

SMA Reach-back Report

Question (Quick Look 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)?*

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 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 surveyed³ with possible exception of those in Northern Africa (Burson-Marsteller, 2016; Marcellino *et al*). For

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.

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

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 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 Raqqa 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 Raqqa), 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 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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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).

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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 indicate 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 region. (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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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 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

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.

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 freed 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 acquiescence 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 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 IACSS 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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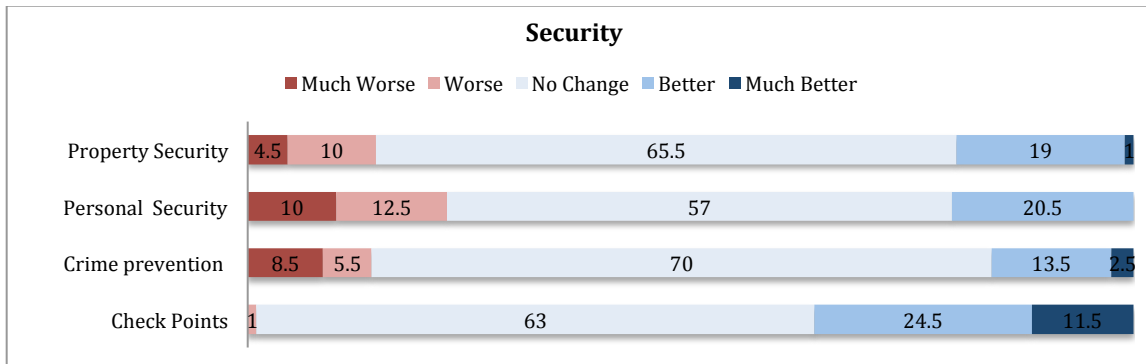
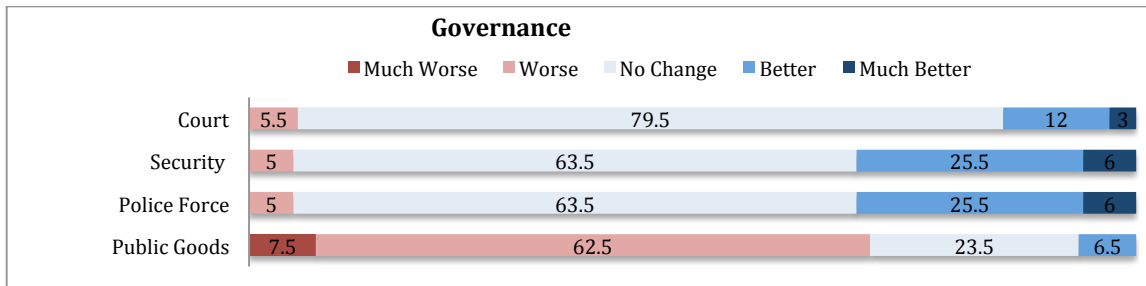
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 Iraq Oil Report

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?



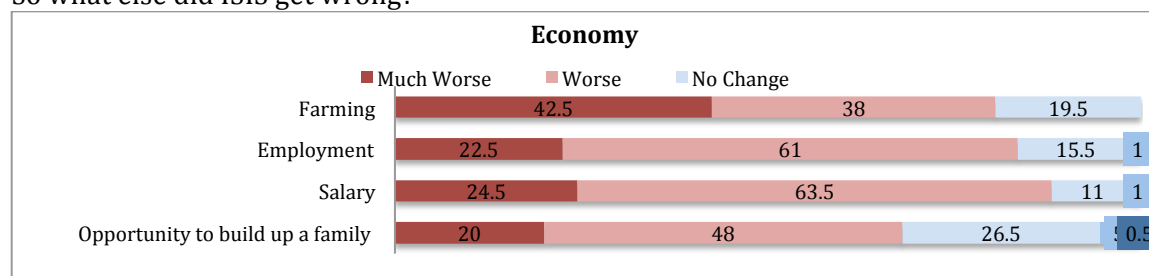
It is no secret that after US intervention, Sunni Muslims were unhappy with the Shia-dominated central government in Baghdad. Many thought the government incompetent, and some even considered it to be the root cause of the problems. So to win the hearts and minds of Iraqi Sunnis, the first thing ISIS 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 #باقية (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

		<i>Last 7 Days (10/10/16- 10/17/16)</i>	<i>Last 30 days (beginning from 10/17/16)</i>	<i>Last 90 days (beginning from 10/17/16)</i>
#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

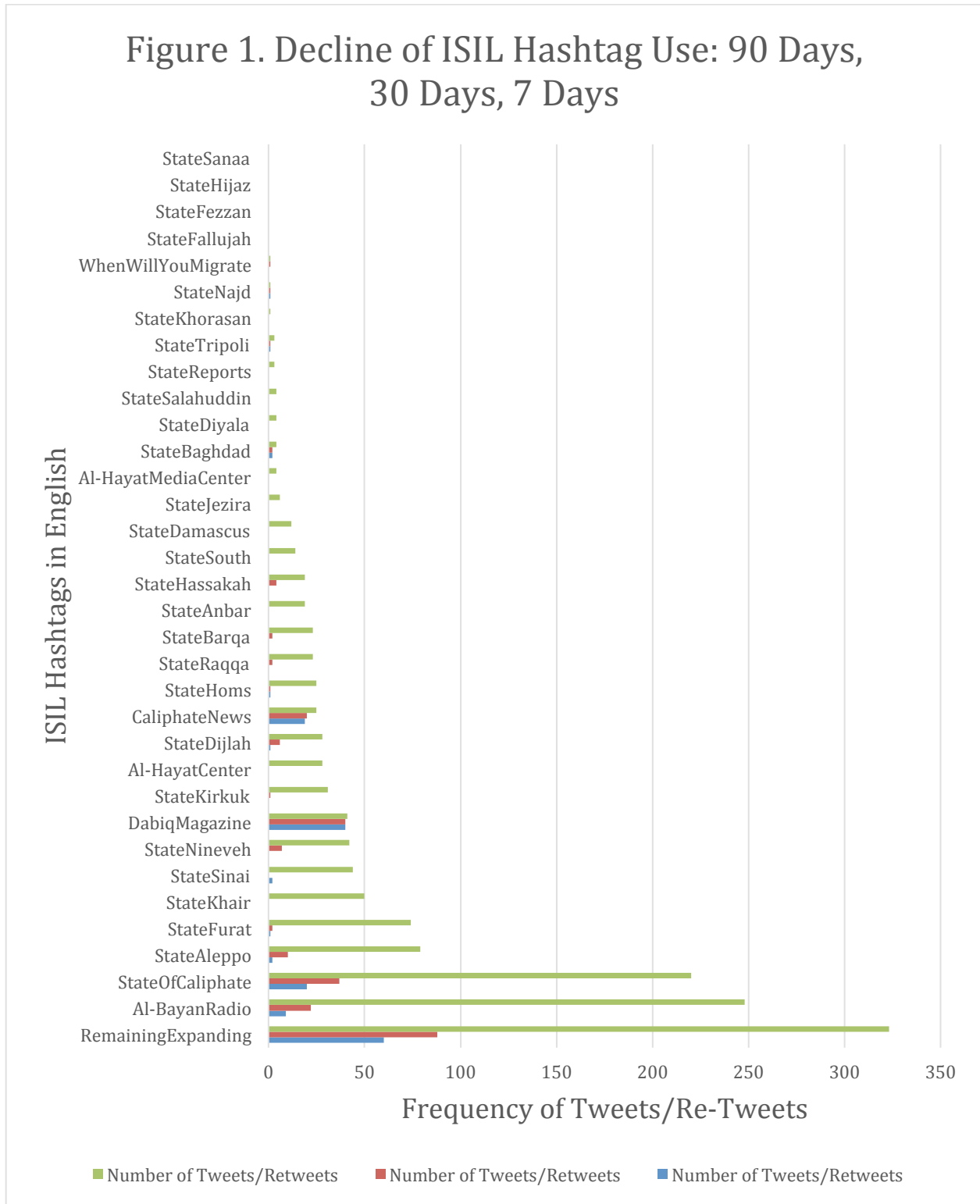


Table 2. Suspected ISIL Accounts & Themes: Last 7 Days (10/10/16-10/17/16)					
Arabic Hashtag	English Hashtag	Number of Tweets/Retweets Last 7 Days	Number of Followers from Suspected ISIL Account	User Identity of Key Account	Content/Theme
#دولة الخلافة	StateOfCaliphate	20	1	Suspected Account ISIL	Unclear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

Figure 2. #StateCaliphate: Outward flow of ISIL Tweets

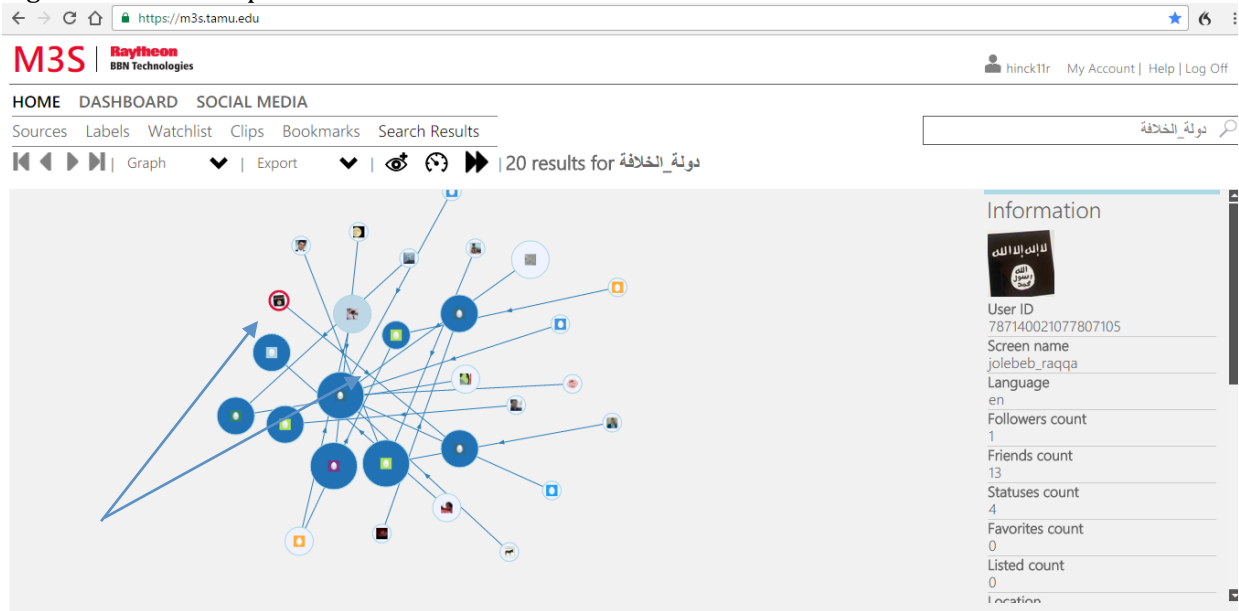


Figure 3. #StateAleppo: Outward flow of ISIL Tweets

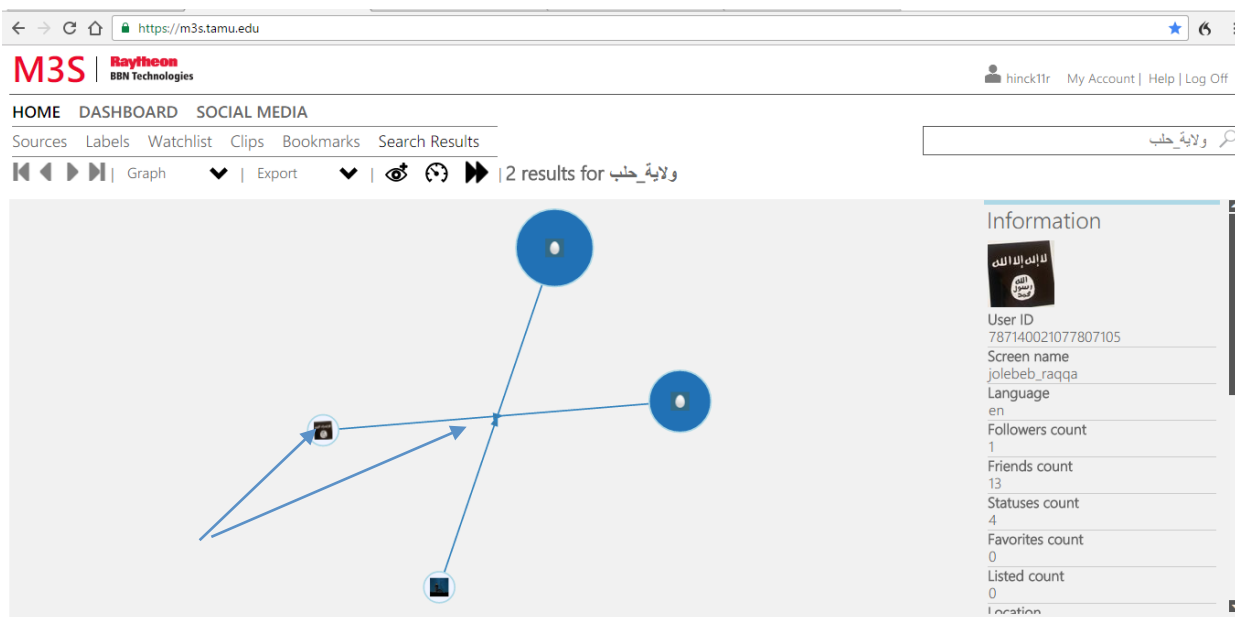
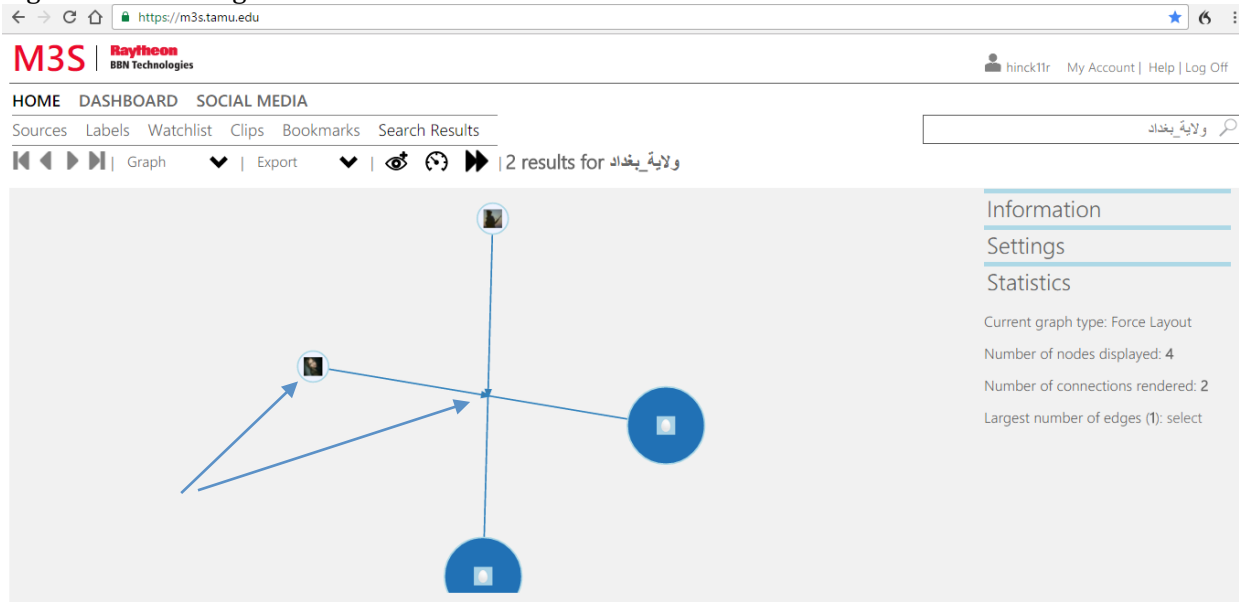


Figure 4. #StateBaghdad: Outward flow of ISIL Tweets

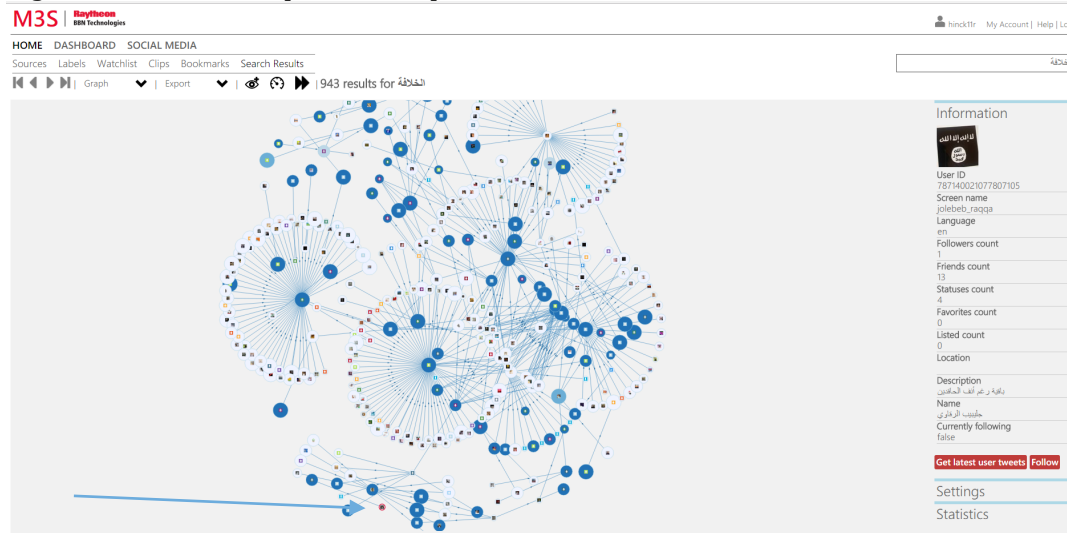


Quick Look 2: Content Analysis of “#Caliphate” and “#Daash”

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”

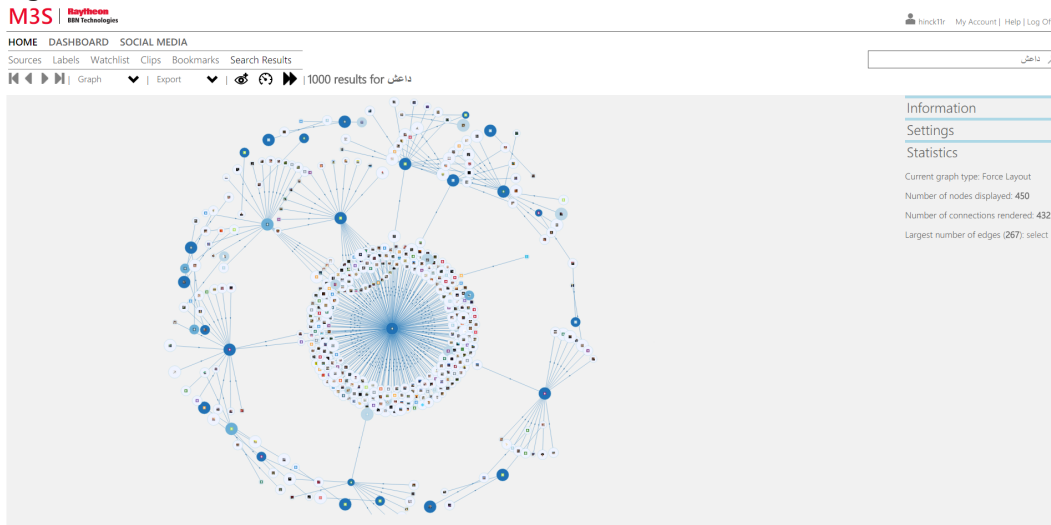


The graph above demonstrates that discourse surrounding the term “Caliphate” remains fractured with multiple major and sub-major nodes. Central nodes continue to be academics, mainstream public intellectuals, and news organizations. ISIL messaging is largely absent; attempts to penetrate the discussion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

RQ2: What themes emerge from discussion of Daash?

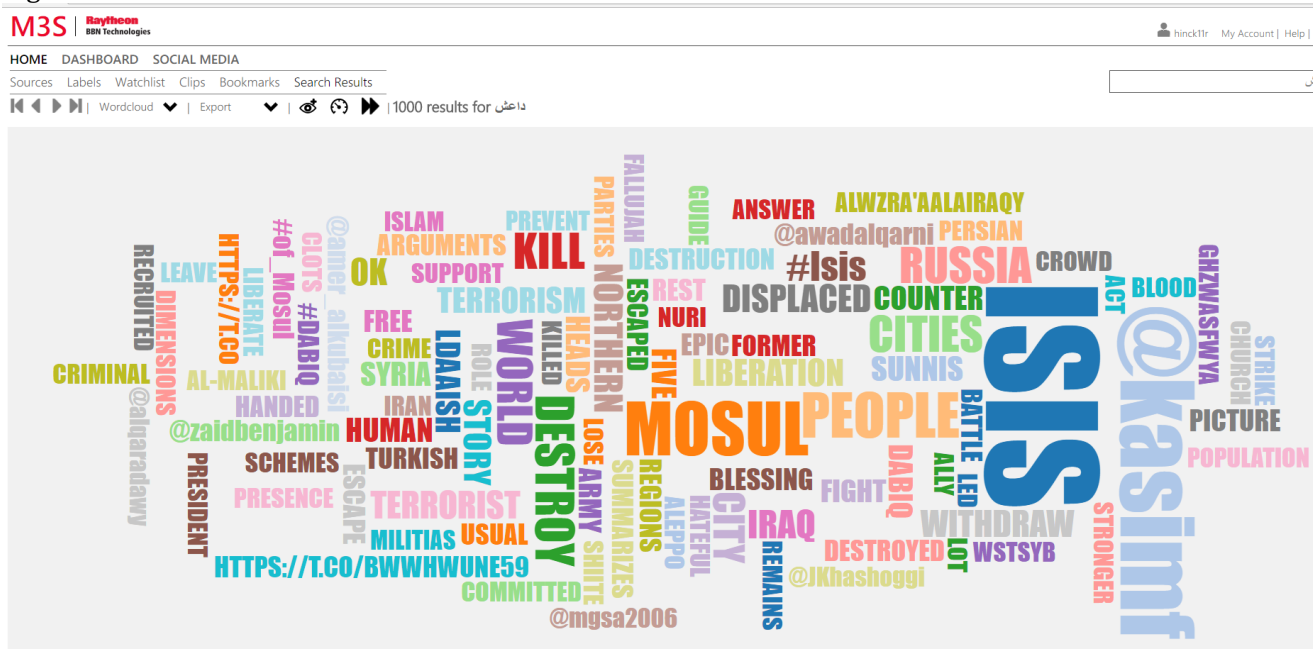
Twitter discourse surrounding the term “Daash” reflects a more centralized discussion originating from a personal Twitter account from an Al Jazeera news reporter along with multiple peripheral discussions, primarily commenting on recent activities in Syria and Iraq. The content from the central node 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

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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

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'

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.

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.

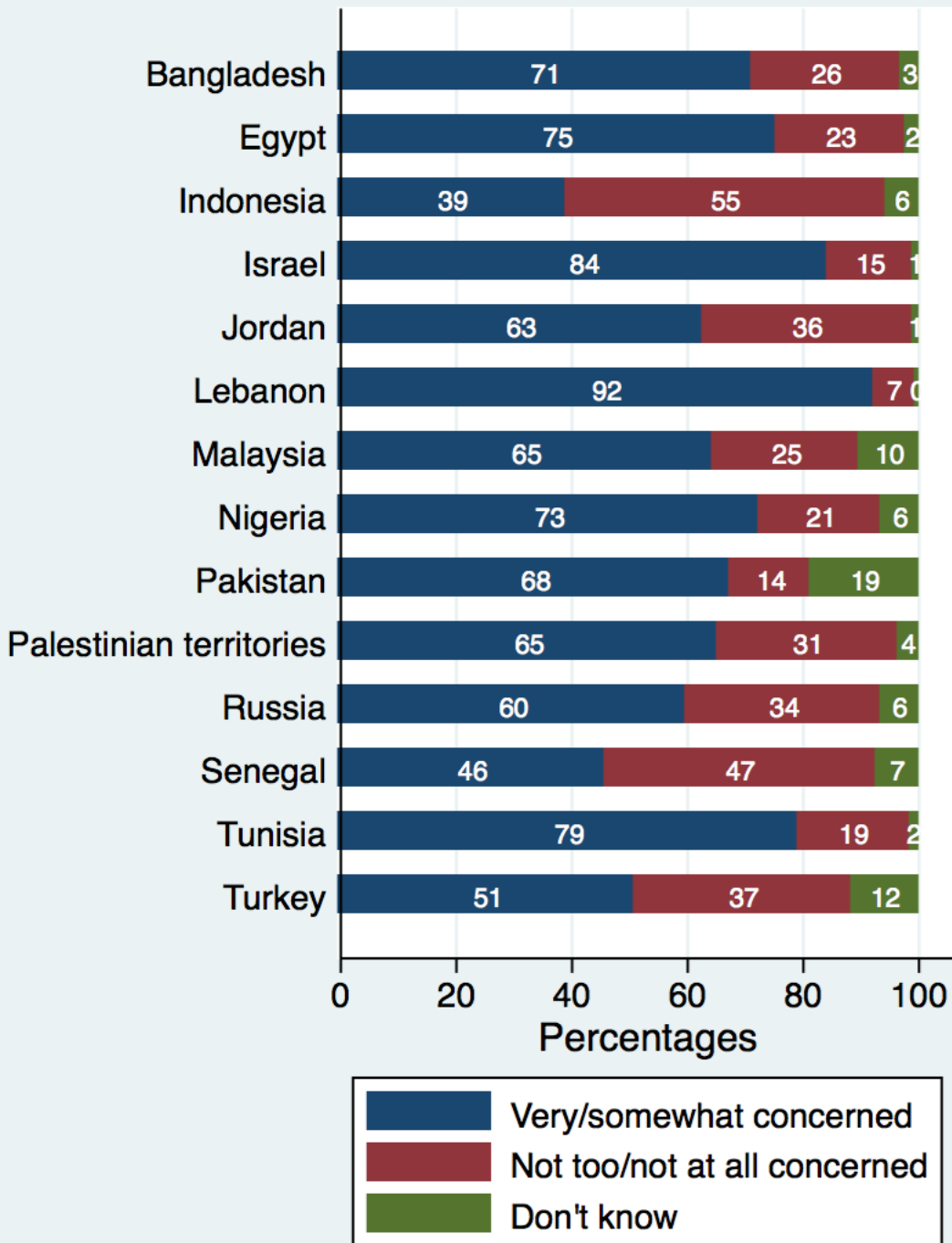
POLICY AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

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

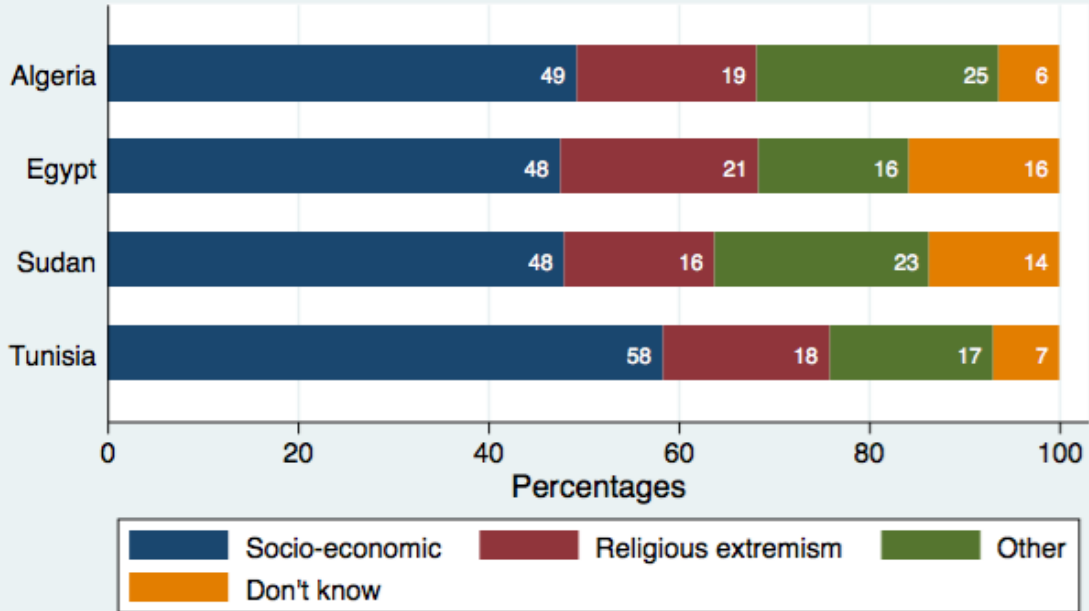
How concerned about Islamic terrorism in your country?



Source: Pew Research Center, Global Attitudes & Trends, 2014

Figure 1. Global concern about Islamic terrorism

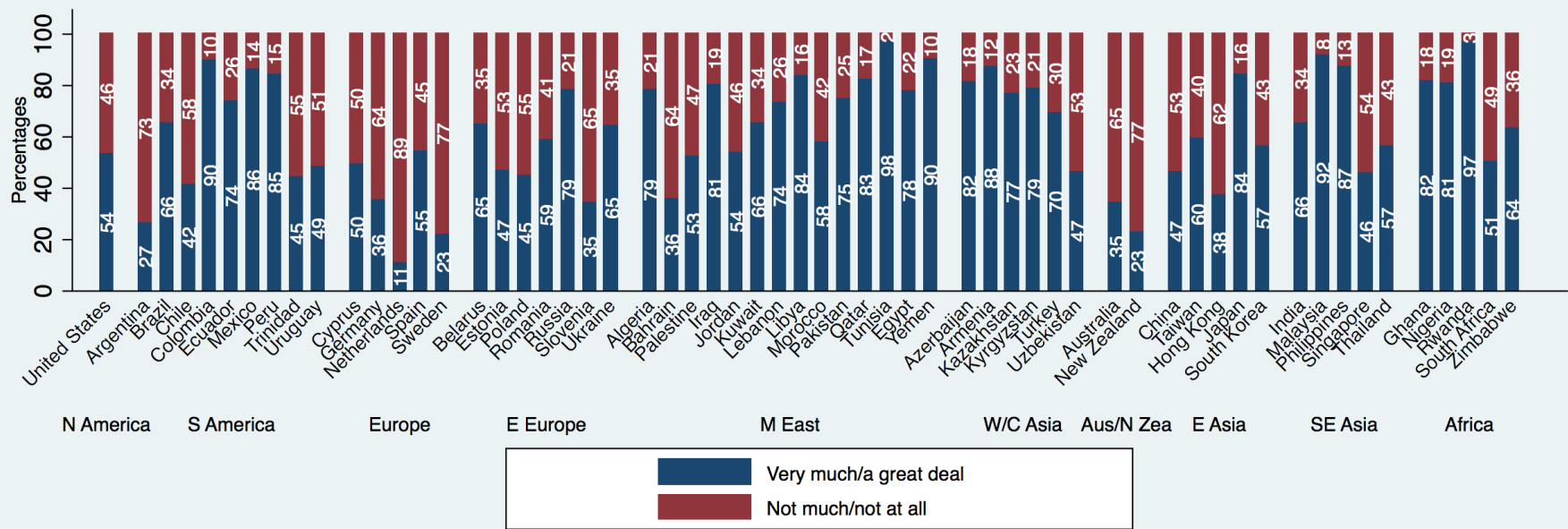
What is the main reason that some people in your country join ISIL or AQIM?



Source: Afrobarometer, Round 6, 2015-16

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

To what extent are you worried about a terrorist attack?



Source: World Values Survey, Wave 6, 2010-14

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 countries 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.
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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 [*Stabilising 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



**Title: CEO and partner of COACH
CEO and partner IIACSS.**

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 Incorporate 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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11. Munqeth M.Daghir, **Relation Between Administrative Corruption & Public Employee Characteristics and traits**, Abu-Dhabi, Emirate Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 2001.
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 Kløver



Dr. Kløver 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. Kløver 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. Kløver 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. Kløver'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. Kløver 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

Sophia Moskalenko is a Research Associate at the Solomon Asch Center for the Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict at Bryn Mawr College (Bryn Mawr, PA) and a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (NC-START).

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.

Jala Naguib

Bio not available at this time.

Mara Revkin



Mara Revkin is a fellow with the Abdallah S. Kamel Center for the Study of Islamic Law and Civilization at Yale Law School, from which she received her J.D. She is pursuing a Ph.D. in political science at Yale University, focusing on governance and lawmaking by armed groups in the Middle East. Her work has been published in the *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Law*, the *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, and the *UCLA Journal of Islamic and Near Eastern Law*, among others. She has conducted fieldwork most recently in southeastern Turkey, Iraqi Kurdistan, and the Sinai Peninsula. After receiving her B.A. in Political Science and Arabic from Swarthmore College, she served as a Fulbright Fellow in Jordan and Oman (2009-2010), and as a Junior Fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (2010-2011).

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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.

This white paper does not represent official USG policy or position.

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.