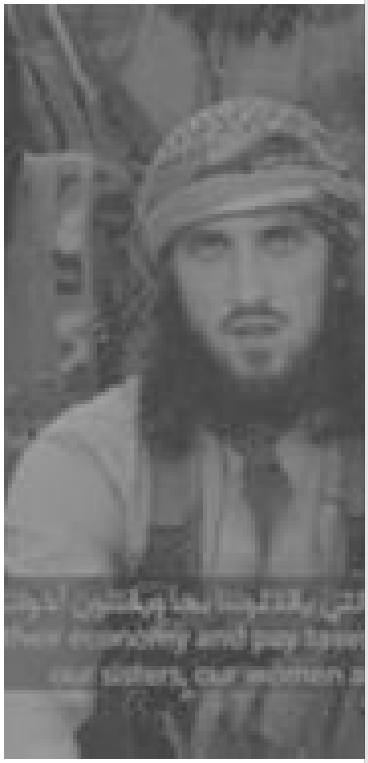
SMA CENTCOM Reach-back Reports



1: Messaging

2: The fight against ISIL

3: Encouraging Regional Stability

4: Regional actor interests and motivations

5: Sources of extremism

Part 6: ISIL Support and recruitment

7: USG bureaucratic requirements

8: Post-ISIS Governance

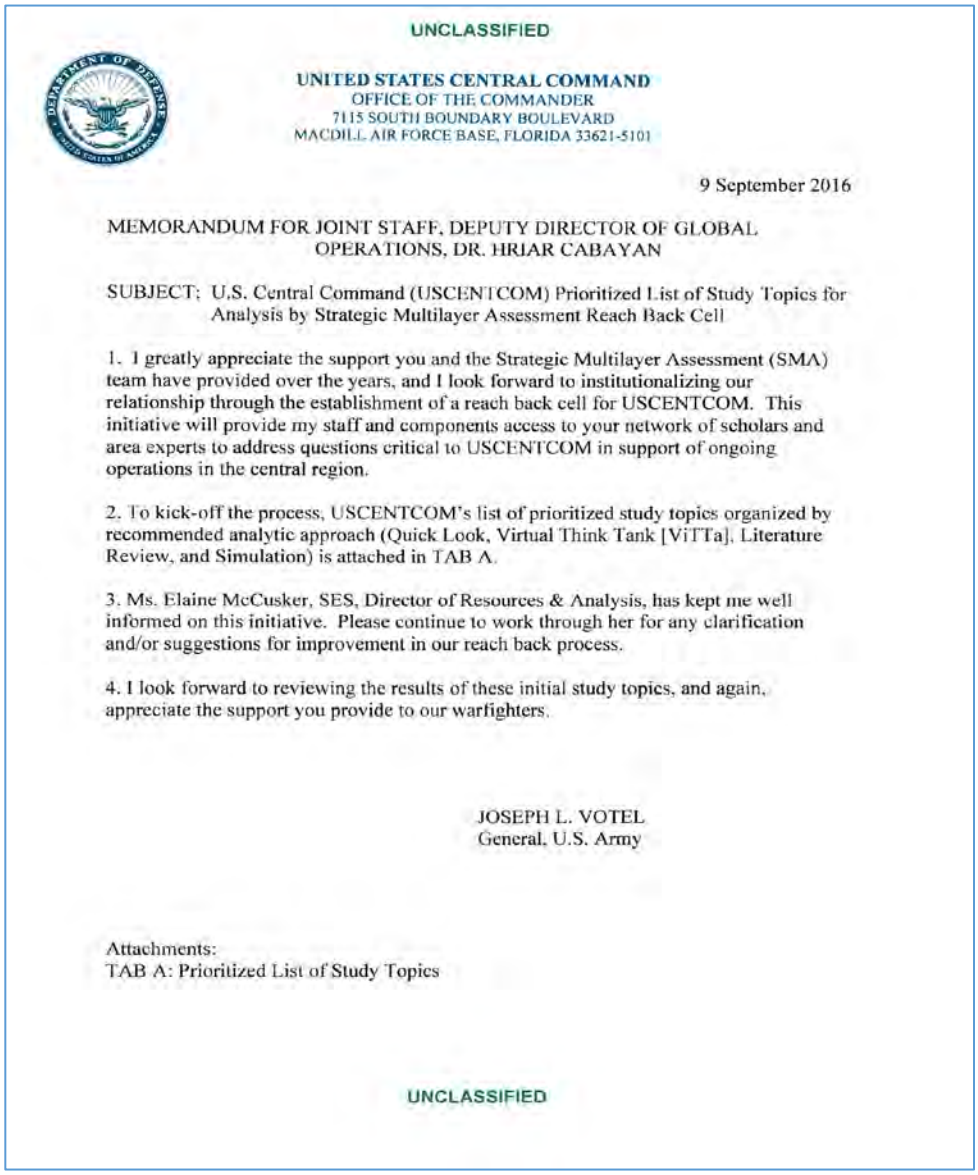
9: Coalition Views

This is Part 6 of a 9 part series of SMA Reach back responses to questions posed by USCENTCOM. Each report contains responses to multiple questions grouped by theme. Parts 1-5 and 7-9 are available from Sam Rhem in the SMA Office at samuel.d.rhem.ctr@mail.mil

10 January 2017

At the request of United States Central Command (USCENTCOM), the Joint Staff, Deputy Director for Global Operations (DDGO), jointly with other elements in the JS, Services, and U.S. Government (USG) Agencies, has established a SMA virtual reach-back cell. This initiative, based on the SMA global network of scholars and area experts, is providing USCENTCOM with population based and regional expertise in support of ongoing operations in the Iraq/Syria region.

The Strategic Multi-Layer Assessment (SMA) provides planning support to Commands with complex operational imperatives requiring multi-agency, multi-disciplinary solutions that are NOT within core Service/Agency competency. Solutions and participants are sought across USG and beyond. SMA is accepted and synchronized by Joint Staff (JS/J-3/DDGO) and executed by ASD(R&E)/EC&P/RRTO.



UNCLASSIFIED

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9 September 2016

MEMORANDUM FOR JOINT STAFF, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF GLOBAL OPERATIONS, DR. HRIAR CABAYAN

SUBJECT: U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) Prioritized List of Study Topics for Analysis by Strategic Multilayer Assessment Reach Back Cell

1. I greatly appreciate the support you and the Strategic Multilayer Assessment (SMA) team have provided over the years, and I look forward to institutionalizing our relationship through the establishment of a reach back cell for USCENTCOM. This initiative will provide my staff and components access to your network of scholars and area experts to address questions critical to USCENTCOM in support of ongoing operations in the central region.

2. To kick-off the process, USCENTCOM's list of prioritized study topics organized by recommended analytic approach (Quick Look, Virtual Think Tank [ViTTa], Literature Review, and Simulation) is attached in TAB A.

3. Ms. Elaine McCusker, SES, Director of Resources & Analysis, has kept me well informed on this initiative. Please continue to work through her for any clarification and/or suggestions for improvement in our reach back process.

4. I look forward to reviewing the results of these initial study topics, and again, appreciate the support you provide to our warfighters.

JOSEPH L. VOTEL
General, U.S. Army

Attachments:
TAB A: Prioritized List of Study Topics

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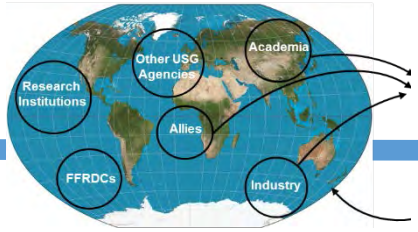
CENTCOM Questions



SMA Reach-back Report

Question *What does primary source opinion research tell us about* ***population support for ISIL*** *in ISIL-held Iraq and globally outside the Combined Joint Operation Area (CJOA) (Syria and Iraq)?*

Opinion polls conducted by independent outfits in 2015 and 2016 derive the same result: the vast majority of Muslims in the region—both inside and outside of the CJOA—do not support ISIL.[1] In fact, ISIL enjoys very low support as a percent of the population across all countries covered by the surveys included in this compilation. Syria showed the highest level of support (20%) while most Muslim-majority countries fall in the single digits (Mauro, 2015). These low numbers recede further when "support" is defined as providing active or material support rather than sympathy for the cause (Burson-Marsteller, 2016).

Among those who do support ISIL, the reported reason has less to do with religion or ideology than with social, economic, and governance grievances.[2] However, experts interviewed identified two populations of concern: young men across the Arab world who they believe are showing growing complaisance toward ISIL and the radicalized population in Northern Africa. According to Mark Tessler, survey data suggests that North Africans who support ISIL are more severe in their adherence to ISIL's extremist ideology and espousal of violence support for ISIL is very low. In the five countries surveyed by the Arab Barometer in spring 2016, it is less than 2% in Jordan, less than 3% in Jordan and Morocco, and slightly higher, in the 8-9% range in Algeria and the Palestinian territories. This is the case both for overall populations and for poorly educated younger men, the primary target of ISIL messaging. (see also, Marcellino *et al*).

It should be noted however, that being widely seen unfavorably does not mean that ISIL is therefore considered the sole enemy. For example, an IIACS poll conducted in Mosul in December 2015 indicated that 46% of the population believed that coalition airstrikes were the biggest threat to the security of their

[1] For example, see polls from the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (ACRPS, 2015); the Pew Research Center, 2015; ORB International Syria poll, 2015; ORB International Iraq poll, 2015; Brookings, 2015; Mauro, 2015; Withnall, 2015.

[2] See Burson-Marsteller Arab Youth Survey 2016; Afrobarometer, 2015-2016; ACRPS, 2015.

families compared to 38% who said that ISIL was the greatest threat to their family. The poll suggests that US government is just as unwelcome in CJOA as ISIL.

Support for ISIL Outside of CJOA

Evaluating military-aged males (MAMs), the primary audience for ISIL messaging, Mark Tessler and Maj Shane Aguero found that, even among its core demographic, support for ISIL's goals, its use of violence, and its perceived compatibility with Islam is still low across the countries surveyed[3] with possible exception of those in Northern Africa (Burson-Marsteller, 2016; Marcellino *et al*). For example, Tessler finds that nearly twice as many poorly educated younger male Tunisian respondents (14.9%) believe that ISIL's tactics are compatible with Islam compared to the general population (8.6%), which already had one of the higher overall levels of popular support for ISIL. However, it is important to note that approval for ISIL's ideology is not the same thing as willingness to provide active or material support. But this belief could help explain why a large number of Tunisians have left the country to fight with ISIL in Syria and Iraq.

A different kind of concern about MAMs is emerging in countries like Egypt where there is only a 2% approval rating of ISIL, but where 22% of youth interviewed are not concerned about the rise of ISIL. While this does not indicate support, it suggests that tolerance for ISIL in the burgeoning youth population in MENA could be significantly higher than the general population (Aguero). Additionally, a 2014 study of Twitter feeds in Egypt showed that while overall levels of support for ISIL in Egypt remain low, ISIL's appeal has increased in Upper Egypt and the Sinai region and that those who support ISIL do so intensely (Cragin).

Drivers of sympathy or support for ISIL outside of CJOA support the conclusion that individuals support ISIL not because of religion or ideology but for a number of other reasons including cultural isolation, poverty, presence of Western forces in Iraq and Syria, and lack of education and economic opportunity (Aguero, Firat). However, radicalization (active support versus sympathy) is a highly individualized process and often involves some kind of psychological, emotional, spiritual, or social catalyst (Aguero).

Support for ISIL in CJOA

Primary source research provided conflicting conclusions regarding the population's support for ISIL in Syria and Iraq. It seems to suggest that Syrians and Iraqis, as a whole, are opposed to ISIL but that Sunnis

[3] Countries surveyed: Syria, Nigeria, Tunisia, Senegal, Malaysia, and 15 others (Benmelech & Klor, 2016) and an additional Tunisia survey (Arab Barometer, ND).

in ISIL-held territory do not see a better alternative and are increasingly complaisant about ISIL's governance.

Countrywide surveys in Iraq and Syria find that the population is largely opposed to ISIL (Everington, Firat). By one account, 93 percent of respondents from Iraq reported that they hold a negative view of ISIL. Only about 2 percent of the Iraqi respondents reported a positive view of ISIL (Firat). Meanwhile 76 percent of Syria respondents reported that ISIL had a negative influence on matters in Syria (Firat).

However, when you look at ISIL-controlled territories—particularly the Iraqi cities of Mosul and Raqqah where polling has been conducted—surveys find growing tolerance for ISIL (Dagher). This is due to a number of reasons:

- Populations under ISIL control have no viable alternative to turn to and hold a strong aversion to the Iraqi state (Dagher).
- Residents are opposed to non-Sunni Arab forces retaking their cities including the Iraqi army, Coalition forces, and Kurdish forces—not to mention Syrian, Iranian, or Russian forces (Dagher, Firat).
- Anti-Shia and anti-Western sentiment is increasingly influencing public opinion in ISIL-controlled regions (Abbas).
- In areas where ISIL has infrastructure and is able to provide essential services (like Raqqah), covert resistance is significantly lower than in areas like Deir Ezzor (Revkin).
- In Syria, local support for ISIL is higher in areas where ISIL has made efforts to promote Syrian recruits within its leadership structure (Revkin).

This does not mean the residents of ISIL-controlled territory want ISIL to govern indefinitely, but they do not want to return to the pre-ISIL status quo. Similar to areas outside of CJOA, support for ISIL in Syria and Iraq is largely driven by social, economic, and governmental grievances, not by religion or ideology (Dagher, Firat).

Public Opinion in the Face of the Battle for Mosul

As the Coalition prepares for the Battle for Mosul, three newly submitted updates agree on one thing: the government that replaces ISIL in Mosul and other liberated areas must be as good or better than what ISIL provided. Let us start with an analysis of why so many Sunni Iraqis welcomed ISIL in the first place:[4]

[4] Based on interviews with 200 Sunni Muslims in Qara Tapah and Jalawla—two sub-districts in the north Diyala governorate, which partially fell under ISIL control in 2014 (Enikolopov, Mironova, & Hussein).

they provided security and justice (Enikolopov, Mironova, & Hussein). What is interesting is that these are two of the elements that seem to be aiding the group's decline in ISIL-held territory, according to a series of interview conducted by Zana Gulmohamad with Arab Sunni and Shia tribal leaders. In Mosul and other areas where ISIL is being challenged, ISIL seems to be giving security and combatant roles to foreign fighters, which is increasing tensions with local populations. Furthermore, ISIL is increasingly harsh to defectors and those who express dissent, yet there is evidence that revolt movement and local counter-ISIL networks are strengthening in Mosul and other areas (Gulmohamad). Mirroring these findings, a study conducted by the Global Media Research Lab at Texas A&M found that ISIL's support within the Arabic Twittersphere continues to erode and its ability to control the narrative appear significantly weakened (Hinck, Naguib, and Kluver). Discourse is changing from the efficacy of the Caliphate to setbacks in Iraq and Syria. What these three studies suggest is that support for ISIL is declining among Sunni populations in ISIL-held Iraq. But the authors cautioned that the government that replaces ISIL must do at least as well as ISIL in providing justice, security, economic stability, and essential services while providing reasonably dealing with competing sectarian and political agendas.

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SME Input

Prioritized List of Study Topics Organized by Study Approach

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QL3: What does primary source opinion research data tell us about popular support for ISIL in ISIL-held Iraq and globally outside of the Combined Joint Operation Area (CJOA) (Syria and Iraq)?

ANSWER: *My frequent travels to Iraq convince me that ISIL support is inextricably linked to tribal alliances and networks run by former Bathist operators. Anti-Shia factor is increasingly influencing public opinion in ISIL controlled regions but still cannot be deemed to be a dominating factor. Parallel to the negative consequences of Hashd al-Shabi operations in certain areas, a counterbalancing factor at play is that Shia majority towns are hosting displaced Sunnis earning them some goodwill.*

Popular Support for ISIL

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Primary source opinion data informs us ISIL does not have the support of the majority of the population in any country (Galka, 2015; Mauro, 2015; Withnall, 2015). The most support for ISIL as seen via a compilation of opinion polling conducted by Pew Research Center, Washington Institute, ORB International, The Center for Strategic and International Studies, ACRPS and Zogby is concentrated in Syria, with 21% of those polled expressing a favorable opinion of ISIL (Galka, 2015; Mauro, 2015). The next most supportive areas are Nigeria (14%), Tunisia (13%), Senegal and Malaysia (both 11%). In 15 other polled nations the level of support was under 10% (Galka, 2015).

These results can be very misleading however when these numbers are more fully dissected. For example, in Egypt, only 2% of the population has a favorable view of ISIS when viewed as a composite, however, when Arab youth (Burson-Marsteller, 2016) is polled (defined as age 18 to 24), 22% are not concerned about the rise of ISIS. While this does not indicate support, 13% agreed with the following statement: "If Daesh did not use so much violence, I could see myself supporting it" (Burson-Marsteller, 2016, pg 8). Again, while this does not indicate support, it does indicated that ideological agreement with ISIS is much higher in the youth population of MENA than in the general population.

The primary driver of support for ISIS in the youth population appears to be a lack of economic opportunity, although there are multiple other reasons presented as possibilities such as the superiority of Islam or the presence of Western troops in the reason. (Burson-Marsteller, 2016, pg. 10) This indicates that there is a massive distinction between ideological support for ISIS and active, material support for ISIS. In interviews with multiple subjects arrested or convicted for material support of ISIS, radicalization is a personal decision that includes ideological support coupled with some psychological, emotional, spiritual or social event that catalyzes the ideology into action (Vindino, Hughes, 2015; Rasmussen, 2015). The primary driver of these catalytic actions appears to be cultural isolation for the majority of European foreign fighters (Galka, 2016).

In conclusion, the level of global and regional support for ISIS is relatively low. The level of material support and active support for ISIL is exceptionally low by percentage. The primary drivers of ideological support for ISIS appears to be economic, while the primary driver of active, material support for ISIS appears to be cultural isolation. Even with a very small support base of under 10% of the population, the total number of people expressing ideological support for ISIS is in the tens of millions globally (Mauro, 2015).

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Response to Quick Look 3

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Quick Look #3. What does the primary source opinion research tell us about popular support for ISIL globally outside the Combined Joint Operation Area?

An academic article, recently accepted by the *Journal of Strategic Studies,* addresses this question by measuring the appeal of Daesh's propaganda over time for local populations within Egypt, using Twitter data in 2014.[5] Findings demonstrate that: (1) Daesh has a social media "fingerprint," distinct from other Salafi groups; (2) while Daesh's messages generally do not resonate with Egyptians, its appeal has increased in Upper Egypt and the Sinai regions; and (3) this method can be applied more broadly to measure the appeal of Daesh over time.

Methods

Our basic approach is grounded in social science and rhetorical theory that treats language and worldview as inextricably linked: real world language-use informs the social and political world, and our social and political realities influence our language. More than just communication, word choice also provides insight into how a person understands the world.

By definition, VEOs promote a worldview that is far from the typical and their word choices are distinct. With a large enough sample, it is possible to use statistical measures to identify a linguistic model or "fingerprint" for VEOs: what words are statistically more likely to be used, and exactly how much more likely. Because the model is not simply a list of words, but rather a weighted list of improbability, it has greater precision.

Our linguistic model for Daesh was developed through keyness testing, using a log-likelihood approach. Keyness testing identifies keywords by comparing how often they appear in a target collection of texts, relative to how often we would expect them to appear in a random sample of more typical texts. The

[5] William M. Marcellino, Kim Cragin, Joshua Mendelsohn, Andrew Michael Cady, Madeline Magnuson, and Kathleen Reedy, "Measuring the Popular Resonance of Daesh's Propaganda", *Strategic Forum*, forthcoming.

resulting linguistic model is similar to a fingerprint analysis. Our initial keyness tests yielded 97 distinct words for “Daesh talk.”

Further empirical tests, however, found that these 97 keywords alone did not provide fine enough resolution to detect small (<5%) degrees of resonance within sub-regions of Egypt. To add greater resolution, we calculated collocates for Daesh. Collocates are statistically conspicuous because of their (co)location near each other: e.g. prosodic associations, such as "habitual" with negative words ("offender,” etc.). This approach yielded 51 two-word collocates and nine three-word collocates for Daesh. By adding these collocates to the results of our keyness testing, we were able to detect much smaller variations of resonance amongst Egypt’s Twitter-users.

Results

The table below reports the findings from our analysis. It illustrates the extent to which Daesh’s worldview resonated with residents of the four sub-regions of Egypt – the Sinai Peninsula, Cairo/Nile Delta, Alexandria/Coast and Upper Egypt – in 2014. For each region, readers will find four stacked bar graphs that go from left to right, which correspond to the four quarters of the calendar year. Each bar graph measures the proportion of Twitter users, in the defined region and time-period, whose Tweets echo the worldview articulated by Daesh. (The axis is truncated at 40%). For easier reading, the bar graphs are color coded in a “stoplight style:” red reports the percentage with high resonance, orange indicates medium resonance and so on with green indicating the non-resonant Twitter users. The gray shaded segments highlight changes from one quarter to the next within each region.

Resonance of Daesh's Worldview in Egypt during 2014

Our findings suggest that only 1-2% of Twitter users pass the threshold for high resonance with Daesh. Even lumping high and medium resonance, the total never exceeds – and tends to fall well short of – 5% of Twitter users within each region. Based on these results, it is easy to conclude that Daesh's way of thinking is highly salient to a small sliver of the population in Egypt.

But the value of this approach is that it goes beyond identifying a snapshot of that small sliver of the Egyptian population with the highest resonance for Daesh's worldview. It also measures shifts in degree of resonance over time. Results indicate that Daesh gained ground with Twitter users in all four sub-regions of Egypt during 2014. The strongest gains occurred in the Sinai and Upper Egypt regions. Among those Twitter-users with high resonance, our analysis reveals that support is intense: Twitter users in this category were 9.2 times more likely to be resonant with Daesh's worldview than random chance.

Response to Quick Look 3

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What does primary source opinion research data tell us about popular support for ISIL in ISIL held Iraq (Mosul)?

Ramadi, a largely Sunni town in Iraq, has been cleared of most of the remnants of the ISIS forces that occupied it until late December 2015. While pockets of resistance remain, there is optimism in the U.S. media that the defeat of ISIS in Ramadi foretells the coming liberation of Mosul, the second biggest city in Iraq and a significant source of revenue and propaganda value for ISIS. The Iraqi government has announced that Mosul is the next significant city to be liberated. Mosul will be a much tougher fight for Iraqi forces and their allies than Ramadi was. It might be a very long while before Mosul is pried from the Islamic State.

Why is Mosul likely to be such a difficult challenge for the Iraqi army and its allies? The reasons boil down to local acquiesce to ISIS, Mosul's Sunnis aversion to the Iraqi state re-establishing control in their city, and the allies the Iraqi army will have to depend on to re-take the city. It is not a simple equation of the Iraqi army's troop strength versus ISIS's troop numbers in Mosul. Certainly, ISIS is grossly outnumbered. That being said, the politics on the ground are in ISIS's favor. Ramadi is a largely de-populated city that was always much smaller than Mosul. Mosul has a very large population and that population is not friendly to the Iraqi state.

One thing is that is very instructive about how the forthcoming battle may play out, is to look back at how Mosul was conquered by ISIS in June of 2014. Iraq's second biggest city, with around two million residents, was taken by a group of around 400 ISIS fighters with the help of some Sunni tribesmen. The much, much larger Iraqi army force simply fled as ISIS approached. The ISIS forces were welcomed by some residents within Mosul while most certainly did not resist ISIS. The key to understanding this is to view ISIS and the

Iraqi army through the eyes of Mosul's Sunni population. For them, the Iraqi army, was a Shia-dominated force, operating with the help and guidance of hated Iran, that had a record of abusing and humiliating Iraqi Sunnis. Mosul's Sunnis were still angry about how demonstrating Sunnis had been treated during the Arab Spring demonstrations of 2011. Many Sunnis were shot, beaten, or disappeared by Iraqi Shia-dominated security forces. Thus, for Mosul's Sunnis, ISIS may have seemed like a group of fanatics who were brutal and even savage, but they were Sunnis who opposed the Iraqi Shia-dominated state. Thus, Mosul residents acquiescing to ISIS taking over their city was more a vote of no confidence in the sectarian Shia-dominated Iraqi state than it was an embrace of the brutally intolerant Salafism of ISIS.

One might believe that since ISIS has controlled Mosul that its harsh rule has alienated the population and created a yearning for the return of the Iraqi state. While ISIS never had the full support of the population of Mosul, its popularity there has been growing, not waning. Public opinion polls have been carried out by IIACSS in Mosul in June 2014, June 2015, and December 2015. These polls give us a very useful view of how Mosul residents think about ISIS and its opponents. The results are not good news for the Iraqi government and the U.S.-led coalition against ISIS.

When ISIS took over Mosul in June 2014, just 10% of the population thought that ISIS represented their interests. In June of 2015, 26% of Mosul residents believed ISIS represented their interests and by December of 2015, that proportion had risen to 40%. In June of 2015, 21% of Mosul residents interviewed said that things had gotten better than 18 months prior to the survey. In December of 2015, 55% of Mosul residents said that things had gotten better than 18 months prior to the survey. Thus, it seems that Mosul residents are getting used to ISIS and find its presence is more tolerable over time.

This does not mean that the people of Mosul want to be ruled by ISIS forever. In December of 2015, 40% of Mosul residents wanted ISIS to maintain control of the city, while 60% wanted ISIS to give up control of the city. This majority support for ISIS to leave does not mean that they want the Iraqi state, as it is now fashioned to simply re-establish the pre-ISIS status quo. This same survey shows that there is great distrust of the Iraqi state and its American allies. Eighty-two percent of Mosul residents have no confidence in the Iraqi parliament, 60% have no confidence in the Iraqi army, and 70% have no confidence in the Iraqi police. Seventy-two percent of Mosul residents do not believe that the Iraqi central government represents their interests.

The United States is also greatly distrusted in Mosul. A plurality of Mosul residents, 46%, said that U.S. and coalition airstrikes are the biggest threat to the security of their family, more than 38% who said ISIS was a threat to their family's security. Another clear sign of the distrust of the United States is that 60%

of Mosul residents said in December 2015 that ISIS was supported by the US government. That was up from 37% who believed that in June 2014.

What does all of this information mean? It means that the Iraqi army or U.S. forces would not be welcomed into Mosul with open arms. While ISIS is not overwhelming popular in Mosul, it is more popular than the current Iraqi regime. The Iraqi government will have to create a political solution to assuage Mosul residents' fears. Mosul will not be successfully rid of ISIS, if it is accomplished by a Shia conquest of the city. U.S. forces coming in to expel ISIS would be just as unwelcome. Iraqi Sunni and Shia, national and local politicians must set about creating a national accommodation, whereby both sides can feel like they can live with each other in trust and not fear. This will be very hard to do, with Iran pushing for a maximalist position for Iraq's Shias and hardline Sunnis, particularly Salafis from the Gulf States pushing for resistance to what is viewed as an Iranian puppet government. But, as Mosul goes, so does Sunni Iraq. If Mosul is to once again become part of Iraqi government controlled territory, its Sunnis must be convinced they have a secure and valued place in Iraq's national politics.

What ISIS Can Teach Policymakers

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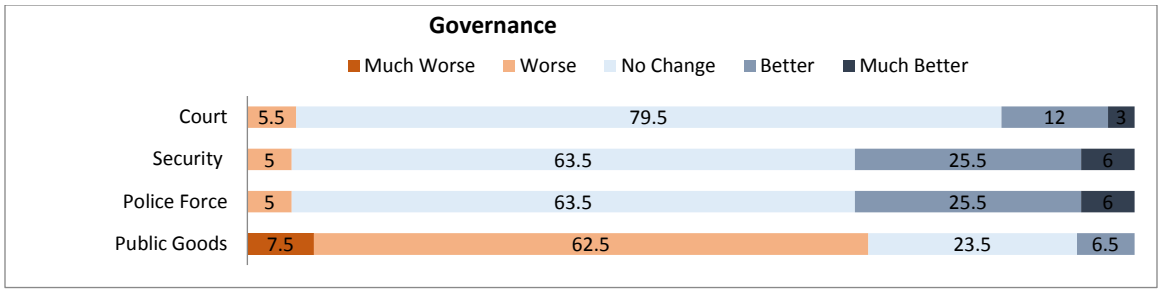
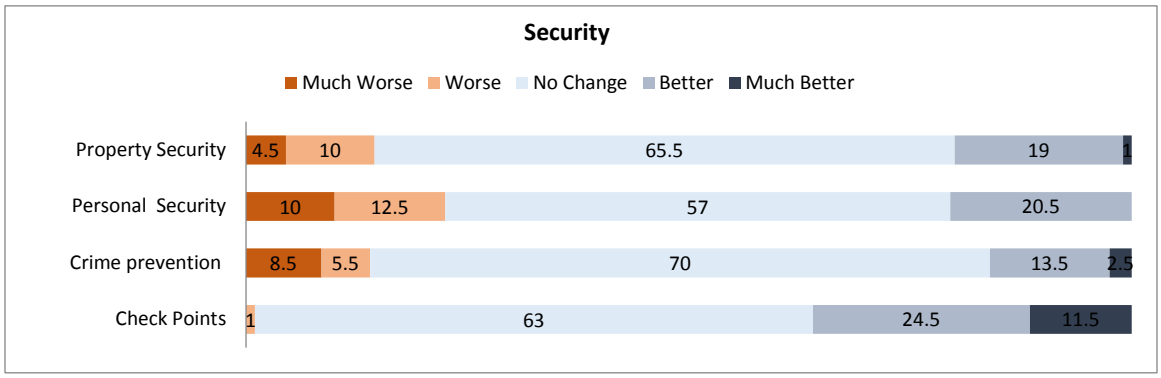
Iraq Oil Report

Military preparations to retake Mosul, the second biggest town in Iraq, are almost done, and no one in Baghdad or Washington has any doubt that these next maneuvers will eradicate ISIS's Iraqi reign. But the question is, then what? Are the West and Iraq prepared to fill the power vacuum the fall of ISIS will leave behind? Unlike Syria, the Sunni Iraqis welcomed ISIS and considered them a liberating force. So how can coalition forces ensure post-ISIS civilians will not desperately need another "liberation" soon after this operation?

A good place to start might be to find out why Sunni Iraqis welcomed ISIS in the first place. In other words, what did ISIS do right? We decided to find out by asking the people who showed little resistance to ISIS expansion in 2014. Some interesting factors about ISIS's effectiveness came to light by asking very basic questions to a random sample of 200 Sunni Muslims in Qara Tapah and Jalawla—two sub-districts in the northern Diyala governorate, which partially fell under ISIS control in 2014.

First, what did ISIS get right?





It is no secret that after US intervention, Sunni Muslims were unhappy with the Shia-dominated central government in Baghdad. Many thought the government incompetent, and some even considered it to be the root cause of the problems. So to win the hearts and minds of Iraqi Sunnis, the first thing ISIS fixed was justice system and security situation. Immediately after taking territory, ISIS established a hardline policing and court system, one where justice was swift, one where a person would quickly have their hand removed (via sword) for stealing. In this way, ISIS was able to instill order into a previously chaotic situation.

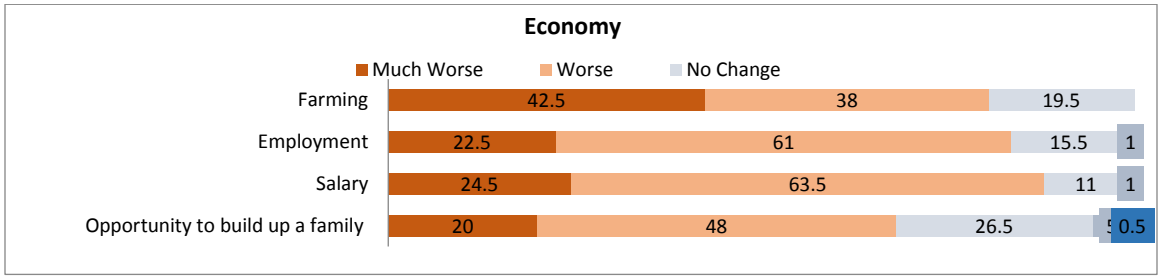
ISIS is also credited for reducing security-related bureaucracy. For example pre-ISIS Iraqi Army and Police checkpoints were considered excessive in number and were manned by disrespectful and rude personal. Locals had found it very annoying to spend at least 5-10 minutes under a hot Iraqi sun at each checkpoint between towns. “To travel from Qara Tapah to Diyala,” said Azada Rash, a local taxi driver, “took almost 2 hours when it was just 1 hour and 20 minutes before checkpoints were installed. And sometimes, people could not even use the road because of security concerns and criminal gangs.”

Though the Sunnis believe ISIS did a great deal to ensure internal security, they also believe ISIS is to blame for massive destruction of property and many civilian deaths because of the war. Despite a very high ranking on security achievements, only a quarter of people think personal and property security were

better under ISIS (than under the former regime). However, almost the same percentage of people strongly disagreed.

Compared to other terrorist groups and even legitimate governments around the world, ISIS has done fairly well with security policies in the area (at least better than the Baghdad government). However, that is not the case when it comes to other public concerns. Subsidies the Baghdad government had provided, such as pesticides, promptly halted with the takeover of ISIS, and other services, such as schools, and medicine for public hospitals, remained closed as they had been under the previous rule.

So what else did ISIS get wrong?



In general, the locals perceive the economy to be worse under ISIS. The biggest issue has been trade isolation. Farmers can't sell their products—wheat, potatoes and sheep meat—which is a serious issue for the mostly agricultural region. If previously government was buying agricultural produce in the region to distribute it to people in need now this major buyer was off limits to farmers. Locals also weren't able to buy imports, so some products like cooking gas are not even available while prices for other products more than tripled. Soon after ISIS took the territories, baby formula, which sold for $3.50 in government-controlled territories, climbed to $14, and to get it meant dealing with smugglers. The bad economy is even affecting the marriage rate. Because Iraqi culture requires a man to have a good job before he can propose to a woman, the bad economy has meant many young people can't marry and start families. How much economic woe is because of ISIS policies and how much is because of outside sanctions is unclear, but crystal clear is the truth that ISIS has neither the means nor inclination to remedy it. Even in places where they were paying schoolteachers salary, it was not an adequate compensation received only sporadically. So what lessons has the rise and impending fall of ISIS taught us?

The main take away point is that ISIS did a great job gaining public support by beefing up the justice system and dealing with security issues. They got very good scores on their own policies related to internal governance. The results of our survey made ISIS look pretty good among locals even though the survey was conducted after ISIS atrocities, and a retakeover of their territory by the Kurdish forces. This means actual attitudes toward ISIS could be even more positive than those reported in the survey. ISIS, however,

was also the cause of the war and trade sanctions, both devastating blows to the economy and social aspects of those societies.

So what have we learned? That after the upcoming Mosul operation, the incoming government—whoever that may be— better do at least as well as ISIS did with security issues, crime, and justice. They also need to be prepared to right the sinking economic ship, some of which (sanctions) should automatically disappear post ISIS.

Response to Quick Look 3

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3. What does primary source opinion research tell us about **population support for ISIL** in ISIL-held Iraq and globally outside the Combined Joint Operation Area (CJOA) (Syria and Iraq)?

1. The population is largely opposed to ISIL in both Syria and Iraq
2. However, the population is too afraid to do anything about it given the history of ISIL brutality and the lack of international intervention on this and other related events.
3. Consequently the majority will remain flexible and opportunistic. This is problematic in that they will not confront ISIL unless it is clearly in their benefit, but it is advantageous in that if real support is given there is potential to mobilize locals.
4. As time goes on, ISIL wins more opportunity to persuade locals that it was right all along. This is best done by adopting sectarian narratives. International support of Kurds and deals with Iran, for example, only serve to strengthen such arguments. The international community has to provide tangible and visible support to people in ISIL-controlled areas.

Quick Look at Social Media Presence as an Indicator of the Strength of the Islamic State

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Executive Summary

In support of USCENTCOM's SMA Reach Back Support, a research team at Texas A&M conducted a follow-up study to its SMA report on Social Media & The Islamic State: The Legitimation of the Virtual Caliphate (March, 2016).

Our analysis aids CENTCOM's questions regarding:

Q3: What does primary source opinion research data tell us about popular support for ISIL in ISIL-help Iraq and globally outside of the Combined Joint Operation Area (Syria and Iraq)?

Q4: What are the general perceptions associated with ISIL endorsed themes, to include 1) re-establishing the Caliphate; 2) imposition of Shariah law; 3) belief that the Ummah/Islam is under attack from the West; 4) low tolerance for non-Sunni Muslim ethno-religious groups; 5) negative disposition towards gender equality?

For this reach-back, the researchers conducted a network and content analysis of the Middle East Twittersphere to provide primary source opinion data gauging support for ISIL messaging. Two studies were conducted: the first examined use of known ISIL hashtags to determine whether ISIL generated content was driving conversation within the Arabic Twittersphere; the second examined the discourse around two widely tweeted hashtags—"Caliphate" and "Daash"—looking for criticism or support for ISIL's claim of establishing a new Islamic State.

Summary of Findings

- ISIL's support within the Arabic Twittersphere continues to erode and its ability to control the narrative appears significantly weakened.
- Discourse around ISIL has primarily shifted away from the efficacy of its Caliphate to updates regarding recent setbacks in Iraq and Syria.
- Even among those who do not support ISIL, US and Russian policy in Syria is heavily criticized. Russian actions, in particular, are negatively framed as responsible for killing innocent Syrians.
- Non-ISIL opinion leaders remain critical of US and Russian backed actions in the Middle East, with many believing that the US is biased towards Shiites.

Methodology

Data was generated using Texas A&M's Media Monitoring System programed to capture Twitter content from the Middle East. This system draws from a seed list of approximately 450 Arabic language twitter users, and captures tweets from across the region. Approximately 500,000-1,000,000 tweets are captured per day, allowing us to discern trends and networks. Although it certainly does not capture all Twitter activity in the region, this quick look allows us to discern trends that are typically mirrored in the larger Arabic twittersphere. Our previous study showed us that Twitter quickly removes ISIL-sympathetic profiles, and thereby limits the number of followers that might exist. Therefore, we follow hashtags rather than follower-leader networks.

The research team conducted searches for known ISIL hashtags which was used for our previous study. Data was analyzed by conducting both a network analysis, identifying key nodes and networks of Twitter generated content, in addition to a content analysis of key themes emerging from user generated Tweets. Data was collected primarily collected from 10/10/16-10/17/16, along with some comparison to the number of Tweets from 30 and 90 days back from 10/17/16. Two data pulls were conducted: the first examined use of known ISIL hashtags to determine whether ISIL generated content was driving conversation within the Arabic Twittersphere; the second examined the discourse around two widely tweeted hashtags—"Caliphate" and "Daash"—looking for criticism or support for ISIL's claim of establishing a new Islamic State. *Caliphate* was chosen because of its positive association with the idea of a new Islamic State, and is more likely to be used by those sympathetic to the organization; while *Daash* was chosen to represent an alternative description of ISIL's organization, one that is more likely to be used by those who are unsympathetic.

Quick Look Study 1: Examination of ISIL Hashtags

RQ1: To what extent are previously known ISIL hashtags driving conversation in the Arabic Twittersphere?

We conducted searches for known ISIL hashtags which suggests significantly fewer attempts by ISIL accounts to use them in organizing ISIL discourse in support of the Islamic State. Table 1 and Figure 1 depict the decline of hashtag use in comparison to the last seven days, 30 days, and 90 days. Network and content analysis of the top four hashtags, #IslamicState, #Daash, #Dabiq, and #Daeshis demonstrate that mainstream public intellectuals, academics, and journalists drive most of the conversation in these areas and are generally critical of ISIL focusing on recent events and ISIL setbacks in Syria and Iraq. Table 2 provides a closer look at suspect ISIL users that are caught up in our data set, identified by overly religious

rhetoric, use of key terms such as “infidels,” or depiction of the ISIL flag. The table shows how many followers the suspect ISIL users have, number of tweets using known ISIL hashtags, and summary of content being tweeted. These numbers are just for our data set, not for the entire twitterverse.

The data suggests that ISIL accounts using the known hashtags create very little content, and are generally followed by no more than 200 users, which suggests that ISIL’s messaging capacity is limited and diminishing. The content Tweeted typically falls into two categories: criticism of other Tweets or reporting on casualties caused by ISIL. Analysis also showed ISIL users incorporating the hashtag #ةيقاب (Remaining/lingering), which might suggest ISIL setbacks, are reducing public support for ISIL. Finally, Figures 2, 3, and 4 provide a closer look into the networked component of suspected ISIL user generated content. In all three cases, network analysis shows ISIL generated content is pushed by ISIL sympathizers towards other non-sympathetic accounts, instead of to other ISIL sympathizers (or those that link to clear ISIL content). This suggests that ISIL messaging is not being picked up by others, providing more evidence doubting the effectiveness of ISIL attempts to influence public opinion.

Table 1. Frequency of Tweets from Known ISIL Hashtags (7 Days, 30 Days, 90 days)

Arabic Hashtag	**English Hashtag**	**Number of Tweets/Retweets**		
		Last 7 Days (10/10/16-10/17/16)	*Last 30 days (beginning from 10/17/16)*	*Last 90 days (beginning from 10/17/16)*
#الدولة_الإسلامية	IslamicState	524	1000	1000
#داعش	Daash	1000	1000	1000
#دابق	Dabiq	1000	1000	1000
#الدواعش	Daeshis	1000	1000	1000
#باقية_وتتمدد	RemainingExpanding	60	88	323
#إذاعة_البيان	Al-BayanRadio	9	22	248
#دولة_الخلافة	StateOfCaliphate	20	37	220
#ولاية_حلب	StateAleppo	2	10	79
#ولاية_الفرات	StateFurat	1	2	74

#ولاية_الخير	StateKhair	0	0	50
#ولاية_سيناء	StateSinai	2	0	44
#ولاية_نينوى	StateNineveh	0	7	42
#مجلة_دابق	DabiqMagazine	40	40	41
#ولاية_كركوك	StateKirkuk	0	1	31
#مركز_الحياة	Al-HayatCenter	0	0	28
#ولاية_دجلة	StateDijlah	1	6	28
#أخبار_الخلافة	CaliphateNews	19	20	25
#ولاية_حمص	StateHoms	1	1	25
#ولاية_الرقة	StateRaqqa	0	2	23
#ولاية_برقة	StateBarqa	0	2	23
#ولاية_الأنبار	StateAnbar	0	0	19
#ولاية_البركة	StateHassakah	0	4	19
#ولاية_الجنوب	StateSouth	0	0	14
#ولاية_دمشق	StateDamascus	0	0	12
#ولاية_الجزيرة	StateJezira	0	0	6
#مركز_الحياة_للإعلام	Al-HayatMediaCenter	0	0	4
#ولاية_بغداد	StateBaghdad	2	2	4
#ولاية_ديالى	StateDiyala	0	0	4
#ولاية_صلاح_الدين	StateSalahuddin	0	0	4
#تقارير_الولايات	StateReports	0	0	3
#ولاية_طرابلس	StateTripoli	1	1	3
#ولاية_خراسان	StateKhorasan	0	0	1
#ولاية_نجد	StateNajd	1	1	1

#متى_تنفر	WhenWillYouMigrate	0	1	1
#ولاية_الفلوجة	StateFallujah	0	0	0
#ولاية_فزان	StateFezzan	0	0	0
#ولاية_الحجاز	StateHijaz	0	0	0
#ولاية_صنعاء	StateSanaa	0	0	0

Figure 1. Decline of ISIL Hashtag Use: 90 Days, 30 Days, 7 Days

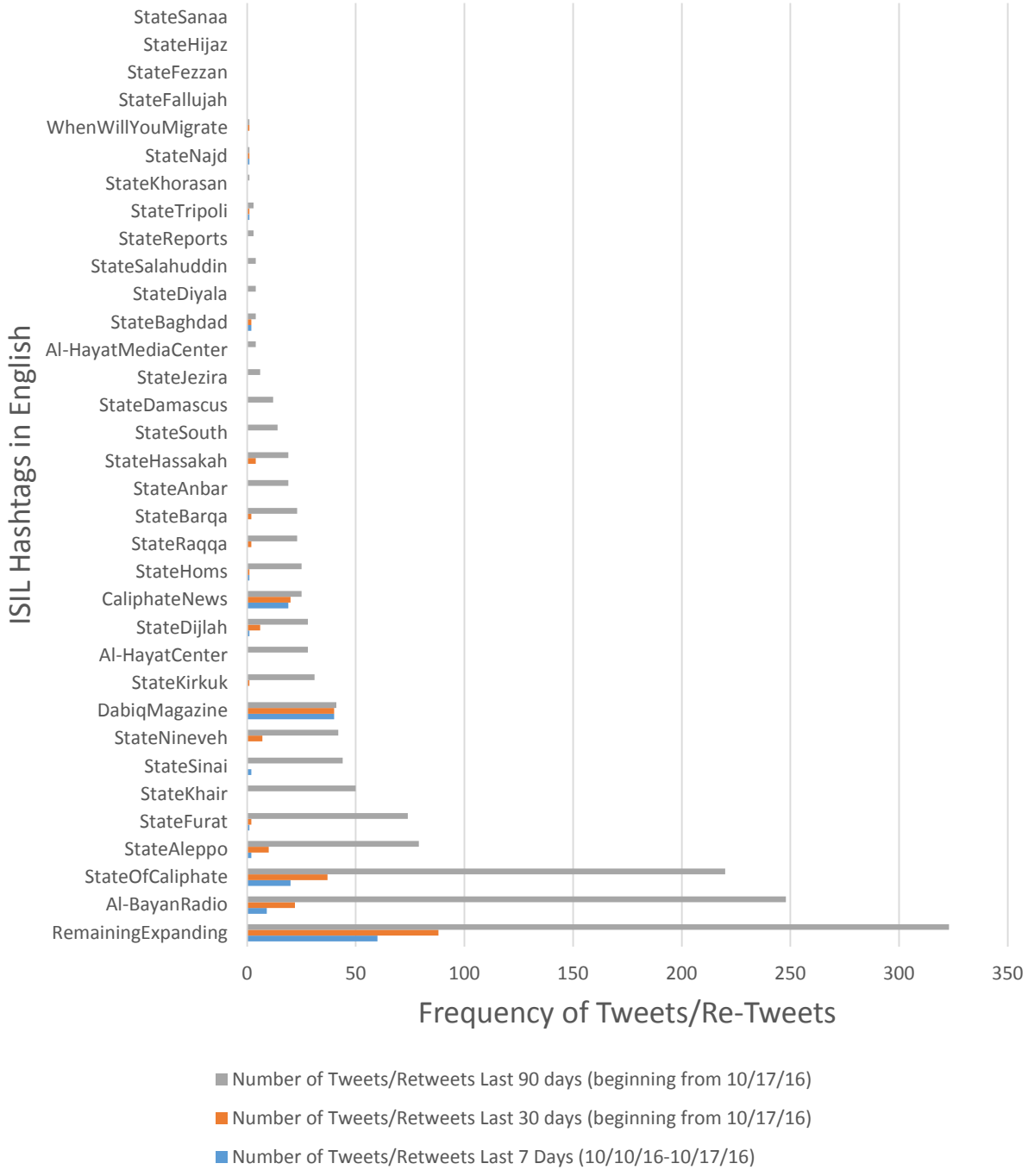


Table 2. Suspected ISIL Accounts & Themes: Last 7 Days (10/10/16-10/17/16)					
Arabic Hashtag	English Hashtag	Number of Tweets/ Retweets Last 7 Days	Number of Followers from Suspected ISIL Account	User Identity of Key Account	Content/Theme
#دولة_الخلافة	StateOfCaliphate	20	1	Suspected ISIL Account	Unclear criticism directed towards other user
#ولاية_حلب	StateAleppo	2	103	Suspected ISIL Account	Unclear criticism directed towards other user
#ولاية_بغداد	StateBaghdad	2	195	Suspected ISIL Account	Reporting on enemy casualties in Iraq and Syria
#ولاية_دجلة	StateDijlah	1	15	Suspected ISIL Account/Sympathizer	Reporting on enemy casualties in Iraq
#ولاية_الفرات	StateFurat	1	195	Suspected ISIL Account	Reporting enemy casualties in Syria and Iraq
#ولاية_حمص	StateHoms	1	195	Suspected ISIL Account	Reports enemy casualties

Figure 2. #StateCaliphate: Outward flow of ISIL Tweets

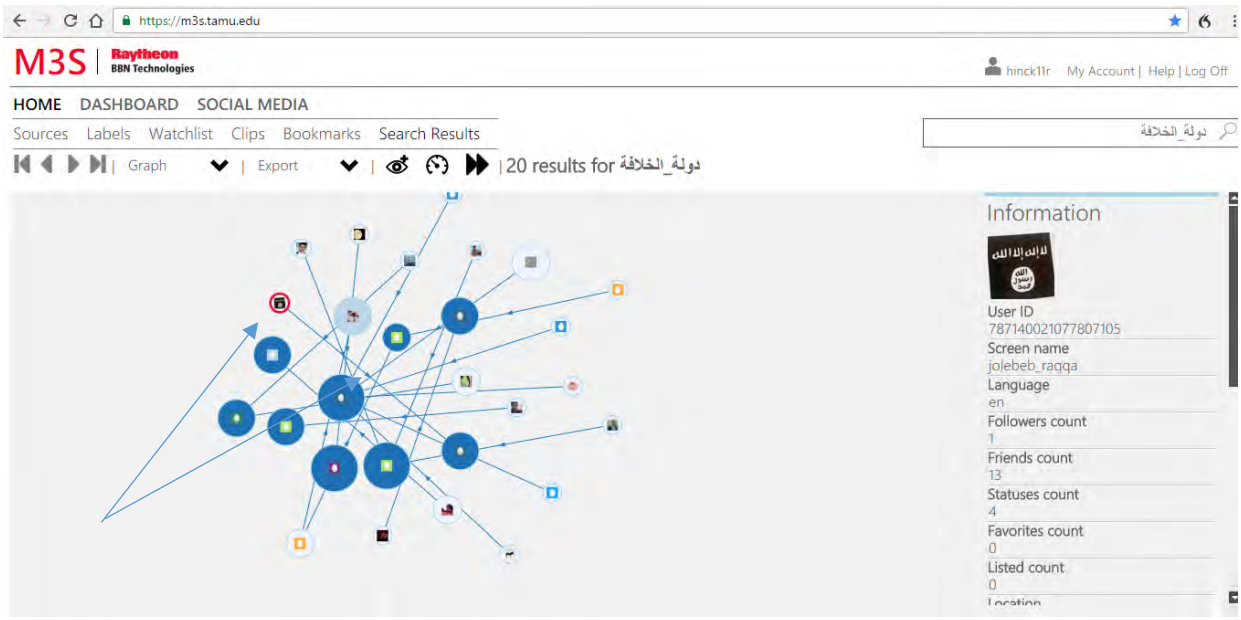


Figure 3. #StateAleppo: Outward flow of ISIL Tweets

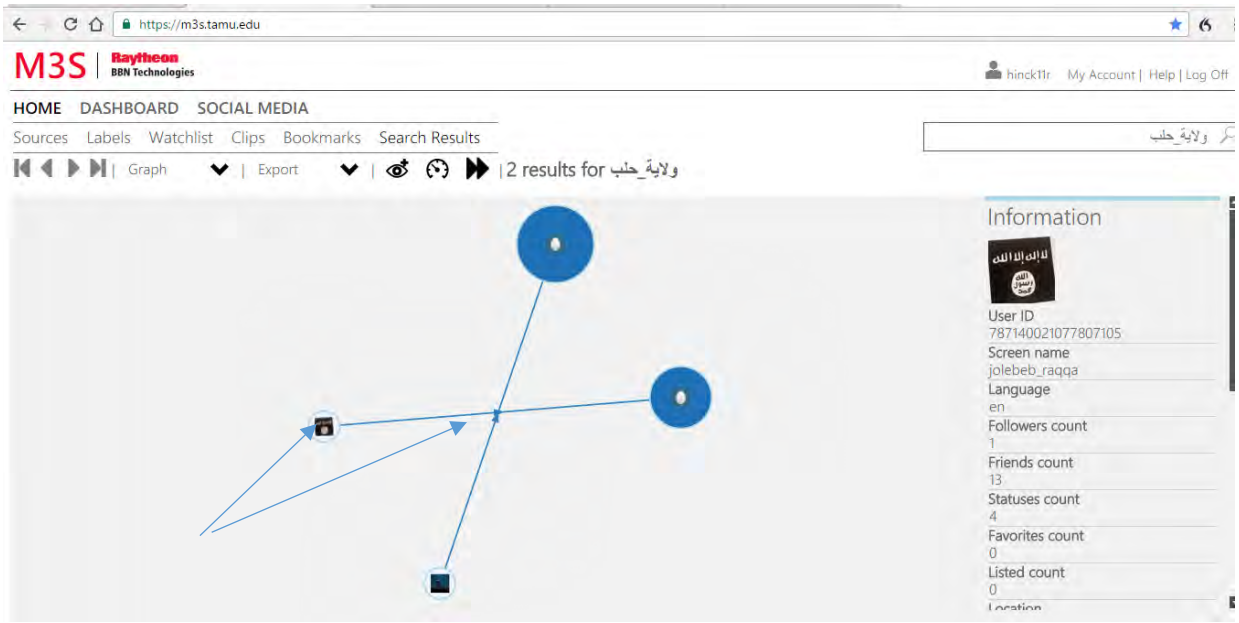
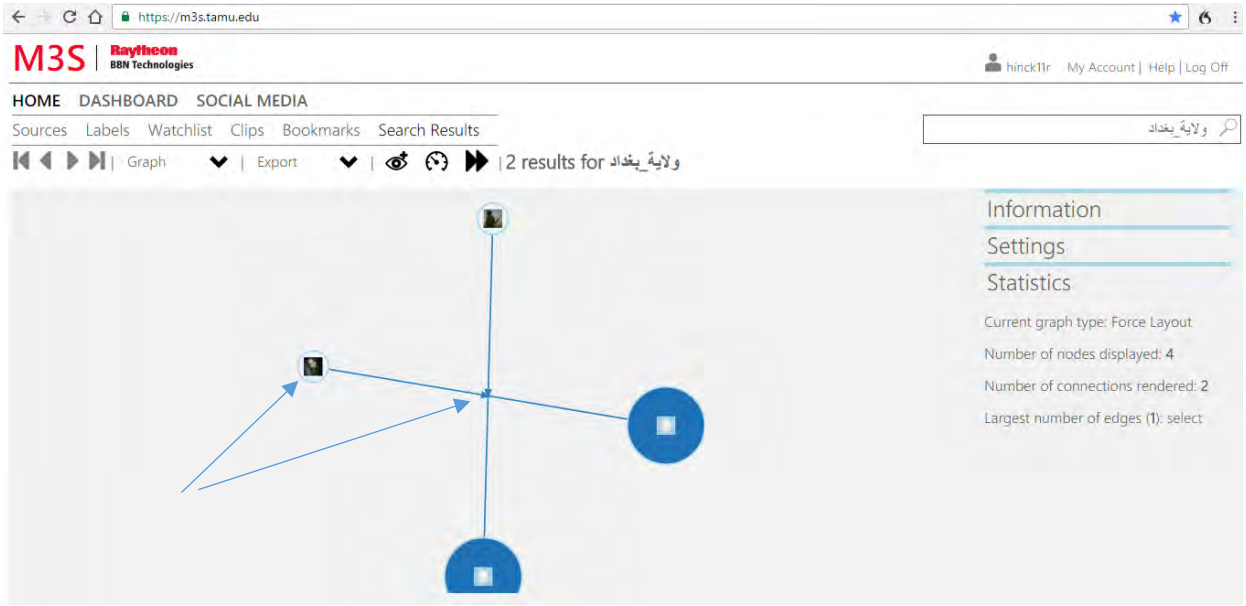


Figure 4. #StateBaghdad: Outward flow of ISIL Tweets



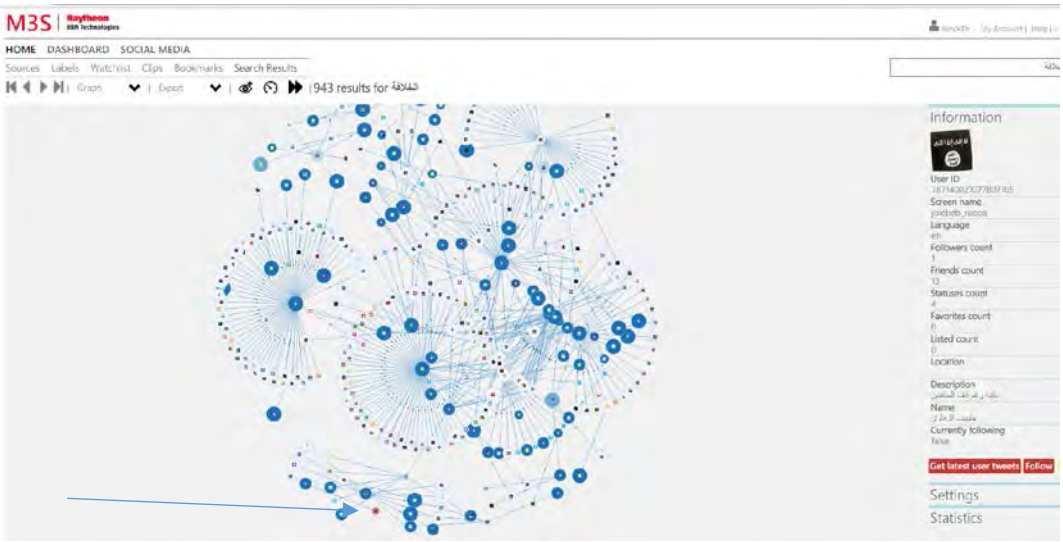
Quick Look 2: Content Analysis of "#Caliphate" and "#Daash"

RQ1. How do Twitter users respond to ISIL discourse regarding the establishment of a new "caliphate"?

Twitter discourse surrounding the term "Caliphate" remained fractured, with ISIL accounts remaining on the periphery. Primary nodes of discourse continued to be public intellectuals, academics, and news organizations. Content analysis reflected a shift in discussion from our previous study. Instead of

discussing the efficacy of the term “Caliphate,” discussion largely reflected updates on events taking place within the Middle East. Most prevalent were reports on events in Syria, including criticism of Russian and US intervention and the possibility for cooperation between Ankara and Iraq. Turkish-backed rebels taking back Dabiq, Syria from ISIL control prompted discussion suggesting the “Myth [that] the Caliphate will fall”. The most common theme among all users was support for Syrians and the large number of deaths in that country. Criticism was leveled towards the international community, and questioned whether anyone actually cared about those dying in Syria.

Figure 1. Network Graph of “#Caliphate”

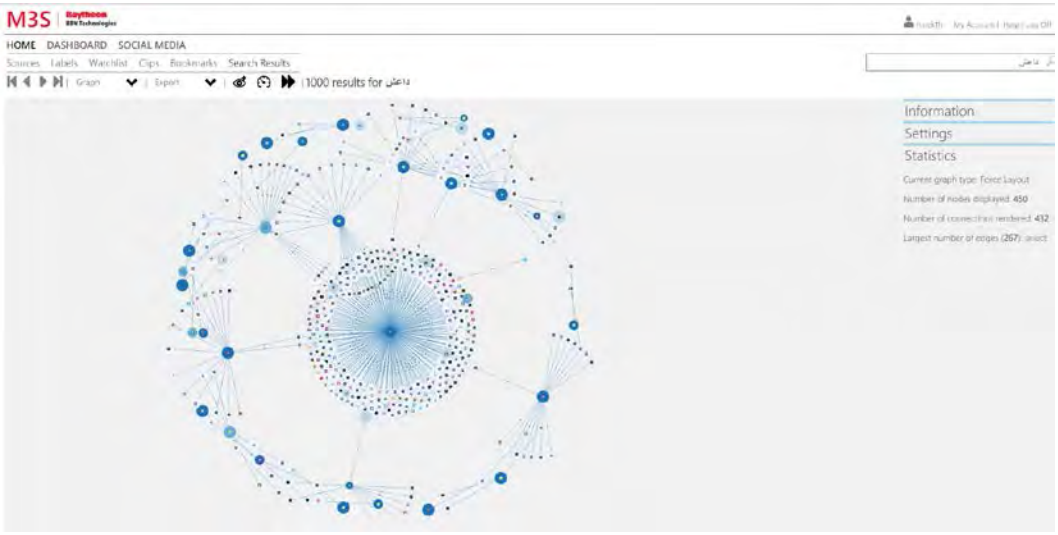


The graph above demonstrates that discourse surrounding the term “Caliphate” remains fractured with multiple major and sub-major nodes. Central nodes continue to be academics, mainstream public intellectuals, and news organizations. ISIL messaging is largely absent; attempts to penetrate the discussion remains marginal. The arrow points to one ISIL account ineffectively attempting to influence the discussion.

RQ2: What themes emerge from discussion of Daash?

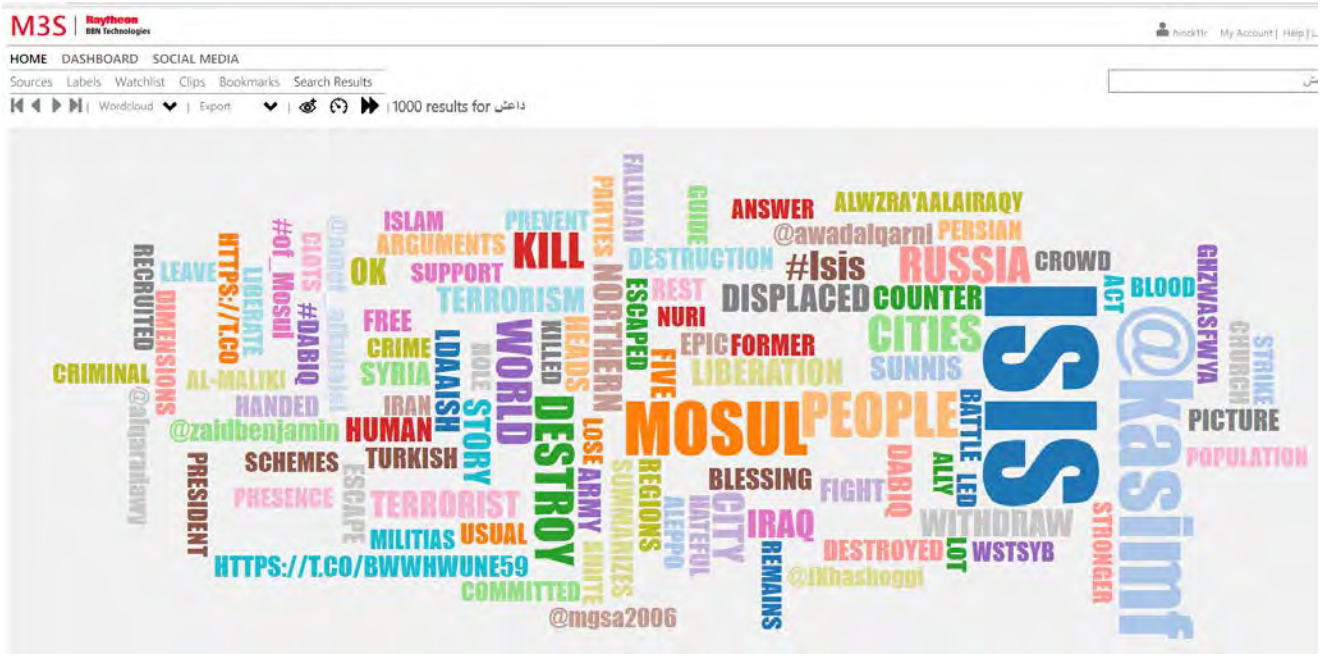
Twitter discourse surrounding the term “Daash” reflects a more centralized discussion originating from a personal Twitter account from an Al Jazeera news reporter along with multiple peripheral discussions, primarily commenting on recent activities in Syria and Iraq. The content from the central node provides criticism towards US and Russian policy in Syria. Russian intervention is viewed negatively, labeling Russian air attacks in Syria as killing innocent Syrians. Largely absent from the discussion are ISIL twitter users suggesting ISIL is not driving the conversation.

Figure 2. Daash Network Graph



The word cloud below creates a visual representation of key words co-occurring with Daash. Taken together with content analysis of Tweets, the graph suggests that the central themes revolving around discussion of ISIL reflects public opinion supporting ground forces taking territory back from ISIL controlled regions while viewing ISIL actions as “terrorists”. Significant support is given to freeing territory formerly controlled by ISIL, as well as support for the Iraqi government’s attempt to retake Mosul.

Figure 3. Daash Co-occurrence Word Cloud



Conclusions:

This quick look was not a broad look at public opinion in the region, but an examination of content and network ties in Twitter can provide a proxy into public opinion in the region. In our previous analysis of the social media strategies of the Islamic State, we concluded that the impact of ISIL sympathizers on public opinion was limited. This quick look back at the region shows that that limited capacity is falling even further, with significantly less traffic, fewer ISIL sympathizers, and almost no ability to generate themes (or memes) that gain widespread support.

Our analysis aids CENTCOM's questions regarding:

Q3: What does primary source opinion research data tell us about popular support for ISIL in ISIL-help Iraq and globally outside of the Combined Joint Operation Area (Syria and Iraq)?

We find little support for ISIL in the Arabic Twittersphere generally. It isn't possible to deduce from our data set findings exclusively from within ISIL-held Iraq (Twitter is banned within the region), but our analysis indicates little sympathy for, or association with ISIL. Instead, public sentiment remains strongly against the group, even when it is critical of US, Russian, or other Western policies.

Q4: What are the general perceptions associated with ISIL endorsed themes, to include 1) re-establishing the Caliphate; 2) imposition of Shariah law; 3) belief that the Ummah/Islam is under attack from the West; 4) low tolerance for non-Sunni Muslim ethno-religious groups; 5) negative disposition towards gender equality?

Our findings indicate that although there is criticism of Western powers and Russia, that criticism does not significantly impact support for ISIL, including the establishment of a Caliphate or the imposition of Shariah law. There is significant criticism is of policies (including, but not limited to targeting practices), but we did not find evidence that there is a significant majority that believe that the ummah or Islam is under attack. This study did not look specifically at sub-questions 4 and 5, on tolerance for non-Sunni groups or gender equality.

Response to Quick Look 3

Zana Gulmohamad

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According to the author's interviews conducted in August and September 2016 with Arab Sunni and Shia tribal leaders (most of them are Arab Sunni politicians, members in the Iraqi Council of Representatives (ICR) and leaders and commanders of Hashd al-Asha'ri - mobilized local Arab Sunni tribes). The interviewees included Hamid al-Sabawi (commander), Dr. Abboud al-Issawi (MP), Ghazi al-Kaoud (Chairman of the Committee of Tribes in the ICR, the leader of Abu Nimr tribe, and a leader of Anbar's Hashd al-Asha'ri), Hamid al-Mutlaq (the Deputy Chair of the Committee of Defense and Security in the ICR), Ahmad Jabra (an MP, a member of the Committee of Tribes in the ICR, a leader of one of Hashd al-Asha'ri's armed groups called The Lions of Nineveh) and many others.[6]

[6] These interviews were conducted for part of the author's project for a paper about the Mosul and Fallujah operations that will be published in October 2016.

All agree that the support for IS in Sunni territories in Iraq has notably declined. There are local revolt movements and networks in Mosul and other areas before their liberation including Fallujah and al-Qayyarah. These secret networks and movements have contacts with the anti-IS coalition including the Iraqi governments and Hashd al-Asha'ri and provide them with critical intel about IS. These groups have targeted IS fighters and positions. For example, targeting checkpoints, assassinations and abductions of IS fighters. Moreover, they have carried out orchestrated defined actions such as raising the Iraqi flag, writing the letter M for "*Muqawama" (*meaning resistance) on the walls. The secret groups in Mosul are called Kataib al-Mosul, Harakat Ahrar al-Mosul, Free Officers Movements. Within these groups are sub-groups such those related to Kataib al-Mosul called Kataib al-Suqur and Kataib al-Nabi Yunis. The presence, activities and propaganda actions including cutting edge videos uploaded online to demoralize IS fighters and reduce their control of the areas. For example, Hamid al-Sabawi who participated in entering al-Qayyarah told the author that when the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) with local tribes entered al-Qayyarah there were several IS fighters killed by the locals. In Fallujah, Ramadi and other cities there were occasionally local revolts against IS by some local community members. According to the author's interviews, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and other IS leaders increasingly grant the security and military (combatant) roles to foreign fighters. There is increasing distrust between the locals and IS fighters. Additionally, there are more and more fissures within the IS military and security structure as there are more defectors and withdrawal of military units. Consequently, IS reactions have become harsher to their fellow fighters by executing the commanders and fighters who withdraw from the battles. Although, there is discontent by the Arab Sunni community towards the federal government, IS's harsh policies have increasingly alienated local communities and widened the gaps between them. However, there are locals who cooperate with IS; mainly for benefits, but also because they have been forced, threatened or brainwashed.

According to the author's interviews with most Iraqi Sunni tribal leaders and Sunni politicians, commanders in Hashd al-Asha'ri are not welcoming the Popular Mobilization Forces' (PMF, Hashd al-Sha'abi, majority Shia militias) interventions in Arab Sunni areas, including Mosul. All the Sunni interviewees reject the PMF's participation or are at least worried about their actions. However, most of the Arab Sunni interviewees believe that IS can be defeated and eradicated if the local Arab Sunnis are properly equipped and funded by the federal government. The popularity of IS has declined significantly in and outside IS held areas in Iraq because of: IS's inability to sustain service provisions, their dramatically shrinking revenues, harsh polices, foreign fighters and leaders' fissures with locals, forcing locals to fight, the exposé of IS's false ideology to some of the locals, the success of the military offensive by the Iraqi Security Forces backed by the US-led coalition, the isolation and encirclement (siege) of many of the IS held areas, and the groups and tribes that facilitated IS's domination from the beginning and throughout their rise and expansion have now turned against them for the aforementioned reasons. All Iraqi interviewees are worried about Iraq post-IS where the Federal Government, the KRG and the Arab Sunnis will all have their own competing agendas.

PUBLIC OPINION ON ISIL

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What does primary source opinion research data tell us about popular support for ISIL in ISIL-held Iraq and globally outside of the Combined Joint Operation Area (CJOA) (Syria and Iraq)?

This short report presents some key findings published by major research outlets as well as new analysis I have conducted using existing publicly available data in an attempt to understand public opinion regarding ISIL in Iraq and Syria as well as around the world.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

1. Majority of Iraqis and Syrians view ISIL negatively.

2. Iraqis and Syrians also view foreign military intervention in their countries unfavorably.

3. Majority of the citizens of Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) nations hold negative views about ISIL.

4. Religious extremism does not seem to be as big of a factor in influencing public support in MENA for ISIL nor reasons suggested by local populations as for why some people join ISIL.

5. Majority of Americans perceive ISIL as a major threat to the US.

6. The opinions about US military intervention in Iraq and Syria are more divided with almost half of the US respondents being opposed to sending military troops to the area.

7. More than half of the citizens in a global survey of 59 countries are worried about a terrorist attack.

IN IRAQ AND SYRIA

Key point 1: Majority of Iraqis and Syrians view ISIL negatively.

Key point 2: Iraqis and Syrians also view foreign military intervention in their countries unfavorably.

Background: Launched in 2011 by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (ACRPS), the Arab Opinion Index (AOI) is one of the few academically led public surveys measuring Arab public opinion on current, relevant socio-political issues. Using a stratified, random sampling method with face-to-face interviews, they provide reliable results (confidence interval at 95% with margin of error 2-3 percent) from reasonably large, nationally representative samples. According to their reports from the latest AOI (2015), 93 percent of their respondents from Iraq reported that they hold a negative view of ISIL. Only about 2 percent of the Iraqi respondents reported a positive view of ISIL.

Results from another public opinion poll specifically targeting Iraq and Syria conducted by ORB International during the summer of 2015, an independent polling agency commissioned by the BBC, also reveal similar findings. While their sample was not representative in Iraq (did not cover the Kurdish or Shia southern regions), they claim that their Syrian sample is representative of the 14 governorates throughout Syria. Their findings show that 94 percent of their Iraqi respondents indicated that ISIL had a negative influence on the matters in Iraq and 76 percent of their Syrian respondents reported that Islamic State had a negative influence on matters in Syria. However, despite this negative evaluation of ISIL, majority of survey respondents also held unfavorable views of foreign fighters in their countries. 62 percent of Iraqis thought coalition against ISIL has a negative influence on matters in Iraq and 71 percent reported that "the presence of foreign fighters has made the problem in Iraq/Syria significantly worse," while 79 percent of the Syrian respondents expressed that the presence of foreign fighters with the opposition or the regime made the problem worse.

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA (MENA) REGION

Key point 3: Majority of the citizens of Middle Eastern and North African nations hold negative views about ISIL

Key Point 4: Religious extremism does not seem to be as big of a factor in neither influencing public support for ISIL nor reasons suggested by local populations as for why some people join ISIL.

Results from the AOI (2015) indicate that majority of Arab citizens hold a negative view of ISIL (ranging from 62 to 96 percent). My analyses from another nationally representative survey on global attitudes conducted by PEW Research Center (2014) also revealed similar findings (see Figure 1 of the Appendix). In many of the MENA countries like Egypt, Lebanon and Tunisia, more than 70 percent of the respondents indicated they were very or somewhat concerned with Islamic terrorism in their countries. More interestingly, however, AOI (2015) results indicate that religiosity does not seem to be driving factor for favorable views regarding ISIL. There seems to be an almost equal representation of religious and non-religious respondents with favorable opinions of ISIL. Similarly, my analyses of data from one of the most rigorous and systematic, nationally representative public data collection efforts in African countries, the Afrobarometer Round 6 (2015-2016) revealed that when asked about the main reasons why some people from their countries join ISIL, a greater majority of people pointed to socio-economic reasons like poverty, unemployment or lack of education vs. religious beliefs or extremism (see Figure 2 of the Appendix).

IN THE US

Key point 5: Majority of Americans perceive ISIL as a major threat to the US.

Key point 6: The opinions about US military intervention in Iraq and Syria is more divided with almost half of the respondents being opposed to sending military troops to the area.

My analysis of data based on Pew Research Center 2015 Political survey (a nationally representative survey of 1,500 adults living in the U.S.) showed that a large proportion of Americans are very or somewhat concerned about the rise of Islamic terrorism in the US (78 percent) and even a larger proportion is concerned about the rise of Islamic terrorism in the world. Similarly, 84 percent of the respondents considered ISIS to be a major threat to the well being of the US. However, despite these negative public attitudes about ISIL, the opinions about US military intervention in ISIL held Iraq and Syria are divided. While overall 64 percent of the sample supported US military campaign against ISIL, about a total of 61 percent indicated that the US military campaign is not going too well or not at all well and about 46 percent opposed to sending ground troops to fight ISIL.

AROUND THE WORLD

Key point 7: More than half of the citizens in a global survey of 59 countries are worried about a terrorist attack.

There are fewer attempts to tap into public opinion about ISIL in non-MENA or non-US regions globally. One of the largest, academically driven global surveys of public opinion, the World Values Survey, for example includes a general question on worries about terrorism in general in their last Wave (2010-2014). Accordingly, my analyses of this variable indicate that there is a large concern about terrorism in especially Middle East, West and Central Asia, South East Asia, South America and Africa, while Europe, North America and Australia/New Zealand seem to be less worried about terrorism (see Figure 3 of the Appendix). However, it should be noted that this survey is relatively dated and unspecific, probably failing to capture growing concern with Islamic terrorism in some of these countries. Yet, what is disconcerting is that when looked at the aggregate numbers, more than half of the respondents in these 59 countries (about 63 percent) are worried about a terrorist attack.

POLICY AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

This report reveals that both in ISIL held Iraq and Syria and other regions of the world, the public by large have a negative opinion of ISIL. However, despite overwhelming negative views about ISIL and Islamic terrorism, public opinion in the US as well as ISIL held areas of Iraq and Syria challenges external military intervention in these regions. Furthermore, some of the findings highlight the importance of non-religious factors such as economics and education in ISIL support. These results suggest that potential non-military policies targeting educational or economic welfare might benefit local communities more than military involvement. Further research is needed to understand non-religious factors that might be promoting public support for ISIL. One potentially fruitful research venue is non-religious values and moral polarization in these dimensions. For example our current research funded by the DoD Minerva Initiative suggest that people draw sharp boundaries distinguishing their in and out groups by using value orientations like benevolence or hedonism, attributing the former or the in-group and the latter to the out-group. Explicating these value differences might contribute to our understanding how public opinion polarizes, diffuses or dissolves. At the moment, research on public opinion about ISIL is scarce, non-systematic and mostly focused on the MENA regions. A more clear knowledge requires systematic data collection from a broader range of world regions (especially considering how wide spread globally ISIL recruitment network has been) with questions aimed at elucidating not only overall negative or positive views of ISIL but also detailed social psychological and community factors that might potentially challenge the propagation of ISIL ideology as well as help disseminate successful policies aiding local populations.

APPENDICES

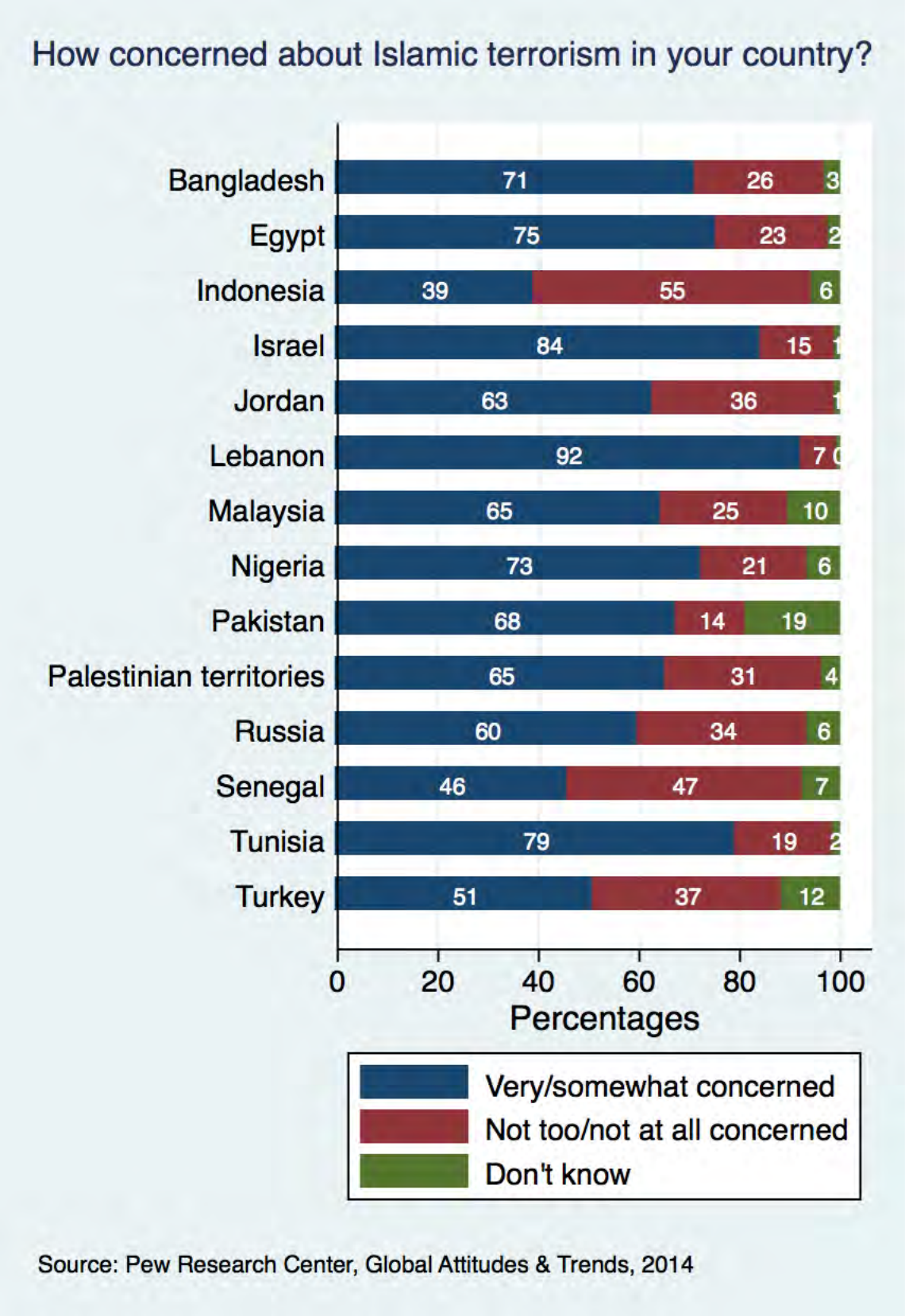

Figure 1. Global concern about Islamic terrorism

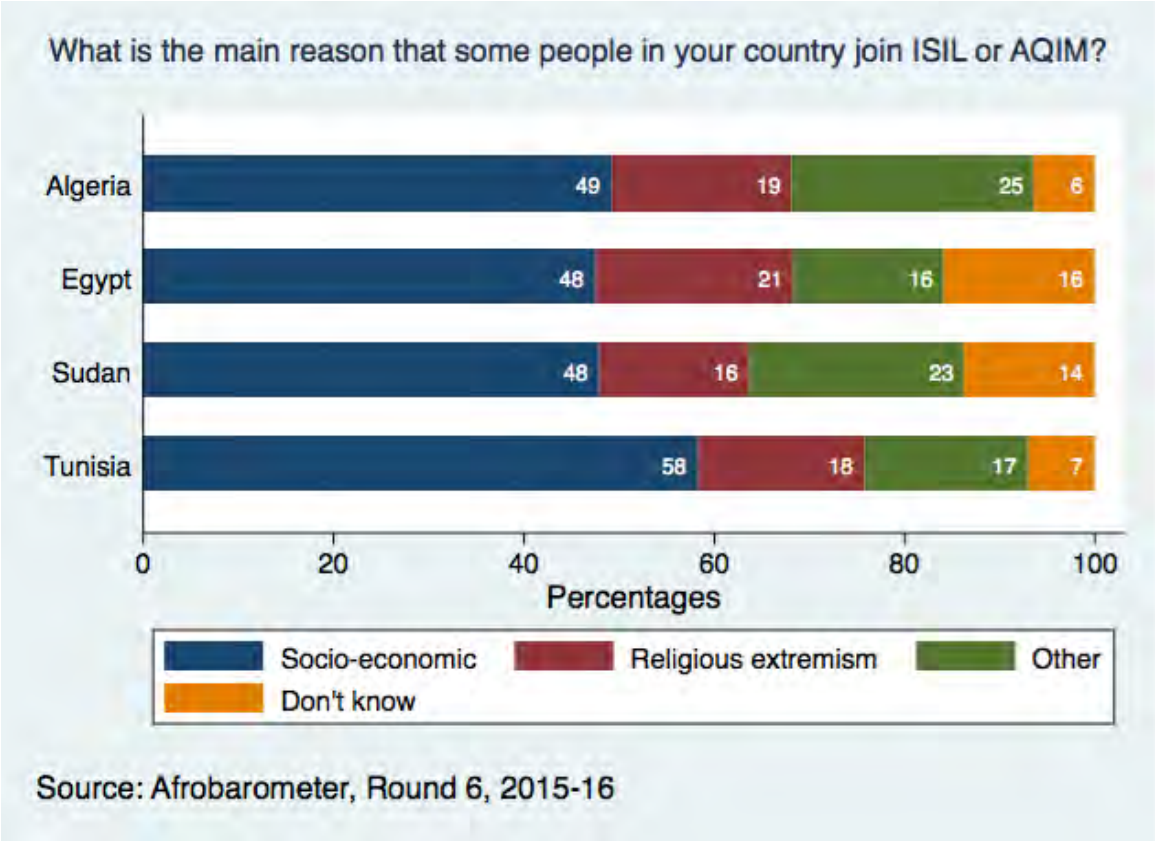

Figure 2. Reasons for joining ISIL or Al Qaida in the Maghreb indicated by the respondents

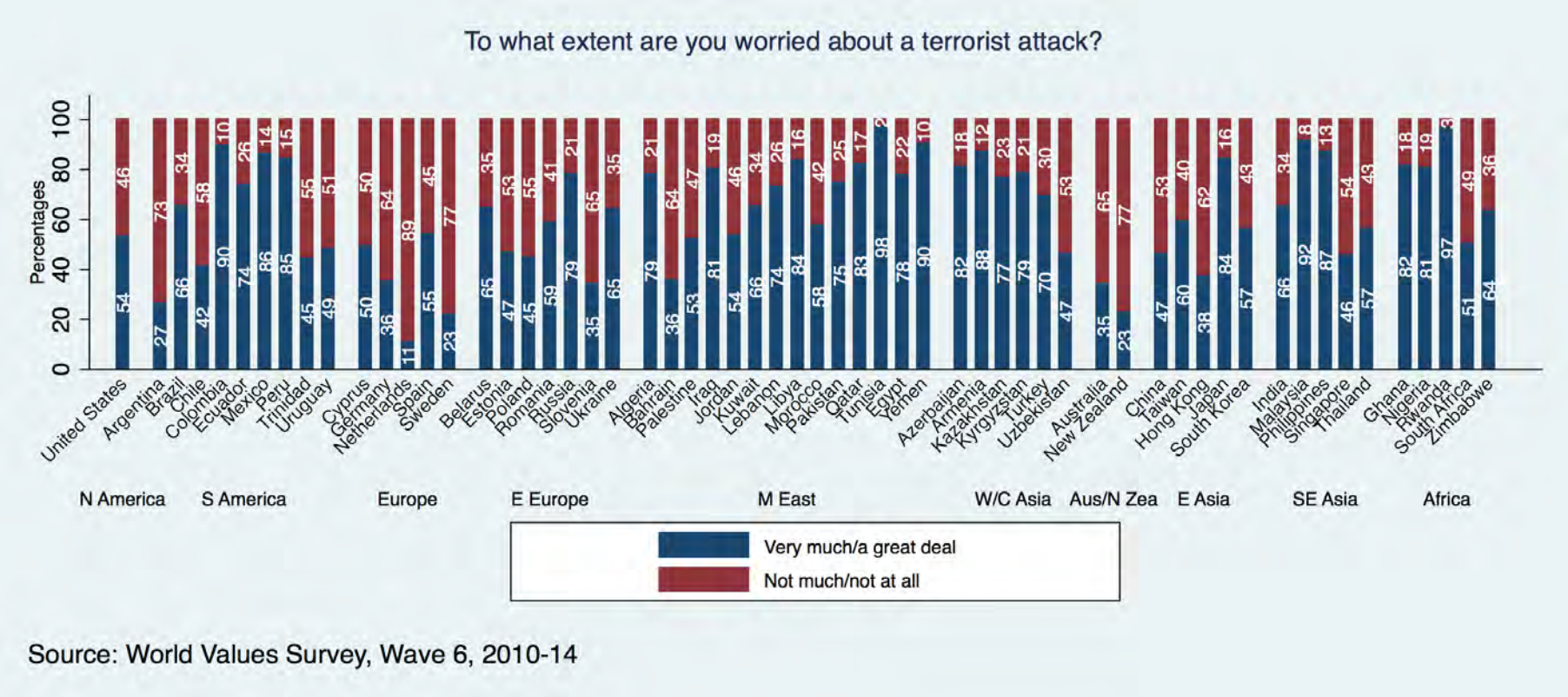

Figure 3. Worries about a terrorist attack around the world.

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Syria Barometer Survey: Opinions about the War in Syria and about Radical Action

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Executive Summary

A telephone survey of Syrians was conducted by market research company GfK from European calling centers between May 6, 2016 and May 27, 2016. The survey was completed by 101 Syrian males between the ages of 18 and 71; although 87 percent of participants lived in an area controlled by Bashar al-Assad's forces, 52 percent were Sunni. Questions included opinions about life in Syria and in participants' hometown since the beginning of the civil war; opinions about which political actor was responsible for the killing and suffering in Syria; opinions about justifiability of suicide bombing and support for ISIS; opinions about U.S. foreign policies; and attitude toward the idea of a "united states of Islam."

Results indicated that most participants experienced significant hardships since the onset of the civil war in Syria. Surprisingly, most participants did not blame the Assad government, Russia or Iran for the war, and instead blamed the United States, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and Turkey. Suicide bombing and support for ISIS received almost zero endorsement. Most participants believed the United States is waging a war on Islam and that U.S. foreign policies are dictated by Jewish interests. Comparisons with a recent survey of U.S. Muslims as well as correlations among some of the items offer potentially useful implications for military and security officials. Notably, Sunni participants did not differ from other religious traditions in support for the Syrian government.

Response to Quick Look 3

Ian McCulloh

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I will address the CENTCOM requirement regarding opinion research more broadly, addressing long term institutional problems. I do not think CENTCOM will succeed in the Gray Zone without addressing this challenge.

Primary source opinion research and related methods are a critical data source for understanding the human domain and the gray zone. Different data, sources, and methods are appropriate for different information requirements. For example, if the DoD wanted to know what kind of submarine the Russians were building, they wouldn't ask people to mimic sonar sounds for an opinion poll. They would use MASINT. Likewise, if they want to understand population knowledge, attitude, beliefs, intention, and behavior (KABIB), they should not resort to expensive forms of intelligence collection. They should use the appropriate method and survey them in a scientific manner.

Proper opinion research is much more complicated than the typical military officer thinks. Most service members will have some experience with command climate surveys, end-of-course surveys, or other instruments. As such, their opinion of survey methods are based on a very informal, usually non-scientific process. These surveys are informal and rarely developed by scientists that are trained in the statistical design of survey instruments. There are technical and mathematical issues associated with instrument validity, respondent error, bias, and survey fraud. Proper opinion research will employ proven methods to address these issues. There are additional concerns with sampling hard to reach populations, conflict zones, volatile issues like support for the Islamic State, and collecting data when governments restrict the use of questionnaires. At CENTCOM's level, multiple (vetted if possible) field vendors should be employed independently to triangulate findings and increase validity. When properly integrated with intelligence sources, a rich and complete understanding of the human domain and gray zone can be developed.

CENTCOM faces several challenges associated with the use of primary source opinion research data.

1) Opinion research is not fully integrated into strategic plans. In my experience, CENTCOM does not choose to conduct data-driven operations. They rely on intelligence that is focused/optimized for specific adversaries and potentially inaccurately identifies key individuals. They dismiss opinion research as invalid, because it is not valued within the mainstream intelligence community. The organizations within CENTCOM that contract opinion research have difficulty integrating their findings into strategic plans. This is due to a deep bias among intelligence professionals and planners and will require command emphasis to change.

2) CENTCOM (and regional Country Teams) no longer invests in intermediate to advanced analysis of opinion research data. For example, the survey data that CENTCOM collects can support latent cluster analysis (LCA) which is used to determine population clusters with similar KABIB characteristics, important for target audience identification, intervention, and assessment. CENTCOM has discontinued their use of cultural domain analysis (CDA) to identify unsolicited issues and values that are essential for effective operations in the gray zone. The command lacks the analysts with strong quantitative skills to conduct this type of analysis. Perhaps this is due to the fact that when the command did have qualified analysts, from 2012-2014, the advanced analysis was not accepted by strategic planners; therefore this requirement was no longer understood nor resourced.

3) Operational and tactical forces do not know how to use relevant data and population information to inform actions on the ground. I call this "operational fusion." For example, special operations teams that rotate through Tampa for pre-mission training (PMT) will often meet with officers whom they know at SOCCENT, SOCOM, and CENTCOM, but routinely fail to meet the social scientists that have been collecting

population-centric data for years; (this data is also not requested and in many cases the users are unaware of its existence prior to pre-deployment train-ups). Despite years' worth of after-action reports from special operations teams reporting the need to get population data for pre-mission planning, my recent trip to Fort Bragg last month reveals the operators are still unaware this resource exists. Of the few teams that get data, they need a properly trained scientist to explain to them how to use data to inform operational plans. Those scientists are never provided to the teams that need them.

4) Senior military leaders are rarely able to properly assess the qualifications of the social scientists on their staff. This was the principal failure of the human terrain system. A soldier is not a paratrooper, just because she went to Airborne School. A soldier is not a ranger, just because he went to ranger school. Soldiers are not special operators, just because they were administratively attached to an SFOB for a week on the FOB. Likewise, an academic is not an expert on the human domain or gray zone, because they have a Ph.D. We expect a jump master to have 30+ jumps, under varied conditions, and attend jump master school, before we would consider allowing them to lead a large jump. Qualified social scientists should have experience designing, overseeing, and analyzing data from multiple relevant projects. Their work should be published in venues that have been extensively reviewed by other experts. They should have innovated new methods to address complex problems. Senior military leaders need help in identifying true experts in opinion research that can mentor and develop the other social scientists working within the commands. Professionalizing this within the ORSA community might be a start.

5) DoD tends to employ solutions that sound good, but lack scientific rigor. For example, one CENTCOM program in 2014 was focused on Twitter use in Syria. When instability flared in Yemen, that program was redirected to Yemen against the recommendations of the social scientists within the command. The recently collected opinion research data showed there was 28% Twitter use in Syria, but less than 2% in Yemen. The program for Syria was an ineffective tool for the problem in Yemen. A similar tactic was recently employed, taking a successful MISO program from Afghanistan and trying to implement it in Syria**.** The program lacks any empirically supported target audience analysis.

Effective operations in the human domain and gray zone must use a program of scientific, primary source, opinion research to be effective! Ignoring these data and failing to integrate them into operations is negligent, especially given their successful use in Iraq (Strategic Programs Operations Center 2006-2015), Afghanistan (MISTF-A), and other operations in the CENTCOM AOR that can be discussed at higher classification.

I'd like to shift the focus to a more pointed criticism. Senior leaders recognize they do not have a sufficient understanding of the human domain and gray zone to plan for and lead effective operations. This is not

because the problems are difficult, or the research methods are illusive. It is a direct result of CENTCOM's priorities and decision making. CENTCOM's budget for opinion research exceeds $3M/year. SOCCENT's budget exceeds $5M/year. SOCOM left approximately $12M unused in FY16. The annual appropriations for information operations and military information support operations (MISO) provide even more potential resources for assessment. I know these resources exist, because I was responsible for establishing those appropriations when I was in uniform a few years ago. The data from these programs are not sufficiently cataloged or utilized. They are not provided to operational forces preparing to deploy. They are not provided to academics supporting the Strategic Multilayer Assessment (SMA). This is not an issue with opinion research or the CENTCOM staff. **It is a failure of DOD leadership to demand proper analytic rigor to inform their decision making process**.

Response to Quick Look 3

Mark Tessler

University of Michigan

Public opinion surveys conducted in 2014 and 2015 in Arab and other Muslim-majority counties found very low levels of support for the Islamic State (ACRPS, 2015; Pew Research Center, 2015). Surveys conducted in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Palestine and Jordan between February and June of this year as part of the fourth wave of the Arab Barometer (arabbarometer.org) also found extremely low levels of support among ordinary citizens. A summary of the Arab Barometer's survey findings, as well as some preliminary analyses of demographic differences and factors that may influence attitudes toward ISIS, are reported in the attached paper, which was disseminated this summer through the WAPO Monkey Cage. Additional analyses, based on these and additional Arab Barometer surveys, will be forthcoming.

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Author Biographies

Hassan Abbas

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Hassan Abbas, Ph.D.
Professor of International Security Studies
Chair of the Department of Regional and Analytical Studies

Education

- MALD and Ph.D. from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University
- LL.M. in International Law from Nottingham University, United Kingdom, as a Britannia Chevening Scholar
- Master's in Political Science from Punjab University (Pakistan)

Research Interests

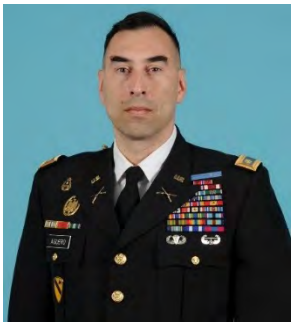
- Politics, Security and Religion in South Asia
- Politics, Islam, and U.S. Relations with Muslim States
- Law Enforcement and Police Reforms in Developing States

Hassan Abbas is Professor of International Security Studies and Chair of the Department of Regional and Analytical Studies at National Defense University's College of International Security Affairs (CISA). He serves as a Carnegie Fellow 2016-2017 at New America where he is focusing on a book project on Islam's internal struggles and spirituality narrated through the lens of his travels to Islam's holy sites across the world. He is also currently a Senior Advisor at Asia Society. He remained a Senior Advisor at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University (2009-2011), after having been a Research Fellow at the Center from 2005-2009. He was the Distinguished Quaid-i-Azam Chair Professor at Columbia University before joining CISA and has previously held fellowships at Harvard Law School and Asia Society in New York.

He regularly appears as an analyst on media including CNN, ABC, BBC, C-Span, Al Jazeera and GEO TV (Pakistan). His opinion pieces and research articles have been published in various leading international newspapers and academic publications. His latest book titled *The Taliban Revival: Violence and Extremism on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier* (Yale University Press, 2014) was profiled on *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* in August 2014. Abbas' earlier well acclaimed book *Pakistan's Drift into Extremism: Allah, the Army and America's War on Terror* (M E Sharpe, 2004) remains on bestseller lists in Pakistan and India. He also runs WATANDOST, a blog on Pakistan and its neighbors' related affairs. His other publications include an Asia Society report titled *Stabilizing Pakistan Through Police Reform* (2012) and *Pakistan 2020: A Vision for Building a Better Future* (Asia Society, 2011).

A detailed list of his publications is available here.

Shane Aguero



Major Shane Aguero is a counter-terrorism strategic intelligence officer with the DIA. He has previously been the Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) Joint Intelligence Support Element (JISE) officer in charge, and prior to that he was the US Army Central (US ARCENT) intelligence fusion desk chief for Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia. Major Aguero also has over five years of deployed combat experience in both Afghanistan and Iraq working at all levels from infantry squad to Combined Joint Task Force, with experience conducting joint, special and combined operations.

Major Aguero has a Master of Strategic Intelligence from the National Intelligence University, an MBA from Webster University and a Bachelor's degree in International Relations from St. Edwards University.

Kim Cragin

R. Kim Cragin is a senior research fellow at the National Defense University. She recently left a position as senior political scientist at the RAND Corporation. Cragin focuses on terrorism-related issues. Cragin has conducted fieldwork in Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen, Egypt, northwest China, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka, among others. Her RAND publications include Severing the Ties that Bind (2015), Disrupting Global Transit Hubs (2013) and Social Science for Counter-Terrorism (2010). Cragin also has published academic articles, including "Resisting Violent Extremism" in the reviewed journal Terrorism and Political Violence (2013), "al-Qa'ida Confronts Hamas" in Studies in Conflict and Terrorism (2009), and "The Early History of al-Qa'ida" in the Historical Journal (2008). Her book entitled *Women as Terrorists: Mothers, Recruiters, and Martyrs* was released by Praeger in 2009. Cragin has a master's degree from the Sanford Institute of Public Policy at Duke University. She completed her Ph.D. at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom.

Munqith Dagher

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2-Academic and Professional Qualification

- 2008 Diploma in Marketing Research, University of Georgia ,USA
- 2005 Certificate in SPSS preliminary and advance models, Bahrain, SPSS regional office

- 1996 Ph.D. in Public Administration(human resources management), University of Baghdad, College of Administration and Economics.
- 1989 M.S.C in Public Administration, University of Baghdad, Iraq.
- 1980 B.Sc. in Administration, University of Basrah, Iraq.

3- Academic and Professional Appointment

- September 2003-Now CEO and founder of Independent Incoroporate of Administration and Civil Society Studies.
- 2006 - Professor of Strategic Management in P.A., College of Adm. And Eco, Baghdad University
- May2003-Sep.2003 Head of Polling Department – IRAQ Center of Research and Strategic Studies (ICRSS).
- 2002-2003 Lecturer in Business Management Dep. College of Adm. And Eco. , Basrah University.
- 1997 Lecturer in P.A., College of Adm. And Eco, Baghdad University.
- 1997 Senior Lecturer in Administration Sciences, national defence college, AL-Bakir University for Post Graduate Studies, Baghdad, Iraq.

4- Publications

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12. More than 15 published articles and research in human resources,strategic management,organizational behavior,TQM and different public administration issues.

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Ruben Enikolopov is Assistant Professor at UPF, ICREA Research Professor at Barcelona Institute for Political Economy and Governance (IPEG), and Nordea Assistant Professor of Finance at the New Economic School in Moscow. He has been a consultant to the World Bank (2005-2010) and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (2007-2008).

Alexis Everington

Alexis Everington is the Director of Research for Madison Springfield, Inc. His qualifications include 15 years program management experience leading large scale, cross-functional, multi-national research & analytical programs in challenging environments including Iraq, Libya, Mexico, Syria and Yemen. Alexis advised both the Libyan opposition government during the Libyan revolution of 2011 and its immediate aftermath and most recently, the Syrian opposition military. He has also helped train several other foreign militaries and has taught at the NATO School. In addition, Alexis developed the Target Audience Analysis methodology that is currently employed across the US national security community and has been applied most recently in Afghanistan, Jordan, and Lebanon. His educational credentials include a Master of Arts from Oxford University in European and Middle Eastern Studies and his language skills include a fluency in Arabic, Spanish, French and Italian as well as a proficiency in Mandarin. Alexis is currently leading large-scale qualitative and quantitative primary research studies in Libya, Pakistan, Syria and Yemen.

Rengin Bahar Firat

Rengin B. Firat is an Assistant Professor at the Global Studies Institute, Sociology Department and the Neuroscience Institute at Georgia State University. A sociologist by training, her research focuses on the social psychological mechanisms underlying inter-group conflict and civic behavior, with a particular emphasis on group identities, ethnic cognition and moral values. She combines social scientific survey methodologies with neurological experimental techniques in her studies. Dr. Firat's research has been published in avenues like *Social Indicators Research*, *Social Science Research*, *Perspectives on Psychological Science* and *Advances in Group Processes* and has received funding from the Social Science Research Council and the U.S. Department of Defense Minerva Initiative. Dr. Firat has previously held a post-doctoral Researcher position at the Evolution, Cognition and Culture Laboratory at University of Lyon in France. She has obtained her Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Iowa in 2013. She holds an M.A. in Sociology from University of Iowa and a B.A. in Sociology from Koç University in Istanbul, Turkey.

Zana Gulmohamad

Zana is studying for a PhD in Politics at the University of Sheffield. His doctoral research is on Iraq's foreign policy post-2003. This project studies the new parameters in Iraq's foreign affairs in the framework of its fragmented polity. A study of the international relations and politics in the Middle East are the pillars of this research. An intensive investigation is being carried out among all the political and non-political bodies in Iraq and the Kurdistan Autonomous Region (KAR), and their representations abroad. The experiences and perspectives of the experts, diplomats and officials are the primary source for this study.

In September 2015 Zana became a Research Associate with the Centre for Peace and Human Security (CPHS) at the American University of Duhok Kurdistan (AUDK).

Previously, Zana completed an MA in Global Affairs and Diplomacy from the University of Buckingham. He has work experience as a manager in governmental institutions in the KRG in various capacities concerning international relations, security, public relations and crisis management. Additionally, he is a co-founder and manager of a non-governmental, non-profit institution, BIT, working in educational and research sectors in the KAR. The NGO provides various courses (in academic and applied sciences) in different fields and conducts researches on the nation's awareness. BIT was established in 2005 and is housed in a modern hi-tech building.

Zana has been a continuous and vigorous researcher on the region's development, utilizing his abundant professional connections across the Middle East, particularly in Iraq and KAR, in various governmental and non-governmental organizations, with an evolving network in the Middle East, North Africa, Europe and North America. He is a political, security and economic analyst specializing in the Middle East and focusing on the region's evolution and its broader consequences for the world. He has contributed articles and reports providing an in-depth analysis to several prestigious international publishers such as The Jamestown Foundation, The National, Al-Araby Al-Jadeed English, Open Democracy, E-international relations, Your Middle East, Middle East Online, Global Security Studies. Having been a Middle East observer with a broad-minded and rigorous analytical perspective from different angles, he can give a realistic touch to a clearly delineated piece of research, seeking originality and unique facts as the analytical strategy.

Robert Hinck

Bio not available at this time.

Mohammed Hussein

Bio not available at this time.

Karl Kaltenthaler

Karl Kaltenthaler teaches and researches in the areas of comparative politics and international relations. His research focuses on public opinion, political psychology, terrorism (Al Qaeda and affiliates), and political economy. He has three books and several journal articles in these areas. His research has been published in *International Studies Quarterly*, *Political Science Quarterly*, *Journal of Conflict and Terrorism*, *European Journal of Political Research*, *Journal of International Political Economy*, *European Union Politics*, and others.

Ph.D. Washington University, St. Louis, 1995, Professor and Director of Research Projects, Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics.

Fields: Comparative Politics, Political Behavior, Public Opinion, Terrorism, Al Qaeda and affiliates, International Relations, European Integration

Randolph Kluver

Dr. Kluver conducts theoretically driven research on political communication (including rhetorical and new media approaches), and global and new media. His work explores the role of political culture on political communication, and the ways in which cultural expectations, values, and habits condition political messaging practices and reception in a variety of contexts. Recently, Dr. Kluver has been exploring the role of communication and geopolitics, and developing research agenda that articulates 'media-centric' views of geopolitics. Currently, he is co-PI of the **Media Monitoring System Project**, a real time international broadcast transcription and translation system, and is developing research protocols and agendas using this pioneering technology.

Dr. Kluver was the founder and Executive Director of the Singapore Internet Research Centre, and one of the principal investigators of the international "Internet and Elections" project, a groundbreaking international analysis of the use of the Internet in the elections. Dr. Kluver's book *Civic Discourse, Civil Society, and Chinese Communities* won the Outstanding Book Award from the International and Intercultural Division of the National Communication Association in 2000. His essay "*The Logic of New Media in International Relations*" received the 2003 Walter Benjamin Award from the Media Ecology Association as the outstanding research article in media ecology.

Prior to coming to Texas A&M, Dr. Kluver taught at Oklahoma City University, Jiangxi Normal University, the National University of Singapore, and Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. He serves on the editorial boards of the Journal of Communication, the Journal of Computer-mediated Communication, the Asian Journal of Communication, New Media and Society, China Media Research, and the Western Journal of Communication.

Clark McCauley

Clark McCauley (B.S. Biology, Providence College, 1965; Ph.D. Social Psychology, University of Pennsylvania, 1970) is a Professor of Psychology and co-director of the Solomon Asch Center for Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict at Bryn Mawr College. His research interests include the psychology of group identification, group dynamics and intergroup conflict, and the psychological foundations of ethnic conflict and genocide. He is founding editor of the journal Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict: Pathways toward Terrorism and Genocide.

Other Research Interests

- What does it mean to essentialize a group, our own or others, and how does essentializing enable killing by category?
- What is the role of emotions (disgust, humiliation, anger) in intergroup conflict, and what is the relation between interpersonal emotions and intergroup emotions?
- How can polling be used to track variation over time in support for terrorism?
- What is the process of radicalization that leads individuals from support for terrorism to acts of terrorism?
- Psychology of Terrorism

Ian McCulloh

Ian McCulloh is a senior scientist in the Asymmetric Operations Department of the John's Hopkins University Applied Physics Lab. His current research is focused on strategic influence in online networks and data-driven influence operations and assessment. He is the author of "Social Network Analysis with Applications" (Wiley: 2013), "Networks Over Time" (Oxford: forthcoming) and has published 38 peer-reviewed papers, primarily in the area of social network analysis. He retired as a Lieutenant Colonel from the US Army after 20 years of service in special operations, counter-improvised explosive device (C-IED) forensics and targeting, and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) defense.

He founded the West Point Network Science Center and created the Army's Advanced Network Analysis and Targeting (ANAT) program. In his most recent military assignments as a strategist, he led interdisciplinary PhD teams at Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT) and Central Command (CENTCOM) to conduct social science research in 15 countries across the Middle East and Central Asia to included denied areas, which he used to inform data-driven strategy for countering extremism and irregular warfare, as well as empirically assess the effectiveness of military operations. He holds a Ph.D. and M.S from Carnegie Mellon University's School of Computer Science, an M.S. in Industrial Engineering, and M.S. in Applied Statistics from the Florida State University, and a B.S. in Industrial Engineering from the University of Washington. He is married with four children and a granddaughter.

Vera Mironova

I am a Pre-Doctoral Research Fellow with the Belfer Center's International Security Program and a PhD candidate in the Political Science Department at the University of Maryland. My research explores individual level behavior in conflict environments. I am interested in how violence affects individual attitudes and decision making. I conducted field work in active conflict zones (Yemen, Iraq, Ukraine, and Palestinian territories) and

post-conflict regions: Balkans (Bosnia, Kosovo, and Croatia), Africa (DR Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi), Central Asia (Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan), and Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan). others. Also, I am a contributor to the Political Violence @ a Glance blog.

Sophia Moskalenko

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Dr. Moskalenko received her Ph.D. in Social Psychology from the University of Pennsylvania in 2004. Her research interests include psychology of group identification, radicalization and activism, martyrdom and inter-group conflict. In collaboration with Clark McCauley she has authored Friction: How radicalization heats them and us, as well as a number of papers on political radicalization and terrorism.

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Bio not available at this time.

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Mark Tessler

Mark Tessler is Samuel J. Eldersveld Collegiate Professor of Political Science. He specializes in Comparative Politics and Middle East Studies. He has studied and/or conducted field research in Tunisia, Israel, Morocco, Egypt, and Palestine (West Bank and Gaza). He is one of the very few American scholars to have attended university and lived for extended periods in both the Arab world and Israel. He has also spent several years teaching and consulting in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Many of Professor Tessler's scholarly publications examine the nature, determinants, and political implications of attitudes and values held by ordinary citizens the Middle East. Among his fifteen books are *Public Opinion in the Middle East: Survey Research and the Political Orientations of Ordinary Citizens* (2011); *Islam, Democracy and the State in Algeria: Lessons for the Western Mediterranean and Beyond* (2005); and *Area Studies and Social Science: Strategies for Understanding Middle East Politics* (1999).

His most recent book, supported by an award from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, is *Islam and Politics in the Middle East: Explaining the Views of Ordinary Citizens* (2015). Based on 42 nationally representative surveys carried out in 15 countries between 1988 and 2011, this work investigates popular perceptions and preferences relating to the role that Islam should play in government and political affairs.

Professor Tessler also co-directs the Arab Barometer Survey project. The first wave of Arab Barometer surveys, carried out in eight Arab countries and completed in 2009, was named the best new data set in comparative politics by the American Political Science Association in 2010. The second wave of Arab Barometer surveys was carried out in twelve countries during 2010-2011, and the third wave was carried out in ten countries from late 2012 to early 2014. These data are available through the Arab Barometer website.

Professor Tessler has also conducted research and written extensively on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. His publications on the subject include *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*. The first edition of the book, published in 1994, won national honors and was named a "Notable Book of the Year" by *The New York Times*. An updated and expanded edition was published in 2009.

Sarah Canna, NSI

Sarah applies her open source analytic skills to regions of vital concern to US Combatant Commands, particularly the Middle East and South Asia. To help military planners understand the complex socio-cultural dynamics at play in evolving conflict situations, she developed a Virtual Think Tank (ViTTa) tool, which is designed to rapidly respond to emergent crises by pulsing NSI's extensive subject matter expert (SME) network to provide deep, customized, multidisciplinary analysis for defense and industry clients. Prior to joining NSI, she completed her Master's degree from Georgetown University in Technology and Security Studies. She holds a translation certificate in Spanish from American University and has been learning Dari for three years.

*To what extent do **populations maintain positive views of ISIL** or ISIL's ideology, particularly in European, N. African, and Arabian Peninsula countries most associated with foreign fighter flows into Syria and Iraq? What are the general perceptions associated with ISIL endorsed themes, to include:*

1) *desire for re-establishing the Caliphate;*
2) *imposition of Shariah law;*
3) *belief that the Ummah/Islam is under attack from the West;*
4) *low tolerance for non-Sunni Muslim ethno-religious groups; and*
5) *negative disposition towards gender equality?*

Executive Summary

There is ample evidence that by and large Muslim populations in the MENA region and Europe do not view ISIL favorably (see previous response). However, there are many similarities and a few significant differences among these populations regarding the credibility and salience of many of the messaging themes that ISIL espouses.

Arabian Peninsula

In Syria and Iraq, one of the largest groups of foreign fighters come from Saudi Arabia, raising questions about the overall level of support for ISIL among the general population. Generally, Sunnis in the Arabian Peninsula support Salafist and Islamist political agendas but reject ISIL's claims to political and religious legitimacy (Lynch; Aguero). According to Tom Lynch, Distinguished Research Fellow at National Defense University, political Islam, which seeks to introduce conservative Islamic practices into the political sphere, is far more popular than the implementation of ultra-conservative Salafism as espoused by ISIL.

Most Sunni Muslims in the Arabian Peninsula do not believe a caliphate is necessary to implement conservative Muslim political and social thought (Aguero). However, they share some of the same grievances about government that gave rise to ISIL in Iraq and Syria. Noureddine Jebnoun, professor of contemporary Arab studies at Georgetown University, argues that the Arab Spring showed that populations in the Arab world are rejecting what they see as a dysfunctional system of governance across the region. There is a demand for greater participatory governance, social justice, and better economic opportunities. At the same time, however, they are supportive of the implementation of Sharia law,

including low tolerance for gender equality and non-believers (Jebnoun; Aguero). But it is important to keep in mind, particular in Muslim-majority countries, that Sharia is considered to be a way of life, not merely a legal code (Aguero). According to a 2014 Pew poll,[7] making Sharia the law of the land has 74 percent support in the MENA region.

Populations in the Arabian Peninsula strongly oppose westernization and modernization, seeing it as an attack on Sunni Muslim unity and heritage. Lynch argues that these populations can be animated towards short-term support for violent causes when they perceive non-Sunnis or non-Muslims to be attacking fellow Sunni Muslims. This helps explain why groups like ISIL can gain meaningful, short-term support in moments of perceived danger for Sunni Muslims. For example, 83% of Saudis consider Western cultural invasion to be a very important or important problem (Moaddel, 2013; Aguero). Furthermore, 84% of Saudis also ascribe to the belief that the Ummah and/or Islam is under attack by the West.

In the past, Salafists from the Arabian Peninsula have provided material and financial support to Salafist jihadi groups opposing Bashar al Assad in Syria, according to Lynch. This anti-Assad support has also aided the rise of ISIL both directly and indirectly. Most Salafist support for ISIL has withered but some support still finds its way to ISIL.

Mia Bloom, an expert on the nexus between women and terror, noted that ISIL is careful to shape its messaging in ways that resonate best with various female population groups. English messaging focuses on giving women in the West a frontline role in the combat, such as the Al-Khansaa Brigade. Meanwhile, Arabic messaging offers women more socially acceptable roles as wives and mothers. This is particularly the case in messaging to women in Tunisia where women are seeking romance and adventure (at a time when marriages are delayed due to poor economic conditions). In Saudi Arabia, the messaging is more about empowering women by showing women in ISIL-controlled territories (in full niqab) driving cars.

Dr. Lynch concludes that the bottom line is that the depth and durability of conservative Islam in the Arabian Peninsula means that even if ISIL is degraded or defeated, the preconditions for another Salafi jihadist group to rise in its place will remain present for the foreseeable future.

Europe

Muslim populations in Europe overwhelmingly reject ISL's ideology and violent tactics (see Quick Look 3). However, a small percentage of Muslims—particularly youths—actively or passively support ISIL's

[7] Lugo, L. (April 30, 2013). The World's Muslims: Religion, Politics and Society. [survey]. Washington, D.C.: Pew Research. Retrieved from http://www.pewforum.org/2013/04/30/the-worlds-muslims-religion-politics-society-overview/

ideology and political objectives according to Marc Pierini, a visiting scholar at Carnegie Europe and former career EU diplomat.

What we know about support for ISIL in Europe is that most supporters are relatively young (between 18-30 years of age), have experienced an identity crisis, are disconnected from their communities, and are marginalized within their own European societies, which have failed to integrate their cultural preferences into the European social fabric, Jebnoun repots. In Britain, sympathizers tend to be highly educated while sympathizers in France and Belgium are often school dropouts, delinquents, have family problems, and face social exclusion and isolation, according to Pierini. What is also common among supporters of ISIL in Europe is that many of them have a superficial understanding of Islam, and are perceived by ISIL recruiters to be easy to co-opt and indoctrinate according to both Jebnoun and Pierini.

Many Muslim families in Europe still hold traditional values even decades after living in Western Europe—according to Pierini and Mark Caudill of the USMC Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning—including negative disposition towards gender equality and belief that Muslims are under attack from the West. What is clear, though, is that there is a generational divide where youth have a greater sense of frustration with their place in society compared to their parents. This is due, in part, to record high youth unemployment in Europe.

Among disaffected youth in Europe, the Caliphate has appeal, according to Pierini and Raffaello Pantucci of RUSI. The Caliphate provides disaffected youth with a purpose, a sense of belonging, and an outlet for their frustrations, outlined Pierini. Recruitment of young Europeans by jihadist movements abroad is not new (e.g., Afghanistan), but the scale is unprecedented due in large part to ISIL's massive and modern propaganda campaign layered upon economic and social frustrations of Europe's Muslim youth.

The appeal has waned in some degree as ISIL loses territory, Pantucci wrote. Its visible loss has led to a gradual loss of appeal and is one of the reasons for the reduction of foreign fighters from Europe.

What is dangerous is that ISIL is intentionally seeking to exacerbate tensions between mainstream and Muslim communities in Europe, Jebnoun and Pierini agree. They do this through recruitment of European youths as foreign fighters, facilitate attacks that exacerbate anti-Muslim sentiment, and actively nurture sectarian divides between these two communities. This inculcates a growing sense of uncertainty and powerlessness in the face of repeated ISIL-supported attacks and is shifting a segment of society towards extreme right/xenophobic political parties and movements. The migration/refugee crisis out of Syria exacerbates these tensions, Pierini argues.

Africa

Like most of the Muslim world, support for ISIL in Northern Africa is quite low (Feuer). In 2014, an International Republican Institute poll found that only one percent of respondents believe that Tunisians should be joining Daesh. However, aspects of ISIL's ideology finds broader support in Tunisia, especially when expressed in generic terms, including the incorporation of Sharia law, a nostalgic approval of the idea of a Caliphate—even though there is little support for the erosion of the nation state, and a belief that Islam is under attack from the West.

Similarly, there is very little support for ISIL in the Sahel, but other Islamist extremist groups do operate in the area, according to Paul Melly, a Sahel expert at Chatham House. In general, popular support for extremists groups in the region is strongly driven by local conditions and politics rather than ideology. Another characteristic of extremist groups in the Sahel is their more extensive ties and crossover between extremist groups and criminal organizations. The largest transnational group in Mali is al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), but it is largely considered a foreign organization that does not match well with the local population's Sufism. Other groups operating in the area, who draw support based on ethnic or familial ties, is Haut conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad (HCUA) and Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (MUJAO). Aside from familial or ethnic ties, other reasons that individuals join these groups include poor economic opportunities, anti-state ideas, and the breakdown of traditional society.

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***Editor**: Sarah Canna (NSI)*

SME Input

Prioritized List of Study Topics Organized by Study Approach

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To what extent do populations maintain positive views of ISIL or ISIL's ideology, particularly in European, N. African, and Arabian Peninsula countries most associated with foreign fighter flows into Syria and Iraq? What are the general perceptions associated with ISIL endorsed themes, to include: 1) desire for re-establishing the Caliphate; 2) imposition of Shariah law; 3) belief that the Ummah/Islam is under attack from the West; 4) low tolerance for non-Sunni Muslim ethno-religious groups; 5) negative disposition towards gender equality?

ANSWER: Anti-western views and assimilation challenges in European states are playing a central role followed closely by Caliphate utopia. In Arabian peninsula, sectarian issues, class divisions and a perceived threat from western secular ideals Islamic worldview helps ISIL recruitment. Poor justice system more to do with ordinary peoples' grievances against ruling classes than other factors mentioned in the question. It is a common belief in countries such as Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan and Jordan that somehow US is involved in supporting ISIL. And this flawed narrative is gaining ground.

In the Arabian peninsula, sectarian issues, class divisions and a perceived threat from western secular ideals to Islamic worldview helps ISIL recruitment.

Views of ISIL Ideology

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The area that has the largest degree of support for ISIL and, by proxy, their ideology is Syria, where 21% of those polled expressed a favorable opinion of ISIL (Galka, 2015; Mauro, 2015). 2015; Mauro, 2015; Withnall, 2015). The next most supportive areas are Nigeria (14%), Tunisia (13%), Senegal and Malaysia (both 11%). In 15 other polled nations the level of support was under 10% (Galka, 2015). This level of support should not be seen as support for ISIL proper, and thus representative of the total strength of ISIL or their ideology, but rather as the total size of their possible resource pool not their actual level of material support. Even in a country with 9% ISIL ideological support (Pakistan), and a population 178

million Muslims, there has only been ~70 foreign fighters that have traveled to ISIS controlled territory to fight (Galka, 2016). An analogy might be to think how many people support a political ideology, vs how many people vote for that ideology, vs how many people volunteer to support that ideology vs how many people are actively employed by a political party espousing that ideology.

With regard to the specific questions being asked, various data sets will be utilized and there may be instances where certain questions have either no information, or only one survey was available. Each of the questions below will be answered separately, followed by a conclusion that will attempt to determine the common elements of this support.

What is the desire for re-establishing the Caliphate? Almost negligible.

There is no desire for a Caliphate as popularly imagined as either a religious dictatorship or a Ummah-wide governmental/regulatory body. With regard to a religious dictatorship governed my Sharia, in historical Islam, prominent Muslim theologians-cum-political theorists relaxed some of the alleged principles of caliphate in favor of recognizing the sultan's discretionary power, which amounted a *de facto* admission of the reality of secular politics (Moaddel, 2013, page 60). With regard to being bound to a Ummah-wide governmental/regulatory body, the majority of respondents defined themselves primarily as a citizen of a state instead of a Muslim. This is true in Egypt (52%), Iraq (57%), Lebanon (60%), Saudi Arabia (48%) and Turkey (44%). The two states where this is not true are Pakistan (70% defined themselves as Muslim) and Tunisia (59% defined themselves as Muslim) (Moaddel, 2013). Additionally, 51% of Egyptians, 69% of Iraqis, 80% of Lebanese, 9% of Pakistanis, 72% of Tunisians, and 76% of Turks strongly agree or agree that their country would be a better place if religion and politics are separated (Moaddel, 2013). This would lend credence to an argument that there is NOT a majority seeking the return of any form of a Caliphate.

This can be seen when there is some significant support for a Western political model in many of the countries surveyed. The percentage of citizens strongly agree or agree with the desirability of having a Western political model for their country varies from 26% of Pakistanis to 63% of Lebanese, with 33% of Egyptians, 45% of Iraqis, 47% of Tunisians, and 44% of Turks as well (Moaddel, 2013).

There is also very strong support for democracy where 91% of Egyptians, 86% of Iraqis, 88% of Lebanese, 88% of Pakistanis, 88% of Lebanese, 86% of Iraqis, 76% of Saudis, 91% of Tunisians, and 84% of Turks strongly agree or agree with democracy as an ideal form of government (Moaddel, 2013). Democracy, however, has a different meaning for different sections of the populations in these countries. Many of the people who favor the democratic political system at the same time believe in Islamic government, consider the implementation of only the Sharia as the characteristic of a good government, or prefer having the army rule. Thus, support for democracy often means support for an illiberal democracy (Moaddel, 2013, pg 73).

What is the desire for the imposition of Sharia law? There is a desire for increased Sharia.

Sharia is considered to be a way of life, not merely a legal code. The legalistic aspects of Sharia are generally only highlighted when examining the level of punishment for an offense, rather than the criminality of the offense itself. For example, alcohol consumption is a crime under Sharia, which carries with it a penalty of some number, generally 80, lashes. Alcohol consumption was also a crime in the United States from 1920 to 1933, and public intoxication is currently illegal in the United States. Additionally, adultery is illegal under Sharia and is also illegal in 21 of the United States and under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, but again, it is the degree of punishment that differentiates the two legal systems.

It must be understood that Sharia is already in effect or has a high degree of influence in multiple countries such as Egypt, Mauritania, Sudan, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, the Maldives, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and certain regions in Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, and the United Arab Emirates. Additionally, many states utilize Sharia for family law such as Algeria, Comoros, Djibouti, Gambia, Libya, Morocco, Somalia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brunei, Gaza Strip, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Oman, and Syria. Indeed, there are some states where Sharia family law is available as a legally binding recourse for Muslim minorities if both parties agree. The states offering this are Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, India, Israel, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and the United Kingdom.

With the previous information in mind, the question is more appropriate when rephrased as "What is the desire for a more strict interpretation of Sharia, or the inclusion of more Sharia into the legal code?"

The World's Muslims: Religion, Politics and Society Pew Research Center survey finds that support for making Sharia the law of the land is often higher in countries where the constitution or basic laws already favor Islam over other religions (Lugo, 2013). Majorities in such countries say Sharia should be enshrined as official law, including at least nine-in-ten Muslims in Afghanistan (99%) and Iraq (91%). By comparison, in countries where Islam is not legally favored, roughly a third or fewer Muslims say Sharia should be the law of the land. Support is especially low in Kazakhstan (10%) and Azerbaijan (8%) (Lugo, 2013). Relatively few Turkish Muslims back enshrining sharia as official law (12%), most likely due to the strong history of secular government enacted by President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Lugo, 2013).

Support for making Sharia the law of the land is highest in South Asia (median of 84%). Medians of at least six-in-ten Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa (64%), the Middle East-North Africa region (74%) and Southeast Asia (77%) also favor enshrining Sharia as official law. In Southern and Eastern Europe states (18%) and Central Asian states (12%), far fewer Muslims say Islamic law should be endorsed by their governments (Lugo, 2013). Overall, Muslims who want Sharia to be the law of the land in their country often, though not uniformly, are less likely to support equal rights for women and more likely to favor traditional gender roles (Lugo, 2013).

What is the belief that the Ummah/Islam is under attack from the West? A popular one.

The popularity of the idea that the Ummah and/or Islam is under attack by the West is a popular one. This can be observed by the fact that 85% of Egyptians, 79% of Iraqis, 70% of Lebanese, 95% of Pakistanis, 84% of Saudis, 84% of Tunisians, and 72% of Turkish strongly agree or agree that there are conspiracies against

Muslims (Moaddel, 2013). Additionally, 85% of Egyptians, 80% of Iraqis, 64% of Lebanese, 30% of Pakistanis, 83% of Saudis, 54% of Tunisians, and 83% of Turkish consider Western cultural invasion to be a very important or important problem (Moaddel, 2013). Even though many Muslims enjoy Western pop culture, a clear majority of Muslims in most countries surveyed think that Western entertainment harms morality in their country. In four of the six regions at least half of those who say they enjoy this type of entertainment also say Western cultural imports undermine morality; specifically sub-Saharan Africa (65%), South Asia (59%), Southeast Asia (51%) and the Middle East-North Africa region (51%) (Lugo, 2013).

Is there a low tolerance for non-Sunni Muslim ethno-sectarian groups? Decreasing tolerance.

In 2013, only seven of the 38 countries where the question was asked, at least half of Muslims describe conflict between religious groups as a very big national problem, and in most cases worries about crime, unemployment, ethnic conflict and corruption far outweighed concerns about religious conflict (Lugo, 2013). The survey asked in particular about relations between Muslims and Christians. In nearly all countries, fewer than half of Muslims say that many or most members of either religious group are hostile toward the other group. In five countries, however, more than three-in-ten Muslims describe many or most Christians as antagonistic toward Muslims: Egypt (50%), Guinea Bissau (41%), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (37%), Chad (34%) and Bosnia-Herzegovina (31%). And in three countries similar percentages say many or most Muslims are hostile toward Christians: Guinea Bissau (49%), Chad (38%) and Egypt (35%) (Lugo, 2013). This information is somewhat analogous to the idea that there is a conspiracy against Muslims referenced in question number 3.

Three years after the previous information was gathered, Arab youth felt that there was much less tolerance than in 2013. In 2016 47% of Arab youth felt that Sunni-Shia relations had worsened over the past five years (ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller, 2016). The results were understandably higher in Yemen (88%), Jordan (84%), Libya (75%) and Iraq (62%) due to the eruption of massive violence along ethno-sectarian lines after the previous survey (ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller, 2016).

Is there a negative disposition towards gender equality? It is lessening.

Arab youth have a desire to see their personal freedoms increased. This averages 67% agreement across the MENA with the statement that, "Arab leaders should do more to improve the personal freedom and human rights of their people" (ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller, 2016). The rate of agreement in the GCC is 74%, in the Levant and Yemen 57% and 68% in North Africa (ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller, 2016). Across the MENA, 66% of male youth and 68% of female youth agreed with the statement that, "Arab leaders should do more to improve the personal freedom and human rights of women" (ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller, 2016).

With regard to specific rights such as female dress codes, the role of a wife, divorce, and inheritance rights, there is widespread difference of opinion. Generally, most Muslims support a woman's right to choose to be veiled. This view is especially prevalent in Southern and Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Southeast Asia (Lugo, 2013). Sub-Saharan Africa is the one region surveyed where most Muslims do not think women should have the right to decide if they wear a veil (Lugo, 2013). A recent survey from the University of

Michigan's Institute for Social Research conducted in seven Muslim-majority countries (Tunisia, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey), finds that most people prefer that a woman completely cover her hair, but not necessarily her face. Only in Turkey and Lebanon do more than one-in-four think it is appropriate for a woman to not cover her head at all in public (Moaddel, 2013). In general, Muslim women voice greater support than Muslim men for a woman's right to decide whether to wear a veil in public (Lugo, 2013).

With regard to the role of a wife, Muslims in most countries surveyed say that a wife should always obey her husband. In 20 of the 23 countries where the question was asked in 2013, at least half of Muslims believe a wife must obey her spouse. Muslims in South Asia and Southeast Asia overwhelmingly hold this view. In all countries surveyed in these regions, roughly nine-in-ten or more say wives must obey their husbands. Similarly, in all countries surveyed in the Middle East and North Africa, about three-quarters or more say the same (Lugo, 2013). At least half of Muslims in 13 of the 22 countries surveyed say a wife should have the right to divorce (Lugo, 2013).

In 12 of the 23 countries surveyed in 2013 about inheritance rights, at least half of Muslims say that sons and daughters should have equal inheritance rights. Most Muslims in Central Asia and in Southern and Eastern Europe hold this view, including 88% in Turkey and 79% in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In these regions, Kyrgyzstan is the only country where fewer than half (46%) support equal inheritance rights (Lugo, 2013). In South Asia and Southeast Asia, opinion differs widely by country. More than half of Muslims in Indonesia (76%), Thailand (61%) and Pakistan (53%) support equal inheritance rights, but fewer than half do so in Bangladesh (46%), Malaysia (36%) and Afghanistan (30%) (Lugo, 2013). Across the Middle East and North Africa, fewer than half of Muslims say sons and daughters should receive the same inheritance shares. Palestinian Muslims (43%) are most supportive of equal inheritance rights in this region, while support is low among Muslims in Morocco and Tunisia (15% each) (Lugo, 2013).

Conclusions

The primary drivers of ideological support for ISIS appears to be economic, while the primary driver of active, material support for ISIS appears to be cultural isolation. There is almost negligible desire for re-establishing the Caliphate. There is a desire for an increased application of Sharia, and the belief that the Ummah/Islam is under attack from the West remains a popular one. There is decreasing tolerance for non-Sunni Muslim ethno-sectarian groups, especially in active conflict areas such as Iraq, Libya and Yemen. Finally, there is lessening opposition to gender equality as Arab youth comes of age.

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Response to Quick Look Question 4

Mia Bloom

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Mia Bloom: So, Quick Look number 4. Okay, so, "To what extent do populations maintain positive views of ISIL or ideology, particularly in European, North African, and Arabian Peninsula countries most associated with foreign fighter flows into Syria and Iraq? What are the general perceptions associated with their endorsed themes: desire for re-establishing the Caliphate, imposition of Shariah law, belief that the Ummah/Islam is under attack, low tolerance for non-Sunni Muslim ethno-religious groups, and negative disposition towards gender equality?" I see. So, all of those are under section Quick Look 4.

Sarah Canna: Right, and I was thinking that you could take a look at this from either a gender perspective or from a regional perspective.

Mia Bloom: Okay, well, I've got 2 different projects with Minerva?? right now. One of them is looking at ISIS's sort of telegram online dark web kind of stuff, which is why I sent that link about ISIS in Africa. In one of the conversations, it was interested in Africa. So, I think that was why I sent that.

Sarah Canna: Right.

Mia Bloom: One of the things that we're getting with regards to gender is very different messaging that it's going out to the European women as it's going out to the Arab women. So, some of the stuff that ISIS is financing explicitly in Arabic is a very different kind of picture than what is readily available on telegram for an English speaking audience. The English speaking audience, the women in particular, are getting the sense that being a foreign fighter involves fighting and that, when they go to Syria or Iraq, they'll have a much more frontline role. In Arabic, it's crystal clear that they're never going to have that role. In Arabic, they make it clear that, for the most part, their role will be that of a wife, mother, "domestic goddess" to quote Rosanne (in other words, homemaker). They don't emphasize the role of the Al-Khansaa Brigade in the Arabic materials. In fact, the only thing that I've seen that was clearly directed towards Arab speaking countries in the Arabian Peninsula was an ISIS woman, fully nikab, gloved hand and everything, driving, and this was sort of to say, "See. Here, you get to drive." So, a lot of what has been directed in Arabic towards the Arabian Peninsula is about an individual level of empowerment, not as a fighter, but you can do far more with your life. I think that they're trying to appeal to sort of the Saudi or Imarabi?? girls who are bored and want to feel more significant in what they're doing. They're saying, you know, that you may not even be able to leave the house, but what you'll be able to do is more significant than what you're going to be doing in the gulf, where you're also not able to leave the house.

Sarah Canna: Can I ask a really basic question? So, are they doing their messaging, I presume to the Arabian Peninsula and Arabic, but to the European population, are they doing that mostly in Arabic?

Mia Bloom: No. To the European population, it's overwhelmingly in French and in English. I mean, they're online in 25 different languages that I've found iniciar??, Portuguese, iniciar?? Español. So, they're doing it a lot of different ____ lately. They're targeting each group in its own language and are very often using girls from that country as recruiters.

Sarah Canna: Is that because they're targeting kind of second generation immigrants who maybe speak French better than Arabic or…?

Mia Bloom: Yeah, pretty much. I mean, they are targeting people who are Arabic, and we know that the women from Bradford or the women from Leon or Paris or wherever, they really speak hardly any Arabic. They may have the occasional Arabic word, _____, ____, you know, SWT. They won't even say it in Arabic; they'll say SWT. They barely speak, I mean if anything, the Punjabis and those originally from Pakistan, they speak sort of a heavily accented midlands English accent with the occasional Urdu/Arabic word peppered in, but they're not fluent, and very few of them can read and write.

Sarah Canna: Mhmm.

Mia Bloom: So, the stuff that's in Arabic is really directed towards Arabic speakers because they don't expect that the, you know, midlands Muslim population speaks enough Arabic to be on the chat rooms in Arabic. Those would be in English.

Sarah Canna: What about northern Africa? Do you know what the messaging there is like to women in particular?

Mia Bloom: So, we only have some reports from Tunis of targeted recruitment of girls for this jihad al-nikah, which is this idea that the girls would travel to Syria in order to support the fighters, like comfort women kind of support, but that's for the most part. Other than that first wave that left in 2012, most of the north African women are leaving with entire families. They're going with fathers, husbands, and brothers. They're going with family units. The ones that were targeted individually were targeted early on for this role as a comfort woman where there has been a bit of a backlash about this jihad al-nikah: whether it's considered basically a form of prostitution.

Sarah Canna: Right, I was just wondering what the appeal would be to young women.

Mia Bloom: Well, they weren't thinking that they would be passed around like a marijuana cigarette. They thought that they would go and find a mujahedeen?? husband, and keep in mind that the cost of marriage

is very expensive in most of these north African countries, so marriage is delayed. If you're going to stay in Tunis and you're 18, you're going to end up with a 45-year-old guy or you go to Syria and you'll find a guy your age because they've built up this romanticized version of the mujahedeen?? in Syria. But this would have been in 2011/2012 before ISIS was as big as it is now. So, many of the girls went off, and it was different groups; it wasn't just ISIS. We only have little bits and pieces of information about their experiences because there was a cleric in Tunisia when some of the girls came back with harrowing stories of having been passed around and then impregnated or some had gotten STIs. It wasn't what they expected it to be. So, we don't have a lot of information on individual girls that are going. The Tunisian government also hasn't been great about sharing the data.

Sarah Canna: So, if I was going to really dumb this down and summarize it, I would say that in Saudi Arabia, women are responsive to messaging that emphasizes empowerment. Women in North Africa, originally, it was a way to find a spouse…

Mia Bloom: …well, it was adventure and romance.

Sarah Canna: Adventure and romance.

Mia Bloom: …and altruism. All of the underpinning elements for all of this is altruism. They're appealing to women's sense of wanting to do good, wanting to be important, significant, to make a difference. They fine tune the message a little bit because when telling a woman in Tunisia that she can drive, she's like, "Mhmm," but telling a woman in Saudi that she can drive, well, now it looks like the jihad is empowering women in a way that the regime doesn't.

Sarah Canna: Mhmm. That makes a lot of sense. No one's going to do anything without feeling that they're in the right, but it seems that in Northern Africa, it's more of a transition to entire families going over.

Mia Bloom: Yeah, so that's one of the reasons why, you know, the problem has been the focus on the female foreign fighters overwhelmingly the western ones, ones like Aqsa Mahmood or Hoda Muthana from Alabama, in other words, these women from western countries. The vast majority of foreign fighters as you know are actually from the more local countries, and the vast majority of the women are also local Syrian women or women that came over with their entire family units. So, we don't have an accurate depiction because there has been this fetishizing of 'why would a woman leave North America or northern

Europe to go to Raqqah when you have all of these other benefits, and it's built an assumption that it's better for women in the west. So, there are very different kinds of messaging to target different kinds of girls, and a lot of the times, they'll use a local interlocker. In other words, they'll use a French girl to recruit other French girls, they'll use a Tunisian girl to recruit other Tunisian girls, they'll use an Italian woman who actually lives in Saudi Arabia to recruit Italian girls. They're being recruited in their own languages, and in order to do so, they have frames of reference that…you know if I was to say to you Jaffa cakes and piji?? chips, it would mean nothing, but if I was talking to a British girl, she would know exactly what I was talking about. So, all the frames of references, the things in order to build up rapport and foster trust…it almost requires some local knowledge.

Sarah Canna: So this actually bleeds into the next question, which is how these populations receive the messaging. It's really interesting to see that a lot of people who are volunteering tell us how people receive messaging on social media and even via text, but we never have anyone talking to us about how person-to-person people get recruited, and I wonder how important that is in these populations.

Mia Bloom: Well, it's very important, and you know, you can have people in the chat rooms, but until you get that individual recruiter who starts making the arrangements, it's all just fantasy. You know, it's all just blowing off steam and saying stuff online that you might not say regularly because online, you have this anonymity. You know, you can be posting under an assumed or false name. So, you really do need to have that recruiter who just comes in at some point in the conversation and starts making the arrangements because these things can't happen without that point person.

Sarah Canna: Now, do you find it…

Mia Bloom: …so, at some point it will be offline. At some point, it will be like you're in the chat room, and then someone will be like, "You know, let's set up a private conversation where we'll start making arrangements…what do the roots look like?" The other thing that they've disseminated in a variety of languages, including a sample in English, was a sort of step-by-step what to do, what to wear when you travel, how to tell people, how to accumulate the money. When I found this one thing, as I was reading it, they were making reference to…I think they said jumper, which is sweater in British language, and they used a particular book store. So, as soon as I realized it was in UK, I sent it to M5 and I said, "Okay, this is the step-by-step instruction manual that we found online," and it was very much written by somebody that was British for a British audience. It included a what to do and what not to do, what kinds of behaviors to engage in.

Sarah Canna: Was the list specific to women or just anyone who was going over?

Mia Bloom: I think it was specific to any. It wasn't specific for women; it was for anyone. In fact, it might have been the one that I found was specific to men because it also said 'don't be fooled by the girls who are just going to retweet you and be your fans,' and you know, 'don't be lulled in by that.' It was actually quite antagonistic towards the fangirls. So, I think it was for guys. But, you know, my first instinct was, because we found it (I think I found it in December), we have contacts. We have equally good relationships with security services in the US as we do with the UK, having had MOD funded projects when we were at Penn State. So, you know, I was like, "I know who to send it to." I don't know what they did with it, and they don't write me back to tell me what. In the same way, I turned it over to the FBI, and I don't know what Mark is doing with it, footedly say no??? or I sound out to somebody that there were specific threats that an ISIS contact gave a journalist, and I was like "Okay, and here is the journalist's phone number." So I, personally, at that point, I would pick up and call and be like, "You know, I'd rather prevent something than predict it and be right." I would like to prevent as many bad things from happening. I contacted Brandy Dinini in Boston because one of the threats was Boston. So, I was like, "Tell Carmen" (she's the AG, Carmen Ortiz). We've worked with a bunch of these pilot programs and worked with different parts of the country. If I'm on telegram, and I see something, I do say something. I take a screen capture, and I send it. So, ___ has never been mentioned interestingly.

Sarah Canna: I have one last question before I let you go. So, going back to the recruitment thing. I just wanted to follow up with the one-on-one in-contact recruitment. Do they use formal recruiters to recruit females?

Mia Bloom: So, they use female recruiters to recruit the young girls. I think my explanation for it is that we've probably done an adequately good job of warning young teenage girls of talking to strange men on the Internet. So, their guard is down when it's a British girl, and she's talking with Aqsa Mahmood because she doesn't see Aqsa Mahmood as a threat, whereas she may have seen some old dude as being sketchy.

With the older women…so, let me step back for a second. We've identified within the western women that are coming from Europe and the United States and Canada, there are two very different types of girls that they're going after. They're going after these young, high achieving girls, maybe girls from Muslim backgrounds who don't know very much about Islam. So, these would be like the Benthal Green Academy girls; girls who are very young, and they'll use women as…in the literature on online grooming for pedophiles, it's called the deviant peer. In other words, the kid looks at this person as just some slightly cooler, older person and not someone who's potentially a threat. It's someone who's not going to be creepy. They also go after some much older convert women. That's more like a match.com, and they're

directly in touch with guys. It's very romantic, and right away, it's about finding a mujahedeen?? husband. So, you have the Sally Jones type; she's the British ex-punk rocker, married, ____ or even Shenna Morine colony?? from Colorado.

So, there are different age groups. One is very young; partly, it's because they think western Muslim women in the west, even though they're Muslim, you've got to get them young before they've been spoiled. They're looking, and they'll be explicit about it, for virgins. They're looking for girls who are bint, which is untouched and unsullied. They're looking for unsullied girls, but they're also looking for these western convert women for other reasons. Now, according to one in here, it was because you know, they know how to please a guy…really sketchy stuff. We're more likely to see these older women, these convert women, directly in communication with men. You're more likely to see the 15, 14, and 13-year-old girls not in communication with men but in communication with other girls. The British girls are talking to Aqsa Mahmood, the Scottish radiology student who disappeared, and the American girls might be talking to Hoda Muthana from Alabama. In other words, it's because those friends will reference things that they can share. You know, with an American girl, they might be talking about music or the Kardashians, with the British girl, EastEnders. You know, those things don't resonate in the same way. That's why I was giving you the Jaffa cakes as an example; nobody here knows what a Jaffa cake is, but if you were a British girl, you totally know what a Jaffa cake is. So, everything is just slightly different (the music is different, the celebrities are different, the snack foods are different) so that they're able to relate, and it's the exact same process that we see with the pedophiles. They're trying to create…they're fostering trust with the target, so that the target goes back to the Internet, is communicating almost exclusively with them, is keeping secrets from the parents so that the parents won't know what's going on, and it's about creating a little mini world. For example, the girl that was interviewed by Rukmini Callimachi in Washington State. She was older and a convert, and she was directly in touch with a male recruiter who she thought she was really good friends with who was trying to set her up with a 40-year old something guy. As compared to we know Aqsa Mahmood's involvement with the Benthal Green Academy girls and with the precursor, the first girl from that ____ that left. So, this is how we differentiate, at least it's how I have differentiated.

We may have some exceptions, ____ is really on the cusp because she was a convert, but she was 19, so she was directly in touch. But, we know that some Anna Erelle, who was a French journalist, pretended to be a convert named Melodie who was young, maybe 17 or 18, and she was directly in touch with an amir. So, you know, there may be some tiny exceptions along the fringes. When they're 17 years old, they may be in touch. When they're 13, 14, 12, 11…it's a girl that they're going to be in touch with because again, the 11-year-old is going to automatically have their guard up with an adult male.

Sarah Canna: It's all about trust.

Mia Bloom: It's about fostering trust and developing this rapport and secrecy and all of these other things.

Sarah Canna: Alright, well, Mia, I'm going to let you go, but thank you so much for this. I think that you've provided a really unique aspect that we're not getting from anyone else.

Response to Quick Look Question 4

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Abstract: Muslims have not fully embraced the modern West's progress-driven secular ethics and continue to subordinate reason to faith. Many are alienated from their own culture amid feelings of inferiority and anxiety vis-à-vis westerners. Some reject both the West and contemporary Muslim societies by embracing what they imagine were the guiding principles of Islam in its infancy.

- Muslims across the globe aspire to live in a single polity following established Islamic ideals.
- Most oppose the harsher aspects of Islamic law but regard Shari'a as a moral consensus harmonizing divine writ with human capacities.
- Many see the modern West as a symptom of the immorality they fear could consume the planet but for Islam.
- Muslims do not hold tolerance and diversity to be unambiguously positive.
- They are similarly ambivalent with respect to gender equality.

A Shared Worldview

This query assumes there is ideological separation between populations from countries associated with foreign fighter flows into Syria and Iraq and the foreign fighters themselves. In fact, in most cases, the populations and the foreign fighters that come from these populations share a common worldview. The difference is one of degree, not kind.

Despite their diversity, Muslim cultures—irrespective of locale—share a fundamental premise distinguishing them from western cultures: Ethics are the province of God, not man. The guiding values by which most Muslims strive to live their lives have not been secularized. Failure to appreciate how different the western worldview is from those of more traditional societies, including those where Islam predominates, prevents a clear understanding of what drives members of those societies.

The guiding values by which most Muslims strive to live their lives have not been secularized.

Of Bees and Balances

The modern world westerners inhabit, physically and mentally, is the ethical inverse of the Old World. In tracing the West's transformation, Harvard University Islamic Studies Professor Abdolkarim Soroush writes that "the values that preceded, caused, and sustained the development of the West were not the result of a conscious world-historical project," among whose authors he includes Bacon, Luther, and Machiavelli. Nonetheless, these and other groundbreaking thinkers opened Pandora's Box by asking whether (and subsequently how) the ethics that had guided the West for millennia could be harnessed to serve the cause of human happiness in this world vice solely assuring salvation in the next.[8]

By examining values through the lens of reason instead of faith, westerners began rationalizing behaviors that heretofore were considered sinful. Dutch physician Dr. Bernard Mandeville's 1705 book *The Fable of the Bees* was instrumental in driving this process, according to Souroush:

"The gist of his thesis is that a society consists of two groups, not unlike a beehive. On one side stand the hardworking, righteous, noble, and productive members. On the other side lay the pompous, idle, and slothful nobility, the class of gluttony and deception. In his story, one day the idle nobility decides to become truly noble by emulating the good workers, and this causes the downfall of that society. No longer did art find enthusiasts or artists patrons. Mandeville concludes that there is an affinity between 'private vices and public goods.' The subtitle of his book reads: *An Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue."*[9]

This, Souroush continues, gave rise to the idea of progress:

"It is thanks to selfish profit seekers that business is lively. Those who hunger for power and ostentation stoke the fire of politics and the seekers of vanity and fame keep the flame of the academy and library aglow. It is the efforts of those who have a love of the worldly pleasures that enrich and improve this world."[10]

Utilitarianism was born. Private vices—greed, lust, pride, etc.—were transformed into public goods that fueled the progressive furnace, thereby producing greater happiness in this world for greater numbers of people. The next logical step was for the private vices to be viewed as private goods. Westerners, maintains Souroush, emerged

[8] Souroush, A. (2000). Trans. by Mahmoud Sadri and Ahmad Sadri. *Reason, Freedom, and Democracy in Islam: Essential Writings of 'Abdolkarim Souroush*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 40-41.
[9] Ibid., p. 42.
[10] Ibid.

"from the shadows to embrace ambition openly, to haggle and to unabashedly strive for the worldly glory of high corporate and political office. Freed from internal constraints of traditional piety, the new humanity kept order (political and legal) through the natural play of checks and balances."[11]

This is the ideological context within which the West has regarded the world for more than two centuries. The fact that it developed gradually over time has hindered a full appreciation for what a fundamental shift in outlook it represents. It also has made it difficult for westerners to comprehend the seemingly illogical resistance of some cultures, including those of the Muslim world, to embrace fully the idea of progress.

Resistance and Hypocrisy

Muslim resistance derives, in part, from history. While the West pursued the idea of progress, Islamic cultures continued to prize piety. Reason and logic, cast in Islam as useful tools for trying to discern God's intent, are human properties and therefore limited and imperfect. God orders, man obeys; believers do not ask, let alone expect an answer to, the question "why." Even where Muslim leaders and governments agree progress would benefit their societies, they are playing catch-up and lack the capacity to engineer changes that occurred organically over hundreds of years in the West.

For many Muslims, the West's progressive enterprise is morally suspect. Each good it produces seems to come freighted with at least one evil: freedom of expression and pornography, high technology and nuclear weapons, material comfort for some at the cost of exploiting others. Small wonder the nation-state, a means of organizing societies that arguably is the paramount achievement of western culture, provokes less enthusiasm than cynicism in the Islamic world.

There is more than a little hypocrisy in the Muslims' viewpoint. In truth, they have coexisted with the West long enough and absorbed sufficient aspects of its worldview to become hybrids: One foot in the pietistic past (the tenets of Islam remain a primary source of law) and the other in the progressive present (nearly all Muslims reside in nation-states). Their existential ambivalence manifests in a profound sense of alienation from their own culture amid feelings of inferiority and anxiety vis-à-vis westerners. Implicitly or explicitly, many define themselves by how much westernization they will tolerate. Others have gone further, rejecting both the West and contemporary Muslim societies by embracing what they imagine were the guiding principles of Islam in its infancy.

Back to the Future

Salafism, the conscious emulation of supposed early Islamic behaviors and mores, has captured the imagination of Muslims exasperated by their cultures' inability to compete effectively in the progressive arena. Rather than maintain, like many of their co-religionists, that the Islamic world's clear deficiencies bespeak a noble refusal to sacrifice morality on the altar of progress, Salafis turn the argument on its head: The present can be used to reacquire the ethics of the past. While modern concepts like freedom of

[11] Ibid., p. 43.

speech involve moral choices (how much pornography is acceptable?), contemporary artifacts are value-neutral: Social media and smart phones can be used to stanch or spread the faith.

The overwhelming majority of Muslims reject the Salafis' enterprise, particularly in its most extreme (Islamic State, al-Qa'ida) forms. They are appalled by the violence and carnage committed in the name of a faith they regard as a counterweight to unfettered materialism, and see the extremists' embrace of western technology as a dire threat: With the West and Islamic terrorists using advanced weapons and media against one another, moderates like themselves are caught in between.

Even with the moderate majority, the ideals championed by the Salafists have resonance.

A generational issue is at play. Older Muslims are aware that the Salafis' combining of high-tech with black-or-white revivalism has piqued the interest of many young people. Some of the latter blame their societies' shortcomings on the failure of their parents' flaccid faith to stand up to what they have been taught is a hegemonic West bent on usurping God by annihilating Islam, the last bastion of traditional ethics. Youthful rebellion combines with utopianism and moral outrage in the cauldron of jihad.

But for Islam

That idle, disaffected, and frustrated young people are enthused by the idea of reconstituting the Caliphate and imposing a puritanical interpretation of Shari'a (meaning the way of Islam, but generally used as a synonym for Islamic law) is not surprising. The urge to set matters aright is a universal human impulse, one cynical and/or maniacal leaders have used to lure youth into committing to a variety of isms over the course of human history (tribalism, nationalism, Communism, etc.). What disappoints many in the West is the apparent inability, or perhaps disinclination, on the part of mature Muslims to curb the enthusiasm of their progeny.

The fact is that, for even the moderate majority, the ideals championed by the Salafists have resonance. Do most Muslims endorse the IS caliphate? No, but many hold out hope that—someday—Muslims across the globe might live in a single polity that follows established Islamic ideals. Do they seek the imposition of Shari'a? No, not in the sense of imposing brutal *hadd* penalties (stonings, amputations, beheadings).[12] But yes in the form of an inchoate, elusive moral consensus that somehow would harmonize divine writ with human capacities, producing justice and moderation in all things.

That Islam is under assault is not in dispute for most Muslims. The question is by whom and to what degree. The modern West is seen by many as a symptom of the immorality they fear could consume the planet but for Islam. For them, western secularization is the handmaiden of a cosmic evil bent on ensuring

[12] Contrary to Islamic State and other extremists' oft-repeated use of beheadings and other gruesome punishments, mainstream Muslims hold that the extremely high evidentiary standards required to impose the *hadd* penalties—four credible eyewitnesses to the act of penetration in cases of adultery or fornication, for example—should ensure they rarely, if ever, are imposed.

the victory of godlessness. Others, including the Salafis, detect greater collusion between the West and satanic forces rendering western culture a legitimate target for any and all means required to hasten Islam's ultimate triumph. Ironically, such reasoning epitomizes Machiavelli's ends-justify-the-means argument.

Faith Trumps Reason

As concepts, tolerance and diversity derive from secular ethics. Both are reasonable, logical ideals for westerners (and others) who see the world in live-and-let-live terms. For Muslims anchored to the traditional worldview, however, tolerance and diversity are not unambiguously positive. Many continue to utilize the five-part Islamic categorization of moral obligation, distinguishing between activities on the basis of whether they are forbidden, objectionable, permissible, commendable, or obligatory. Moderates refer to various *ahādīth*—narrations of the Prophet Muhammad's words and deeds[13]—to cast tolerance of non-Muslims as permissible, commendable, or even obligatory. Salafis cite others in arguing that such forbearance is either objectionable or forbidden.[14]

And what of gender equality? Few Muslims, even in the West, are completely comfortable with the idea of male-female equivalence. Most regard the sexes as fundamentally different physically and therefore equipped for different tasks in this world. Many also believe men and women possess unique minds, distinct ways of looking at and solving problems, and therefore see value in recognizing and utilizing these differences.

Polls consistently show that Muslim women want greater opportunity to use their talents and education outside the home. The same surveys indicate that women as well as men continue to view the latter's primary role as bearing children and taking care of their families. This apparent contradiction reflects the aforementioned one-foot-in-the-past-one-in-the-present dichotomy of Islamic societies. It also may be seen a tacit acknowledgment that although Islam imposes greater gender differentiation than some in a given society may regard as just, most are willing to subordinate their reason to faith. If any one thing can be said to distinguish Muslim cultures from our own, that is it.[15]

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[13] Thousands of *ahādīth* (singular = *hadith*) on a wide range of subjects were related by the Prophet's relatives and companions following his death in 632 CE. Islamic scholars and jurists developed methods for determining the authenticity of these narrations, including by examining the reliability of their transmitters through the ages. Although there is consensus on the validity of some *ahādīth*, many are contested to this day.

[14] Kadri, S. (2012). *Heaven on Earth: A Journey Through Shari'a Law from the Deserts of Ancient Arabia to the Streets of the Modern Muslim World*. New York: Straus and Giroux, p. 85.

[15] Poll Finds Muslim Women Admire Western Values, But Don't Want to Imitate Them. (2009, October 31). Retrieved from http://www.voanews.com/a/a-13-2006-06-06-voa48/322871.html; Crabtree, S. (2012, April 2). Two-Thirds of Young Arab Women Remain Out of Workforce. Retrieved from http://www.gallup.com/poll/153659/two-thirds-young-arab-women-remain-workforce.aspx; Most Muslims Want Democracy, Personal Freedoms, and Islam in Political Life.

Response to Quick Look 4

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It is important to acknowledge the evolution of the relationship between VEOs, potential recruits and the wider public both inside and outside areas controlled by ISIL. For example, during the early days of JN and even ISIL, the wider public view among many within Muslim – and not just Sunni – community was that these VEO groups appeared to be a religious (but not extremist) platforms against the oppressive tyranny of the Assad regime. As such, although it seems hard to believe it now, many of those who joined ISIL in 2013 were religious but more motivated by a humanitarian desire to help those in need.

Another category, and one that has grown stronger over time - is the opportunist. Here, recruits are primarily – but again not solely - driven by the need to win tangible or non-tangible rewards. One obvious example includes financial incentives and booty for those lacking means to get wealth. A second is power and status for those who lacked it. These two account for the strongest opportunistic motivators and apply to a range of recruits. For example, ISIL approached certain individuals belonging to more downtrodden tribes in Deir Ezzor and 'empowered' these to gain greater local control. The benefit of this type of recruit is that he or she can be persuaded to leave ISIL if other opportunities present themselves. Herein lies a challenge – how to ensure that tribes supportive of ISIL will not face revenge attacks if they leave, and how to ensure that individuals who leave ISIL will not face heavy punishment, including marginalization from society. Other salient rewards that have motivated recruits include: Redemption and forgiveness (often for former criminals seeking a second chance to 'make it right'), access to Paradise (for those convinced by VEO religious narratives), Camaraderie and heroism (for those who identified with the

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(2012, July 10). Retrieved from http://www.pewglobal.org/2012/07/10/most-muslims-want-democracy-personal-freedoms-and-islam-in-political-life/.

energy of the Arab Spring but felt the need for a more radically religious approach) and sex (for those attracted by the idea of the availability of women or Jihad husbands)

The next category is the ideologue. This recruit acts primarily out of a desire to inspire and spread a 'correct' version of Islam. It is noteworthy that the ideologue may restrict his objective to countering western and 'Zionist' governments, seeing these as aggressive entities that threaten the existence of Islam. However, the more radical ideologue will expand his or her definition of the enemy to include other Arab and Muslims governments and nations, accusing these of straying from the right version of Islam. These types of ideologue are revolutionaries imbued with a sense of moral and religious righteousness echoed in some of the Wahhabi teaching (such as the legitimacy of labeling other Muslims takfiris). Other drivers include: a desire for revenge, an eagerness for justice as they perceive it, sectarianism, the sense that Islam today is corrupt and that a return to the purity of early Islam is the only solution, etc.

Given the different categories, the demographic background of an individual attracted to a VEO also shows great variety. For example, it is true that those in poorer communities (particularly those that exist surrounded by visibly wealthier communities) are more susceptible to feel indignation and frustration at their life situation. Likewise, they may lack a religious or mainstream education that inculcates a sense of critical thinking. Both of these aspects will make them more susceptible to some of the narratives implied by the abovementioned observations (access to wealth, access to justice, divine calling, Paradise etc.). However, it is also clear that recruits include unemployed youth that have received a good education, and even men who are married and have children.

Perhaps rather than trying to establish the ratio of 'types' of recruit, it would be better to focus on programming that will more likely lead to a change in behavior. Here, the opportunist stands out as more 'low-hanging fruit' than the ideologue. The former displays a much greater elasticity of affiliation, and I believe that co-opting these will help starve VEOs of the 'oxygen' they need.

Response to Quick Look 4

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In Tunisia and Morocco, the two countries responsible for the largest outflow of foreign fighters to Syria, Iraq, and more recently Libya, the populations' views of ISIL's activities tend to be very negative. In Tunisia, for example, an internal poll conducted by the International Republican Institute in 2014 found that only

1% of respondents believed Tunisians should be joining Daesh. However, aspects of ISIL's ideology find support among these populations, especially when framed in general terms. If asked whether Islamic law (sharia) should form the basis of legislation, majorities would respond in the affirmative to the extent sharia is understood as a set of principles intended to establish justice. (When sharia is framed as a set of specific punishments for acts such as theft, support for "the imposition of sharia" among populations of northwest Africa tends to drop, though support remains high in countries to the east, such as Egypt.) Likewise, the Caliphate retains significance in the collective memory as a period of flourishing in the Muslim world, even if there is little expressed desire to eliminate nation-states and re-establish an empire. The notion that Islam/the Muslim world is under attack from the West resonates strongly throughout the region, due in part to lingering resentment over the colonial past and in part to governments' promotion of such conspiracies. In my travels to the region, I have found little intolerance for non-Sunni communities, although in Salafi communities (which number around 17,000 in Tunisia and 10,000 in Morocco), anti-Shiite sentiment is stronger. These societies are generally conservative in their views of gender relations, even if small but effective women's rights movements have successfully lobbied for laws increasing gender equality in the political realm.

Response to Quick Look 4

Noureddine Jebnoun

Georgetown University

It is very difficult to assess with accuracy the level of support and sympathy for ISIL's views and ideology among European and Middle Eastern populations. In fact, any serious study that aims to measure the patterns of ISIL's "popularity" among target populations should be based on reliable and quantifiable data. However, what we often glean from the abundant open sources regarding the involvement of European citizens in terrorist activities in their countries or across Europe is that most perpetrators are relatively young (between 18 to 30 years of age), have experienced a crisis of identity, are disconnected from their communities, and are marginalized within their own European societies, which have failed to integrate their cultural references into the European social fabric. Seemingly, ISIL can comfort them and provide them with a sense of purpose and community to remedy their meaningless lives. Such measures mitigate their disillusionment, boosts their self-esteem, and empowers them to redress their perceived "moral bankruptcy." Whether converts to Islam or descendants of second or third generation immigrants, these militants hold a very superficial understanding of Islam and are therefore seen by ISIL as religious novices who are very easy to co-opt and indoctrinate. By recruiting youths from Europe's Muslim communities, ISIL aims to exacerbate anti-Muslim sentiment in European societies through further exclusion and stigmatization. More importantly, ISIL's European network, beyond its operational value, has been actively nurturing sectarian divides between European communities and their religious minorities.

In contrast, the attitude of individuals in the Arab world who either expressed support for ISIL by joining the movement or by failing to oppose it when it occupied their towns in Iraq, Syria or Libya, should be understood as a response to the dysfunctional systems od governance across the region. ISIL is not only a criminal organization using a theological discourse that revolves around an "authentic representation of Islam" to achieve its strategic goals across the region, it is also seen as an alternative to miscarried governance and to the failure to create local societies based on participatory governance, citizen rights, equal opportunities, social justice, respect of human rights, adequate education, job opportunities, and decent standards of living. Instead, the post-colonial Arab state epitomized authoritarianism, corruption, police brutality, denial of citizenship, cultural alienation, and systematic violation of its citizens' rights as a mode of governing. ISIL built its "legitimacy" as a "state in waiting," in the terms of Yezid Sayigh, seeking to appropriate the monopoly representation of political Islam. ISIL's legitimacy is also a result of the Arab state's failure to deliver a legitimate system of governance to its citizens that involves feasible socioeconomic development and equitable treatment based on citizenship rather than on ethnic and sectarian background. Furthermore, there is evidence that foreign military interventionism in the Arab world, including the U.S. led-war in Iraq, deeply destabilized the region and was a major driver in the rise of ISIL. The Israeli aggressions against Palestinians and other Arabs as well as the occupation of Arab territories aggravated these trends.

Response to Quick Look 4

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This response addresses Arabian Peninsula countries.

The people in Gulf Arab States (Arabian Peninsula) maintain negative views about the desirability of a Caliphate. A vast majority are opposed to the use of violence or terror to attain political objectives. In the main, they do favor adherence to Shariah law and hold negative beliefs toward gender equality. They fear westernization and modernization as an attack on Sunni Muslim unity and heritage and can be animated to short-term support for violent causes when they perceive non-Sunnis or non-Muslims to be attacking fellow Sunni Muslims. These trends help explain why Salafi jihadist groups like the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) can gain meaningful short-term support in moments of perceived danger for Sunni Muslims. The trends establish the reasons that ultra-conservative Salafi beliefs remain viable across

[16] See short author biography on page 26.

the Arabian Peninsula and the more prominent Islamist agendas sustain broad popular support in many Gulf Arab States.

The governments and people of the Gulf Arab States express low support for the methods and techniques of the Salafi jihadist ideology of ISIL. They express uniform dismay at the extreme violence and gore practiced by ISIL in Syria, Iraq and across the wider Middle East. They are wary of the self-declared Caliphate by Iraqi Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, uncertain about its legitimacy and its prospects for survival. The Saudi Grand Mufti, Sheikh Abdul Aziz al-Sheikh and other Sunni Arab Gulf clerics branded ISIL as "enemy number 1 of Islam," in mid-2014 shortly after al-Baghdadi declared the Islamic State Caliphate.[17] Public opinion polls in late 2014 found that ISIL had a mere 5% support in Saudi Arabia, with similarly low numbers assumed present in the other Gulf Arab States.[18]

However, many people in the Gulf Arab states believe in the tenets of Salafism, the ultra-conservative Sunni Muslim ideology that, although non-violent in the main, shares a number of religious beliefs with the extremely violent ideology of Salafi jihadism practiced by ISIL (and by al Qaeda). Modern Salafism is based on an austere reinterpretation of Islam, calling for Sunni Muslims to return to the original teachings outlined in the Koran and the practices of the Prophet Mohammed as understood by the earliest generations of Islam. From the Salafist perspective, non-Islamic thought – including Westernism, modernism and Shiísm - has contaminated the message of "true" Islam for centuries, and this excess must be jettisoned for a proper Islamic way of life. Salafists' desire uniform implementation of restrictive Shariah law and eschew gender equality. Salafists have low tolerance for non-believers and what they decry as insufficiently conservative or "impure" fellow Sunni Muslims. Most Salafists revere past Muslim Caliphates. However, most are unconvinced that a wider Caliphate is necessary. Many believe that properly configured national governments can protect Salafist interests from the encroachment of modernity and Muslim "non-believers." Most Salafists are organized around popular local imams, preachers and social groups. In recent times, Salafists have formed political parties to safeguard their interests. Salafist political parties exist in Kuwait and Bahrain (and in Egypt). Salafists in other Gulf Arab States gain and maintain political influence through community and religious groups with reach into the powerful ruling families and state bureaucracies of the region's autocratic governments. Salafists from the Gulf Arab States have provided material and financial support to Salafi jihadists militant groups opposing Bashar al Assad in Syria. From 2011-2014, this support was broad and somewhat indiscriminate – an emotional reaction to the brutal crackdown against Syrian Sunni communities that began during 2011 by the Assad government in its fight against the Arab Spring uprisings. This intemperate support for Sunni Muslim communities under government assault in Syria aided the rise of ISIL in direct and indirect ways. Since late 2014 and the declarations by prominent Sunni Muslim clerics and Gulf Arab governments

[17] "'ISIS is enemy No. 1 of Islam,' says Saudi Grand Mufti," *Al Arabiya (English)*, August 19, 2014, http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/08/19/Saudi-mufti-ISIS-is-enemy-No-1-of-Islam-.html.

[18] See David Pollock, *ISIS Has Almost No Popular Support in Egypt, Saudi Arabia or Lebanon* (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute, October 14, 2014), http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/isis-has-almost-no-popular-support-in-egypt-saudi-arabia-or-lebanon.

against ISIL, most Salafist support for ISIL has withered. Nonetheless, analysts agree that some Salafist financial support still finds its way to ISIL from unreformed Gulf State donors or from ISIL predation of donations to other Sunni militia groups fighting in Syria.

Islamism is a far more popular modern Sunni Islam ideology. Islamism seeks to introduce conservative Islam into the political sphere. Islamists are known for forming political parties, participating in elections, and pushing for constitutional reform. The most notable Islamist political party is the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt. Islamists target governments, universities, and any other institutions into which they can integrate the major features of Islam: Shariah law, solidarity of the Sunni Muslim Ummah, and adherence to largely segregated gender roles. Islamists are not inclined toward widespread violence, and do not look for a new Caliphate. Like Salafists, many Gulf Arab State Islamists provided material and financial support to Salafi jihadist militias in Syria from 2011-2014 as an emergency response to the fierce "assault on fellow Sunni Muslims" by Bashar al Assad's Alawite government. Islamists across the Gulf also heeded the Sunni clerical backlash against ISIL of late 2014, although some material support from Islamist charities in the Gulf has been documented as still going Sunni militias in Syria and even to ISIL.

Although Gulf Arab State populations have a very negative view of ISIL and its ideology of Salafi jihadism, a majority of Gulf Sunni Arabs do align with two schools of Sunni religious thought with common, fundamentalist but non-violent themes: ultra-conservative Salafism, and conservative Islamism. Neither school believes in re-establishing the Caliphate. Both oppose violence absent an extraordinary threat to the community of the Sunni faith (Ummah). However, both view conservative Sunni Islam, the imposition of Shariah law, and firm limits on the encroachment of western mores and modernism as desirable in political life. The depth and durability of these popular views to the questions that Gulf Sunni Arabs face in the conduct of everyday life make it certain that even should ISIL meet its demise, the preconditions for another Salafi jihadist group to rise in its place will remain present for the foreseeable future.[19]

Popular Support for Extremist Groups in the Sahel

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[19] For greater detail on these conclusions and their implications see Thomas F. Lynch III, *The Islamic State as Icarus: A Critical Assessment of an Untenable Threat,* Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (WWICS), October 2015; Thomas F. Lynch III, *The U.S. Military and Countering ISIS*, Middle East Institute – Policy Memo, October 1, 2015; and, Thomas F. Lynch III, *Sources of Terrorism and Rational Counters*, TRENDS Working Paper – 01/15, January 2015.

Introduction

A range of militant or extremist groups are active in the Sahel, most signficantly in north-east Nigeria and in Mali, but with tentacles extending into other countries. The extent to which they have genuine local roots varies – as does the extent of popular support they enjoy.

Brief mention will also be made of other armed groups active in the region but focussed on secular goals and without an ideological jihadist agenda, or else focussed primarily on criminal activity.

The picture is clouded by a degree of overlap in membership between jihadist and non-jihadist groups and the extent to which many individuals may move between groups or remain involved with two or more factions simultaneously. This applies both to ordinary fighters and possibly also some leading figures, who may participate in a peace process while in fact still dabbling in jihadist violence or criminality.

Jihadist factions

Al-Qaeda au Maghreb Islamique (AQMI – or AQIM) developed as an outgrowth of the 1990s conflict in northern Algeria between a secular state and Islamist radicals. Faced with a peace amnesty backed up by tough government military action, some Algerian militants moved south into the Sahara and over the border into Mali – where the state and security forces were much weaker and poorly equipped to stop them.

The leaders of AQMI and many of the fighters were Algerian, but they began to develop connections with local Arab or Tuareg tribes in the Malian Sahara – in some cases taking wives from local Arab or Tuareg families. Thanks to the money they were earning from hostage taking and drug trafficking, they also had the financial resources to lubricate these local ties; it is reported that in some cases they provided medical or other essential services that the state had failed to provide in this region – which is remote from most of Mali; but full details have not emerged and this presence did not amount to overall territorial control or the total displacement of the state.

A constellation of jihadist groups occupied northern Mali in 2012-13.

Of these, AQMI was predominant in the Timbuktu region, and probably attracted most publicity, because of its hostage taking and its attacks on libraries and tombs in Timbuktu. It did manage to recruit some local sympathisers – such as Ahmed Al-Faqi Al-Mahdi, recently convicted at the ICC for damage to historic saints tombs in the city. The group may also have recruited some local guides and drivers in Mali; it had the money to pay local recruits much more than they could earn from alternative legitimate pursuits.

However, AQMI continued, overall, to be viewed as a largely foreign organisation and it appears to have attracted little popular support in Timbuktu – where the tolerant Sufi interpretation of Islam, influenced by mysticism and with great reverence for numerous saints, is strikingly different from the fundamentalist austere purist Wahabi beliefs of jihadist AQMI.

However, the period 2011/12 did see the emergence of one major jihadist faction that is essentially Malian in nature – ***Ansar Dine*** (or Eddine). This armed group was founded by Iyad Ag Ghaly, a Malian from the noble Ifoghas strand of Tuareg, from Kidal region in north-east Mali. The group has drawn many of its recruits from among Malian Tuareg, particularly Ifoghas, from this region.

(It should not be confused with the domestic non-violent religious movement in Bamako of the same name, which had in fact been founded earlier.)

Iyad Ag Ghaly was already prominent in Kidal region, in business, as a former leader in the separatist azawad rebellion and later as a mediator in disputes between the Malian government and re-emergent local separatists before a new crisis developed in late 2011. But he formed Ansar Dine around the end of that year, after being rejected in a bid to become the leader of the secular separatist Mouvement National de Libéation de l'Azawad (MNLA). He recruited among kinsmen and other fellow Ifoghas.

After the French-African military intervention of 2013, Ag Ghaly went underground, but even today he remains an influential figure who may even have had some influence over the negotiation of the Algiers Accord, last year's peace deal between the government and separatists. There have been unsubstantiated reports that Ag Ghaly may benefit from the protection of the Algerian authorities; his whereabouts are

variously reported as in the Tinzaouten area – twin communities of the same name either side of the border between north-east Mali and southern Algeria – or southern Libya.

Ag Ghaly certainly appears to benefit from a degree of connection or tolerance among senior figures in parts of the separatist alliance (the Coordination des Mouvements de l'Azawad, CMA) particularly the Haut Conseil de l'Unité de l'Azawad (HCUA). The latter is essentially drawn from the Ifoghas.

There is a substantial degree of overlap and two way traffic between the separatists, particularly the HCUA, and the jihadists. The HCUA is nominally signed up to the peace deal, but Cheick Ag Aoussa, the HCUA chief of military staff – killed when his car was blown up as he returned from an arms control meeting with the UN peacekeepers in Kidal on 8 October 2016 – is believed to have maintained close contacts with Ag Ghaly. Malian sources also claim Ag Aoussa was a leading commander of the January 2012 Aguelhok massacre, when a Malian army garrison that had surrendered were murdered in cold blood by separatists and/or jihadists.

Many fighters move back and forth between public allegiance to the HCUA – in the hope of benefitting from the material incentives offered under the peace and disarmament process –and continued involvement in jihadist violence. In recent weeks, jihadists have been relatively brazen and open about their continued activity, which suggests they still benefit from degree of at least tacit acquiescence in north-east Mali, particularly the Kidal and Tin Essako areas; many of those engaged in this violence appear to be Tuareg from this region.

Conditions are rather different elsewhere in northern Mali -- in Timbuktu, Gao, Ménaka, Tessalit or Taoudenni – where the social/ethnic composition of the population is mostly non-Ifoghas and where there appears to be relatively little support for Ansar Dine.

However, it would be quite wrong to view jihadism in Mali as a purely Ifoghas phenomenon. There are commanders and fighters drawn from other strands of the population too.

In the Gao region, the most prominent jihadist faction during 2012-13 was the ***Mouvement pour l'Unicité et le Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (MUJAO).*** This was sometimes described as the "black Al-Qaeda" – which was something of a caricature but did reflect the fact that MUJAO seemed to recruit more local people, particularly of darker skinned sub-Saharan ethnicities from the Niger river valley. This may in part have been the result of a long tradition of adherence to Wahabi religious traditions in some villages near Gao.

The French-African military intervention of 2013 ended MUJAO's control of the area. But jihadist fighters remain active. Subsequently, the Algerian jihadist Mokhtar Belmokhtar – who had gradually broken away from mainstream AQMI – formed a new group drawn from his fighters and the residue of MUJAO; this faction, ***Al-Mourabitoun***, is widely suspected of involvement in some of the recent spectacular urban jihadist attacks in Bamako, Ouagadougou or Grand Bassam. If true, its ability to stage these may have been helped by a capacity to recruit black recruits who are less noticed in the big West African cities. But there is little evidence of generalised popular support for Al-Mourabitoun, either in these cities or in the Gao region of Mali.

The picture is complicated by the persistence of drug smuggling, which is highly lucrative. The big urban attacks clearly are motivated by jihadist terrorist ideology.

Even so, among the wider population in Gao, there is widespread resentment of the armed groups, whether jihadist, criminal or separatist. Recently, there were street demonstrations by local protesters angered by the possibility that, under a plan to decentralise more power to regional councils, the government might seek to draw armed groups into the peace process by giving heir senior figures many of the seats in new nominated transitional councils. Many Gao residents are angered by this possibility.

Meanwhile, some recent attacks in the rural Sahel – for example, near Téra in western Niger in March 2016 – have been seen by local observers as less motivated by ideology than by a desire to capture weapons from the security forces. (Thanks to the international security operation in the Sahara, it has become much harder to smuggle weapons into Mali from southern Libya).

However, ethnic motivations and generalised anti-state ideas also come into play.

The authors of a 6 October attack on the troops protecting the Tazalit refugee camp in western Niger, executed the 22 members of the Nigérien security forces they had captured, even though there was no military reason to do so. The killings may have been motivated by ideology or by ethnic factors (e.g.: Tuareg antipathy towards southern Nigérien soldiers), but this has yet to be clarified.

There is a long history of jihadist raids into western Niger, even as far as Niamey, to attack security force posts, refugee camps, or kidnap westerners. Evidence appears to suggest that these are often carried out

by militants operating from neighbouring eastern Mali, and a significant proportion of these are local, sometimes also involved in narcotics trafficking, for which Gao has been a hub.

Although identified jihadists have often been local Arabs or Tuareg, there are some indications they may also have recruited fighters from other ethnic backgrounds. They appear to benefit not so much from generalised popular support as from the acquiescence of some local Gao region individuals who may turn a blind eye or alternatively be employed as drivers or look-outs

So in this region the jihadist operators do appear more local than in Timbuktu region.

Elsewhere in Mali, there is some evidence that jihadist groups have attracted some recruits from the Sahraoui population (in Western Sahara or Sahraoui refugee camps in Algeria). This may reflect the fact that many young Sahraouis in refugee camps in Algeria are unemployed and disillusioned, rather than widespread popular support for an ideological agenda; but this remains to be clarified.

However, further south, in central Mali, there is a clear overlap between local grievances and popular support and the emergence of jihadist ideas as a motivator for violence. Much of Mopti region has become highly insecure, with numerous attacks over the past two years.

Many have been claimed by the Front de Libération du Macina (FLM), a local group inspired by the jihadist preacher Amadou Koufa. Many local youths, particularly from the Peul ethnic group, have become involved.

However, the violence also reflects pressures on land and a breakdown of the traditional arrangements for resolving disputes between Peul pastoralists and settled farming populations; there also appear to be other grievances at play, over the governance by some local elected officials, the poor quality of some local services or heavy-handed security crackdowns and human rights abuses by the Malian army. Criminality may also be a factor.

The violence in central Mali is essentially local; there was a recent attack on Nampala, where the FLM was joined by fighters who had come from northern jihadist groups, but that is not typical; most attacks appear to be staged by disenchanted local youths, motivated by a mixture of local grievance and a touch of ideology; in numerical terms, these groups may have recruited at least several hundred fighters, but it's not clear whether or not these youths have much support have beyond their own numbers, or how far their wider communities support them.

There have been local mediation efforts in central Mali by community leaders, leading Peuls and others, who have persuaded significant numbers of fighters to promise to lay down their arms. But it remains unclear how far this process has actually been implemented; certainly some attacks have continued into mid-late 2016.

Response to Quick Look 4

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Q4: European populations remain interested in the Caliphate, but its visible recession on the battlefield means ISIL holds a lot less attraction than before. The establishment of the Caliphate was a visible radicalizer amongst a niche of European Muslim populations, and helped strengthen the flow of fighters heading to Syria and Iraq. Its visible loss has led to a gradual loss of appeal and is one of the reasons for the reduction of travellers to a trickle. The larger concepts remain of interest, but they no longer so clearly have a home in ISIL.

Perceptions of ISIL in Selected EU Countries

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Abstract

- Among the European Union countries providing most ISIL fighters, there is a significant difference in social-economic background of ISIL sympathizers: British sympathizers seem to be mostly highly-educated people providing for ISIL's policy planning and communications needs; sympathizers from France and Belgium are mostly found in young adults (mostly male, but not exclusively) with a background of school dropouts, petty delinquency, social exclusion, family problems, and vulnerability to propaganda.
- A generational gap is observed in France and Belgium: most young people (18-30 age-bracket) hail from hard-working families, most often of Maghreb origin (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia), with no previous records of radicalization and a desire for inclusion in the society and social promotion for the next generation. This "pull factor" doesn't play for younger, frustrated generations.
- In France and Belgium, the level of religious education/knowledge among ISIL sympathizers is generally very low and mostly recent. There is generally no knowledge of the Arabic language, other than superficial. More sophisticated motivations such as establishing a Caliphate, imposing Sharia law or the Sunni-Shia divide seem to largely escape this group of sympathizers/recruits.
- The attractiveness of ISIL as a war organization seems to be focused on recent recruits among young people looking for a "place in the society" or for a personal project (some have even declared that they saw the jihad in Syria as "an adventure"), in the context of a society perceived as rejecting young Muslims.
- In domestic political terms, the main consequence in Western Europe is not just a Muslim/non-Muslim divide in the society but also a rise in xenophobic/racist ideologies and political movements.

Background

Some of ISIL-promoted themes, such as the belief that Muslims are under attack from the West or a negative disposition against gender equality might resonate with a large proportion of the Muslim population in Western Europe. This is linked to the traditional way of life that many Muslim families maintain, even after decades of living in Western Europe (e.g. role of mothers traditionally limited to running the home, without working outside and with limited exposure to social life). In these Muslim families, the general political perception of Western policies vis-à-vis the Muslim world has been negatively influenced for decades by a) the Israel-Palestine conflict and b) by Western interventions in Arab and Muslim countries (French colonization of the Maghreb, intervention in Egypt in the 50s, Algerian independence war, or more recently the 2011 intervention in Libya).

But, until recently, these negative perceptions did not translate in more than general frustration. The fact that these frustrations morphed into political/terrorist activities (for the younger generation) is a more recent phenomenon and illustrates a profound generational gap between those young adults who are currently the ISIL's sympathizers (or operatives) and their parents. It is striking to witness how distraught parents appear to be when confronted with news that their sons (and sometimes daughters) have left for Syria or have committed terrorist acts in European countries.

Recruitment of young Europeans by jihadist movements abroad is not a new phenomenon per se (e.g. Afghanistan) but the scale is unprecedented, probably due to a massive and modern propaganda and also to accumulated economic and social frustrations of young Muslims in France and Belgium.

It is worth underscoring the demographic and employment aspect of the situation of young Muslim in Western Europe. Previous generations of migrants from MENA were actually filling a gap in the job market which led to a somewhat better societal integration. That pull factor has disappeared as youth unemployment levels hit record highs in Europe and the situation of the most marginalized only got worse. The sense of economic security and opportunity enjoyed by previous generations was leading to integration, while the frustrations of younger generations lead to the opposite phenomenon and to sensitivity to radical propaganda.

Perceptions of ISIL's Ideology by Young Muslims in France and Belgium

Apart from a limited group of older propagandists and recruiters, it appears that the level of religious education among young ISIL sympathizers is generally very low (some media even mentioned that 70% of French jihadists were "atheists", an assertion hard to document). Themes such as re-establishing the Caliphate or imposing Sharia law, and even more remotely intolerance against Shia Muslims, seem to be perceived in a very general manner, and they are certainly not themes backed by any real degree of understanding of the Quran and the other fundamentals of Islam.

The vast majority of ISIL sympathizers in France and Belgium seem to be receptive to its ideology mostly for reasons pertaining to their personal place in the society: belonging to the working class, being often confined to less affluent neighborhoods, being tempted by "easy money activities" (petty thefts, soft drugs dealing), they end up associating with marginal groups in the society, with little or no future than repeated arrests, judicial processes and short terms in jail (where radicalization occurs).

In such a context, belonging to (and eventually fighting for) a "single nation for all Muslims" (the Caliphate) may suddenly appear as a "life project" worth cutting off with family and friends and, ultimately for a fraction of this group, worth launching oneself in either jihad in Syria, violent attacks at home, or both in succession.

An important element of ISIL's propaganda in France and Belgium lies in the messages specifically addressed in 2014 to French sympathizers. On 22 September 2014, a jihadist known by the name of

Abu Mohammed al-Adnani asked ISIL's followers to target French citizens, civilian or military, by any means (stone, knife, car, push from high building, strangulate, poison). A similar message was broadcasted in French by a masked jihadist on 19 December 2014 (who also invited followers to imitate Mohammed Merah, the jihadist who killed French soldiers and Jewish teacher and pupils in the cities of Montauban and Toulouse in 2012). These messages echoed tragically on 14 July 2016 when a jihadist drove a truck into a crowd in Nice, killing 84 and wounding 331.

Perceptions of ISIL's Ideology by the General Public

An important consideration in assessing the perceptions of ISIL's ideology by the general public in France and Belgium is a) the total rejection of the ideology's violent aspects, including by a portion of the Muslim citizens, b) a growing sense of being powerless in front of repeated attacks, especially in 2015 and 2016, c) a definite sense of frustration with the authorities in front of a perceived lack of efficiency, d) a growing shift of a segment of the public toward extreme right/xenophobic political parties or movements. In 2016, the coincidence of such attacks with the migration/refugee crisis has provoked amalgams and xenophobic reflexes in a large segment of the population and the political establishment.

ISIL-inspired attacks have been targeted with the objective not just to terrorize the population, but to attack its open society features and lifestyle (editorial meeting of a newspaper/pubs and restaurants/sport stadium/concert venue in Paris; random travelers in airport and metro in Brussels; crowd attending the National Day fireworks in Nice) and to divide the society according to ethnic/religious lines (military and police of Arab or Black origin/Jewish schoolchildren and teacher/Kosher supermarket in France; Jewish Museum in Brussels).

In other words, it is of paramount importance not to limit an assessment to the phenomenon of European citizens radicalizing due to ISIL's ideology (certainly a most important part of any assessment), but to also

consider the societal and political consequences on the wider society in a context where the lack of economic prospects, multiple armed conflicts in the vicinity of Europe, and a wave of migrants and refugees add to the terrorist wave to instill a high sense of insecurity among ordinary citizens and a high fear of the future. In such a context, xenophobic and racist ideologies flourish.

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He regularly appears as an analyst on media including CNN, ABC, BBC, C-Span, Al Jazeera and GEO TV (Pakistan). His opinion pieces and research articles have been published in various leading international newspapers and academic publications. His latest book titled *The Taliban Revival: Violence and Extremism on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier* (Yale University Press, 2014) was profiled on *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* in August 2014. Abbas' earlier well acclaimed book *Pakistan's Drift into Extremism: Allah, the Army and America's War on Terror* (M E Sharpe, 2004) remains on bestseller lists in Pakistan and India. He also runs WATANDOST, a blog on Pakistan and its neighbors' related affairs. His other publications include an Asia Society report titled *Stabilizing Pakistan Through Police Reform* (2012) and *Pakistan 2020: A Vision for Building a Better Future* (Asia Society, 2011).

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Tom Lynch

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Paul Melly

Expertise

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French and EU Africa policy

Development policy, IMF/World Bank Africa strategy, grassroots development

Development finance; project and trade financing

Raffaello Pantucci

Raffaello Pantucci's research focuses on counter-terrorism as well as China's relations with its Western neighbours. Prior to coming to RUSI, Raffaello lived for over three years in Shanghai, where he was a visiting scholar at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS).

Before that he worked in London at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), and the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington. He has also held positions at the European Council of Foreign Relations (ECFR) and is an associate fellow at the International Center for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR) at King's College, London.

He is the author of *We Love Death As You Love Life: Britain's Suburban Terrorist*s (London: Hurst, April 2015/US: Oxford University Press, forthcoming), described by *The Financial Times* as 'the most articulate and carefully researched account of Britain's 'suburban terrorists' to date.'

He is currently completing a writing project looking at Chinese interests in Central Asia. His journal articles have appeared in *Survival*, *The National Interest, Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, and *RUSI Journal* amongst others, and his journalistic writing has appeared in the *New York Times, Financial Times, Wall Street Journal, Sunday Times, CNN, Guardian, Foreign Policy, South China Morning Post*, and more.

Marc Pierini

Marc Pierini is a visiting scholar at Carnegie Europe, where his research focuses on developments in the Middle East and Turkey from a European perspective.

Marc Pierini was a career EU diplomat from December 1976 to April 2012. He was EU Ambassador and Head of Delegation to Turkey (2006–2011), Tunisia and Libya (2002–2006), Syria (1998–2002), and Morocco (1991–1995). He also served as the first coordinator for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership ("Barcelona Process") (1995-1998) and was the main negotiator for the release of the Bulgarian hostages from Libya (2004-2007).

Marc Pierini served as counselor in the cabinet of two European commissioners: Claude Cheysson, (1979-1981) and Abel Matutes (1989- 1991). He has published three essays in French: "Le prix de la liberté" (*Actes Sud*, 2008)(also in Bulgarian at *Janet45*), "Télégrammes diplomatiques" (*Actes Sud*, 2010), and "Où va la Turquie?" (*Actes Sud*, 2012)(also in Turkish at *Doğan Kitap*).

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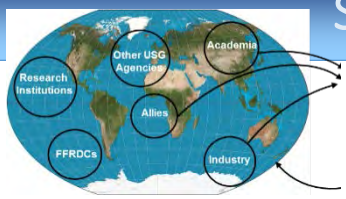
Sarah Canna, NSI

Sarah applies her open source analytic skills to regions of vital concern to US Combatant Commands, particularly the Middle East and South Asia. To help military planners understand the complex socio-cultural dynamics at play in evolving conflict situations, she developed a Virtual Think Tank (ViTTa) tool, which is designed to rapidly respond to emergent crises by pulsing NSI's extensive subject matter expert (SME) network to provide deep, customized, multidisciplinary analysis for defense and industry clients. Prior to joining NSI, she completed her Master's degree from Georgetown University in Technology and Security Studies. She holds a translation certificate in Spanish from American University and has been learning Dari for three years.



Question: What actions and polices can regional and coalition nations employ to reduce recruitment of ISIL inspired fighters?

Reducing ISIL Recruitment

Dr. R. Kim Cragin
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This paper addresses the issue of ISIL recruitment from Literature Review Question #3. To do this, it utilizes a "quick look" format and focuses on two non-standard ideas approaches to challenge of terrorist recruitment. For readers interested in source materials on this subject, this paper also incorporates a bibliography at the end of the document.

Minimize the impact of existing foreign fighters and returnees[20]

The single most significant policy that nations could employ to reduce recruitment of ISIL fighters in the future is to minimize the influence of returnees. Historically, most foreign fighters have returned home from conflicts overseas to recruit and build local networks. Take, for example, the case of Afghanistan in the 1980s and 1990s. Approximately 80 per cent of the 20,000 foreign fighters returned home and recidivism rates ranged from 40 per cent (Indonesia) to 90 per cent (Algeria). Moreover, even in the case of Indonesia, which had the lowest rate of recidivism, returnees recruited and expanded local terrorist networks. In fact, recent interviews in Indonesia with Afghan veterans revealed that foreign fighters were instructed to recruit 10 new operatives each, once they got home.

A similar pattern exists with foreign fighters today. Between June 2014 and May 2016 there were 54 directed and "inspired" plots or attacks associated with ISIL in Europe. Foreign fighter returnees were involved in 65 per cent of the directed and 40 per cent of the entirety of the plots. In many of the plots, returnees recruited others to assist in the operation. The November 2015 Paris attacks illustrate this phenomenon. The core group of operatives was comprised of nine individuals under the leadership of Abdelhamid Abaaoud. Seven of the operatives were foreign fighters and returned home specifically to conduct an attack in Europe. Two of the operatives were Iraqi nationals who were sent to Europe by ISIL leaders to participate in the attacks. But an additional 21 individuals have been arrested by security officials for providing logistical or other support to these attackers. Of these additional 21 recruits, only seven had previously fought in Syria or Iraq. The rest were recruited locally.

[20] Findings in this section draw on a forthcoming article in a special edition of the *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* on the topic of countering violent extremism, entitled, "The Challenge of Foreign Fighter Returnees."

This means that regional and coalition nations should put policies and programs into place now to mitigate the impact of returnees on future recruits. These programs should include the following elements. First, nations should make it illegal – through penal codes or otherwise – to travel overseas to fight as part of an insurgency. The United Nations has already begun to work with countries on their legal frameworks, but this framework is essential for countries to be able to act, and assist each other, in mitigating the impact of returnees. Second, countries should provide "off-ramps" or de-radicalization programs to individuals who travelled to Syria in support of ISIL, but did not engage in violence. Third, returnees who engaged in violent acts should be imprisoned – per a countries' relevant penal code – but, in the prison, they should likewise be placed into a de-radicalization program. If they refuse to participate, they should be isolated from other prisoners to minimize the potential recruitment of other prisoners.

Emphasize programs that reinforce non-radicalization[21]

Another policy that nations could employ to reduce recruitment of ISIL fighters in the future is to implement programs that reinforce non-radicalization. Generally speaking, radicalization can be understood as a process whereby individuals are persuaded that violent activity is justified in pursuit of some political aim, and then they decide to become involved in that violence. However, many of the factors that push or pull individuals toward radicalization are in dispute within the expert community. Much of the problem is that the factors identified by experts as contributing to radicalization apply to many more people than those who eventually become involved in political violence. Such limitations are more than academic, because they make it difficult for policymakers to design interventions. These limitations lead to programs aimed at manipulating broad structural actors—for example, education—so that they affect small subsets of populations of people who might or might not decide to become terrorists. One alternative is to instead focus policies on encouraging individuals to reject violent extremism.

To explore this possibility, we conducted a series of subject matter interviews, focus groups, and surveys in the Palestinian West Bank (2012) and Yemen (2016) on why individuals eschew violent extremism. Findings revealed the following:

- Rejecting violent extremism is a progress with multiple stages and choices within each stage
- Choosing not to engage in violence is distinct from opposing political violence in theory
- Nonviolent political activism does not contribute to non-radicalization
- Family plays a greater role than friends in shaping attitudes towards nonviolence in the Palestinian West Bank, and
- Urban centers in Yemen represent key populations for strengthening non-radicalization.

These findings suggest that policies to reduce the recruitment of ISIL inspired fighters must go beyond de-radicalization and counter messaging programs. In fact, from a policy perspective it is equally or more important to strengthen the factors that inhibit radicalization. And, importantly, these factors are *not* merely the absence of radicalization factors. Thus regional and coalition nations should attempt to understand why most do not engage in violence in their countries and they attempt to design programs to reinforce these factors.

[21] Findings in this section draw on three publications on the topic of non-radicalization, including the results from a forthcoming study on Yemen. References can be found in the Bibliography.

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Biography

R. Kim Cragin is a senior research fellow at the National Defense University. She recently left a position as senior political scientist at the RAND Corporation. Cragin focuses on terrorism-related issues. Cragin has conducted fieldwork in Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen, Egypt, northwest China, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka, among others. Her RAND publications include Severing the Ties that Bind (2015), Disrupting Global Transit Hubs (2013) and Social Science for Counter-Terrorism (2010). Cragin also has published academic articles, including "Resisting Violent Extremism" in the reviewed journal Terrorism and Political Violence (2013), "al-Qa'ida Confronts Hamas" in Studies in Conflict and Terrorism (2009), and "The Early History of al-Qa'ida" in the Historical Journal (2008). Her book entitled *Women as Terrorists: Mothers, Recruiters, and Martyrs* was released by Praeger in 2009. Cragin has a master's degree from the Sanford Institute of Public Policy at Duke University. She completed her Ph.D. at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom.