressions of unbelief may not be held openly unless there is an agreement with Muslim authority, for example regarding the religious practices of Christians and Jews. As for the conditions of the place from which hijrah is to be performed, then the innovation (bidah) lies on the same level as unbelief, because the worst of things is innovation and innovation belongs to hellfire (al-Awayisha 2002: 5–11).

The duty of hijrah is not limited to leaving countries where direct rule of unbelievers is established, but a Muslim is supposed to perform hijrah from any territory where the prophet's companions are cursed and where sins and innovations prevail (al-Awayisha 2002: 95–99). Some scholars believe that hijrah is not the duty of one who is able to withstand the pitfalls of fitnah, in the sense that he is able to keep his religion untouched by unbelief. Al-Awayisha adds that such a condition is very limited in terms of its real application, for example, the father of a family may be able to protect his faith, but his wife or children may not be able to do so. If an ideal country is not available as a destination for emigration, then a Muslim should choose the smaller of the two evils. For example, if there is a state in which very little of Islamic injunctions is practiced, then it is still a better choice than a state ruled by Jews or Christians (al-Awayisha 2002: 95–99).

As for the relationships between believers and unbelievers, the author states that praising an unbeliever is a grave sin and praising an unbeliever for aspects of his unbelief is tantamount to apostasy. If a Muslim praises the justice of unbelievers, then he also praises man-made laws, and this is a clear act of infidelity. True justice is based only on the laws of God, which can be found in the Quran and the Sunnah. If the laws of Christians were just, then God would command Muslims to follow them. Remaining in a world ruled by Christians can lead a Muslim away from his religion and daily contact with unbelievers will lead to their misguided habits becoming natural to such a Muslim and eventually losing their religion. A Muslim is supposed to be forgiving, but he is not supposed to esteem Jews or Christians because they are the ones who have gone astray and have earned the wrath of God (al-Awayisha 2002: 113–121). God commanded the people and the genies to worship him. For example, in verse 56 of Surah adh-Dhariyat: "*And I did not create the Jinns and the human beings except for the purpose that they should worship Me.*" One of the most sublime acts of worship performed by the Prophet Muhammad and his companions was Hijrah. Hijrah from Mecca to Medina became a means to uplift the Muslim community and establish God's order, to achieve good, and to reject the forbidden. However, hijrah is not just an event from ancient history, but an act that remains valid as long as the world itself lasts (al-Awayisha 2002: 5–11).

Another follower of al-Albani's school of thought is the Jordanian mufti Mashhur Hasan as-Salman. In response to a group of Muslims asking about God's rewards tied to hijrah he confirms that hijrah from a territory where a Muslim is unable to meet the obligations of Islam to a country where he is able to do so is the duty of such a Muslim. At this point as-Salman emphasizes the special esteem of the lands of Sham (roughly the territory now called Levant) as a suitable destination for hijrah, where the Prophet Ibrahim himself emigrated from Nineveh. Another

inquirer on the official website of as-Salman is interested in what God's regulations regarding hijrah of a Muslim with his family to a Western country are. In his reply as-Salman corrects the way in which the interviewer treats the word hijrah: Although today the word hijrah is used in the sense of emigration, even from Muslim countries to lands of unbelievers, hijrah in its legal sense means always and only leaving from countries of unbelief to countries of Islam, never the other way around. A Muslim is meant to live in a society that preserves the cultural heritage of his fathers and grandfathers. He is meant to live with his religion in a country where he hears a call to prayer, and even if he lives in a Muslim country as a poor man, it is still better than living as a rich man in a land of unbelievers. The last question directly concerning hijrah is raised by a Bosnian Muslim who lives with his mother and brothers, who are all unbelievers, in the USA. He wants to marry, move and raise his children in one of the Muslim countries. He asks if he should leave his unbelieving relatives in the USA. In response as-Salman advises him to try to convert his mother and brothers to Islam. If he fails to do so, then he is advised to perform the obligatory hijrah to a country where he finds piety and knowledge of the Islamic faith and he should leave his relatives where they are (as-Salman 2019).

As-Salman divided hijrah into three types: Hijrah of the body, hijrah of the tongue, and hijrah of the heart. Complete hijrah of the body means the departure of a Muslim from Dar al-Harb and Dar al-Fisq¹⁰ to the Dar al-Islam, or leaving a place where unbelief openly prevails over faith for a Muslim country. If a Muslim is able to transform Dar al-Harb into Dar al-Islam, then he must stay in the country. Partial hijrah of the body is when a Muslim avoids places where forbidden practice, such as drinking alcohol, takes place. The complete hijrah of the tongue means to brake contact with the "perpetrators" of the reprehensible deeds and with the unbelievers. Partial hijrah of the tongue then means "mere" termination of friendship with sinners, but without complete falling out with them. A Muslim is to perform either a complete or partial hijrah of the tongue, depending on the gravity of sins that surround him. From the foregoing description it is clear that hijrah of the body is primarily the departure from a place and hijrah of the tongue is the abandonment of people. According to the author, the most basic and most important hijrah is, however, hijrah of the heart. It is due to an inner transformation that a person "emigrates" from the initial state to greater godliness, repentance and love for God. This hijrah is an essential part of every Muslim's life and it is a constant process (as-Salman 2001).

The Islamic State

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Islamic State) going by the English acronyms ISIS, or ISIL and the Arabic acronym Daesh is a "descendant" of an Iraqi offshoot of al-Qaida and founded by a man recognized under the pseudonym of Abu Musab az-Zarqawi, who was inspired by the theories contained in the works of "Fiqh ad-Dima" by Abu Abdallah al-Muhajir and "Idarat at-Tawahhush" by Abu Bakr Naji. Both works are considered to be the basic ideological pillars of the Islamic State. From the beginning the Islamic State has been focused on missionary activities. It called on Muslims to join the organization and practice "true Islam" under its leadership. After the Islamic State established itself in power, it began to use more technologically sophisticated methods aimed at Western audience, trying to exploit the feeling of alienation of Muslims living in the West and applying to them with the likable idea of the original Islamic State rebirth. The "hacker brain" of the Islamic State Junaid Hussain, also known as Abu Hussain al-Britani, spoke to Muslim youth: "*You can sit at home and play the Call of Duty, or you can come here and answer the real Call of Duty*" (Raqqa is being slaughtered silently 2016).

¹⁰The word fisq (or fusq) translates as immorality or sinfulness.

The Islamic State established the “al-Hayat” media agency under whose auspices the online magazine Dabiq was being published between 2014 and 2016. The online magazine Rumiya was being published by the same agency between 2016 and 2017. Both periodicals had been available in several languages, including English. It is clear that the Islamic State employed authors with knowledge of Islamic as well as Christian and Jewish religious texts, history, Middle Eastern and Western political realities. However, more detailed information concerning the main authors and editors, such as their nationality, ethnicity or location of their workplace or previous qualifications, is not known. Dabiq’s articles are generally directed against non-believers (Christians, Jews and other “non-believers”), Muslims opposed to the Islamic State (“apostates”), competing jihadist groups, the Saudi royal family, Shiites and other Muslims, including representatives of institutions such as al-Azhar, or against liberal Muslims. The shift from Dabiq to Rumiya magazine seems to mark the change of orientation of the Islamic State’s propaganda from the Levant region to the West. The magazine Dabiq is named after a place in northern Syria where an apocalyptic battle is believed to take place between Muslims and an army of enemies united against them (Fricano 2017). By contrast, the name Rumiya, referring to Rome,¹¹ is taken from a quote of former al-Qaida’s commander in Iraq Abu Hamza al-Muhajir: “*We will not stop our jihad until we rest under the olive trees of Rome*” (Nur 2016: 3–5). Before the publication of Dabiq magazine had stopped, the Islamic State started to suffer territorial losses which forced it to create an alternative battle zone beyond the borders of Syria and Iraq (Nur 2016: 3–5). As for the professional level of Rumiya magazine, it no longer reaches the qualities of Dabiq. It rests on constantly repeated articles and lacks Dabiq’s apocalyptic style. The former state-building accent of the Islamic State has turned into an emphasis on terrorist operations and appeals to single individuals for violent actions against unbelievers in their countries (Nur 2016: 5–6).

Hijrah in the Dabiq and Rumiya magazines

In the texts of the magazines Dabiq and Rumiya, the greatest emphasis is placed on the six aspects of hijrah. These aspects were determined by the author on the basis of the performed analysis. Each of these aspects is discussed separately in the following lines.

The basic set of the content analysis included both journals, i.e. both Dabiq and Rumiya. From this set, those articles were selected that contained at the basic set of the content analysis at first contained both journals, i.e. both Dabiq and Rumiya. From this set, those articles were selected that contained at least one commentary on the subject of hijrah. Then repetitive texts were removed from the set, or texts that contain the word hijrah, but were used mechanically, without ideological meaning. For example, simply stating that a person has performed the hijrah. Rumiya articles are less used in this paper because they contain fewer relevant texts than Dabiq. Therefore, 12 issues of Dabiq and 4 issues of Rumiya were included in the examined set.

From a professional point of view, Dabiq is a magazine of high quality. Graphics, language stylistics and argumentation are professionally managed. It is also clear that the Islamic State employed authors with knowledge of Islamic as well as Christian and Jewish religious texts, history, Middle Eastern and Western political realities. However, more detailed information about the main authors and editors, such as nationality, ethnicity, place of work, or previous qualifications is not known.

¹¹The default name in Arabic is Ruma. Prestigious Arabic dictionaries mention the term Rumiya only after the term Ruma. It is an older, not commonly used form of this word. Both words mean Rome. It is necessary to note that the term ar-Rum, or Romans, refers in medieval Arabic texts to the inhabitants of the Eastern Roman Empire.

As for Rumiyaḥ, it doesn't reach the qualities of Dabīq. It depends on constantly repeated articles, it is shorter than Dabīq and lacks its apocalyptic style. The former state-building accent of the Islamic State has changed in Rumiyaḥ to an emphasis on terrorist operations (Nur 2016).

In terms of literary form, both journals are a combination of pamphlets, interviews, reports and essays on religious topics.

In order to scrutinize the concept of hijrah in the magazines Dabīq and Rumiyaḥ, a semiotic analysis was used. The aim of the analysis, as carried out in this paper, is not to reveal the media techniques used to manipulate the reader, but to approach the source material as a text that represents the religious views and dogmas of the Islamic State. The ambition of this work is not to answer the question "why the author presented the information in a specific way, or how it should affect the reader", but to describe what the Islamic State actually says about the hijrah and how it fits into the broad stream of Islamic thought.

The semiotic analysis used in this paper is based on Daniel Chandler's book *Semiotics: The Basics* (Chandler 2007). Here I present only a brief and general scheme of the analysis:

- a) Denotative and connotative description: All the recognized signifiers (hijrah statements in the form of either part of a sentence, whole sentence, or paragraph) were divided into several thematic fields after a thorough reading of the whole set (denotative level is a simple description of signs) and then the signifiers were selected within thematic categories and subjected to the identification of deeper, culturally defined meanings with associative content (the connotative level is the interpretation of signs whose meaning is not obvious in itself).
- b) Paradigmatic arrangement: In this section, binary oppositions (mutually contradictory meanings) which place the signs in the context of a broader stream of Islamic thought were pointed out. This part of the analysis, therefore, tries to point out the signifiers (information about the hijrah) that were not published in the researched texts and doing so to better define the position that the Islamic State's approach to the hijrah holds in comparison to other schools of Islamic legal thinking. For this purpose, the categorization of schools of Islamic thought presented by Tariq Ramadan was chosen (Ramadan 2005).
- c) Syntagmatic arrangement: This part deals with how the individual signs are arranged one behind the other and how they relate to each other, ie what position the individual signifiers occupy within the construction of the message of the articles. The aim is to find out if there is a noticeable development of the meaning of the message over time.

Aspect No. 1: Hijrah is a timeless, absolute duty

The most basic characteristic of hijrah in the grasp of the Islamic State is its validity until the day of resurrection. The emigration of a Muslim from the Dar al-Harb to the Dar al-Islam is not only one of the basic duties of a believer but it is literally a litmus paper of his faith. The preface to the second issue of Dabīq sets out the Islamic State leadership's position on Muslims' obligations to it: "*Rush to perform hijrah, just as Moses hurried to his Lord*" (Dabīq 2014c: 3). The reference to the practice of other prophets (in this case Musa, or Moses) is a typical phenomenon of both examined media. The Islamic State works with the theme of hijrah in the sense that it is a timeless duty that God's servants have always carried out. Leaving the territory controlled by unbelievers for a territory where a community of believers can be established is naturally in accordance with God's ordinance. For example, the prophet Moses, who led his people out of Egyptian captivity, is taken as a model for Muslims, while the authors of the Dabīq link the story of Moses with Islamic territorial concepts. In essence the quoted paragraph suggests that Moses and his faithful people performed hijrah from Dar al-Harb to Dar al-Islam. The fourth issue of Rumiyaḥ states: "*Thus,*

their role models in hijrah are the determined messengers who were harmed for the sake of Allah and who never considered the torment they received from people to be on par with the punishment of Allah” (Rumiyah 2016b: 3). And the eighth issue of the same magazine says, “*Such did the Prophet’s companions, who are the best of the creation after the prophets, endure the bitterness of hijrah and the loss of wealth, family, and homes, all for the cause of Allah [...] so where are we in relation to them?*” (Rumiyah 2016a: 24).

God’s prophets and the companions of the Prophet Muhammad enjoy special respect in the Islamic world and are considered the ideal of humanity. For this reason it seems natural that the example of the “ideal creatures of God” can be used to support the argument about the validity of the obligation to perform hijrah. The authors of the text explicitly urge the reader to take these important figures of Islamic history as role models and not hesitate to embark on a journey of emigration, even if this causes them a number of difficulties, as nothing material from this world can be compared to a reward, or, conversely, a punishment that God has prepared for man and his actions. The eighth issue of Dabiq reads: “*The mother of the faithful, Sawda bint Zama, the wife of their prophet, was the one who performed hijrah to Ethiopia and Medina. She left Mecca despite her virtues*” (Dabiq 2015c: 34). The fact that neglecting hijrah is a serious offense against God is made clear in the third issue of Dabiq: “*So abandoning hijrah – the path to jihad – is a dangerous matter. In effect, one is thereby deserting jihad and willingly accepting his tragic condition of being a hypocritical spectator [...] God makes it clear that He will punish the hypocrites with even greater hypocrisy for failing to keep their obligations to Him*” (Dabiq 3 2014: 27). A person who professes Islam is committed to keep the obligations that God has placed on people. If he does not do so and still declares himself a Muslim, then he is a hypocrite. On the other hand, the performance of hijrah is immediately rewarded as indicated in an interview with a woman who has successfully moved to the territory of the Islamic State: “*All praise belongs to God, who has made my journey possible. I did not face any difficulties. Living in a country where God’s laws are enforced is amazing! Now I feel satisfied when I have finally done this duty*” (Dabiq 2015a: 50). The article “Hijrah and forgiveness” from the third issue of Dabiq begins with a hadith in which Amr Ibn al-As narrates how he came to see the prophet, and before taking the oath of allegiance, he demanded all his sins to be cleansed. To this the prophet Muhammad replied, “*Do you not know that Islam erases all previous sins? And don’t you know that hijrah erases all previous sins? And that the Hajj erases all previous sins?*” (Dabiq 2014a: 23). The Islamic State calls on Muslims to fulfill their duty to God and to perform hijrah, even if they face obstacles and are afraid of failure or death. Whatever the outcome of their journey is, God always guarantees a reward, because hijrah of Muslims to the Islamic State is his wish. It is written in the third issue of Dabiq. “*So do not say to yourself, ‘I will never succeed in my hijrah.’ Most of those who have tried, have successfully reached the Khilafah [...] Do not say to yourself, ‘I might get arrested.’ That fear is unsure and the obligation of hijrah is certain*” (Dabiq 2014a: 33). The fourth issue of Rumiyah magazine states: “*So if the schemes of the tawaghit have prevented you from performing hijrah to Iraq and Sham, then know that the doors of hijrah will remain open until the Hour is established*” (Dabiq 2014a: 2). In the following page, this statement is based on the quotation of verse 100 of Sura an-Nisa: “*And whoever leaves his house and moves out to God and His messenger and is caught dead, he is rewarded by God, and God is Forgiving, Merciful. Whoever of them does this and then dies or is killed or drowns or is stomped upon to death by his riding animal, it is then incumbent upon Allah to enter him into Jannah*” (Dabiq 2014c: 19).

To support the view that the duty of hijrah did not end with the conquest of Mecca in 630 AD the authors of both examined magazines quote well-known hadiths: “*Hijrah will not cease until the fight with the unbelievers ceases.*” And “*Hijrah will not cease as long as there is jihad*” (Dabiq 2014d: 35). And the hadith: “*I do not associate with any Muslim who lives among idolaters.*”

Another hadith quoted by the Islamic State that clearly shows that it considers hijra to be a continuous duty can be found in the eighth issue of Dabiq: *“Hijrah will not cease as long as there is repentance and repentance will not cease as long as the Sun rises in the West”* (Dabiq 2015e: 33). In Islamic eschatology, the observation of sunrise in the West and sunset in the East is one of the so-called great signs that mark the immediate end of the world. This means that as long as this world exists, there is an obligation to perform hijrah. In the ninth issue of Dabiq the authors say that the Prophet explained that Muslims will not stop fighting the ranks of the unbelievers until Jesus (Isa) descends and leads the Muslim armies. And he said (the prophet): *“Fight against the unbelievers, hijrah and jihad will remain until the establishment of the Hour”* (Dabiq 2015d: 53).

In the examined texts, verse No. 97, Surah an-Nisa, is repeated periodically: *“Surely the ones whom the Angels take up, [while] they are unjust to themselves—the Angels say, ‘In what [condition] were you?’ They say, ‘We were oppressed in the earth.’ They [the Angels] say, ‘Was not the earth of Allah wide enough so that you [could] have emigrated in it.’”* In the tenth issue of Dabiq, a commentary is offered on this verse: *“The noble ayah is general and refers to every person who resides amongst the mushrikīn while he is able to make hijrah and is not able to establish the religion. So he is wronging himself and committing a sin according to consensus and according to the text of this ayah”* (Dabiq 2015e: 48). The author of the text claims here that the obligation to perform hijrah is based on a consensus of opinions (Ijma). This classic legal term evokes a universal consensus of lawyers on a given topic, and the above-mentioned paragraph gives the impression that there is no opposition among Muslims against the duty of hijrah from the territory of unbelievers. However, this opinion needs to be analyzed in more detail. First of all, it must be stated that in the history of Islamic legal thought there has never been agreement on the exact definition of Ijma, or on who exactly is eligible to partake in the consensus. Are they all jurists or just the majority? Who is qualified to have a valid opinion? Isn’t only the Ijma of the Prophet companions valid? Can one generation of jurists abolish another generation’s Ijma? These and many other questions have never been answered unanimously, and the author of the quoted paragraph does not define what he actually means when he uses the term consensus. Given the Salafist nature of Islamic State ideologues, it can be assumed that the author of the text means the consensus of the first generations of Muslims (so-called salaf) (Kamali 2005: 155–170).

As indicated in previous lines, the Islamic State often draws a parallel between hijrah of the first Muslims to Medina and hijrah of contemporary Muslims to the Islamic State’s territories, stressing that the companions did not hesitate to break social bonds with their pagan relatives and emigrate to the Prophet. In the same way, in present times, if one of the relatives refuses to perform hijrah, then it is right to leave such a hypocrite, because he is thus subjecting himself to God’s punishment. In the tenth issue of Dabiq, the author of the text answers a question from a Muslim woman whose husband refuses to perform hijrah to the Islamic State: *“And know that there are only two possibilities before you. Advise your husband to fear God and remind him of God’s greatness. If your husband repents, then know that it is by the grace of God. However, if he persists in his arrogance and his pride and sins retain dominion over him, then it is your destiny to leave him in this world so that you may succeed in the next world. I hereby call on you to perform hijrah to us in the lands of the blessed Islamic State”* (Dabiq 10 2015e: 47).

Although there is a constant appeal in the examined texts to all Muslims to fulfill their duties and perform hijrah, special emphasis is laid on Muslims who have “extra value” for the Islamic State. These are professionals who can contribute to the management of the state from a practical point of view. Here, the call to hijrah gives a slightly less “pure religious” impression, when the authors of the text calculate quite pragmatically whose hijrah is especially valued. These are doctors, nurses, engineers and many other vocations. In several passages, hijrah, in the sense of

an individual step on the path to the salvation of the soul, turns into an instrument for achieving the earthly goals of the Islamic State. The duty to execute hijrah stems not only from the need for a Muslim to live in an ideal Islamic environment, but also from the need of an “ideal” Islamic State for qualified Muslims to run it: “*Therefore, every Muslim professional who delayed his jīhad in the past under the pretence of studying Shariah, medicine, or engineering, etc., claiming he would contribute to Islam later with his expertise, should now make his number one priority to repent and answer the call to hijrah, especially after the establishment of the Khilafah. More than ever before, this caliphate needs experts, professionals and specialists to help strengthen it and support its Muslim brothers. Without this, empty promises of such a Muslim will remain proof against him on the Day of Reckoning*” (Dabiq 2015d: 26). The ninth issue of Dabiq contains a report from a medical school run by the Islamic State, where one of its staff says that the institution has accepted 100 new students, but the number of teachers needs to be strengthened: “*The Islamic State provides everything you need to live and work, so what are you waiting for?*” (Dabiq 9 2015d: 26).

Once a Muslim has fulfilled his obligation to immigrate to an Islamic state, he is prohibited to return to his country of origin. Here, the authors of Dabiq compare nowadays apostates to the early-Islamic Bedouins, who first converted to Islam and practiced hijrah, but later returned to a nomadic way of life. Throughout Islamic history there has been a tendency to settle a nomadic element. The settled urban society is considered more advanced from a religious point of view. In both examined journals there are many quotations from the prophetic hadiths that indicate that he considered the Bedouins to be lukewarm in faith. The Islamic State considers a Muslim who leaves the destination of his hijrah and returns home to be an apostate of the faith. This is made clear, for example, by Ibn al-Athira’s quote: “*They [the Salaf] used to consider the person who after his hijrah returns to his homeland without excuse like a murtadd*” (Dabiq 2015b: 22).

Aspect No. 2: Dar al-Islam is exclusively a territory administered by the Islamic State

The basic thesis, which appeared in several issues of Dabiq, is that the only territory that falls into the classification of Dar al-Islam are the provinces under the direct control of the Islamic State. Only here, according to the authors, is God’s will fully implemented, and because the rulers of other Muslim countries are apostates and collaborators with “crusaders”, their countries, together with non-Muslim countries, form a vast space of Dar al-Harb where laws sent by God are not prioritized. To define what part of the Dar al-Harb is, the Islamic State uses a parallel with medieval Islamic history: “*The companions did not consider lands seized by false prophets or Zakat deniers for nothing but the Dar al-Harb.*” In this part of the text, it is clearly stated that any country which is not obviously Islamic, i.e. where no religious tax is levied and where beings who are not worthy, that is, anyone except for God, is worshiped, belongs to the realm of Dar al-Harb. The text continues: “*The jurists who came after them did not consider the countries ruled by the Tatars and Ubaydi rulers as a Dar al-Islam, and although these people professed Islam and ruled through some of its laws, they committed apostasy because some other laws and teachings diverged from Islam*” (Dabiq 2015b: 22).

Tatars¹² are in the salafist-jihadist literature a symbol of unbelieving power that hypocritically professes Islam, but in fact, poses an immediate threat to “orthodox” Muslims. This concept is based on the historical experience of the Mongol invasion of the Muslim world, which was reflected, for example in the works of Ibn Taymiyyah, the undisguised model of today’s Salafists. The Fatimids were a Muslim dynasty ruling in North Africa and Egypt and as one of the Shiite

¹²The Mongol dynasties that converted to Islam are meant here.

sects the Islamic State ranks territory under their control as a historical example of Dar al-Harb. Both dynasties represent a state apparatus that claims to be Islamic, but according to the Islamic State, its representatives are not “true” Muslims, as are not all the authorities of today’s Muslim states, who are by their nature outright apostates or at least collaborate with infidels against interests of the only and true Islamic state. In the eleventh issue of Dabiq the authors quote Ibn Qudamah: “*Hijrah means leaving the Dar al-Kufr and going to the Dar al-Islam*” (Dabiq 2015b: 22). Quoting Ibn al-Qayyim, they add: “*If the laws of Islam are not implemented somewhere, then it is not the Dar al-Islam*” (Dabiq 2015b: 22). The paragraph in the fourteenth issue of Dabiq then clarifies what Dar al-Islam is: “*All Muslims have a duty to perform hijrah in the caliphate, which is the only body standing in the way of the apostate Brotherhood,^[13] his crusader lords and “rejectionist” allies,^[14] who work together to destroy the Islamic religion and replace it with ‘Islam’, which is in the same relationship to the prophet as contemporary Christianity in relation to the principle of tawhid,^[15] which had been introduced by Isa*” (Dabiq 2016: 43). This passage again clarifies that the only true follower of Muhammad’s religion is the Islamic State and other Muslims live in Dar al-Harb. The Islamic State speaks here not only against the Shiites, but also against the Muslim Brotherhood, which considers itself to be a reform stream of Islam. The last part of the quoted passage is interesting. It is said here that the enemies of Islam (Dar al-Harb) are trying to change true Islam, as had always been the case in human history when one of the messengers of God, prior to Prophet Mohammad, ascended. Part of Islamic dogma is that God had been periodically sending his message to mankind through chosen messengers and prophets, whose message, however, was always distorted after some time. For example, the text under scrutiny speaks of the tawhid proclaimed by Isa. Muslims consider the Christian Holy Trinity to be an association to the oneness of God, which arose through the distortion of Isa’s teaching after his death. When the Islamic State speaks of apostates wishing to distort Islam as Christianity was distorted and thus make it acceptable to its “crusader” masters, they mean that only the message of the Prophet Muhammad has been kept whole. Protector of this one true religion is among many “sects” only the Islamic State. Everything beyond its borders is the Dar al-Harb, the territory of the enemies of Islam.

Aspect No. 3: The special position of Sham as a destination of hijrah

The idea, which appears mainly in the third issue of Dabiq, is that the best possible destination of hijrah of all other possibilities is Sham, a historical region consisting of today’s Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine. The word Sham is an inherent part of the Arabic name of the organization (al-Dawlat al-Islamiyah fi al-Iraq wa as-Sham). The uniqueness of Sham is that it was chosen by God as the homeland to which he brought some of his prophets, including Abraham and Moses. The duty of hijrah has not ended, and so today’s Muslims are to immigrate to this blessed country: “*Hijrah of foreigners to Sham was a sign of allegiance to the path taken by Abraham, who established a tradition of declaring hostility and hatred against idolaters and their idols*” (Dabiq 2014a: 10). Furthermore, the authors of the text quote the hadith: “*There will be hijrah after hijrah. The best people on earth will be those who keep to the land of Ibrahim’s hijrah. Then there will remain on the earth the worst of its people. Their lands will cast them out, Allah will hate them, and the fire will gather them together with the apes and swine*” (Dabiq 2014a: 10). The discourse here ascends to an apocalyptic level when it is outlined that at the end of the world, the performance of hijrah to Sham will be the criterion according to which people will be

¹³The Muslim Brotherhood is meant here.

¹⁴The original text uses the word “rafidah”, which refers to Shiite Muslims, because Shiite Islam does not recognize, i.e. rejects the institution of an elected caliphate embodied by the first three so-called rightly guided caliphs.

¹⁵Belief in the oneness of God. From the number “wahid”, one.

classified as damned or saved. The authors let Ibn Taymiyyah speak: “*Islam in the end of times will be more manifest in Sham [...] So the best of the people on the earth in the end of times will be those who keep to the land of Ibrahim’s hijrah, which is Sham*” (Dabiq 2014a: 10). The authors of the text leave the reader in no doubt that these apocalyptic events are going to occur in our time. The end of the world is near, and the “right” decision, which is to perform hijrah, should be made as soon as possible: “*So those who left their tribes – the best of Allah’s slaves – rallied together with an imām and a jamā’ah upon the path of Ibrāhīm. They gathered together in the land of malahim shortly before the occurrence of al-Malhamah al-Kubra, announced their enmity and hatred for the cross worshippers, the apostates, their crosses, their borders, and their ballotboxes, and pledged allegiance to the Khilafah, promising to die defending it*” (Dabiq 2014a: 11). In Islamic eschatology al-Malhama al-Kubra signifies a great battle between the forces of the faithful and the unbelievers, namely the Romans, which is believed to take place in northern Syria, where the city of Dabiq is located. The term “Rome” is a surrogate for the Christian West here. It is sometimes identified directly with the United States. In addition to the worshipers of the cross the authors of the text place their border lines and their ballot boxes on the list of enemies. Modern state borders, man-made on the basis of a democratic electoral process, are perceived by the Islamic State as purely anti-Islamic. The Islamic State strongly opposes nationalism and “artificial” state formations, which were created by the “crusaders” after the end of World War I. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi explains in the following lines: “*These people are the ones who say: Iraq and its resources are the property of all Iraqis. According to these people, everyone has the same rights, whether they are Sunnis or fire worshippers*¹⁶ [...] *O followers of tawhid, our credo is that a Muslim is our brother, even if he is a Filipino Asian, and that a devil worshiper is our enemy, even if he is a purebred Iraqi*” (Dabiq 2014a: 20).

In the third issue of Dabiq, the authors use a quote from Ibn Taymiyyah to explain that hijrah to Sham is equal to the historical hijrah of Muslims to Medina: “*And the land of Abraham’s hijrah was made for us equal to the land to which the Prophet Muhammad emigrated because hijrah to Medina was suspended after the conquest of Mecca*” (Dabiq 2014a: 11). Through this text, the Islamic State makes it clear that the meaning of hijrah is closeness to God through His messengers, not the place itself. Through the words of Ibn Taymiyyah, the authors of Dabiq claim that the past presence of a messenger of God, such as Abraham, gives the place the status of a hijrah destination. Moreover, the Sham is going to be the scene of the critical events of the end of the world and of God’s judgment, so it’s “sacredness” and the obligation to emigrate here seem to be quite evident in the light of Dabiq’s outputs. The Islamic State acknowledges that the historical hijrah to Medina has lost its significance after Mecca became part of the Dar al-Islam. Its spiritual position is taken over by the territory of the Islamic State in Sham, which is surrounded by unbelievers and apostate enemies and therefore needs a constant influx of “the best of the people” for its protection and growth. “*The angels spread their wings over them and their state*” (Dabiq 2014b: 24).

Aspect No. 4: Legitimate reasons for which hijrah cannot be performed

Although hijrah is an obligation that will last until the end of the world, according to the Islamic State, the authors of the examined texts, as well as representatives of other schools of Islamic thought, acknowledge that if a Muslim is unable to perform hijrah, then he is excluded from the general obligation. However, this does not mean that other obligations to the Islamic State cease to exist: “*If for any reason you are unable to perform hijrah, try to arrange oaths of allegiance to*

¹⁶This is how Shiite Muslims are sometimes labeled. Here, the Islamic State deliberately creates a link between Iran’s original religion, Zoroastrianism, its fire temples, and Shiite Islam, which is currently the dominant Iranian religion.

Caliph Ibrahim in the place of your residence. Publish them as much as possible. Gather people, for example in mosques, Islamic centers, and Islamic organizations, and publish these oaths of allegiance” (Dabiq 2014a: 3). While in this text the Islamic State presents as an alternative to hijrah the “raising of public awareness” and motivation of others to emigrate to the caliphate, the 11th issue of Dabiq already calls for another alternative: “*As for the Muslim who is unable to perform hijrah from dārul-kufr to the Khilāfah, then there is much opportunity for him to strike out against the kafir enemies of the Islamic State*” (Dabiq 2015b: 54). Given that this quotation comes from an article dealing with armed attacks by sympathizers with the Islamic State abroad, there is no doubt that the word “strike” here means a murderous attack on either civilians or representatives of “kafir” nations. None of the texts published through the two examined journals specify in detail the legitimate conditions that may excuse Muslims from carrying out compulsory emigration, instead, it is generally stated that this exception applies to those who, while having a sincere interest in performing hijrah, are objectively prevented by external factors. We know from the previous lines that a mere “excuse” such as postponing hijrah until an individual completes his education is not considered justifiable by the Islamic State. From the following paragraph we learn that there is no difference in terms of this obligation or the exception to it between men and women: “*This regulation is a duty for men as it is for women because when God relieved this duty of those who are incapable of hijrah, he did so equally for men as for women*” (Dabiq 2015c: 33).

The exception to hijrah is based by the Islamic State on verses 98 and 99 of Surah an-Nisa: “*Except the ones deemed weak among the men and women and newborns who are unable to contrive a device and are not guided to a way, God may erase their guilt because God is forgiving, merciful*” (Dabiq 2015c: 33). There is another exception, which logically follows the facts from the previous lines. We already know that the Islamic State considers parts of Sham under its control to be the ideal region to emigrate to, as the final battles between the forces of Evil and Good will take place here. However, the territory occupied by the Islamic State is wider than the historical region of the so-called Levanta, and its jihadist fighters, such as in Iraq, should theoretically withdraw to the Syrian provinces. For this reason, the following text has been published: “*The most obedient way to obey God’s commands is for every soldier to defend the battle line closest to him, under the command of his commander [...] he does what is obligatory [...], while living in Sham, especially for such warriors, emigration would be a virtue, but not an obligation. And if they had left their posts [in Iraq], the Nusayriyah would soon seize Iraq and then proceed to Sham*” (Dabiq 2014a: 11).

Aspect No. 5: A Muslim cannot live freely among unbelievers

It has been mentioned in the previous lines that a society governed by the laws created by man is, from the point of view of the Islamic State, blasphemous against God, because it is God who has given mankind the ideal code of life to be followed. A sincere Muslim can never live a happy life in a non-Islamic state, or Dar al-Harb. The only state that conscientiously carries out God’s will is the Islamic State, while elsewhere a Muslim will be exposed to conditions that will not allow him to fully fulfill his religion. His most vital need will be deprived, and he will live in a state similar to slavery: “*Modern-day slavery embodied in employment, working hours, etc. is slavery that leaves Muslims in a permanent sense of subordination to their infidel master. It’s as if Bilal had never been liberated and the Islamic State in Medina had never been established*” (Dabiq 2014a: 29).

In both examined journals, the topic of the exploitation of Muslims in the West is represented quite often and the only possible solution is hijrah. Just as the first Muslims gained their religious freedom after hijrah and the establishment of an Islamic state, so today’s Muslims can only

be liberated by cutting ties with their home states and unbelieving fellow citizens who, as the Islamic State also emphasizes, never accepted them anyway. Remaining among unbelievers will have deepening consequences for Muslims. Not only will they continue to be oppressed, but they will not be able to fully meet the demands of Islam, which can have fatal consequences for them in the long run: *“Muslims in the West will quickly realize that they are facing two options. They will either renegade and accept the religion of the infidels so that they can live among them without difficulty, or they will perform hijrah into the Islamic State, thus escaping persecution by the crusader governments and citizens”* (Dabiq 2015a: 62). Specific examples of threats faced by Muslims in countries of non-believers are given in an interview with one of the women who successfully left for the Islamic State: *“Young people in the West who have fallen into drugs, alcohol, promiscuity and other bad habits and social illnesses that make every decent Muslim family shed tears [...] I want to make it absolutely clear that this message of mine is addressed to Muslims who risk their lives in the afterlife by living under the rule of the Crusaders who wage war on Islam, as well as those Muslims who live in lands ruled by apostates through man-made laws”* (Dabiq 2015c: 33). By remaining among the unbelievers, a Muslim damages himself and his faith, and doing harm to himself means committing a sin. In the commentary on verse No. 97 Surah an-Nisa, the authors of Dabiq write: *“The ayah indicates the general obligation of hijrah. So everyone who lives amongst the mushrikin while being able to perform hijrah and not being able to establish his religion, then he is wronging himself and committing sin. This is in accordance with ijma”* (Dabiq 2015c: 33). The following is a quote from a hadith: *“Whoever gathers and lives with the mushrik, then he is like him”* (Dabiq 2015c: 33). Muslims living among the infidels not only harm themselves, but in fact contribute directly to the aggression against “orthodox” Muslims and Islam as such: *“As for those who continue to suffer from the disease of being indifferent towards the obligations of hijrah, jihad, and bayah, so much so that they see nothing wrong with residing amongst and paying taxes to, the very crusaders who belittle the Shariah on their news and entertainment programs, who arm the secularists and Rawafid in Muslim lands, who imprison and torture Muslim men and women, and on top of all who burn the Quran and mock the Prophet [sallallahu alayhi wa sallam], then let them prepare their flimsy excuses for the angels of death”* (Dabiq 2015d: 4). While the obligation to perform hijrah has already been sufficiently emphasized by the Islamic State in its texts, the authors of Dabiq point out that in the religious sense the word hijrah, as emigration, has only one acceptable meaning, and it certainly cannot be understood as any emigration: *“Although the obligation of hijrah is clear, a mistake is regularly committed by claimants of Islam, and that is in choosing their destination for hijrah. They always choose the lands of the Christians for their destination. But after the establishment of the prophetic state, hijrah was to al-Madinah not al-Habashah. And during the Umawi and Abbasi rule, hijrah was to the lands of the khilafah not Rome and Constantinople”* (Dabiq 2014a: 22).

Aspect No. 6: Hijrah is an integral part of a larger process

In the conception of the Islamic State, hijrah is the first step in a process that naturally finds its historical pattern in the state-building activities of the Prophet Muhammad and in the establishment of the first Islamic State. This process has five phases: hijrah, the creation of a community of believers (Jama), the destabilization of apostate regimes, the consolidation of power in this territory, and the establishment of a caliphate. In the words of the authors of Dabiq: *“These phases consist of emigration to a country with a weak, central authority that can be used as a base in which a community of believers will be formed and new members recruited and trained. If such a country did not exist, or if hijrah was impossible, then this territory could be formed through long campaigns of attacks carried out by the underground cells. These ‘nikaya’ attacks will force renegade forces to withdraw from rural areas to large cities. The community of believers will then take*

advantage of the situation by raising the chaos to a point that will lead to the complete collapse of the renegade regime throughout its territory. Some call this 'tawahhush'. The next step is to fill the vacuum, where the community of believers will take over the administration of public affairs to the point that it will transform itself into a fully functioning state and then continue to expand to other territories that are still under the control of infidels" (Dabiq 2014a: 38). Two important words are mentioned in the text. Nikaya (defiance) and tawahhush (brutality). These terms refer to the book of Idarat at-Tawahhush, by Bakr Nadji, which describes the strategy by which the population of the target area is to be brought to a state of moral decay and permanent fear. In a situation where the local state structure is falling apart, the Islamic State will be the only organization that the local population can turn to. The book Idarat at-Tawahhush was published before the Islamic State established itself in power and was intended as an ideological guide for any jihadist movement that would gain enough strength to turn this theory into practice.

Elsewhere the authors quote the Prophet's hadith, in which he states five duties similar to those proclaimed by the Islamic State. Hijrah and jihad as the means for creating and spreading the caliphate are confirmed here by the authority of the Prophet: "*I order you with five things That Allah ordered me with: Jama [fellowship], Sama [listening], Ta'a [obedience], Hijrah [emigration], and jihad"* (Dabiq 2014d: 31).

The examined texts emphasize several times that hijrah is an irreplaceable part of a larger whole, and just as the Prophet Muhammad did not start jihad until he completed his hijrah in Medina, so today hijrah must first be carried out to the Islamic State from which jihad can be conducted: "*There is no life without jihad and there is no jihad without hijrah"* (Dabiq 2015d: 31).

Conclusion

This study presents an outline of modern Salafist debates about the Islamic concept of hijrah. This paper is exceptional in that it looks at the texts of Islamic state's journals in the light of a specific legal-theological phenomenon, the hijrah, and thus defines ISIS in the context of the historical development of this Islamic concept, thanks to a comparison with a school of Islamic thought which represents a much more mainstream view of the researched phenomenon within Salafism. Hijrah, as interpreted by the Islamic State, broadly corresponds to the conception of literalist Salafism of Muhammad al-Albani and his disciples. Al-Albani and authors of the magazines Dabiq and Rumiyah agree on these following points: The meaning of verse No. 97 of Surah an-Nisa is general, and hijrah is, therefore, an obligation valid until the day of resurrection for one who is able to perform it. Hijrah means emigration from Dar al-Harb to Dar al-Islam. Dar al-Harb are all territories in which God's law is publicly opposed, the Prophet Muhammad and his companions are denigrated, and other apparently non-Islamic or anti-Islamic acts are present. The preferred destination for hijrah is as-Sham, a land that God has designated as the target of emigration to several of His prophets, most notably Abraham.

It is apparent that the two approaches of literalist Salafism agree on general issues. However, they differ in some, more detailed features. For al-Albani, Dar al-Islam, the Abode of Islam, may be any Muslim country where basic Islamic customs are observed. On the contrary, the Islamic State considers itself to be the only territory, where the order established by God is adhered to and all other states fall under the classification of Dar al-Harb, the Abode of War. If a person who is in all respects able to emigrate from the Abode of War, but still does not and decides to live among unbelievers, he is, according to al-Albani, in peril of losing his faith. However, such a Muslim is not explicitly declared an unbeliever or an apostate. The situation is different in texts of the magazines Dabiq and Rumiyah, where Muslims who refuse to emigrate to the

Islamic State are declared hypocrites and unbelievers. While for al-Albani's Salafism hijrah to as-Sham is the preferred option, for the Islamic State hijrah to as-Sham is a duty, except for those who wage jihad on other battlefields in the name of the Islamic State. Similarly, al-Albani's Salafism envisages hijrah as a phenomenon of permanent continuity which will last until the end of the world. However, the authors of *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* go a step further when they see the apocalypse to be imminent. Thus, Muslims from all over the world must emigrate to the territory of the Islamic State without any delay. The consensus among various Islamic schools of thought is that a Muslim is not obliged to perform hijrah provided that they are unable to do so. The Islamic State agrees but adds that the Muslim's inability to perform hijrah does not excuse him from other duties, such as supporting the Islamic State in a place of their residence, even by carrying on "jihadist" activities.

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O autorovi

Jan Klik is a PhD student at the Department of Historical Sciences, Faculty of Arts, University of West Bohemia. His research interests lie in Islamic legal theory and modern political history of the Middle East. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9132-5577>.