Multi-Method Assessment of ISIL

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Table of Contents

Preface, MG Michael Nagata, US Army, Commander, SOCCENT, Director CJIATF 1

Scope 3

Executive Summary 3

I. Conceptual Organization: Evolution & Longevity Framework (Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois, NSI) 15

II. Findings and Observations (Ms. Sarah Canna, NSI) 20

III. ISIL Capacity to Control, Civilian Support, and Local Elite Power Base 25

An Organizational Profile of the Islamic State: Leadership, Cyber Expertise, and Firm Legitimacy (Dr. Gina S. Ligon, Ms. Mackenzie Harms, Mr. John Crowe, Dr. Leif Lundmark, and Dr. Pete Simi, University of Nebraska Omaha, START, DHS) 25

Dynamic Innovation & Evolutionary Capabilities of ISIL (Dr. Shalini Venturelli, American University) 33

Thematic Analysis of ISIL Messaging (Dr. Lawrence A. Kuznar, Indiana University – Purdue University, Fort Wayne & NSI & Mr. William H. Moon, Department of the Air Force) 47

Comparative Psychological Profiles: Baghdadi & Zawahiri (Maj Jason Spitaletta, USMCR, Joint Staff J7 & The Johns Hopkins University-Applied Physics Laboratory) 55

ISIL's Inter-Organizational Relationships: Conflict and Cooperation (Dr. Philip Potter, University of Virginia) 65

A Red Team Assessment of ISIL Competitive Strategies (Dr. Benjamin Jensen, Majors Craig Giorgis & Dan Myers, Marine Corps University, Minerva researchers) 72

Branding the Caliphate?: Online Media Framing from a Self-Proclaimed State (Dr. Laura Steckman, Whitney, Bradley and Brown) 80

The Validity, Viability—and Possible Value—of Neuro-cognitive Science and Technology in Operational Intelligence and Deterrence (Drs. James Giordano and Rachel Wurzman, Georgetown University Medical Center) 87

IV. ISIL External and Umma Support 94

ISIL Affinity Study (TRADOC/G-2 Operational Environment Lab) 94

Understanding the Threat: Explaining the Rise the Appeal of the Islamic State (Mr. Jonathon Cosgrove, Mr. Muayyad al-Chalabi, Mr. Lee Slusher, & Dr. Stacey Pollard, Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory) 100

Understanding the Rise of ISIL in Iraq and Syria, and Its Appeal in the US (Drs. Clark McCauley & Sophia Moskalenko, Bryn Mawr College, START, DHS) 110

Understanding the Dynamics of ISIL Mobilization: The Challenge of Foreign Fighters (Dr. Jocelyne Cesari, Georgetown University; Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs; and Harvard University) 114

Texas A&M University Media Monitoring: Representations of ISIL in Arabic Language Social Media (Ms. Jacquelyn Chinn and Dr. Randy Kluver, Texas A&M University) 120

The Militant Jihadi Message Propagated by ISIL is a Contagiously Virulent Meme in the West—the Ebola of Terrorism (Dr. Anne Speckhard, Georgetown University) 126
Radicalization Is Overrated (Mr. Andrew Bringuel and Ms. Natalie Flora, FBI) 135
De-Romanticizing the Islamic State's Vision of the Caliphate (Dr. Steven Corman, Arizona State University, Center for Strategic Communication, HSCB, Minerva researcher) 143
Combining Police and Military Response to the ISIL Threat (Mr. Andrew Bringuel and Ms. Natalie Flora, FBI) 150
Identifying ISIL Support Populations and Persons Vulnerable to Recruitment: Implications for Force Protection (Mr. Jeff R. Weyers and Dr. Jon Cole, Tactical Decision Making Research Group, University of Liverpool) 156
A Tale of Two Caliphates (Mr. Bill Braniff and Mr. Ryan Pereira, DHS, University of MD, START Program) 161
The Devoted Actor, Sacred Values, and Willingness to Fight: Preliminary Studies with ISIL Volunteers and Kurdish Frontline Fighters (Dr. Scott Atran, Lydia Wilson, Richard Davis, Hammad Sheikh, ARTIS Research, University of Oxford, Minerva researchers) 165

V. Objectives and Scenarios for ISIL (Drs. Ali E. Abbas, Richard S. John, Johannes Siebert, Detlof von Winterfeldt, University of Southern California, Center for Risk and Economic Analysis of Terrorism Events [CREATE], DHS) 176

VI. Connecting the Continua: The Dynamics of ISIL Success (Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois, NSI) 184

Appendix A: Summary of Key Findings (Dr. Larry Kuznar, Indiana University–Purdue University, Fort Wayne, NSI; & MAJ Jason Spitaletta, JS/J-7 and JHU/APL) 192

Appendix B: Authors & Subject Matter Experts 201

Preface, MG Michael Nagata, US Army, Commander, SOCCENT, Director CJIATF

Early in 2014, as it became clear that the rise of the so-called "Islamic State" was becoming a significant menace to Regional Stability and US Interests, SOCCENT began a dialogue with Dr. Hriar Cabayan and his co-workers regarding a topic that has been at the core of the struggle against Violent Extremism. That question has been, and remains today, a perplexing one for those of us from Western cultures and societies: "What precisely are we contesting, and what is it that fuels the adversary's power?"

In accordance with the age old dictum that, "before one can solve a problem, one must first seek to understand it," I would argue that we in the West, and indeed most who were not born and raised within the Islamic world, have struggled to meet the test of the second part of that adage. As a veteran of Special Operations and CounterTerrorism activities against Violent Extremism, this weakness in our comprehension has been a source of constant worry for myself and my colleagues. Too often, it has hindered my own efforts to plan operations, anticipate events, predict outcomes, or evaluate risks. While I would certainly argue that we have achieved some important successes over the years, honesty requires me to acknowledge that I have never been able to achieve all that I had hoped for.

Why? Is it an absence of skill? A lack of coordination or resources? A failure of imagination (as the 9/11 Commission famously reported after the events of 2001)? Those that know me might argue that I am guilty of all of them in some measure. Yet I have watched comrades and colleagues from across the Military, Diplomatic, Civilian, and Intelligence domains, from many different countries, have the same difficulties.

I believe that we do not yet fully comprehend that which we are contesting. And, in the case of the Islamic State (or al-Dawlah al-Islamīyah fī al-'Irāq wa-al-Shām; which creates the Arabic Acronym-DA'ISH), we have a Violent Extremist foe that I believe is unlike any other we have contested. Whatever strengths al-Qaeda has been able to demonstrate, in all its various forms from North Africa to Pakistan, in its contest with the International Community, DA'ISH is the most effective, most inspirational, and most powerful manifestation of Violent Extremism we have ever seen.

And, among all its various strengths, the one that has increasingly demanded attention has been the "intangible" power of DA'ISH—its ability to persuade, its ability to inspire, its ability to attract young men and women from across the globe, and its ability to create an image of unstoppable power and spiritual passion and commitment. While we can and certainly are mustering physical, financial, and other forms of "tangible" power and resources to effectively contest what DA'ISH is and what it strives for, where I would argue we are demonstrating significant weakness and vulnerability is in adequately confronting the "intangible" power of this enemy.

The contents of this paper reflect some of the work that Dr. Cabayan and his colleagues are doing to help us understand and comprehend this "intangible power" across a unique enterprise of academicians, scientists, policy intellectuals, current and former Foreign Service, military, and

intelligence professionals. Most importantly, their efforts to improve our comprehension will enable us to adjust our efforts, our operations, our investments, and our risk-calculations to more effectively contest it and the organization that wields it. I am grateful for their tireless work in this regard, and I commend it to the reader.

We face a terrible foe, and one that the world must defeat. To do so, we must be mindful of the need to understand him. And in the case of DA'ISH, we must come to understand the intangible power that he wields. Only then, can we truly begin unraveling the 21st Century Gordian Knot he has created against us.

Scope

SOCCENT has requested a short-term effort to assess the appeal of ISIL, specifically to answer, "What makes ISIL so magnetic, inspirational, and deeply resonant with a specific, but large, portion of the Islamic population allowing it to draw recruitment of foreign fighters, money and weapons, advocacy, general popularity, and finally support from other groups such as Boko Haram, several North African Extremist Groups, and other members of the Regional and International Sunni Extremist organizations?" A study was undertaken to understand the psychological, ideological, narrative, emotional, cultural and inspirational ("intangible") nature of ISIL. This white paper summarizes results from analytical efforts and key results and observations.

Executive Summary

Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois, NSI; Dr. Hriar Cabayan, JS/J-39; Ms. Sarah Canna, NSI; Dr. Larry Kuznar, Indiana University–Purdue University, Fort Wayne, NSI; & MAJ Jason Spitaletta, JS/J-7 and JHU/APL[1]

The articles in this paper summarize work performed at the request of SOCCENT by numerous government agencies, academics, think tanks, and industry. The participants and SMEs consulted are listed in Appendix B. The work was performed over a period of four months (July-Oct, 2014). SOCCENT requested a short-term effort to assess the appeal of ISIL. Specifically, SMA[2] was asked to answer the question, "What makes ISIL so magnetic, inspirational, and deeply resonant with a specific, but large, portion of the Islamic population allowing it to draw recruitment of foreign fighters, money and weapons, advocacy, general popularity, and finally support from other groups such as Boko Haram, several North African Extremist Groups, and other members of the Regional and International Sunni Extremist organizations?" The study attempted to understand the psychological, ideological, narrative, organizational, leadership, emotional, cultural and inspirational ("intangible") nature of ISIL. The project included the development of an overall (Evolution & Longevity) framework (Section I) to synthesize the qualitative and quantitative analytical approaches for discerning the appeal of ISIL. In the process, interviews were conducted with over 50 SMEs from across the globe to gain insights into the core questions being asked (see Section II). The effort brought together different perspectives, disciplines, methodologies, and analytic approaches and sources to uncover real and apparent consistencies and inconsistencies among them and to identify how the individual pieces combine to provide a clearer picture of an issue.

Overall, there was qualified agreement on key factors explaining ISIL support—the differences are in the importance attributed to these factors by different SMEs and researchers.

On the question of ISIL longevity, the study uncovered two very different schools of thought:

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[2] Strategic Multi-Layer Assessment (SMA) provides planning support to Commands with complex operational imperatives requiring multi-agency, multi-disciplinary solutions that are NOT within core Service/Agency competency. Solutions and participants are sought across USG and beyond. SMA is accepted and synchronized by Joint Staff/J-39 DDGO and executed by ASD (EC&P).

1. ISIL has resilient properties via its capacity to control people and territory stemming from pragmatic leadership and organization, intimidation tactics, tapping into existing Sunni grievances, use of a well-developed narrative and media outreach to attract and motivate fighters.
2. ISIL is not a durable but rather an opportunistic group that 1) is taking advantage of a pre-existing sectarian conflict to acquire land, wealth, and power; 2) only attracts a narrow band of disaffected Sunni youth, 3) is alienating local populations by over-the-top violence and harsh implementation of Sharia; 4) is unable to expand into territories controlled by functioning states; and 5) does not possess the expertise required to form a bureaucracy and effectively govern.

Key insights provided that are of particular relevance to the operational community include:

- ISIL's **Capacity to Control** is defined by its organizational skill and ability to use symbols, narratives, and violence (to intimidate or coerce).
- **External Support** – Sunni Muslim states' main objective is power—not ideology. External support or opposition to ISIL could change rapidly based on new developments (e.g., if Shias are perceived to be winning the sectarian conflict).
- **Local Elite Power Base** (particularly in Iraq) is driven by elite desire to retain power and ISIL patronage, not primarily by ideology.
- **Civilian Support** is driven by coercion and fear, assessment of who offers better security and/or governance, and lack of viable alternative.
- **Ummah Support** – Radicalization is a very individualized process; there are many reasons why people sympathize, support, or join ISIL.

Key Study Observations:

1. There was a significant focus in the group on the persuasive narratives ISIL uses.
   However, there is little evidence that the USG is well positioned to counter theses narratives, but the conditions that allowed ISIL to rise so quickly (weak states, Sunni sectarian grievances, youth bulge, unemployment, etc.) are things the USG and international community might affect over the long term.
2. Beliefs about ISIL's longevity generally fall into two camps: durable vs. flash in pan.
   However, a third possibility must also be considered: ISIL is a symptom of rising Islamist fundamentalism across the Muslim world combined with inequality and thwarted aspirations, declining sense of nationalism, and other pre-existing conditions including youth bulge, impact of the information revolution, drought, etc.
3. The political environments and sources of acquiescence to, or support for, ISIL are different in Syria and Iraq and require more investigation.
   However, SMEs tended to speak about ISIL support in terms that generalized across the two. There is a danger in thinking about them the same way in terms of solutions and root causes.

Bottom line:

- ISIL exists in a very fluid context where exogenous forces can drastically alter its prospects for success, just as exogenous factors created the conditions that allowed the organization to flourish over the last two years.
- ISIL's primacy is a relative one, due to a lack of both inspirational and pragmatic alternatives and its present coercive and intimidation tactics.

Please refer to Appendix A for an overview of the research findings presented in the report as they relate to 1) the Longevity-Evolution Framework, 2) why ISIL is so appealing, and 3) issues emerging from various workshops held in support of the SMA/SOCCENT effort.

Topic Overview

In her opening paper entitled "Conceptual Organization: Evolution & Longevity Framework," Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois, NSI, describes an organizing framework that was used throughout the effort to 1) provide a common vocabulary and standard scale for discussing this complex issue; 2) lay out the landscape or "schools of thought" regarding the intangibles that explain ISIL support and achievement; 3) guide identification of intangible factors that explain ISIL growth or decline; and 4) help distinguish those factors that relate to ISIL specifically versus those that relate more broadly to a sustained militant radical Islamist ideology and movement. She goes on to describe the framework and how it was put used in the study. These include ISIL Capacity to Control, Civilian Support, Local Elite Power Base, and ISIL External and Umma Support.

From July through October 2014, Ms. Sarah Canna, NSI, conducted a Subject Matter Expert (SME) Elicitation study to gather insights from interviews, panel discussions, seminars, and personal communications with over 50 SMEs from the United States, the Middle East, and Europe. SMEs described conditions on the ground as a "perfect storm" for the emergence of ISIL. The confluence of key conditions allowing ISIL to rise so quickly included a power vacuum in Iraq and Syria, the Arab world undergoing rapid change, the rise of the information age, drought, and the youth bulge. However, while these conditions were extremely important, ISIL's sustainability and longevity is based on its capacity to control the population through fear and coercion, provision of order and governance, lack of viable alternatives, strong leadership, and momentum (success breeds success). ISIL's capacity to control is largely based on its interaction with the local population. However, ISIL also enjoys sympathy, support, and recruits from the global Sunni Muslim population. SMEs interviewed felt that the primary way ISIL achieves support from the global Sunni Muslim population is through persuasive use of narratives. These narratives conveyed a sense of moral imperative, emphasized Sunni grievances, provided sense of identity and worth, and offered an outlet for adventure and heroism. While these factors represent areas of qualified agreement on key factors explaining ISIL support, SMEs differed on which factors were the most important, which led to two primary schools of thought regarding ISIL's longevity: that ISIL is either a durable social movement or a flash-in-the-pan.

Section III: ISIL Capacity to Control, Civilian Support & Local Elite Power Base

Section III presents a series of articles assessing ISIL Capacity to Control, Civilian Support, and Local Elite Power Base. In the first article entitled "An Organizational Profile of the Islamic State: Leadership, Cyber Expertise, and Firm Legitimacy," the authors (Dr. Gina S. Ligon, Ms. Mackenzie Harms, Mr. John Crowe, Dr. Leif Lundmark, and Dr. Pete Simi, University of Nebraska Omaha, START, DHS), using an internal strategic organizational analysis, show support for the hypothesis that the Islamic State is a durable movement in the geographic region it currently controls. They posit three strategic resources and capabilities that will allow ISIL to become a durable movement: (1) unique leadership style and structure, (2) state-of-the-art cyber usage (e.g., messaging and technology), and (3) organizational legitimacy in an unstable region. They state that their data supports the hypothesis that ISIL will evolve into a functioning government (in this case, a Caliphate) in the region it currently controls. They list following factors regarding the intangible factors central to ISIL success: High Performing Top Management Team/Leadership Structure, Innovative Cyber Sophistication, and Organizational Legitimacy.

In the second article entitled "Dynamic Innovation and Evolutionary Capabilities of ISIL," Dr. Shalini Venturelli (American University) assesses ISIL's network dynamics as a unique typology of violent jihadist network that will continue to display advanced capabilities and powerful strategic effects within and beyond the region. The paper draws from the author's 11-month ongoing comparative investigation of ISIL and employs an original dynamic model design and integrated complex analysis of multiple types of primary data sets, including original field data. The study's model was tested on the battlefield in a theater of war and is designed to assess the complex interactive dynamics of underlying factors driving Jihadist network transformation in a field of conflict. The study's findings and analysis show that ISIL is no longer just an adaptive network but, instead, has leaped far ahead of its competitors on the study's scale of stages of network transformation derived from the author's first-hand field observations of insurgencies in recent wars. The article addresses some of the study's key findings including an elaboration of ISIL's evolutionary capabilities to reconstruct and transform the tangible and intangible ecosystem of conflict in the Middle East region. As outlined in the paper, particularly significant are a unique set of critical evolutionary capabilities for integration of material and nonmaterial warfighting functions, domination of the information environment with greater strategic depth than any of its adversaries, qualities of robustness to resist attack, methodology of population control, and strategies for widening the battlespace to other regions. The paper discusses some of the study's high-confidence implications and predictions that are based on complex analysis of multiple variables and provides concepts for a commensurate dynamical strategy response to address ISIL's vulnerabilities emerging from the investigation.

The third article entitled "Thematic Analysis of ISIL Messaging," Dr. Larry Kuznar (Indiana University – Purdue University, Fort Wayne & NSI) and William H. Moon (Department of the Air Force) state that the key themes that resonate with ISIL followers include the following: 1) victory is destined and ordained; 2) it can only be achieved through violence; 3) rewards and honor will accrue those who fight (especially in the hereafter) and 4) the primary enemies are apostate Sunni, Shia, Americans, Westerners, Jews, and then all others. These themes appear to resonate with disaffected young males, aggrieved Sunni in the

region, and an increasing number of active Jihadists. ISIL is particularly adept at manipulating deeply resonant themes in Sunni Islam that enable them to *morally outbid* alternative and more moderate voices. It is imperative that these deeper themes be appreciated and accounted for in our understanding of ISIL. These strengths of the narrative provide ISIL with short-term durability and a durable recruitment strategy. However, the rejection of their message by the vast majority of Muslims and their need to continue to achieve victory, along with discrepancies between their rhetoric and behavior indicates that ISIL as an organization may not be sustainable indefinitely, especially if *effectively* opposed.

In his article entitled "Comparative Psychological Profiles: Baghdadi & Zawahiri, Maj Jason A. Spitaletta (USMCR, Joint Staff J7 & The Johns Hopkins University-Applied Physics Laboratory) states Baghdadi may be a high value target (HVT), but is not likely a high payoff target (HPT). While he is likely to be perceived as more charismatic than Zawahiri, the relative charisma of a leader may not necessarily translate into lower-level recruitment. Baghdadi's Islamic State is not a cult of personality, and its structure may be less vulnerable to decapitation than other groups with more charismatic leaders. Analysis of Baghdadi's speeches indicates that he is respectful, but not supplicant, toward Zawahiri and considers himself more a successor to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the former emir of Al Qaeda in Iraq. ISIL's thematic content particularly in Adnani's comments, and its desired target audience, indicate multiple risk factors for radicalization. ISIL targets adolescents, young adults, and people in middle adulthood. The continuity of message across multiple demographics and psychological vulnerabilities makes for a coherent master narrative. The ISIL narrative is not novel, but it is compelling; ISIL leaders have a nuanced understanding of their desired target audiences

In the fifth article entitled "ISIL's Inter-Organizational Relationships: Conflict and Cooperation" Dr. Philip Potter (University of Virginia) states that ISIL's extensive relationships in the region raise immediate concern about both the augmentation of capabilities and the diffusion of tactics. However, ISIL's inter-organizational relationships stand in contrast to the typical alliance formation patterns. ISIL has a broad network of relationships that have contributed in meaningful ways to its capabilities. Most notably, its relationships have brought manpower and weapons without which the organization could not have grown at the pace that it did. However, the element of compellence in these relationships has made the network fluid over time. The evolution of this network of relationships among Islamist factions defies simple, unambiguous characterizations; however, in the broadest possible terms, it has shifted from inter-organizational fighting and competition in 2012-2013, to ISIL domination in 2013-2014, and to rapprochement in the second half of 2014. Much as it did for al Qaeda central, outside pressure is leading ISIL to struggle with a loss of operational control over the organizations with which it has forged cooperative relationships. However, this decline in control is accompanied by a decline in threat to their organizational structure, which has allowed organizations with complimentary ideologies to reengage with ISIL. The result is increasing consistency and coherence in the network of organizational relationships in Iraq and Syria with the Islamist organizations aligned on one axis and the moderate and secular organizations aligned on another.

In the sixth article entitled "A Red Team Assessment of ISIL Competitive Strategies," Dr. Benjamin Jensen and Majors Craig Giorgis and Dan Myers (Marine Corps University, Command and Staff College) state

that ISIL's connectivity with a family of networks (illicit, commerce, religious, etc.) allow the group to generate momentum and appeal in chaotic environments by transiting the Observe, Orient, Decide, and Act (OODA) loop faster than any adversary. Furthermore, ISIL operates within a vanguard model (i.e., small groups using violence to signal political action) that generates two types of appeal: 1) active sympathizers and supporters and 2) temporary alliances of convenience. ISIL uses higher degrees of violence to establish extremist credibility (i.e., programming effects) and exploit the signal to recruit along a digital network connecting disenfranchised populations around the world. The critical factor to ISIL's success is its leadership. ISIL's leadership successfully integrates tactical success with its strategic goals. In other words, it understands the character of the conflict, has a vision, and implements it faster than its adversaries can respond.

In her article "Branding the Caliphate: Online Media Framing from a Self-Proclaimed State," Dr. Laura Steckman (WBB) examines ISIL's perception of itself, as portrayed through its rhetoric in *Dabiq* magazine in terms of Nation Branding Theory, analyzing ISIL's overtures at branding itself as a state. ISIL's rhetoric shows that it is shaping its identity and crafting a new narrative based on the Middle East's pre-modern history and its own interpretation of Islam. ISIL communicates its self-conceptualized identity through multiple means, including prominent figures and online media; it projects its self-created image to encourage potential consumers to "buy in" to its vision of a caliphate. From the analysis, ISIL's magazine offers a version of state and government designed to support Sunni Muslims while subjugating all other populations. While this image of a state is not necessarily cogent with that of the West, the caliphate, whether real or imagined, appeals to some Sunni Muslims, as evidenced by the influx of foreign fighters to the region. Pictures and stories describing the benefits ISIL claims to offer also send the message to Sunni Muslims that ISIL takes care of its "citizens" and meets the Muslim population's social welfare needs. These are only some of the ways in which ISIL is working to create a nation brand through its media wing.

In the final article in this section entitled "The Validity, Viability—and Possible Value—of Neuro-cognitive Science and Technology in Operational Intelligence and Deterrence," Drs. James Giordano and Rachel Wurzman (Georgetown University Medical Center) argue that neuro-cognitive science and neurotechnology (neuroS/T) are of increasing interest in and to national security, intelligence, and defense (NSID) endeavors. They describe current, in-development, and proposed neuroS/T approaches, including a novel method, NEURINT (neural intelligence) and address the focus, capabilities, limitations, and potential utility of these techniques and tools in assessing and deterring information transfer and violent behaviors of hostile agents and actors. They posit that neuroS/T can provide insights to patterns and mechanisms of individual and group cognition, emotions and behaviors, and that there is a growing body of information about the ways that individuals and groups are neuro-cognitively affected by, and respond to, various types of information including narratives, propaganda, and environmental conditions. Giordano and Wurzman conclude that the current task—and opportunity—will be to seek viable ways to translate neuroS/T approaches to greater utility in specific NSID operations.

Section IV: External and Umma Support

The next set of articles assesses ISIL External and Umma Support. In the opening article entitled "ISIL Affinity Study," the TRADOC/G-2 Operational Environment Lab team asserts ISIL's appeal is relatively

narrow amongst the overall population. In Iraq, two of its key allies, the Neo-Baathists and Sunni Tribalists, are not ideologically wed to ISIL but see ISIL as allies of convenience against the Government of Iraq (GoI). While the al Abadi government appears to be receptive towards rapprochement with the Sunni population *writ large,* it will take a combination of GoI action and ISIL missteps to move these groups towards the government. Regionally, the majority of the populations' affinities are not aligned with ISIL, but in several countries the affinities for ISIL are slightly positive. This results in an environment that is conducive to unsanctioned recruitment and support for the portion of the population attracted to ISIL. This positive population affinity will require their government's intervention to disrupt ISIL recruitment and support. However, the regional governments (and the USG) need to be cognizant that governmental action against ISIL may potentially led to their facing civil tension from segments of their population over the issue of ISIL.

In the second article of this section entitled "Understanding the Threat: Explaining the Rise and the Appeal of The Islamic State," Mr. Jonathon Cosgrove, Mr. Muayyad al-Chalabi, Mr. Lee Slusher, and Dr. Stacey Pollard (JUH/APL) conclude that ISIL's ascent was the result of a confluence of favorable conditions—a perfect storm. First, longstanding grievance-based narratives made Sunnis in the region and farther afield susceptible to ISIL's messaging. Second, the sectarian strife in Iraq produced a marginalized Sunni population, especially in the country's northern and western portions. Third, the organization has made use of several methods to further expand its ranks. The organization has "low barriers to entry," meaning it accepts recruits from diverse backgrounds, forgoing the type of vetting process common in other extremist groups. Also, the group's success has created a snowball effect in that many flock to ISIL simply due to its success to date. Lastly, the group employs a sophisticated media apparatus to propagate its message. Key narratives that gave rise to ISIL include victimization, the plight of Iraqi Sunni Arabs, Sunni/Shia antipathy, an alternative to chaos, and an alternative to the nation-state. While narratives provided the informational backdrop for ISIL's appeal, the group was able to take advantage of regional instability to transform its goal of a state into reality and implemented successful recruiting practices.

In their article entitled "Understanding the Rise of ISIL in Iraq and Syria, and its Appeal in the US" Drs. Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko (Bryn Mawr College, START, DHS) use social movement theory to analyze the rapid rise of ISIL in Syria and Iraq as a perfect storm of political opportunity and material and human resources forwarded with a "Sunni Salvation" framing. They use 2014 polling data from US Muslims to argue that foreign fighters from Western countries are motivated more to fight Bashar al-Assad than to join ISIL, with only a small proportion of US Muslims having a favorable opinion of ISIL. These results lead them to suggest that the appeal of ISIL to Sunnis in Syria and Iraq is based in sectarian threat, whereas appeal to Western volunteers has more to do with individual psychology than sectarian division.

In the fourth article entitled "Understanding the Dynamics of ISIL Mobilization: The Challenge of Foreign Fighters," Dr. Jocelyne Cesari (Georgetown University, Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, and Harvard University) argues that several distinctions are necessary to appropriately evaluate the ideological influence of ISIL. First, ISIL's influence in combat zones like Syria and Iraq are not primarily related to its ideology but to local political conditions. When it comes to foreign fighters

however, ideology plays a more significant role but follows different patterns according to political and national contexts. In Muslim countries outside the combat zones, the attraction is linked to the pre-existing political forms of Islam. In other words, the higher the influence of Islam in politics and legal systems, the greater the probability of attraction of ISIL. In the West, the attraction comes from the lack of symbolic integration of Islam. It means that lack of political acknowledgement of Islam as a legitimate component of secular democracies makes Muslims more vulnerable to the message of ISIL. Both in majority and minority contexts, ISIL's discourse has to be analyzed as the most recent expression of the global ideological cluster called Salafism. She argues that Salafi doctrine has become central in the way that Muslims deal with their religious tradition. In this context, Salafism may be generally defined as a variant of "pan-Islamism." This term refers to those religious or political transnational movements that emphasize the unity of the Ummah (the community of believers) over specific cultural, national, or ethnic loyalties. These movements indicate the emergence of fundamentalism as a global phenomenon. Global fundamentalism is defined, above all, by an exclusive and hierarchical vision of the world, as well as by a taxonomy of religions that places Islam at the top. She argues that in the case of European and American Muslims, the accessibility of Salafism is a primary reason behind its popularity. She goes on to emphasize that social media do not create ISIL success but that this success is facilitated by the preexisting presence on the internet of the Salafi interpretation of Islam.

In their article entitled “Texas A&M University Media Monitoring: Representations of ISIL in Arabic Language Social Media” Ms. Jacquelyn Chinn and Dr. Randy Kluver (Texas A&M University) use the Twittersphere as a proxy indicator of public opinion across the region. They conclude that based on Arabic language Twitter activity, support for ISIL in the region is limited, yet support for Western intervention and policies also limited. ISIL networking patterns on Twitter are distinct and have largely adapted in response to Twitter’s network disruption strategy. Lastly, even though they are unlikely to change the regional view of the caliphate, small networks can still do significant damage to the community. They state that despite ISIL isolation from the mainstream, events could quickly break to their advantage. As social media conveys attitude better than argument, what is true can be false tomorrow. Also USG and allies must not play into ISIL themes of far enemy/near enemy, granting legitimacy as a viable political alternative, or overstatement of their nature and intentions. As with other forms of media, ISIL social media tells a unitary story, of ruthlessness towards enemies with gentleness towards the ummah.

In her article “The Militant Jihadi Message Propagated by ISIL is a Contagiously Virulent Meme in the West—the Ebola of Terrorism,” Dr. Anne Speckhard (Georgetown University) discusses the history of how the ISIL meme came into existence, defines what it is, and examines its power to infect. She also briefly discusses, from the memetic stance, ways of limiting and inoculating resistance to the power of the ISIL meme to inspire violent terrorist actions. ISIL has regenerated and repackaged an already virulent terrorist ideology into a powerful social meme that is now viral, inciting social contagion throughout the world. The ISIL meme builds on already existing and accepted Islamic dogma that most Muslims treasure, as well as ideological advances that predecessor organizations were able to achieve, distorting Islamic teachings, as they did, into a violent ideology that has become as highly infectious. This violent meme travels virally via the Internet and social media. The epidemic in the West has incited over

two thousand men and some women—hundreds from nearly every Western country to join ISIL, most by physically migrating to Iraq and Syria to join the battle, with some staying at home and acting in place as homegrown terrorists.

In the seventh article, "Radicalization Is Overrated," Mr. Andrew Bringuel and Ms. Natalie Flora (FBI) state that radicalization is overrated when assessing motive for criminal behavior. Scholars and forensic behavioral scientists have spent their entire careers trying to understand why someone commits an act of criminal violence. The environmental factors that facilitate and provide access for committing criminal violent acts are of equal significance. It is important that any strategy looks beyond the radicalization process in order to identify the reasons criminal enterprises survive leadership changes as well as changes in environment. So the core question of how ISIL has become a magnetic and inspirational group that deeply resonates with Sunni Muslims has to be asked in terms of the "why" as well as the "how."

In his article "De-Romanticizing the Islamic State's Vision of the Caliphate," Dr. Steve Corman (ASU, Center for Strategic Communication, HSCB) states that ISIL, like other Islamist extremist groups, promotes two related narratives of the collapse of the historical Caliphate. The first is a catastrophe, caused by the Jews and Crusaders that resulted in domination and oppression of Muslims, harm to the religion, and exploitation of Muslim lands. The second is a call for restoration of the ideal system of government. He goes on to state that the Caliphate was far from ideal, being marked by infighting, conflict, assassination, and war. Extremists obscure this history by editing "inconvenient details" to create a romantic history, and generate support for their vision by promoting an imagined community of unified Muslims and using strategic ambiguity to suppress discussion about its details. This creates a brittle ideology that can be countered by deconstructing the imagined community, challenging strategic ambiguity, and de-romanticizing the history of the Caliphate.

In their second article in Section IV entitled "Combining Police and Military Response to the ISIL Threat," Mr. Andrew Bringuel and Ms. Natalie Flora (FBI) state, in order to effectively combat the spread of ISIL's influence among US citizens, the USG needs to develop a comprehensive strategy involving both military and police agencies. These agencies need to share intelligence developed INCONUS as well as OCONUS. They argue that a combined military and police response is necessary in order to mitigate the threat caused by ISIL and identify, infiltrate, and neutralize individuals inspired by ISIL's message. Furthermore, a combined military and police response can build on public trust, improve resiliency, leverage restorative justice, and facilitate identification of emerging threats. Furthermore, a combined military and police response will improve policy, training, and development of research-based structured professional judgment tools (SPJTs). They conclude that while the missions, methods, and rules of engagement (ROEs) are different between police and the military, there is much that that the two share in terms of processes.

In their article entitled "Identifying ISIL Support Populations and Persons Vulnerable to Recruitment: Implications for Force Protection," Mr. Jeff R. Weyers and Dr. Jon Cole (University of Liverpool) discuss the use of social media by terrorist groups. They propose that such use poses a unique situation for researchers in that it allows for examination of live samples at every stage on the spectrum from

extremism to terrorism. By utilizing the Identifying Vulnerable Persons (IVP) guidance (a screening tool for identifying terrorist involvement and potential recruitment behavioural cues), they describe a yearlong analysis that was conducted of persons self-identifying as members of ISIL and Jabhat al-Nusra (JN). In total, over 3000 cases were screened using the IVP guidance, which identified over 355 foreign fighters and individuals at risk of recruitment to the terrorist groups. Recent attacks on western targets in Europe and North America have focused on military personnel that are outside their bases and mostly unarmed indicating that the early identification of such individuals has implications for force protection. They conclude that the research clearly indicates that screening tools, such as the IVP guidance, can be utilized to provide an early decision regarding the potential danger posed by an individual or a group. As the communities in which these individuals live are the most likely to spot the behavioral indicators of radicalization, it is essential that any screening tool is acceptable to those communities. They furthermore add that the key should be to avoid the identification of 'false negatives' and enhance the identification of 'true positives' before an individual engages in violence.

In their article "A Tale of Two Caliphates," Mr. William Braniff and Mr. Ryan Pereira (University of Maryland, START, DHS) argue that ISIL's appeal is based on a more compelling vision, operational menu, and strategy in the post-Arab Spring context relative to that of al Qaeda (AQ) and its associated movement. AQAM primed the global jihadist community to mobilize. ISIL has created a destination that is inspiring, accessible, and appropriate for the historical moment. By comparing these two visions, they observe ISIL's relative appeal can be distilled into five points.

1. Sectarianism: Whereas AQ "far-enemy" strategy bet on provocation to polarize and mobilize the masses, ISIL is ratcheting up already elevated levels of sectarian tension in the post Arab-Spring world and benefitting from the resulting resource mobilization.
2. Righteousness: While AQ emphasizes the importance of doctrine in its rhetoric, ISIL has evidenced a fervent desire to enforce an uncompromising interpretation of Islamic law through its behaviors.
3. Obligation: AQ relies on an abstract argument—that Islam is under attack everywhere—to convince Muslims that it is their individual duty to defend Islam everywhere, obfuscating offensive tactics with notions of classical or defensive jihad. ISIL has established a physical Caliphate and, with it, the pragmatic obligation to defend the Caliphate and build its institutions.
4. Strength: AQ is a cautious and nomadic terrorist organization that has shied away from equating terrain with success, trying instead to reorient extant militant groups from the periphery of their respective conflicts in a slow war of attrition with the West. ISIL, by comparison, appears decisive, confident, and contemporary as they opportunistically seize terrain, antagonize their enemies, and publicize their exploits.
5. Urgency: ISIL sees the Caliphate as the means to the final apocalyptic battle between Muslims and the non-Muslim world. For those ideologically inclined individuals, it is essential to participate in ISIL's campaign now, before the opportunity passes. Without the Caliphate, al-AQ's call to arms lacks the same urgency.

The following article entitled, "The Devoted Actor, Sacred Values, and Willingness to Fight: Preliminary Studies with ISIL Volunteers and Kurdish Frontline Fighters," Dr. Scott Atran with Ms. Lydia Wilson, Mr.

Richard Davis, and Mr. Hammad Sheikh (ARTIS Research & The Centre for the Resolution of Intractable Conflict, University of Oxford, Harris Manchester College and School of Social Anthropology) assess ISIL membership. They observe that much prior research indicates that close camaraderie with a family-like group (band of brothers) is critical to the "fighting spirit" of combatants, and recent studies among combatants and supporters of militant Jihad suggest that identity fusion is a key mechanism, providing a sense of invincibility and special destiny to the group and motivating willingness to make costly sacrifices, including fighting and dying. Yet, historical studies of foreign volunteers such as those recruited by ISIL indicate that for some groups, commitment to sacred values ratchets up fusion and fighting spirit beyond the close family-like group to an extended ideological group defined by a sacred cause. The authors go on to propose If sacred values are more strongly associated with a larger group, then combatants will fuse with that larger group and consider that larger group, defined by its sacred cause, to be what they are most willing to defend and fight for, even unto death. Unconditional commitment to comrades, in conjunction with their sacred cause however perverse it may seem to others, can be what allows low-power revolutionary and insurgent groups (e.g., the Islamic State) to endure and often prevail against materially stronger foes who are motivated more by typical reward structures like pay and promotion (e.g., the Iraqi army).

Section V: Objectives and Scenarios for ISIL

In an article entitled "Objectives and Scenarios for ISIL," Drs. Ali E. Abbas, Richard S. John, Johannes Siebert, and Detlof von Winterfeldt (University of Southern California, CREATE, DHS) report analyzing the transcripts of interviews with 59 subject matter experts and also conducting an extensive review of Internet and other open sources to address the following three questions.

1. What are the objectives of ISIL?
2. What are the objectives of ISIL's followers?
3. What are the scenarios and associated uncertainties for the success or failure of ISIL?

Their indicate that ISIL pursues four strategic objectives: "Establish a Caliphate in Iraq and the Levant," "Control and Govern the Caliphate," "Expand Islam and Sharia Law Worldwide," and "Recreate the Power and Glory of (Sunni) Islam." ISIL wants to "Derive Legitimacy as Heirs/Descendants of Mohammed" and wants to "Be Recognized as the Leader of the Jihad." Furthermore, it has clear ideas about how it wants to achieve its strategic objectives and how an Islamic State should be structured. ISIL wants to "Implement a Pure and Strict Version of Islam." Instead of collaborating with other Islamic groups that are not as radical as ISIL, it tries to "Radicalize and Align Followers" and "Take over other Islamic Movements." ISIL's key means objectives are "Generate Revenue" and "Kill, Frighten, and Convert Infidels." The followers and recruits of ISIL have a complex set of objectives that can be partitioned into three strategic objectives: "Humanitarian Fulfillment," "Religious Fulfillment," and "Personal Fulfillment." This is consistent with many observers' opinions that potential followers and recruits are "damaged," "empty," or "unfulfilled" in a very personal way.

VI Bringing it All Together

In the closing article entitled "Connecting the Continua," Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois (NSI) summarizes key intangibles and vulnerabilities. Regarding intangible factors, she lists the following.

1. There is a significant tension between the domestic and national security interests of Sunni regimes. Because they see the value in ISIL as a sectarian force against Shia/Iranian influence, unless they begin to perceive a threat to domestic stability from ISIL, there is little incentive to oppose the group—until ISIL moves its fighters/ influence outside Iraq and Syria it supports Gulf security.
2. The psychology of intimidation, ISIL's aura of "victoriousness," and pragmatic political calculations reinforce elite acquiescence in Iraq and ISIL's ability to control population and territory.
3. Umma support includes military successes and popular perception of ISIL as a defender of Sunni against the West, Shia, apostate oppressors. While related, these have difference antecedents; military success is not necessary for ISIL to retain support.
4. Support/acquiescence among the local elite power base appears to be based in material factors more so than local "civilian" support, which evolves from fear and intimidation buttressed by, for some, highly resonant psychological/perceptual factors (e.g., grievance).

She lists the following key vulnerabilities:

- There are both active and influential population segments in regional Sunni states (in this study referred to as the "regional umma") that are sympathetic to ISIL's program, which, according to its rhetoric, ultimately requires overthrow of the regimes under which they live. As such, ISIL leaders tread a fine line between appearing to pose a threat to the domestic security of those Sunni regimes and thus inviting more vigorous opposition from them on the one hand, and maintaining the support it has gained among local populations and financiers on the other.
- ISIL capacity to control population and retain elite support is related to the belief that ISIL will be in power in the future.
- The degree to which it ISIL retains its branding as defenders of Sunni/ warriors against Shia and the West; ISIL use of violent tactics and messages also inhibits Umma support.
- Tactics and harsh interpretation of Muslim law are vulnerabilities *only in the shorter term*; an added vulnerability may be competition spurred by elite perceptions of unequal benefit or reward for ISIL support. In many areas, loss of elite support would have a direct negative impact on civilian support as well.

Some of the authors in this compilation have also produced and additional, longer report on their findings. Please contact either Mr. Sam Rhem at the SMA office at samuel.d.rhem.ctr@mail.mil or the individual authors to request a copy of the full report.

I. Conceptual Organization: Evolution & Longevity Framework (Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois,[3] NSI)

The core value of any SMA project is in bringing together analyses based in different disciplines, methodologies, and analytic approaches—not necessarily to hammer out a single answer but to uncover consistencies and inconsistencies among them and, similar to working a jigsaw puzzle, identify how the individual pieces combine to provide a clearer picture than any single one might.

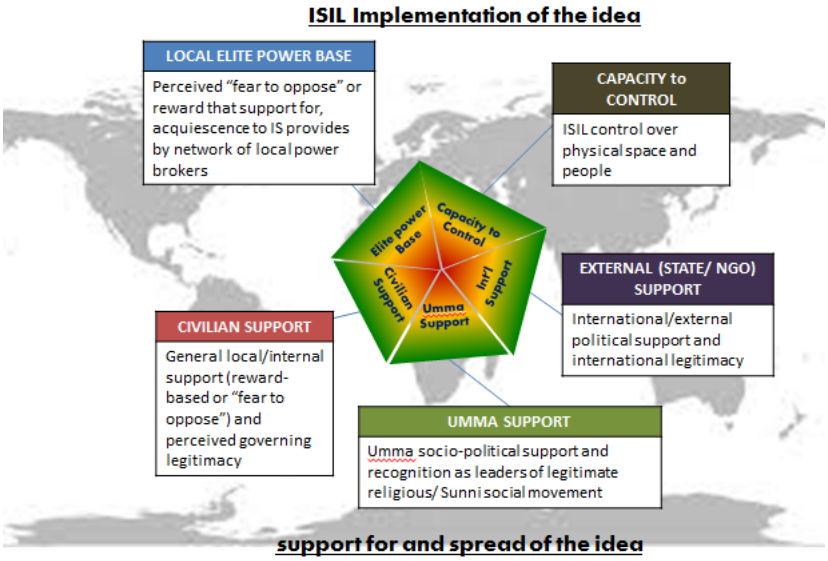

Figure 1 Longevity Framework

This project, and thus the organizing concept, was centered on two questions: "What are the intangible factors that make ISIL so magnetic, inspirational, and deeply resonant with a specific, but large, portion of the Islamic population?" and "How durable is the organization versus the idea or ideology likely to be?" In other words, what is the nature of support for ISIL, and are we facing a "flash-in-the-pan" or a more durable movement capable of achieving its military, religious, and political goals?

The purpose of this organizing framework was to 1) provide a common vocabulary and standard scale for discussing this complex issue; 2) lay out the landscape or "schools of thought" regarding the intangibles that explain ISIL support and achievement; 3) guide identification of intangible factors that explain ISIL growth or decline; and 4) help distinguish those factors that relate to ISIL specifically (i.e., as the organization and the "brand") versus those that relate more broadly to a sustained militant radical Islamist ideology and movement.

The first thing to note about the Longevity Framework (Figure 1) is that it rests on a map. Clearly, neither ISIL's rise nor support for the militant Islamist idea it represents can be explained without considering the historical, cultural, political, and social context within which it emerged. Considering the dynamics of the regional context, the framework broadens the analytic focus from ISIL the organization to include the larger militant radical Islamist movement and groups that may arise subsequent to ISIL. In

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addition, the framework is intended to be a thinking tool, rather than a way to generate "answers," and although ISIL is central in this effort, the framework is built to be generic enough to apply to similar groups or used as a frame for continual assessment of the evolving nature of ISIL or other groups.

The framework consists of five continua reflecting two higher-level constructs—affinity for the group and implementation of the idea or ideology—that represent the organizational attributes and conditions requisite for a revolutionary movement to evolve into a functioning government. These are

- the nature of general, grassroots popular support for, or acquiescence to, ISIL (*civilian support*);
- the degree of support from the broader Sunni community from which fighters, aid, legitimacy, and leadership of the global radical Islamist movement might be gained (*umma*[4] *support*);
- the nature of the response of the international community (*external support*);
- the degree to which ISIL is entrenched in its area of responsibility (AOR) (*local power network*); and
- ISIL's success in controlling territory and people in order to grow its base of operations (*capacity to control*). Here again, the focus was not on counting hardware, like numbers of trucks or guns, but on the "intangible" aspects of ISIL's ability to influence and control—in other words, how ISIL is able to incentivize people to behave in a certain way (e.g., through intimidation, provision of services, etc.)

Using the Framework

For this study, the Longevity Framework was used as a common reference point for discussion, debate, and for integrating insights from diverse analytic approaches and data. It is also a fairly straightforward way to characterize the type of adversary ISIL represents based on the type of support it has and its capacity to control. Specifically, different sets of positions on each of the five continua present very high-level characterizations of what we believe we are facing with ISIL. For example, analysis indicating that ISIL has significant civilian support but limited capacity to control and external support, would be describing an ISIL adversary that is essentially a grassroots movement. By comparison, if our analyses indicated that ISIL had very little local support and that its capacity to maintain control was primarily the result of violent activities underwritten by external actors, we would be looking at an adversary with questionable governing legitimacy and one that may have difficulty expanding too far. These high-level distinctions are important because they 1) can change over time and with US and coalition actions, 2) might be used as markers of ISIL evolution, and 3) suggest significantly different strategies for successfully opposing one type of adversary versus the other.

[4] It is important to recognize the varied and contested meaning of the term "umma". Although it refers to the broader Muslim community, there is can be disagree on who is or is not a member of this community. ISIL in particular has extremely specific ideas about who is admitted to the true community of Muslims—the true umma. For this project we have used "umma" to refer to the world-wide Sunni Muslim community. Authors of subsequent papers in the volume have been encouraged to specify when they are using umma in more specific ways.

Each of the five framework continua ranges from conditions associated with a short-lived group to an institutionalized governing entity. The definitions and descriptions of five-point scales for each are detailed below.

External (State) Support

Framing Question: What is the nature of international or other external support (or non-support) for ISIL?

Definition: External support for ISIL includes active and passive political or material support from nation-states or other non-Muslim international actors (other than Iraq or Syria) based on their own direct or regional interests. Examples of actors in this category are Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iran, Turkey, Qatar, etc.

Scale	External Support Description
None	Unanimous international condemnation and opposition to ISIL and its program possibly including broad international mobilization to defeat ISIL
Weak	Very passive or tacit support from states or non-Muslim organizations; non-opposition against ISIL, its goals and objectives across numerous regions of the world including Muslim/Middle Eastern states; only few states' less critical interests served by ISIL success
Covert/ tacit support	Some, particularly regional states or non-Muslim organizations, have interests directly served by ISIL although active support mainly covert and limited to facilitating measures (e.g., cross-border transit, delivery of small arms); opposition may be active but involves small core of actors
Overt support	A number of states or non-Muslim actors have important interests that are directly served by ISIL and are willing to offer overt diplomatic and non-military material support; direct and active opposition to ISIL involves only a few actors
Int'l political recognition	Broadly-based and overt international military and diplomatic support including official recognition and respect for borders

Local Elite Power Base

Framing Question: What is the relationship between ISIL and local leaders?

Definition: The elite power base refers to local family, village, tribal, or other non-ISIL leaders or power networks in Iraq and Syria both inside and outside ISIL controlled areas. Included in this category are issues relating to the nature of ISIL support among local elites including the means by which local leader support is garnered by, for example, the perceived value in patronage and money or safety that support for or acquiescence to ISIL control provides local power brokers.

Scale	Local Elite Power Base Description
None	There is no passive or active support for or acquiescence to ISIL control or governance among local leaders
Weak /primarily fear-based	ISIL support among local leaders is primarily fear-based acquiescence with a weak basis for providing value (material or psychic) to sustain powerbroker support
Disjointed/ mixed	ISIL support among local leaders amounts mainly to acquiescence with limited perceived value of supporting ISIL along with some pockets of leaders perceiving rewards (psychic or material) from active support
Broad/ primarily reward-based	ISIL support among local leaders is primarily reward-based passive or active support with what leaders see as a solid basis for ISIL to continue providing value (material or psychic)
Entrenched /strong; loyal	ISIL largely perceived to provide reliable and durable value in exchange for power brokers' active support and participation; entrenched local leader support with means of sustainment

Civilian Support

Framing Question: What accounts for civilian support for ISIL?

Definition: For this study, the "civilian" population was defined as individuals and/or groups of individuals resident in Iraq or Syria either inside or outside ISIL controlled areas. Because the construct refers to a continuum of support from none/weak support for ISIL governance to strong support or perceived legitimacy of ISIL governance, study participants considered the intangibles that account for acquiescence or support as well as those that account for passive and active opposition.

Scale	Civilian Support Description
None	No non-elite popular support of or acquiescence to ISIL ideas, values, and leadership; significant and active grassroots opposition to ISIL attempts to control
Weak /primarily fear-based	Acquiescence to or apparent support of ISIL ideas and objectives among local non-elite population based primarily in fear of retribution; i.e., little to no popularly perceived legitimacy
Disjointed/ mixed	ISIL support among local (non-elite) population limited mainly to acquiescence with small pockets of people choosing to align with and assign legitimacy to ISIL leadership and objectives even without the threat of coercive measures.
Primarily reward-based	ISIL support among non-elite locals is primarily reward-based (psychic or material) passive or active support with widening grassroots perception of ISIL leaders and institutions as legitimate
Strong; loyal	Broad-based and committed grassroots support for ISIL ideas, objectives, and perception of ISIL leadership and institutions as legitimate governors

Capacity to Control

Framing Question: What are the non-military or intangible means by which ISIL is able to control physical space and the people in it?

Definition: Capacity to control refers to the (non-strictly military) means by which ISIL is able to wrest and maintain control over space and people in areas in which ISIL operates (currently Syria and Iraq) and/or has targeted. The particulars of ISIL leaders or leadership structures fit into this category.

Scale	Capacity to Control Description
None	Presence in small, disjointed and/or non-contiguous areas but no control
Weak	Means of population/area control are limited to terror tactics and violent force; areas controlled are mainly ungoverned or weakly governed areas that remain accessible to armed opposition
Expanding capacity	Evolving means of population/area control include more than just threat of force, e.g., they include economic, value-based, or minor reward-based influence. ISIL led political and social institutions and processes are emerging; areas controlled are mainly ungoverned or weakly governed areas that remain accessible to armed opposition
Refined institutions of control	ISIL possesses multiple means of population/area control beyond coercive measures and ISIL led political and social institutions and processes are refined and becoming standardized across its area of operation (AO), which is mainly inaccessible to armed opposition
Strong/ voluntary support	Control gained over formerly governed areas where acquiescence/ support for ISIL governance is primarily voluntary and based in common values, psychic reward, and/or perceived legitimacy of ISIL control; area control includes complete control of borders

Umma Support

Framing Question: What accounts for support for ISIL among Muslim communities and individuals outside Syria and Iraq?

Definition: Umma support—or support from the broader Muslim community—refers to religious and political support through to recognition of ISIL as leaders of a legitimate Sunni movement from Muslim individuals and communities outside areas under ISIL control. Intangibles that explain only active opposition among Muslim communities and individuals outside Iraq and Syria may be out of scope. Non-Muslims attracted to ISIL as foreign fighters are included here as are recent converts to Islam.

Scale	Umma Support Description
None	Presence in small, disjointed, and/or non-contiguous areas but no control
Weak	Means of population/area control are limited to terror tactics and violent force; areas controlled are mainly ungoverned or weakly governed areas that remain accessible to armed opposition
Expanding capacity	Evolving means of population/area control include more than just threat of force, e.g., they include economic, value-based, or minor reward-based influence. ISIL led political and social institutions and processes are emerging; areas controlled are mainly ungoverned or weakly governed areas that remain accessible to armed opposition
Refined institutions of control	ISIL possesses multiple means of population/area control beyond coercive measures and ISIL led political and social institutions and processes are refined and becoming standardized across its AO, which is mainly inaccessible to armed opposition
Strong/ voluntary support	Control gained over formerly governed areas where acquiescence/support for ISIL governance is primarily voluntary and based in common values, psychic reward, and/or perceived legitimacy of ISIL control; area control includes complete control of borders

Caveats

As mentioned above, readers should consider the framework as a heuristic—a thinking tool rather than a source for "answers." As such, it is reductionist in a number of ways. First, the framework focuses analytic attention on the group in order to assess support at the individual, elite, Muslim community (in this case), and state/external levels of analysis. Although a reasonable approach, this may treat other factors contributing to ISIL success only as they relate to ISIL's organization or message (e.g., youth bulge; environmental factors like drought). Second, as applied in this study, there was little discussion of the differences between environmental conditions in Syria versus Iraq. In part, this may be a reflection of the relative accessibility of information about ISIL activities and sources of support in Syria versus in Iraq. This may be a particular issue in generalizing insights from the "civilian support" and "elite power base" sections from Iraq to Syria or, for that matter, across different areas of Iraq.

II. Findings and Observations (Ms. Sarah Canna, NSI)

From July through October 2014, NSI conducted a Subject Matter Expert (SME) Elicitation study to gather insights from interviews, panel discussions, seminars, and personal communications with over 50 SMEs from the United States, the Middle East, and Europe. The interview questionnaire and transcripts from the SME elicitation effort are available upon request.[5] CTTSO provided the Apptek Talk2Me platform to expedite the transcription of the SME Elicitation interviews. In addition, all of the data (human edited and original audio) are posted on the Web-based Talk2Me platform for the SMA study for further analytics and reporting.[6]

This report summarizes SME findings that help us understand ISIL's intangible appeal. However, it does not attempt to adjudicate or force convergence of the findings.

Conditions: The Perfect Storm

Some SMEs described conditions on the ground as a "perfect storm" for the emergence of ISIL. The confluence of the conditions listed below allowed ISIL to rise so quickly.

Contributing Subject Matter Experts

- Ali Abbas, University of Southern California, CREATE, DHS
- Mario Abou Zeid, Carnegie Middle East Center
- John Arquilla, Naval Postgraduate School
- Scott Atran, University of Michigan
- Boaz Atzili, American University
- S. Gulden Ayman, Istanbul University
- Leo Blanken, Naval Postgraduate School
- Brent Blaschke, Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications, US Department of State
- Mehrzad Boroujerdi, Syracuse University
- William Braniff, University of Maryland, START, DHS
- Joseph Carter, International Center for the Study of Radicalisation
- Jocelyne Cesari, Georgetown University, Harvard University, & Minerva researcher
- Jaquelyne Chinn, Texas A&M University
- Steven Corman, Arizona State University, Center for Strategic Communication, HSCB, Minerva researcher
- Daniel Cunningham, Naval Postgraduate School
- Sean Everton, Naval Postgraduate School
- Alberto Fernandez, Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications, US Department of State
- James Giordano, Georgetown University
- Heather Gregg, Naval Postgraduate School
- Fanar Haddad, Middle East Institute & National University of Singapore
- Shadi Hamid, Brookings Institution
- David Jacobsen, University of Southern Florida, Minerva researcher
- Nazar Janabi, private consultant
- Lina Khatib, Carnegie Middle East Center
- Jytte Klausen, Brandeis University, START, DHS

[5] Please contact Sarah Canna at scanna@nsiteam.com.
[6] Thanks go to Dr. Kathleen Egan at CTTSO Kathleen.Egan@cttso.gov and Mr. Jim Carey at Apptek JAMES.F.CAREY@leidos.com.

- Failed states of Iraq and Syria: The power vacuum in the Sunni regions of Iraq and Syria opened the door for an alternative governing force to coalesce and gain the acquiescence and/or support of the civilian [7] population.
- Arab world undergoing rapid change: ISIL is an expression of rising Islamist fundamentalism, declining sense of nationalism, and a sense of empowerment spurred by the Arab Spring.
- Information Age: The advent of the information age makes it easier for people to communicate across large distances, to create a platform for sharing experiences and beliefs with like-minded individuals, and to actively persuade others to sympathize with or join a cause.
- Drought: Climate change, resulting in long periods of drought over the last ten years, has severely challenged the economic and social stability in the region.
- Youth bulge: Like many parts of the developing world, Syria and Iraq are experiencing a youth bulge that, when combined with unemployment and lack of political voice, has resulted in a reservoir of young, angry men.

- Randy Kluver, Texas A&M University
- Larry Kuznar, Indiana University–Purdue University, Fort Wayne, NSI
- Nelly Lahoud, West Point Combatting Terrorism Center
- Joshua Landis, University of Oklahoma
- Gina Ligon, University of Nebraska, START, DHS
- Shiraz Maher, International Center for the Study of Radicalisation
- Clark McCauley, Bryn Mawr College, START, DHS
- Mansur Moaddel, University of Maryland
- Sophia Moskalenko, Bryn Mawr College, STRAT, DHS
- Williamson Murray, Ohio State University, Minerva researcher
- Denise Natali, National Defense University, Minerva researcher
- Peter Neumann, International Center for the Study of Radicalisation
- Ken Pollack, Brookings Institution
- Philip Potter, University of Virginia, Minerva researcher
- Glen Robinson, Naval Postgraduate School
- Hy Rothstein, Naval Postgraduate School
- Paul Salem, Middle East Institute
- Rob Schultz, Naval Postgraduate School
- Daniel Schuman, Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications, US Department of State
- Jacob Shapiro, Princeton University, Minerva researcher
- Katherine Shats, Georgetown University Medical Center
- Mubin Shaikh, Liverpool University
- Erroll Southers, University of Southern California, CREATE, DHS
- Shibley Telhami, University of Maryland
- Detlof van Winterfeldt, University of Southern California, CREATE, DHS
- Shalini Venturelli, American University
- Jeff Weyers, Liverpool University
- Maha Yahya, Carnegie Middle East Center
- Judith Yaphe, National Defense University

[7] Civilian refers to the people living in ISIL-controlled areas.

On the whole, SMEs felt that these conditions made it possible for ISIL to seize the opportunity to push for an alternative form of governance in the region. However, while these conditions were extremely important, ISIL's sustainability and longevity is based on its capacity to control the population and to garner sympathy and support from the broader Sunni Muslim population both inside and outside the region.

Capacity to Control

SMEs believed that ISIL's capacity to control is based on several factors.

- Fear and coercion: ISIL has a monopoly over the use of force in areas it "governs." It uses the implicit and explicit threat of violence against civilians to ensure acquiescence.
- Provision of better governance and order: Some argue that ISIL provides better governance and essential services than what was experienced under Iraqi and Syrian rule. Furthermore, ISIL provides some degree of stability and order in a previously uncertain environment.
- Lack of a viable alternative: There are no alternative forms of Sunni-empowered governance available. ISIL draws on the power of collective Sunni identity and Sunni grievances to establish its legitimacy.
- Strong leadership: ISIL has a strong, agile, pragmatic leadership and organizational structure. It has a highly motivated and a dedicated rank and file under the leadership of a disciplined and experienced cadre, supported by consistent and compelling messaging.
- Success breeds success: ISIL's momentum and its ability to survive coalition attacks to date plays a role in convincing civilians and local power brokers that it will be around for the long-term, which reinforces support or acquiescence to ISIL, which further reinforces ISIL's capacity to control.

ISIL's capacity to control is largely based on its interaction with the local population. However, ISIL also enjoys sympathy, support, and recruits from the global Sunni Muslim population. SMEs interviewed felt that the primary way ISIL achieves support from the global Sunni Muslim population is through persuasive use of narrative. SMEs identified over 20 narratives ISIL uses to persuade, the most powerful of which are described below.

Persuasive Narratives

Narratives are messages that represent the ideals, beliefs, and social constructs of a group. ISIL uses them within the civilian population to consolidate control and amongst the global Sunni Muslim population to garner sympathy, support, and recruits.

- Moral imperative: ISIL uses a variety of narratives to convey the idea that Muslims have a moral imperative to support them. These narratives include the restitution of the caliphate, creation of a utopian society based on Muslim laws and values, ISIL as a representative of the pure form of Islam, ISIL bringing back the Golden Age of Islam, and that ISIL's caliphate will unite all Sunni Muslims.

- Sunni grievances and victimhood: ISIL uses shared feelings of marginalization, repression, and lack of power to gain legitimacy and support. They draw on sub-narratives of victimization among Sunnis at the hands of Shias and the West to cement this powerful narrative.
- Immediacy: ISIL rejected al Qaeda's core narrative that it needed to wait for the right time to establish a caliphate. ISIL did it within months. ISIL touts it willingness to take action, combined with its success in establishing what it calls a caliphate, as evidence of their proclaimed righteousness.
- Reinvention of self: No matter what kind of life you led, when you convert to Islam and join the fight, all previous wrongdoing is washed away. ISIL offers a new start and a new sense of identity and purpose to anyone who joins them.
- Thrills, adventures, and heroism: Some individuals are particularly drawn to ISIL because it advertises thrills, adventures, and opportunities for heroism (and violence) that appeal to some young men's sense of masculinity.

Schools of Thought

While these factors represent areas of qualified agreement on key factors explaining ISIL support, SMEs differed on which factors were the most important, which led to two primary schools of thought regarding ISIL's longevity.

1. ISIL has resilient properties via its capacity to control people and territory stemming from pragmatic leadership and organization, intimidation tactics, tapping into existing Sunni grievances and use of a well-developed narrative and media outreach to attract and motivate fighters.

2. ISIL is not a durable organization. It has taken advantage of a pre-existing sectarian conflict to acquire land, wealth, and power. It only attracts a narrow band of disaffected Sunni youth, is alienating local populations by over-the-top violence and harsh implementation of Sharia, is unable to expand into territories controlled by functioning states, and does not possess the expertise required to form a bureaucracy and effectively govern.

In reviewing the effort, a third school of thought emerged: that the real challenge is not ISIL the organization, but the sense of disempowerment, anger, and frustration in the Muslim world. This is evidenced by rising Islamist fundamentalism across the Muslim world combined with a declining sense of state-based nationalism. It is fueled by the perception of inequality and thwarted aspirations in addition to the conditions mentioned earlier in this chapter: failed states, demographic shifts, unemployment, drought, spread of communication technologies, etc. If the problem is larger than ISIL, then solutions that only seek to undermine ISIL's capacity to control are insufficient to address the underlying cause of conflict.

Additional Factors

This summary presents a cursory review of the many topics addressed by over 50 SMEs interviewed for this effort. In addition, the report also touches on a number of other controversial topics. These include:

- whether ISIL is primarily ideological or opportunistic;
- whether the local elite power base in Iraq and Syria sincerely supports ISIL;
- the degree to which regional Sunni Muslim states support or oppose ISIL;
- a brief look at whether the rise of other historical violent social movements could be instructive; and
- the ways in which ISIL in Iraq is different from ISIL in Syria.

SME elicitation through the SMA SOCCENT Speaker Series will continue. To be added to the distribution list for the series, please contact Mr. Sam Rhem at samuel.d.rhem.ctr@mail.mil.

III. ISIL Capacity to Control, Civilian Support, and Local Elite Power Base

An Organizational Profile of the Islamic State: Leadership, Cyber Expertise, and Firm Legitimacy (Dr. Gina S. Ligon,[8] Ms. Mackenzie Harms, Mr. John Crowe, Dr. Leif Lundmark, and Dr. Pete Simi, University of Nebraska Omaha, START, DHS)

This research was supported by the Department of Homeland Science (DHS) and Technology Directorate's Office of University Programs through Award Number 2012-ST-061-CS0001, Center for the Study of Terrorism and Behavior (CSTAB 1.12) made to National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) to investigate THEME: 1 the role of social, behavioral, cultural, and economic factors on radicalization and violent extremism. The views and conclusions contained in this document are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as necessarily representing the official policies, either expressed or implied, of the US Department of Homeland Security or START. We thank Executive Director William Braniff of START, who served as a subject matter expert for this report, as well as Mr. Jason Spitaletta of John Hopkins University who provided valuable source material for this report.

Executive Summary

Using an internal strategic organizational analysis, we found support for hypothesis two: the Islamic State is a durable movement in the geographic region it currently controls. There are three strategic resources and capabilities that we posit will allow ISIL to become a durable movement: (1) unique leadership style and structure, (2) state-of-the-art cyber usage (e.g., messaging and technology), and (3) organizational legitimacy in an unstable region. The Leadership Style and Structure of ISIL differ from those we have analyzed in 90+ VEO leadership teams. This particular characteristic is not only rare, but also would be difficult to replicate in another group given the historical conditions that gave rise to ISIL, as well as the participatory style that Abu Du'a al-Baghdadi has with his close followers (see section on Leadership/Human Capital Resources). The Cyber Sophistication of ISIL shows the expertise and diversity of their cyber and media team. After profiling this group's use of cyber technologies for over a year, we have determined that they use a variety of technological platforms, diverse languages, and tailored messaging. The cyber technologies facilitate internal coordination (e.g., command and control) and focuses information flow externally with the broader Umma and potential foreign fighters (see section on Cyber Capabilities). Organizational Legitimacy has resulted from a unique combination of the strong leadership style, strategic branding, and consistent message. In other words, "ISIL Sells Success." Our conclusion is that this strategy of promoting itself as a successful organization and with a pure mission (ideological superiority) leads to a perception of organizational legitimacy, which is particularly magnetic in an environment that is rife with corruption, poor governance, and distrust of existing institutions (see section on Organizational Legitimacy and Branding). In the full report, we offer unique insights gained from examining ISIL through a business model. Using this strategic management lens, we found support

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for the hypothesis that ISIL is a durable movement in the geographic region it currently holds because of its rare, unique, and inimitable resources and capabilities.

Key Findings:

- Strategic differentiators of ISIL are the leadership structure, cyber expertise, and firm legitimacy. These resources and capabilities are rare, valuable, inimitable, and organized effectively to position the organization for success.
- ISIL has developed an organizational structure that may be resilient to leadership decapitation, given the power sharing style of al-Baghdadi, the strength and structure of the Shura Council, and the military prowess of the two Deputies (al-Anbari and Turkmani). The Shura Council will select the next Caliph; the group will be loyal to that person (likely from the Shura Council). Currently, the leadership structure is incredibly strong and resilient.
- Cyber expertise, manifested by a diversity of social media (e.g., Dawn) and internal planning (e.g., FireChat) platforms facilitates both recruiting and command and control in the theater. Among all significant players in the Global Jihad Industry, ISIL possesses the strongest cyber expertise and sophistication.
- Selling success is key to the notions of firm legitimacy that ISIL needs to portray. They will continue to attack new ground, show images of power and statehood, and send messages of "celebrity-levels" of Global Jihadism. In addition, they seem to select strategic targets and show patience and persistence in acquiring them (e.g., battle for Kobane was most likely for grain silos located there; their attacks seem to be centered around a) strategic tribal partners or rivals and b) critical infrastructure).

The Business Model of ISIL

One analogy to understand if ISIL is likely to become a regional Caliphate is to compare their organizational behaviors to those of a start-up prior to an Initial Public Offering (IPO), when it is important to convey success, legitimacy, and assess strategic resources and capabilities (Certo, 2003). Following this analogy, our approach is based on an organizational and leadership profile of ISIL (Barney, 1991). We analyzed the internal characteristics of the organization, within the broader context of the Global Jihadist industry, using a strategic framework to identify resources and capabilities that inform what is unique or intangible about ISIL as an organization and broader social movement. Our analysis offers a unique perspective because it focuses on internal facets of ISIL as an organization and provides insight into what support ISIL may seek out as they continue to legitimize their organization.

Our overall conclusion is that ISIL is a durable movement whose current organizational characteristics and observable actions suggest efforts to establish themselves as a legitimate organization with the potential and probable intent to establish and maintain local governance.

There are three general observations that led to this conclusion. First, our team currently estimates that ISIL has moderate-to-high support from the civilian population and local elite in both Iraq and Syria, as well as a high capacity to control within these regions. This assessment is in large part due to their control over critical infrastructure and key resources, which allow them to offer services to the local

population that the previous regimes did not consistently or universally provide (e.g., food, clean water, electricity). Specifically, certain actions taken by ISIL in recent months, such as using a portion of money from their oil sales to provide governance and food to the local civilian population and maintaining infrastructure necessary for the daily operations of local businesses and the elite, suggest an awareness that winning the support of the local population will ultimately allow them to maintain territory and governance in these regions over the long term more easily than if they took control of the population solely by force. The overall message is one that promotes the benefits of an ISIL regime for the population over the alternative regimes, despite the negative tone of global media attention. For the civilians, access to basic necessities may counterbalance the brutality with which the ISIL group deals with non-believers/apostates. This reflects an understanding of diversifying their brand image to meet the needs of different support populations.

Second, in regard to their high capacity to control, ISIL has established an effective and elite leadership team, as well as an advanced organizational structure, which strengthens their cohesion as an organization and allows them to recruit, train, and utilize a diverse array of expertise (e.g., cyber and technological expertise) to legitimize their organization. The participative, pragmatic leadership style embodied by al-Baghdadi and his close followers is a style commonly exhibited by successful state-level leaders, but is rare among VEO leaders (Ligon, Harms, & Harris, 2014). Strengths of this leadership style include a strategic (rather than emotional) approach to problem solving, information sharing among organization members with valuable knowledge and expertise to inform decisions, actions that promote the organization's needs over the leader's, and opportunities for autonomy and leadership among lower-level organization members that can foster loyalty to the group (Mumford & Van Doorn, 2002).

Third, the broader Umma and international support is currently estimated to be moderate-to-low, suggesting that the focus of ISIL is on establishing themselves as an independent, self-sustaining organization, rather than on aligning with other potentially powerful organizations or governments. This assessment is supported by the organizational branding efforts ISIL has engaged in, such as severing their alliance with Al Qaida and their affiliates and marketing themselves as a unique and more-successful alternative to other Salafist jihadi groups. ISIL has also shown little efforts to establish legitimate ties to other nation states. While one perspective may suggest that foreign governments are hesitant to endorse ISIL by aligning with them (due to their violence and negative press), an alternative perspective is that ISIL is avoiding partnerships with entities stronger than themselves to preserve their brand. The motivation behind this second perspective is that co-branding, despite the short-term financial and security benefits, often results in the collaborating organizations disavowing or diluting certain tactics and goals in favor of the alliance (Washburn, Till, Priluck, 2000). Given the efforts made by ISIL to establish legitimacy through operational successes and media victories, co-branding at this stage may deter them from establishing legitimate local governance in Iraq and Syria (i.e., ISIL is focusing on garnering local support before reaching out to global communities). While it is likely that ISIL may eventually attempt to gain stronger Umma and international support, their focus currently seems to be on organizational independence and legitimacy (Deephouse, 2000; Rindova, Petkova, & Kotha, 2007).

This analysis is based on a six-year longitudinal study of ISIL and other violent extremist organizations, sponsored by the Department of Homeland Security S&T and the National Consortium for the Study of

Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (Ligon, Principal Investigator CSTAB 1.12; START). In the following sections, we will briefly outline the methods on which this report is predicated and highlight the results of the present effort to examine what makes ISIL magnetic as an organization.

Method

Drawing from a team with diverse academic expertise, we examined ISIL from the organizational strategy literature, organizational psychology literature, and marketing/branding literature using UNCLASSFIED primary and secondary sources (Ligon, et al., 2014). This project employed a historiometric methodology in order to evaluate the strategic and comparative threat posed by ISIL. Following the steps described by Ligon, Harris, and Hunter (2012), we defined the sample that would provide the best comparative attributes to evaluate the Islamic State within the larger framework of global jihadists. After identifying the sample, we gathered data from primary and secondary sources, evaluated the organizations in our sample using the LEADIR (Leadership of the Extreme and Dangerous for Innovative Results; DHS S&T funded START CSTAB 1.12 project) content coding scheme, indices of technical capabilities and sophistication, and organizational and leadership characteristics.

A two-part framework was applied to provide the organizational profile of the ISIL. First, an industry analysis was conducted with first-level affiliated groups of al Qaeda Central (AQC). Industry level analysis examines forces that work on or against the "industry" in which ISIL operates, based on the stated ideology and competition for sympathizers to that ideology. Thus, for the present effort, we selected the industry of Global Jihad Affiliates of al Qaeda Central (e.g., al-Shabaab, AQIM, AQAP, Boko Haram, al-Nusra Front, and ISIL) as our unit of analysis. While ISIL is no longer affiliated with al Qaeda, the prior relationship, stated objectives, and proximity make this a viable comparison group of the global jihad industry. This "industry analysis" provided benchmarks to which we compare ISIL on its strategic resources and capabilities.

Second, we conducted an internal strategic analysis of ISIL to identify what resources and capabilities ISIL controls to develop and deliver its services to sympathizers and current members. Our specific focus was on the human and organizational resources and capabilities leveraged by ISIL, rather than surveying the population they try to influence.

Finally, we conducted a VRIO (Value, Rare, Imitable, Organization) analysis to evaluate the competitive implications of the resources and capabilities controlled by ISIL, specifically, the likelihood of ISIL developing and maintaining a viable regional caliphate. The following sections highlight our findings.

Results

Our analysis determined that there are at least three resources or capabilities that will allow for a competitive sustained advantage for ISIL: (1) leadership and human capital, (2) cyber sophistication, and (3) organizational legitimacy. Organizational Structure and Marketing/Branding are also capabilities of ISIL, but because these are not as costly to imitate (i.e., others in the Global Jihad industry also have strong organizational structures [e.g., AQIM] and marketing/branding tactics [e.g., AQAP]), we did not deem them as critical differentiators of ISIL. Using a comparative strategic analysis of ISIL compared to

other Global Jihad VEOs, we developed the following Table 1 to illustrate how ISIL differs from any of its allies and/or competitors.

Table 1. VRIO analysis chart of the global Jihad industry

Organizational Structure	Marketing/Branding	Attack Sophistication	Cyber Sophistication	Leadership and Human Capital	Firm Legitimacy
ISIS	ISIS	ISIS	ISIS	ISIS	ISIS
AQAP	AQAP	AQAP	AQAP	AQAP	AQAP
AQIM	AQIM	AQIM	AQIM	AQIM	AQIM
al-Nusra Front	al-Nusra Front	al-Nusra Front	al-Nusra Front	al-Nusra Front	al-Nusra Front
al-Shabaab	al-Shabaab	al-Shabaab	al-Shabaab	al-Shabaab	al-Shabaab
Boko Haram	Boko Haram	Boko Haram	Boko Haram	Boko Haram	Boko Haram
AQC	AQC	AQC	AQC	AQC	AQC

Organization is Extremely Low/Unique/Rare on This Attribute

Organization is Extremely High/Unique/Rare on This Attribute

When examining rival VEOs in the Global Jihad Industry in Table 1 above, it becomes clear that no one organization has the bundle of resources and capabilities that ISIL currently possesses. The VRIO analysis indicated that some of these resources and capabilities may be easily imitated by rival groups in the Global Jihad movements. For example, al-Nusra Front has done a remarkable job playing on the grievances of the Sunni populace in how they have branded themselves as a viable group that is different from AQC (i.e., one that "gets things done" differently—and more brutally—than AQC has been able to deliver). In addition, AQAP has structured itself in a way that is efficient, legitimate, and sophisticated due to a long tenure in the region, similar to that of ISIL. Finally, AQC is still seen as the legitimate Global Jihad social movement and likely will retain that position unless ISIL continues to grow with foreign fighters and the broader Umma movement at a rate that out-paces AQC. One of the strengths of Usama Bin Laden's (UBL's) speeches was his tie of local grievances to the global mission of the "far enemy," but to date, al-Zawahiri has not been an effective champion of that message.

The VRIO analysis does indicate two important findings. First, there are no groups currently that rival ISIL in terms of cyber sophistication, leadership/human capital, or organizational legitimacy efforts. This has important implications because we evaluated these particular resources as being extremely costly to imitate by other VEOs. First, the cyber sophistication that ISIL possesses is stronger and was acquired via the recruitment of experts in cyber technology and also via an extreme early investment in the equipment and infrastructure needed for such experts to work. In addition, the willingness to "cut losses" and expand to additional venues and platforms in social networking is unique to organizations in general, but particularly unique to ideological organizations who tend to have difficulty making changes to keep up with their environment (organizational adaptation). The cyber technology (e.g., the app "The Dawn" that ISIL built to allow access to users' personal data) allows ISIL to exhibit a much more flexible, innovative approach to internet-communication technology.

Second, as detailed in the full report (Ligon et al., 2014), the leadership and human capital was acquired via a complex chain of events that would be difficult for any other violent extremist organization (VEO) to imitate. The unique characteristics of al-Baghdadi made him the perfect influential leader for the current context of social situations and environmental unrest (e.g., the timing of his detainment that coincided with elite former Baathists) and the subsequent roles he allows his top management team to play in terms of decision making and recruiting are remarkable examples of causal ambiguity and social complexity that make this particular resource a sustainable competitive advantage for this VEO.

Finally, the VRIO analysis indicates that even while certain groups share some characteristics of ISIL, no one group in its Global Jihad Industry can compete across all of the strategic resources and capabilities it possesses. For example, ISIL has strong leadership, cyber sophistication, and remarkable organizational structure that allow it to brand itself in a way that outpaces the narrative messaging provided by other VEOs. In addition, the organizational legitimacy (achieved through promoting ideological superiority to competing groups and strong organizational branding as an independently sustainable movement) it has garnered in the local population, with tribal elder elites and with the broader Umma, indicates that this organization should have the capacity to become a viable caliphate in the geographic regions it now controls.

Summary and Implications

The Leadership Style and Structure of ISIL differ from those we have analyzed in 90+ VEO leadership teams. This particular characteristic is not only rare, but also would be difficult to replicate in another group given the historical conditions that gave rise to ISIL, as well as the pragmatic participatory style that al-Baghdadi has with his close followers. Specifically, Baghdadi's approach to leadership suggests that the senior leaders in the Syria and Iraq regions can execute the mission of ISIL as they see fit, rather than check in with Baghdadi for approval. This allows for a more tailored approach to military campaigns, as well as Baghdadi's subordinate leaders having control in how their areas are governed. In addition, the leadership style that Baghdadi evidences is one that will often plan for succession and development among his leadership team, rotating assignments so that his top managers (the two Deputies and the broader Shura Council) obtain diverse expertise and experience in a variety of positions. This makes for a more robust decision making structure (i.e., the media wing senior council

would have had some experience in finance and thus know what kinds of messaging is more influential across certain types of donors), as well as a pool of potential successors in the event of a leader decapitation action. Note, most personalized/aggrandizing VEO leaders do not think this strategically about the health of the organization. As noted in the section on Organizational Structure in the full report (Ligon et al., 2014), ISIL is unique in that the top management team has a great deal of autonomy in decision making, is highly hierarchical and formalized, and expertise among top advisers is encouraged and valued. In addition, Baghdadi's pragmatic approach to organizational leadership can be seen in his strategic moves to recruit highly desirable leaders for his top management team (e.g., former Baathists who were prominent in Saddam Hussein's regime). Accordingly, we determined the overall leadership structure and style of ISIL to be a key resource that provides sustainable performance above and beyond what other VEOs in the Global Jihad industry have been able to execute.

The Cyber Sophistication of ISIL shows the expertise and diversity of their cyber and media team. After profiling this group's use of cyber technologies for over a year, we have determined that they use a variety of technological platforms, diverse languages, and tailored messaging. The cyber technologies facilitate internal coordination (e.g., command and control) and focuses information flow externally with the broader Umma and potential foreign fighters (see section on Cyber Capabilities). This degree of cyber sophistication, coupled with ISIL's understanding of marketing, organizational branding, and media relations (e.g., consider the GTA game campaign to recruit potential foreign fighters), enables a much more robust and fluid recruitment arm of the organization and highlights the kind of personal information they can access. This also demonstrates how ISIL has more robust Twitter accessibility (e.g., through the mobile twitter app "The Dawn" they developed) and social network site presence than other VEO groups that are currently not employing these technologies. These types of decentralized communication techniques are both prevalent and easily accessible to ISIL and are a key resource for this group when reaching out to members (e.g., the FireChat app allows for covert planning of coordinated attacks) and potential recruits in the broader Umma. When assessing the cyber sophistication required to execute the diverse array of strategies as detailed in this section, our research has shown that ISIL is a highly sophisticated group—and the level of expertise required to copy this level of sophistication would take years to develop and/or a targeted recruitment of members with cyber technology expertise.

Organizational Legitimacy has resulted from a unique combination of the strong leadership style, strategic branding, and consistent message (in other words, "ISIL Sells Success"). Our conclusion is that this strategy of promoting itself as a successful organization with a pure mission (ideological superiority) leads to a perception of organizational legitimacy, which is particularly magnetic in an environment that is rife with corruption, poor governance, and distrust of existing institutions. Specifically, we conclude that ISIL obtained an intangible reputation by combining resources such as leadership, structure, marketing, and performance, influencing brand communities (i.e., sympathizers) to form stronger ties to their organization as it increases in legitimacy, or promotes itself as a reputable, high-performing organization. In particular, ISIL spends a great deal of time and resources on communicating aspects of its legitimacy both to (1) its local populace and (2) the broader Umma. First, ISIL established a strong organizational brand by using their split with AQC to promote their organization as ideologically "pure"

and establishing themselves as a durable movement with sustainable resources and capabilities (e.g., controlling critical infrastructure and natural resources). Second, ISIL is capitalizing on discontent with the current regime in Iraq and Syria and garnering public support by providing basic services such as access to food, water, charity distribution, Sharia court, and education. A key difference between ISIL and other Global Jihad VEOs is its rapidly increased capacity to govern once it has taken control of a region or province. Finally, as the idea of ISIL becomes more diffuse across the region and more broadly (through mass media and peer-to-peer publicity, establishing control of territory, and offering intangible services), the ISIL organization is turning into a social movement, which is highly attractive to the broader Umma and local populations. Thus, we determine that the combination of resources and capabilities contributing to the overall legitimacy of ISIL is rare and difficult to imitate by competing organizations.

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Dynamic Innovation & Evolutionary Capabilities of ISIL (Dr. Shalini Venturelli,[9] American University)

Abstract

- The study employs an original dynamic model design and analytical method tested on the battlefield in a theater of war to study the complex interactive dynamics of underlying factors driving insurgency conflicts. The study's findings, assessments, and predictions are the result of 11-months of continuing investigation of ISIL. These findings emerge from integrated complex analysis of multiple types of primary original data sets.

- The study's macro finding is that ISIL is not an adaptive network—it has leaped far beyond that stage on the scale of jihadist network transformation observed first-hand by the author on the ground in recent insurgency wars. Instead, the study finds that ISIL has gained evolutionary network capabilities to reconstruct and transform the tangible and intangible ecosystem of conflict in the Middle East region. This is an unequivocal signature of an evolving 'power-law network,' an emergent power-law property of ISIL's network-typology exhibiting high levels of system-dynamics capability.

- ISIL's strategic evolutionary capabilities include, for example, seamless integration of tangible and intangible operations where tactical measures are infused with informational, communicative, and symbolic properties; domination of the operational environment with unprecedented and powerful ontological and epistemological depth capabilities that shapes the environment to yield favorable strategic outcomes; evolution of resilient traits and robustness in systems growth and responsiveness; concept of 'Ceaseless War' and the 'Global Army' for projecting force remotely beyond the region through spontaneous individual initiative without any organizational commitment of resources and manpower; strategic orchestration of conflict in adjacent theaters enabled by its growing number of affiliates; disposable and substitutable leadership without causing network collapse as an innovative response to leadership decimation by US forces and allies; distributed decision-making for increased network fluidity and robustness to withstand attack; winning 'moral advantage' in doctrinal hermeneutics to build legitimacy and influence in the Islamic public sphere; among many other significant capability advances.

- The study's dynamic framework and findings on ISIL's capabilities suggest the need for a commensurate dynamical strategy response. By using ISIL's vulnerabilities as identified in the study, this white paper provides some examples of operational concepts designed for a dynamical strategy response.

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Approach: Multidisciplinary Dynamic Model Design [10]

This original design of a complex qualitative research model applied here to ISIL was field-tested on the ground for US commanders in a theater of war. It has a high degree of predictive accuracy (over 90%) for jihadist network transformation and is applicable to complex assessment of adversary capabilities in current and future conflicts. Developed by the author/principal investigator during 2013-2014, the model design emerged from 12-months of continuous, first-hand empirical field investigation of the dynamical patterns and forces that are driving violent jihadist network-formation and innovation in the Afghanistan battlespace and in Northwest Pakistan. The model also draws from the author's long-term comparative field investigation of interconnected regional-global jihadist networks operating in pre-jihadist communities and conflict environments of the Middle East-North Africa, Western Europe, Southwest Asia, and South and Southeast Asia. Originally initiated at the request of US Commanders in December 2013, the investigation of ISIL has been continuous over a period of 11-12 months and remains an ongoing investigation. The project's dynamic model design to study jihadist network transformation has innovated a multidisciplinary method of analysis for integrated and extended evolutionary analytical assessment of violent extremist networks. The sampling of findings and predictive analysis reported here reflect the study's observations and multiple types of data sets collected thus far.

Key Findings [11]

<u>ISIL demonstrates an unambiguous signature of power-law network dynamics</u>: The study's macro finding from a year's research investigation shows the ISIL network is NOT adaptive. Instead, it has <u>gained evolutionary capability</u>. This has serious multiple-order implications for the current conflict, the Middle East Region, and future jihadist insurgency wars. This study finds that it is quite inaccurate to assess ISIL as an adaptive or even innovative network, because these are qualitatively lower-order variances driven by micro-modifications that no longer explain ISIL's reality on the ground in the operational area or the serious threat posed by the entity's irreversible evolving power-law network dynamics. On the study's scale of jihadist network transformation, ISIL has leaped past the five progressive transformation stages of violent jihadist networks. By comparison, the study found only three of five stages attained thus far by highly active jihadist networks in Southwest Asia over a lengthy 10-year period.

ISIL has broken into far higher levels of transformative behavior and developed broad-based evolutionary dynamics across critical functions and components in less than year of its offensive campaign in Iraq and Syria. This sudden emergence of higher order network proficiency accounts for the sudden and steep curve in its tactical and intangible capabilities achieved

[10] A full report provides more detailed elaboration of the original dynamic model design for study and analysis of jihadist network transformation, using the method of multidisciplinary extended evolutionary synthesis. The model design is also reported in the accompanying brief.

[11] Only *selected findings* are reported in this White Paper. Additional key findings with discussion of results and implications are provided in the full report.

through multidimensional and cross-domain synergies. Its capabilities are measured in multimodal integration of terrorist network components for producing physical as well as intangible force projection, and tangible and intangible area-denial and access-denial. The evidence from the study's continuing data collection in the past 11 months demonstrates that ISIL has evolved into a unique typology in classes of jihadist networks. The study's complex integrated analysis of multiple types of primary data signals the emergence of a new model of global jihad in future conflicts resulting from the impact of ISIL on the global jihadist paradigm so that violent networks are now actively engaged in adopting and diffusing the ISIL model and methods.

Some of the study's strategic-level findings suggest that further acceleration in ISIL's capabilities and those of its affiliates are strongly favored by underlying structural conditions of fragmentation in international order—especially across the Middle East region—thus engendering newer conducive environments for jihadist network incubation, innovation, and extension. Yet ISIL's capability identified in this investigation cannot be simply explained as a product of unfolding entropy processes in social order within Iraq and Syria, the Middle East region, or across components of the international system. Instead, its model is a product of breakthroughs in substantive areas of jihadist network proficiency and performance creating a broad spectrum of effects and implications.

ISIL has acquired strategic evolutionary force in critical areas of security and social control capability. Not all innovative traits are evolutionary, and not all evolutionary properties of a violent network are strategic. The study finds ISIL has developed a number of highly strategic types of evolutionary network advantages. The following are just a few of many advances in critical areas that emerged from complex integrated analysis across data sets:

ISIL is redefining future warfare in a key evolutionary capability: The conceptual and operational power to infuse all warfighting functions with informational properties. *As a result, it is demonstrating in real time the ability to nullify conventional distinctions between tangible and intangible, lethal and non-lethal dimensions of operations*. This is an advanced asymmetric capability—a concept that the author separately proposed for adoption in preparing the future Joint Force.[12] But in view of the study's ISIL findings, the time horizon has now shifted forward, and the capability should be rapidly developed, matched, and exceeded in real time by the US military in order to achieve the mission in the Iraq/Syria theater. Developing continuity in operational effects between the physical and intangible battlespace is not a marginal gain; it is a leap in several orders of magnitude.

1) ISIL's leap is evolutionary in terms of creating an emergent pathway to self-generating modification/reconstruction not only of its own network, but also of the conflict ecosystem in the larger Middle East geostrategic environment encompassing multiple state and non-state adversaries, power players, population groups, and partner forces. If the conflict becomes

[12] Venturelli, Shalini, "Advanced innovations in Joint Force capability for active defense of the Information Environment (IE) to prevent, shape and win future conflicts." Prospectus Concept Proposal for JIOWC/J39 (2014e).

protracted, ISIL's operations will set the conditions for inviting asymmetric intervention by powerful state adversaries such as Russia and Iran and induce counter-productive decision-making among allies and partners in the Middle East. Furthermore, the effects of ISIL's dynamic capability transcend the region by diffusion of method and are in process of altering the operational capabilities of our strategic competitors such as Russia evidenced in increased operational fusion between Russia's tactical and informational activities for producing strategic-level outcomes. It is also provoking jihadist-network conflict dynamics *within* Western societies through recruitment for a powerful ideology of endless war of global scope.

2) ISIL's seamless message integration across all systems and operations enables the highly distributed network to function as a communicative platform for forceful realization of an imagined community brought into being by ritualized violence, mass murder, and totalitarian social control. Each tactical operation is inherently strategic communicative action in its symbolic meaning leveraged by advanced propaganda narratives methods distributed through digital technologies to targeted populations across the globe for recruitment, spontaneous initiative in violent action, support, and deterrence. Other adversaries will quickly adopt these techniques and innovate further so that the cycle of progressively asymmetric communicative campaigns becomes indistinguishable from the tactical campaign. Numerous new advantages accrue from this continuity, and are elaborated in the study's more detailed assessment report. As noted in the author's field investigation of complex intangible drivers of insurgency conflict, coercive social control of information space by adversaries delivers some of the most powerful effects on the security environment in terms of influence on decision-making, production of sanctuary and population support, legitimacy of jihadist order, alliances with power players, and erosion of the will to fight and dominate terrain among partnered security forces[13].

3) *ISIL has innovated potent intangible drivers of conflict by dominating the operating environment with unprecedented levels of ontological and epistemological depth*. ISIL has rendered obsolete the psychological concepts of 'cognitive domain' and 'cognitive depth' employed in military doctrine referring to a broad scope of perceptual influence. Such industrial era concepts, as the author notes elsewhere, are conceptually and methodologically inadequate to understanding recent and future conflicts where the production of intentional and spontaneous intangible asymmetries by state and non-state adversaries is key to gaining advantage.[14] In ISIL we find a quantum leap in capability to shape strategic-level outcomes regardless of discrete battlefield victories or losses. Following careful analysis of ISIL's intangible innovations, the study accounts for this leap empirically and conceptually by developing *two*

[13] Venturelli, Shalini, "Dynamics of the Information Environment for Security & Stabilization." Field Study Report & Assessment for US Commanders, U/FOUO, (2014a).
Venturelli, Shalini, "Solving the Complex Puzzle of Security Capability of Partnered Forces in Afghanistan and Iraq." Field Study Report & Assessment for US Commanders, U/FOUO, (2014b).
[14] Ibid.
Venturelli, Shalini, "Advanced Innovations in Joint Force Capability for Active Defense of the Information Environment to Prevent, Shape and Win Future Conflicts," Prospectus Concept Proposal for JIOWC/J9 (2014c).

new concepts for assessment of intangible capabilities of future adversaries. Since there is a high likelihood other opponents, violent networks and competitor states will learn and acquire this type of proficiency as they deconstruct ISIL's methods, the study's contribution of the two empirically informed theoretical concepts outlined below may acquire increased significance for the future Joint Force.

The study introduces two new concepts to explain ISIL's advances. The concepts provide a way to analyze ISIL's strategic design of communicative values (content qualities) to reach some of the deepest layers of meaning and reasoning across communities. The concepts are as follows: (a) *'ontological depth' capability is defined by the study as the ability to modify social reality of existential interests for identity, community, and security—in short, the power to reconstruct the underlying model of survival*; (b) *'epistemological depth' capability, on the other hand, is defined by the study as the ability to modify and shape the fundamental grounds of judgment, validity of discourse and argumentation, and legitimacy of order*. *'Ontological depth'* capability in communicative values interacts meaningfully and effectively with social construction of deep existential beliefs about identity, order, and power. *'Epistemological depth'* capability in communicative values interacts with deep axiomatic knowledge foundations, especially the grounds of judgment-formation (as opposed to the more superficial surface layer of perception-formation), logic systems, concepts of validity of reasoning and argument, and notions of legitimacy, authenticity, and authority. By targeting the fundamental ontological and epistemological layers of being, belief, identity, community, order, collective will, and doctrinal reasoning on validity, authority and legitimacy, ISIL has gained what no other jihadist organization, including Al Qaeda, has yet been able to achieve in categories of network-formation, high-quality human capital and skills, tactical victories, and the production of new forms of order and strategic realignments. All these gains are the product of developing and operationalizing these two power-law and strategic capabilities.

The study's complex integrated analysis of primary data reveal that the core method employed by ISIL to achieve these depth capabilities in the conflict environment is the methodology of powerful hermeneutics. ISIL's hermeneutic methodology exceeds all previously known levels of interpretive power in formulating expressions of doctrinal legitimacy and categorical imperative for commission of individual and mass ritualized murder as an essential tenet of the practice of authentic Islam. *Ontological and epistemological depth realized by means of hermeneutic power* is producing results on all fronts, simultaneously increasing recruitment, attracting network alliances, instilling fear and flight among non-Sunni population groups, deterring adversaries and security forces, and winning battles by dramatically weakening in real time the resolve of opposing forces and entities. It is also undermining the legitimacy of Arab states and their regimes, as well as the established forms of official Islam sanctioned and resourced by governments. Ontological and epistemological depth in the form of hermeneutic power-projection across all communicative platforms is inspiring jihadist networks across North Africa, Southwest Asia and Southeast Asia. Most notable, ISIL's doctrinal hermeneutic power has gained the tacit and explicit sympathy of Muslim populations in the region as well as in Europe, Africa, and Asia, which are drawn to its promise of excavation and reinstatement of authentic

Islam and the will to bring about such a realization on the physical and intangible fields of battle as called for in received doctrine.

Proficiency in even one of these power-law capabilities is a huge strategic advancement in asymmetric warfare; possessing *both* ontological *and* epistemological effectiveness through forceful and capable hermeneutics and granular doctrinal exegesis is an exponential burst in warfighting capability across all functional areas that not only projects force and drives actors, resources, and decisions within the existing battlespace and immediate terrain, but allows expansive reach into the geopolitical and geostrategic battlespace to strategically reconstruct and redefine the broader tangible-intangible ecosystem of the conflict.

This is what is meant by evolutionary 'power law' dynamics: generating an emergent ecosystem—in this case, the Middle East region and US guaranteed international order—to suit the requirements of the entity—in this case, ISIL. Compared with the 'adaptive' concept of how network entities adjust to fit in with the pre-existing environment, evolutionary power law gains are on a qualitatively different transformative scale, not just in orders of magnitude but also in range and modes of effect. ISIL's ontological and epistemological depth capabilities also show what is meant by *real* power to induce intangible strategic influence, as compared with prevailing methodologies of influence as a formulaic construct, a set of mechanics, or a psyops technique applied to shape the more discernible and superficial surface layer of perception within the operational area.

The two new influence capabilities identified in this study are unexpected emergent properties arising from ISIL's evolutionary trait No. 1 above of integration of informational elements into all operations thereby annihilating systems boundaries between physical and intangible dimensions of strategy and tactics in warfare. ISIL's more effective influence capabilities also create access to an *essential resource in population-based war: gaining the 'moral advantage' over your adversary*. Once achieved, 'moral advantage' provides legitimacy and authority for leveraging vital operations on the ground, such as: (a) producing civilian sanctuary and support; (b) strengthening capacity to capture and control Sunni communities; (c) and channeling decision-making in the region toward outcomes favorable to ISIL among leaders, competing networks, power players, and targeted population groups in Arab societies and beyond.

These two findings alone suggest that in order to shape the operational environment and achieve the mission, the Joint Force urgently requires now and in future far more advanced intangible capability to develop effective counter-strategies against an adversary's strategic-depth influence. Current concepts and training are inadequate to the task of winning wars where—as in this case and in other emerging threats—there is seamless continuity between the physical and intangible battlespace.

3) *ISIL has evolved powerful resilient traits from a wide range of innovations whose combined effects are not additive but instead enhanced through nonlinear interactions, thereby resulting in robustness in systems growth and fluidity of responsive and anticipatory mechanisms*. The study assessed the evolutionary capability and persistence of the ISIL network through several attributes of resilience, including the capacity of the ISIL network-system to absorb

perturbations (shocks and disturbance). While simultaneously undergoing transformative change adding new functions and capabilities, ISIL has also been retaining and improving the same functions, distributed structure, core identity, and feedback learning mechanisms. The study's analysis of ISIL's systems dynamics can further identify its future trajectory. The study finds that among the most important resilient traits the network has acquired is robustness to uncertainty, which gives it the power to project force with single-minded strategic intent in conducting operations. Robustness also gives ISIL the will and fluidity to resist opposition even in the face of overwhelming force applied daily by the US military and its coalition partners. The continuously changing environment of new leadership in Iraq that involves a field of multiple opponents battling for control in Syria and Iraq has not slowed ISIL's expansion into neighboring countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, even Turkey, and in North African countries of Egypt and Libya.

ISIL's leaders and its membership demonstrate a cogent recognition that *stasis presents a greater existential threat than any powerful military assault*. In evolutionary terms, stasis is indeed a bigger threat to an organism's resilience than a hostile and lethal opponent who may paradoxically induce new and progressive functional capabilities in its target. As ISIL survives air attacks on its infrastructure, it will develop even further asymmetric functional capabilities that are progressive in nature, thus making it all the more robust. Inversely, this trait could also be exploited by US forces to compel ISIL into a temporal and spatial zone where, in order to continue operations and carry out its mission, it must shrink its footprint, retreat into a garrison-mode and remain for a while in a relative state of stasis. Based on the study's finding, such a channeled or even coerced pathway would most certainly undermine ISIL's robustness and resilience capability. As a distributed and expanding network organization, *it must maintain a specific bandwidth of operational tempo to generate the force and energy that allows extensions in functional capabilities*. In this respect, it is the very antithesis of the Iraqi army, which is structurally bias toward inertia.

The study finds, therefore, that one of ISIL's greatest strengths is also one of its vulnerabilities since it has developed a systems bias for those precise resilient traits that are uniquely resistant to stasis. Nevertheless, there the analysis reveals worrisome indications that the only other force based in the region also concurrently acquiring some of the same but more limited resilient capabilities, is the Assad regime's Syrian Army in its war against rebels and jihadist networks, including ISIL. For now, the regime's military's forces are nowhere near the innovative and evolutionary levels of ISIL. Thus, this violent jihadist network with capabilities to win battles and impose systemic forms of harsh order will continue to grow and threaten the region until its evolutionary capabilities are destroyed and the organization is defeated by the only force capable of doing so, which remains the US military. Based on the study's analysis, defeating ISIL will require a higher order dynamical, full-spectrum tangible-intangible multimodal strategy, operational concept, plan and execution. Weakening some parts of ISIL's system while leaving other components and functions intact will only further contribute to the networks resilience and perpetuation.

4) Other innovation and evolutionary capabilities continue to emerge in this ongoing study of ISIL. Elaborated in the full report, here is a small sampling of two additional areas:

- *Concept of the 'global army'*: This is a concept of remote 'operations-in-place' initiated by individuals who self-recruit to the network through spontaneous, non-resourced operational initiative conducted within their own native homelands. ISIL does not need to allocate resources or personnel, or even build a communications infrastructure to implement such a concept. It has only to continue strengthening its capabilities for ontological and epistemological depth to inspire and spread violent social action at a remote distance from the Middle East. Efforts to extend the conflict to other regions and turn Western societies into a battlefield by innovating remote and spontaneous operations can enhance the strategic transnational dynamics of the network.

- *Upgrading the broader jihadist innovation platform*: ISIL is provoking evolutionary effects on the broader paradigm of violent jihad by creating an upward inflationary spiral in jihadist network capability that extends to its affiliates and competitor networks, such as Al Qaeda. It is already drawing recruits from regions dominated by other networks that have started to adopt ISIL's concepts and methods in order to inspire membership and gain in operational proficiency. Consequently, improvements in ISIL's evolutionary capabilities are contributing upgrades through spillover effects across all networks that together constitute the violent jihadist 'innovation platform.'

- *Strategically orchestrate conflict in adjacent theaters*: ISIL's growth and expansion is driven not just by recruitment and conquest of communities, but by functioning as it is already as a force of attraction for networks across the MENA region from Algeria extending in an unbroken band to Southwest Asia. Operating from Iraq/Syria, it has started to strategically orchestrate, synchronize and spread the conflict, which serves as a net advantage in the mitigation of risks from setback or degradation inflicted by the US led campaign. This requires US forces to think several steps ahead on how to defeat ISIL geopolitically by expanding the battlespace even as US forces, allies and partners prevail tactically in the Iraq/Syria field operational area.

Predictions of ISIL's Evolutionary Trajectory & Implications for the Region

A number of critical predictions emerge from the application of the study's model and analytical method to the assessment of ISIL. These are taken up at length in the full report. Moreover, predictions will be periodically recalibrated based on continuing assessment of ISIL's capability, interactions and responses to the intent, decisions and actions of opponents and key players, including responses to the US military, in addition to geopolitical spillover effects. The author's field investigations of complex drivers of conflict in the battlefield over an extended period of time show that interactions of underlying factors do not produce standard linear effects. On the contrary, unstable environments generate complex interactions and spontaneous asymmetries that can only be understood through non-linear evolutionary and intangible dynamics.[15] Recent

[15] Venturelli, Shalini, "Dynamics of the Information Environment for Security & Stabilization." Field Study Report & Assessment for US Commanders in Afghanistan, U/FOUO, (2014a).

wars have intellectually prepared US combatant commanders to grasp this deeper dimension of the intangible war. However, this knowledge has yet to be codified and transferred in doctrine and staff training to provide commanders with the complex analysis and concepts they require or prepare the Joint Force for the dynamical shifts taking place in current and future pathways of conflicts.

In addition to those addressed in previous sections of this paper, the study's current assessment of ISIL's developmental trajectory and impact include, for example, the following sets of predictions:

- ISIL is rapidly transferring knowledge, methods, and capabilities to other networks by virtue of the common jihadist innovation platform. Some of its own key capabilities were adopted from networks in other regions, such as learning from the transformation of Taliban networks from the centralized to cellular and distributed insurgency networks in Afghanistan and Pakistan as a result of decimation of network leadership caused by US precision strikes. The US military's initially reasonable working concept of networks assumes that networks are node-dependent. Remove the leadership node, and the network disintegrates, is the concept's central premise. However, as the author documented in recent field studies for commanders, these assumptions were conceptually linear and thus flawed, unable to predict the pathways of network evolution as both mitigation against loss of leadership, as well as sudden emergent properties of cumulative micro innovations over a period of a decade of war.[16] Using the common jihadist innovation platform of rapidly diffused adaptation and innovation strategies shared across networks and regions, ISIL did not have to experiment with this specific type of network innovation. In order to evolve a distributed structure and concept of leadership substitution by cultivating a deep bench of operational commanders and ideological innovators, it merely had to conduct a careful study of methods, responses, and effects already innovated by jihadist networks in Southwest Asia. The documented in the author's previous field study, the Taliban had already developed this unique type of evolved resilience which ISIL was clever enough to asses and adopt even before the network burst out of the Syrian civil war's terrorist incubation chamber. Once unleashed as it has been by ISIL, these and other evolutionary capabilities cannot be reversed or effaced from the jihadist corpus of concepts, skills and methods.

  The study's analysis of knowledge transfer mechanism within the global jihadist innovation platform predicts that from now on and into the foreseeable future, the US military in any encounter with a jihadist network on the battlefield can reliably expect to confront several or more ISIL-like tangible and intangible capabilities in warfighting and strategic depth-influence. Consequently, a defeat of ISIL will not bring about an end to

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Venturelli, Shalini, "Solving the Complex Puzzle of Security Capability of Partnered Forces in Afghanistan and Iraq." Field Study Report & Assessment for US Commanders in Afghanistan, U/FOUO, (2014b).

Venturelli, Shalini, "Advanced Innovations in Joint Force Capability for Active Defense of the Information Environment to Prevent, Shape and Win Future Conflicts," Prospectus Concept Proposal for JIOWC/J9 (2014c).

[16] Ibid.

this advanced class of violent jihad since its capabilities are transferring at a rapid rate, producing jihadist dynamics of its own. The effects of the knowledge/capability transfer will be observed after a period of incubation during which other jihadist networks will inject new modifications into the ISIL model and field test their model in limited operations to adjust and improve their methods. When this period ends, the study predicts there will be a surge of more capable violent networks across the globe creating newer and more serious threats to regional and international stability. Even as the future Joint Force prepares to eradicate them overseas, these threats will be more acutely felt than at present inside the US homeland and in European countries and, accordingly, should be adequately prepared for in advance by domestic security agencies.

- As previous outlined, ISIL's 'moral advantage' acquired through projection and communication of ontological and epistemological depth capability relies on doctrinal hermeneutics or powerful, granular exegetics and interpretations of the Koran. It would be a mistake to view this as 'information operations' (IO) or even 'ideology,' since ISIL's has created newer forms and modes of intangible depth capability. The IO and ideology-type concepts do not account for the strategic impact on decision makers, population groups, and key players of ISIL has gained by shifting even modifying the deepest layers of beliefs about existential meaning, order, and legitimacy. The study finds that ISIL has created momentum through a 'moral imperative' in the region and beyond, forging, perhaps for the first time, a collective consciousness within the Islamic public sphere, which itself comprises a powerful dimension of the Global Information Commons. This will strengthen its legitimacy, recruitment of high-quality human capital, and a growing support base in Muslim communities. Other networks have been far less proficient in creating 'moral-exegesis' on the playing field of the Islamic public sphere.

  Based on these observations and analysis, the study predicts that while ISIL itself may eventually be destroyed, the idea of ISIL as a carrier of the moral imperative will remain alive in the Muslim collective conscience and thus inspire even more radical Koranic or doctrinal hermeneutics and ideological innovation to move manpower, resources and inspire jihadist operations. Thus the current conflict is producing a radically different type of jihadist leadership that has never been seen before in any type of organizational system, where leadership is invested not in the charismatic and indispensable individual, but in the New Jihad Ideology itself. When the Doctrine itself becomes 'The Leader' of mass violence and acts of extreme brutality, which in essence describes the evolutionary trajectory of ISIL's ideological innovations, then an entirely different strategy will have to be devised by the West to address an entirely new typology and scale of threat.

- ISIL has opened a unique pathway of perpetual struggle through perpetual war for the 'imagined community' of the caliphate. The key to understanding this pathway is the study's predictive analysis that it is not the imagined community itself that is the endstate because the caliphate is a functional imagined state for acquiring legitimacy

and inspiring social action. Instead, ISIL's endstate is also its core identity and rationale: the perpetual war. The minute it achieves its mission and the struggle ends, is the minute it will lose its identity.

Therefore, the study predicts that ISIL will experiment on the ground with each new community it controls, with the application of its concept of social order through harsh Sharia. So long as it can continue to capture terrain, control communities, and demonstrate its concept of order, it will maintain its rationale and identity. Even if defeated, its followers will carry the perpetual war to new borders. But the minute it achieves statehood, it will be forced into a condition of stasis, unable to evolve further, and unable to project strategic depth-influence that inspires support and recruitment. Eventually routed and replaced by other opposing forces in this state of stasis, it will in the interim be surrounded by uncertainty and instability, challenged to maintain a defensive posture.

Consequently, the ISIL network will continue to move forward with waging its Ceaseless War concept and strategy to engender further evolutionary gains for itself and other jihadist entities. This will create long-term destabilization effects, regional realignments and restructuring within and beyond the operating area, or perhaps beyond its geopolitical boundaries. These objectives are far closer to ISIL's true strategic goals than the settled caliphate.

Dynamical Strategy Response Against ISIL's Evolutionary Network Capabilities

The study's framework, analysis and findings suggest ISIL's complex evolutionary effects will necessitate a dynamical response that achieves overmatch against the network's evolutionary and asymmetric advantages. The response must be informed by the dynamical principles of flexibility, fluidity, multimodality, and targeting of both the tangible and intangible capabilities of ISIL.

Here are just a few examples of proposed operational objectives informed by the study's framework and findings:

- Forcing ISIL into a defensive posture to reorganize. This is best achieved with quick-reaction fluid cells that can project power spatially and dominate the temporal dimension through unpredictable strikes.

- Maintaining continuous surprise asymmetry to force ISIL to relinquish its attack mode for a garrison-mode. A garrison posture renders many of the network's critical evolutionary capabilities inert since these were evolved for tangible and intangible depth projection and not to defend a specific patch of sand.

- Containing ISIL within a contiguous area to conduct systematic multimodal operations with continuity and integration between the physical and intangible dimensions of operations. This allows security forces to build local population confidence in the will of coalition and partner forces to dominate and control the field.

- Demonstrating domination/control capability and effective order to local population to undermine belief in ISIL's invincibility and system of supplying social order.

- Prioritizing the information environment through integrated operations, including nonlethal targeting to dominate the information battlespace.

- Strengthening the warfighting capabilities of partnered forces in tangible and intangible areas. It is especially important for partnered forces to acquire the 'will to dominate,' develop cohesive force identity, effective leadership, concepts of intelligence-driven operations, quick-reaction cellular operational capability, concepts of operational planning, and multipillar coordination. The author has studied and documented first-hand recent groundbreaking advances in advising models for strengthening these complex, but essential, intangible warfighting capabilities of partnered forces.[17] Real security capability advances, through the use of more innovative and effective advising methods recently demonstrated in theater, can be rapidly scaled and applied to advising efforts for Iraqi forces and Syrian rebel forces.

- Developing continuous complex analysis of the intangible environment for commanders. Field-based multidisciplinary analysis for commanders and planners is an essential precondition of winning complex, asymmetric wars from this point and into the future. Without such analytical support in real time—expertise, knowledge, and skills that are currently beyond the capability of military intelligence, the military reporting system, or contractor-led studies—commanders will be unable to design innovative concepts and operations for seamlessly integrating tangible and intangible targeting within the battlespace.

- Disrupting the convergence of ISIL and regional Jihadist networks. This will require concurrent operations on multiple fronts and in multiple dimensions of the conflict.

The study has also developed a set of metric data requirements and data-collection plan for a dynamical strategy response. It is available on request and included in a full report.

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Thematic Analysis of ISIL Messaging (Dr. Lawrence A. Kuznar,[19] Indiana University – Purdue University, Fort Wayne & NSI & Mr. William H. Moon, Department of the Air Force)

Abstract. Thematic analysis was conducted on a corpus of 14 speeches by two key ISIL spokesmen (al 'Adnani and al Baghdadi) to answer two questions: "What are the intangible factors that make ISIL so magnetic, inspirational, and deeply resonant with a specific, but large, portion of the Islamic population?" and "How durable is the organization versus the idea or ideology likely to be?"

The key themes that resonate with ISIL followers include: victory is destined and ordained, ISIL successes are evidence of their destined victory, victory can only be achieved through violence, rewards and honor will accrue to those who fight (especially in the hereafter), and the primary enemies are apostate Sunni, Shi'a, Americans, Westerners, Jews, and then all others.

These themes appear to resonate with disaffected young males, aggrieved Sunni, and an increasing number of active jihadists and provide ISIL with short-term durability. However, the rejection of their message by the vast majority of Muslims and their need to continue to achieve victory, along with discrepancies between their rhetoric and behavior indicates that ISIL may not be sustainable indefinitely as an organization, especially if *effectively* opposed.[20] However, given the history of Sunni grievances in the region and the appeal of the Caliphate narrative, their ability to recruit is likely to endure.

Important takeaways

1. *Violence* is the message; it is the only way to establish justice
2. *Victory* and *success* are essential to maintain their appeal and attract support, although set-backs will likely be denied or claimed as a special case of victimization
3. According to ISIL, the Caliphate is ordained by God and therefore *destined*; it will not fail to be achieved
4. ISIL's message is *hopeful*; it attracts people to build something tangible that ISIL has created, although through hatred and violence
5. ISIL's message is deeply embedded in concepts fundamental to the Sunni Islam and difficult, although not impossible, to counter on an ideological level
6. Messages must be understood in the context of Salafist ideology *as interpreted by ISIL* in order to appreciate how these messages initially attract, and ultimately retain, ISIL supporters.
7. ISIL messaging has transparently laid out ISIL intentions; it should be taken seriously

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[20] While military opposition is necessary to stem their expansion, *effective* requires that no one plays into their narrative and provides them with a Western, unbelieving enemy they can use to rally and expand their base among potential allies, Jihadist and otherwise.

8. ISIL speeches effectively bundle messages that will appeal to different audiences (potential foreign fighters in the West, young males in the Middle East, aggrieved Sunni in Iraq and Syria).

Introduction

This thematic analysis was conducted to answer two questions:

1. "What are the intangible factors that make ISIL so magnetic, inspirational, and deeply resonant with a specific, but large, portion of the Islamic population?" and
2. "How durable is the organization versus the idea or ideology likely to be?"

Magnetism: Key themes that resonate with their supporters include hope of regained honor by establishing a Caliphate, destined victory and success, their tangible successes are evidence of their destiny, and righteous and violent retribution.

Portion of the Islamic Population: However, ISIL has attracted approximately 15,000 foreign fighters, or a mere 0.005%, of the global Muslim population, so they are *magnetic only to a minute fraction of their target population*. However, their low success rate has given them enough fighters to accomplish their goals to date.

Durability: In the near-run (months and years), ISIL's efforts to attract followers is sustainable. However, their ability to sustain their growth and expand indefinitely as an organization appears to be limited given the apparent lack of enthusiasm for their message throughout the Islamic world, coupled with the apparent need for them to sustain victories and rewards for their supporters. However, the movement they represent, to regain lost glory of Islam and address the grievances of Sunni through opposition to their enemies, is likely to endure because of Sunni grievances and appeal of the narrative.

The thematic analysis described in this paper identifies key themes that appeal to ISIL supporters, explains why some of these themes resonate with particular audiences, and identifies potential weaknesses in ISIL messaging. The paper is structured as follows: Description of the Data, Description of Theories and Methods, and Results.

Corpus of ISIL Messages: The Data

The corpus was composed of 14 speeches and other messages broadcast by ISIL spokesmen Abu Muhammed al-'Adnani (seven speeches) and leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (seven speeches). The materials were initially collected in English translation off of the web, but for the sake of consistency, copies provided by the Open Source Center (OSC) were used.

Thematic Analysis: Theory and Method

A central problem in the interpretation of discourse is that no machine can read text like a human, but humans are inherently subjective, rendering their interpretations ungrounded and suspect. Furthermore, discourse is always interpreted in specific historical and cultural contexts, and a means for appreciating the meaning of discourse in context is essential, if any valid interpretation is possible.

The approach used in this study has been developed to overcome these limitations by rendering the interpretation of themes empirical and transparent, and therefore vulnerable to scientific tests (Fenstermacher, Kuznar & Yager, 2012). It limits subjectivity, strikes a balance by using humans to code and systematically capture cultural nuance, yet provides data amenable to quantitative analysis. These data are used to reveal how concepts relate in larger narratives that have meaning in a particular cultural context and that motivate behavior. It draws from the following theoretical perspectives: grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss, 2008), critical discourse theory (van Dijk ,2004; Fairclough, 2001), narrative analysis and framing theory (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), and evolutionary biology (Tiger 1969; Atran 2003).

Finally, the approach employed in this study has been applied to studies of Afghan insurgent literature (Kuznar & Yager, 2012), anticipation of conflict between Indian and Pakistan (Kuznar, Yager, St. Clair & Stephenson, 2012), North Korean missile testing (Kuznar, 2013), trust as expressed in Iranian discourse (Kuznar & Yager, 2013), and violent actions initiated by Bashar al-Assad (Kuznar, Suedfeld, Morrison, Cross & Spitaletta, 2014). A number of commonalities in how people reveal their intentions through their discourse, discovered through these studies, informed this study and provided some a priori expectations.

Thematic analysis provides the basic method for identifying critical elements of language used in persuasive communication (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The following units of analysis are defined in this study.

T**hemes** are words or phrases that convey a connotative meaning; the meaning is greater than the description implied by the word or phrase.

Rhetorical Devices are ways of using language to influence an audience. Examples include poetry, hyperbole, metaphor, symbolism, examples, logic, etc.

Theme Associations are correlated themes and rhetorical devices that reinforce one another and tend to co-occur, bolstering one another's effects on the recipient.

All speeches were blind coded without identifying information to minimize bias. Culturally relevant themes and rhetorical devices were identified with associated specific language. Statistical analysis of the frequency and density of themes and rhetorical devices (# themes / 1000 words) were conducted to identify patterns in theme use and associations among themes. **Theme density** is a measure of common and presumably important themes. Some themes that have great impact may be mentioned less often and the analysis considers some of these as well.

Results

Results are based on measures of theme density and focus on the following: the overall message conveyed by the corpus, messaging specific to al 'Adnani and al 'Baghdadi, theme associations that resonate with potential audiences, and trends in messaging through time.

The Overall ISIL Message

Considering the corpus as a whole, the most densely noted themes (> 1 / 1000 words) express an explicitly violent Jihad against Infidels (*kuffar*, unbelievers) with the purpose of establishing a Caliphate for a true Ummah (community of believers). Some of these themes appear to address different aspects of ISIL's messaging, including Religion, the Caliphate, the Fighters (Mujahideen), and Graphic Violence.[21]

Islamic religious themes of particular importance include: Destiny (God has ordained our movement), *Tawhid* (oneness of God), *Minhaaj* (correct methodology or path based on Hadith and Sunnah), possessing Truth, and Forgiveness of sins.

Caliphate relevant themes include Destiny (the Caliphate is destined), History (historical precedents indicate this Caliphate is destined), and the establishment of Sharia law.

Fighter relevant themes include Destiny (the fight is destined), Honor, Overcoming hardships and Unity of a brotherhood.

Violence-related themes include frequent use of Graphic violent imagery (reference to dismemberment, blood, throat slitting), and the Humiliation of enemies.

Figurative Language (metaphor, symbolism), Graphic violence and Pejoratives (name calling, profanity) are liberally used to emphasize their message, more than in other terrorist and insurgent literatures we have analyzed.

ISIL enemies, listed in order of their density are: Infidels (*kuffar*), Shi'a, America, Tyrants (*Tawaghiit*, refers to dictatorial rulers in Middle East, but also carries Qur'anic connotations), Jews, Crusaders (a catch-all term for Western powers), and the Sunni Awakening Councils in Iraq. Other enemies are mentioned only very infrequently.

It is important to elaborate on the violence-related themes. ISIL's world is strictly divided into two camps: the camp of Islam and faith and the camp of *kufr* (disbelief) and hypocrisy. From ISIL's perspective, without *Jihad fi sabiil Allah* (struggle for the sake of Allah) and *qitaal* (fighting) and strict adherence to and enforcement of *al-walaa'* (amity, allegiance, devotion) *wal-baraa'* (enmity, disavowal), a significant component of *al-'Aqidah As-Salafiyyah* (Salafi dogma/belief system), the *kuffar* (unbelievers) and hypocrites (*munafiqoun*) will never be defeated and the Khilafah (Caliphate) will not evolve.

In its simplest connotation, the phrase *al-walaa' wal-baraa'* means, on one hand, drawing near to what is pleasing to Allah (SWT[22]) and His Messenger (SWS) and, on the other hand, withdrawing from what is displeasing to Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SWS). Although this concept rests upon or is nested in numerous other, often pan-Islamic tenets such as *tawhidullah*

[21] Actual theme codes used in the analysis are capitalized, and when necessary, explained parenthetically.
[22] SWT Glorified and Exalted is He (Allah), Peace and Mercy upon Him (Prophet)

(the oneness of Allah) it is the interpretation and propagation of *al-walaa' wal-baraa'* found in the ISIL message that al-Baghdadi and al-'Adnani rationalize the use of extreme violence—they do not merely call for disassociation from that which is displeasing to Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SWS) but instead to destroy that which is displeasing. Fellow Sunni Muslims are not exempt from finding themselves as labeled among *al-baraa'*. Additionally, the ISIL message clearly conveys that the *kuffar* and true believers cannot coexist here in this world and they will not share the afterlife; e.g., "A *kafir* and his killer will never gather in Hellfire" [Sahih Muslim].

All of these messages likely operate on multiple levels, meaningful to different audiences ISIL wishes to persuade. On a more superficial level, the sense of destiny, excitement, and meaningful belonging, punctuated with graphic imagery, is likely to resonate with young males, including those within the region, recent converts to radical Islam in the West, and even non-Muslims who may be looking for a meaningful cause. Similarly, their appeal to Sunni grievances potentially resonates with even Sunnis who are not particularly orthodox or not of the Salafist school of thought who feel that they have been oppressed by non-Sunnis or Sunnis working on behalf of Western interests.

On a deeper level, the appeal to broadly accepted Islamic principles (*Tawhid*, prophecy, Sunnah), combined with a reconstructed narrative of the return to the lost glory of the Caliphate, provides a deeper narrative that can resonate with religiously oriented Sunni, and initiates who may have been initially attracted by the more superficial message. ISIL's message is also likely to resonate with Sunni in the region who may not be explicitly of the Salafist school, but whose worldview is impacted by Salafist ideas, considering the fact that the Sunni Muslims in the contested region are familiar with the "tenets/principles" (pan-Islamic) that serve as the foundation/premises of the ISIL's particular Salafist argument.

It is important to point out that, while ISIL commits acts condemned by the vast majority of Muslims, more moderate Muslims have difficulty arguing against the broad principles in which ISIL cloaks their justifications; they are truisms of the faith. In this way, ISIL effectively engages in "*moral outbidding*," in attempting to command the high ground in competing narratives within Islam.

The outgroups mentioned by ISIL provide insight into those they regard as their primary enemies, and perhaps into the order in which they might want to engage them. ISIL's widespread use of "infidel" often refers to other Sunni who are seen as apostates and hypocrites, and they often refer to the Awakening Councils that initially struck back at AQI, the predecessor to ISIL. It appears that other Sunni "unbelievers" are the most immediate and proximate enemy they are concerned with fighting, unless those apostates repent and join ISIL's jihad. Shi'a (often referred to pejoratively as Rejectionists, Rafidhah, and Safavids) are clearly their next priority as enemies. Americans are close behind Shi'a as ISIL's enemies, followed by Jews (Israel), and the general category of Crusader.

ISIL Authors: Adnani vs. Baghdadi

Both al-'Adnani and al-Baghdadi exhibit very similar use of themes. A Pearson's *r* of the theme density of the top 82 themes both authors employ is $r = 0.774$, and a Spearman's rho of the ranking of these themes is *rho* = 0.568, both statistically significant at $p < .00001$ level.

Both authors assiduously reference Quranic and Hadith verse to justify and highlight their successes to emphasize their arguments.

However, there is a different emphasis in their messages. Al-'Adnani emphasizes the destined violent Jihad against specific enemies such as unbelievers (*kuffar*), Shi'a and Americans, and makes more use of graphic and violent imagery.

Al-Baghdadi makes more appeals to foreign fighters, emphasizing that they have a duty to immigrate (*hijrah*) to the region to wage violent Jihad. This message is especially relevant to specific Hadith that stress how the waging of violent Jihad is an obligation, and failure to engage in violent Jihad is an indication of infidelity. Al Baghdadi's more recent missives have stressed the need for patience.

ISIL Theme Associations

Themes are cultural elements, expressed through language, and people assemble them, much like bricks, to create a larger edifice, a narrative, that expresses a complex of meaning to an audience. The blind coding methodology permits a more objective and empirically traceable method for identifying the associated themes people use to influence others. The theme densities are analyzed with Principle Components Analysis to identify clusters of themes that reinforce one another. This analysis demonstrated that ISIL messengers densely pack each message with many themes meant to reinforce one another. The first component of the factor analysis indicated that the following themes were highly correlated.

This factor might be labeled "Violent Jihad Ordained for Victory." It integrates a message of Hope that it is the absolute Truth that you, the Mujahideen, have an ordained (Religious Verse) Duty to pledge Allegiance to a Caliphate in the oneness of God (*Tawhid*) on the right path (*Minhaaj*) to wage Jihad against Tyrants in an apocalyptic battle (Judgment Day). The Jihad must be violent (Violent Confrontation); peace is not an option (Peace is Futile). You will need to be Patient and Sacrifice to Overcome hardships. In the end, your enemies (Infidels, Awakening Councils, false Scholars, Crusaders, Jews) will fear you and your strength. You will right Injustice and gain Honor. An underlying concept is that of *al-walaa' wal-baraa'* or allegiance and disavowal. This concept allows ISIL to flexibly define ingroups (true believers, or the true *Ummah*) distinct from outgroups (infidels, regardless of their professed religious affiliation), enabling ISIL to define anyone as an infidel and, therefore, permissible for killing, torture or enslavement.

This first factor ties together most of the themes essential to ISIL's message, and illustrates how key elements of ISIL's message are inextricably intertwined and must be understood as a whole.

Trends through Time

Trends in theme use over time can give clues to a speaker's intentions and provide indicators and warnings. While the sample is small, there are some trends in the overall corpus, and especially in the rhetoric of al-'Adnani and al-Baghdadi.

'Adnani demonstrates a number of increasing trends in his discourse. The themes of Destiny, Victory, Caliphate and Shirk (polytheists, which includes Alawites; unbelieving Sunni; Shi'a; and potentially anyone who does not strictly adhere to the "correct path" [*minhaaj*] decreed by ISIL) are all statistically increasing, indicating that he is using these themes to impress upon followers that the Caliphate is competent and destined to defeat its enemies. Al-'Adnani is also increasingly mentioning Christians and Americans, indicating that these are current and future enemies to be targeted.

Al-Baghdadi exhibits several increasing trends, including Caliphate, Destiny, Undefeatable, and Strength emphasizing that the Caliphate is religiously ordained and destined and strong. Interestingly, he exhibits a decreasing mention of foreign fighters, indicating that he may have a decreasing concern with attracting them.

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Comparative Psychological Profiles: Baghdadi & Zawahiri (Maj Jason Spitaletta,[23] USMCR, Joint Staff J7 & The Johns Hopkins University-Applied Physics Laboratory)

Abstract

An underlying assumption of what intelligible characteristics make the Islamic State magnetic was that the charisma of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the self-appointed Caliph, was significantly greater than that of Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, the successor to Osama Bin Laden and the current emir of Al Qaeda. Expedient comparative psychological profiles of each leader were generated using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Baghdadi may be a high value target (HVT), but is not likely a high payoff target (HPT). While he is likely to be perceived as more charismatic than Zawahiri, the relative charisma of a leader may not necessarily translate into lower-level recruitment. Furthermore, charisma is subjective, as different communities possess varied expectations from their leaders. While he has been elevated in stature by the political rhetoric (namely the work of Adnani), Baghdadi's Islamic State is not a cult of personality, however, and their structure may be less vulnerable to decapitation than other groups with more charismatic leaders.

Introduction

One of the questions posed to the OSD-SMA network was what were the intangible qualities of the Islamic State (ISIL) that made them so magnetic. An immediate assumption that underlies the subsequent research was that the charisma of Abu Bakr al Baghdadi (Ibrahim Awad Ibrahim al Badri al Samarrai) the self-appointed Caliph of the Islamic State was significantly greater than that of Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, the successor to Osama Bin Ladin and the current emir of Al Qaeda. Individual charisma is often necessary to begin a revolution as the risk required of underground operations necessitates a leader who is regularly able to motivate and provide justification for such risk (Bos et al., 2013). Charismatic authority rests on a commanding devotion to an individual's sacrosanct character and the concomitant normative patterns of behavior (Weber, 2009). Charismatic leadership is the result of a unique personality and/or experience that differentiate a leader from those around him or her (Yuki, Gordon, & Taber, 2002) and that these extraordinary characteristics are often regarded by followers as exemplary and/or divine in nature (Weber, 2009). Charismatic leaders often visionaries who demonstrate some combination of emotionality, activity, sensitivity to the sociopolitical landscape, intense interest in and empathy toward their followers, superior rhetorical and persuasive skills, and exemplary behavior in the form of sacrificing their personal ambitions to those of the movement (Bos et al., 2013).

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Methods

While there is scant biographical data on Baghdadi, there is sufficient information to on Zawahiri to serve as a comparison and/or rule out certain characteristics. Much of the information on Zawahiri was the result of an Integrated Personality Profile of Zawahiri using Post's (2005) approach that was incorporated into a chapter on underground leadership in Bos et al. (2013). To the extent possible, similar methods were used for Baghdadi, but the sources were limited to media reporting along with some more in-depth analysis such as that of Ligon et al. (2014) and Barrett (2014). To help contextualize the comparison, a quantitative approach to Integrative Complexity Scoring using ProfilerPlus software was employed for eight Baghdadi speeches (4/8/13-11/13/14) totaling 16554 words, five Zawahiri speeches where ISIL was mentioned (6/9/13-5/24/14) totaling 7300 words, and five Adnani speeches (6/19/13-9/22/14) totaling 30636 words. Integrative Complexity (IC) scoring proceeds on a 1–7 scale with 7 indicating the highest degree of complexity in a selection of text (Suedfeld, 2010). Each speech was analyzed by paragraphs, multiple IC scores were averaged, and the resultant mean and standard deviation were assigned to the speech. Automated approaches to IC scoring have methodological limitations, namely the tendency to elevate scores, but ProfilerPlus is nonetheless a valid means of coding and calculating scores for large amounts of data (Suedfeld & Tetlock, 2014).

In addition to IC, ProfilerPlus was also used to analyze a select set of leadership traits based on Hermann's (2002) typology. Hermann (2002) identified seven traits in assessing leadership style and her approach to Leadership Trait Analysis (LTA) is a useful tool in developing psychological profiles of individuals to whom researchers do not have direct access:

1. Belief in Control Over Events (BACE)-Degree of control the target perceives over the environment, akin to self-efficacy.
2. Need for Power (NFP)-Degree of target's concern for establishing, maintaining, or restoring one's power and/or control, influence, or have an impact on other persons or groups.
3. Conceptual Complexity (CC)-Degree of differentiation that the target demonstrates in describing or discussing other people, places, policies, ideas, or things.
4. Self-Confidence (SC)-The target's sense of self-importance or image of his or her ability to cope adequately with objects and persons in the environment.
5. Task Orientation (TO)-The target's relative emphasis on interactions with others when dealing problems as opposed to focusing on the feelings and needs of relevant and important constituents.
6. Distrust (D)-Wariness about others or the degree of the target's suspicion of the motives and actions of others.
7. In-Group Bias (IGB)-A worldview in which one's own group (social, political, ethnic, etc.) holds prominence, is perceived as superior, and/or there are strong emotional attachments to this in-group.

Results

A thorough account of the results of the comparative profiles is beyond the scope of this section; however, brief summaries are included on both Zawahiri and Baghdadi. Zawahiri has exhibited narcissistic, obsessive-compulsive, and paranoid personality traits but not to the degree that would meet the clinical criteria for a disorder (Bos et al, 2013). He presents as contentious/oppositional and dominant/controlling, with secondary features of the dauntless/dissenting and ambitious/self-serving (Bos et al., 2013). His abrasively negativistic (or passive-aggressive) personality manifests in an insecure yet overbearing style that is intolerant of dissention (Bos et al., 2013), something quite evident in his June 9, 2013 rebuke of Baghdadi. Zawahiri is a respected, but divisive figure in the global Salafist insurgency (Bos et al, 2013)—a trend that has migrated from private conversations amongst underground groups (Spitaletta, 2012) to social media (Chin & Kluver, 2014). Zawahiri tends to speak from an ideological/moral high ground but does not dominate the terrain the way his on-camera persona would indicate. In fact, Zawahiri has demonstrated fairly poor management skills first with Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) (Spitaletta, 2012) and later al Qaeda (Spitaletta & Marshall, 2012) and has demonstrated little operational credibility who seemed more comfortable serving as the power behind the throne (Bos et al., 2013). The most important relationship in Zawahiri's life is that with the idealized figure of Sayyid Qutb. Qutb's character, binary worldview, and steadfast devotion to Islamic principles caused the ambitious Zawahiri to identify with Qutb as a surrogate father figure to emulate and to which he continually aspires. Zawahiri is currently dealing the crisis of ego integrity versus despair (Erikson, 1980) at the end of ones' life yet seems uncomfortable ceding control of AQ of the global Salafist insurgency to others; however, options are limited.

Compared to Zawahiri, much less is known about Baghdadi. One version of Baghdadi's biography holds that he was born in Samarra in 1971 and educated at the Islamic University in Baghdad before moving to Fallujah to serve as an assistant Imam (Barrett, 2014). The Islamic State's version claims that Abu Bakr holds a doctorate in Islamic Science and served as an Imam in both Samarra and Fallujah prior to 2003 US invasion prior to co-founding *Jamaat Jaysh Ahl al Sunnah* before being imprisoned in Camp Bucca in 2004 (Barrett, 2014). Imprisonment is often a seminal experience in a revolutionary leader's life (Bos et al, 2013), and it appears to be the same for Baghdadi and his Shura Council (Thomson & Suri, 2014). Post (2004) identified that an individual does not become a leader until he or she encounters his followers and Camp Bucha seems to have hosted that encounter for Baghdadi (McCoy, 2014). His speeches are rife with the notion of oppression/emasculation by tyrants with allusion to his (and ISIL leadership's) experience being imprisoned by the US.

Analysis of Baghdadi's speeches indicates that he is respectful, but not supplicant, toward Zawahiri and considers himself more a successor to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the former emir of Al Qaeda (AQ) in Iraq. There is an underlying theme of Oedipal tension between ISIL as the son to AQ's father; the specific manifestation is evident in Baghdadi's interaction with Zawahiri. In this case, the underlying tension of Baghdadi that manifests in him overcoming the authoritarian Zawahiri is projected onto Sunni males who are attempting to overcome their oppressors

(Fuchsman, 2004). While extrapolating a bit beyond the data, ISIL's ritualization of decapitation (Bunker, 2014) and its inclusion in their messaging (Kuznar, 2014) might also be an implicit communication from Baghdadi to Zawahiri, who condemned such barbarity when used by al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (Bos et al., 2013). Zawahiri's 2005 letter to Zarqawi reveals not only some of the aforementioned personality traits of the former but also a degree of Machiavellian leadership, to which Baghdadi may currently be reacting. Zawahiri's acknowledgment of the populace as the center of gravity of the global Salafist jihad indicates the need, at least somewhat, to retain popular support. In directing Zarqawi, Zawahiri acknowledges the limitation of proselytizing by force as well as the risk of imposing one's religion, in this case on Shia Muslims in Iraq (Bos et al., 2013). That Baghdadi perceives ISIL to be an extension of AQI under Zarqawi and not subordinate to Zawahiri's organization lends support to this hypothesis. Finally, the theme of lions, prominent in Islamic extremist organizations (CTC, 2006), overcoming tyrants is an appeal to an ISIL ideal masculinity—the Sunni Muslim who risks his life for the betterment of the Caliphate and the Umma. This particularly theme resonates with males across lifespan and psychological vulnerabilities.

Baghdadi showed a mean IC of 1.76 (SD=1.59), a median score of 1.51, with the modal code between 1-2 (98) along with 6 paragraphs greater than 5. Overall, he demonstrated a decreasing trend in IC until the most recent speech. With the addition of the 11/13/14 speech, his trend in IC flattens. He demonstrated more first-person plural usage than Zawahiri, lending support to Ligon et al. (2014) finding that he is a more socialized leader. His tone seems to shift with 6/15/13 refusal to adhere to Zawahiri's ruling, with a generally negative trend bottoming out on 1/19/14 with a mean IC of 1.12. The next three speeches showed slight increases (still lower than the first) with the highest IC evidenced in the most recent. A decreasing IC trend generally suggests an increased likelihood for increasing violence as drops in IC predicts violent conflict between groups (Suedfeld, 2010). It is unclear, however, what affect the trauma of the recent airstrike that may or may not have injured Baghdadi had on his IC. Zawahiri's mean IC 1.92 (SD=1.42) was higher than that of Baghdadi. His median IC was 1.84 with the modal code between 1-2 (47) and no paragraphs greater than 5. His initial speech (6/19/13) was directive and had the lowest mean IC (1.45) of all his analyzed comments, He used less forceful and less directive language afterward and showed an increasing trend in IC. An increasing trend in IC is consistent with many revolutionary leaders (Suedfeld & Rank, 1976); however, given the relatively narrow window of analysis (11 months) and limited data (five speeches in which the Islamic State was mentioned) there is insufficient evidence to suggest Zawahiri's increasing IC is indeed indicative of that trend. Adnani exhibited the highest and most consistent IC with a mean of 2.12 (SD=1.62) over the period analyzed. His median score was 1.84 with the modal code between 1-2 (140) and 14 paragraphs scored greater than 5. As Kuznar (2014) indicates, Adnani's language is metaphor-rich and verbose with an average word count per speech double that of Baghdadi. If public comments are representative of internal mental processes, Baghdadi appears more self-assured and certain after the confrontation. Zawahiri does not necessarily accept the idea of the establishment of a caliphate; however, he has not persisted (publically) in

direct refutations of Baghdadi. Figure 1 depicts the mean IC and standard deviations of each speech of Baghdadi, Zawahiri, and Adnani for the period covered.

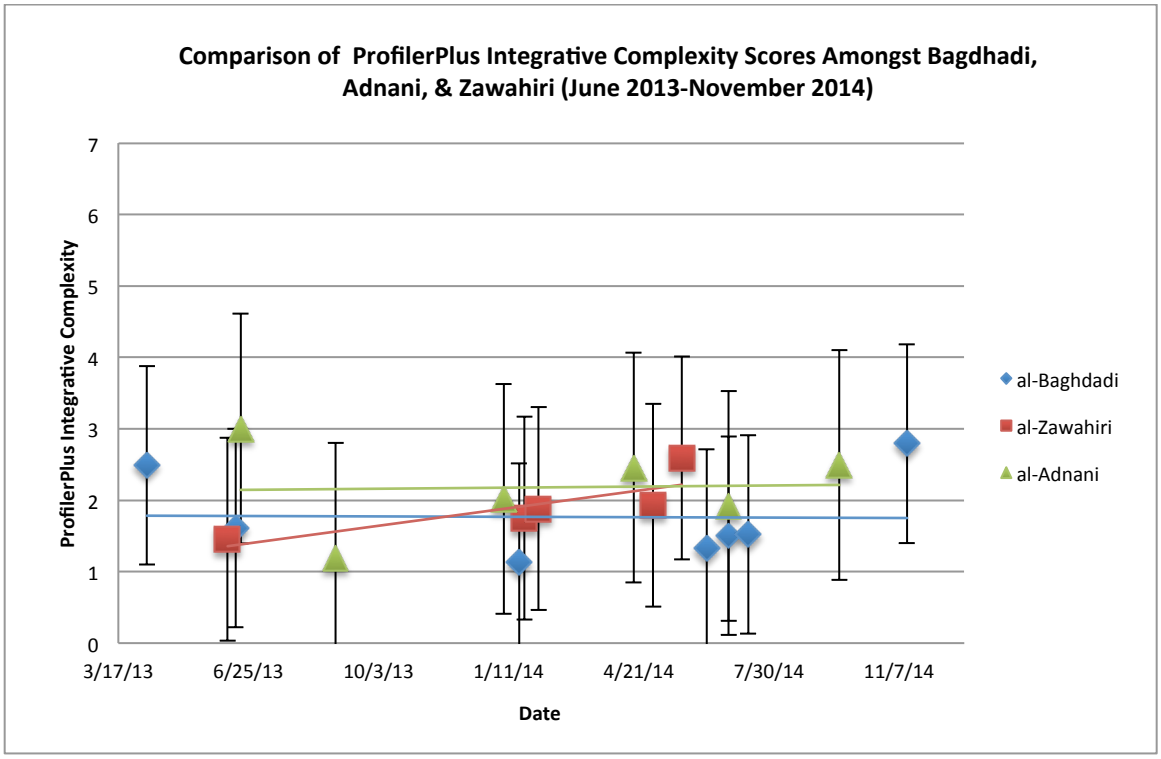

Figure 1. Plot of mean ProfilerPlus Integrative Complexity scores for Baghdadi, Zawahiri, and Adnani from March 2013 through November 2014

The same corpus that was used to code IC was used to code the LTA variables described earlier for both Baghdadi and Zawahiri. The seven different LTA scores for Baghdadi and Zawahiri were quite similar suggesting comparable word choice and patterns within their comments. This was somewhat counterintuitive and, given the other observable differences in psychological characteristics, necessitates caution when interpreting these findings. The most pronounced differences between the two were in their subjective Belief in Control Over Events (BACE) with Baghdadi slightly below the mean (in the normal range) and Zawahiri being low. Of note were two particularly low comments (1/23/14 and 2/3/14) by Zawahiri that drove down his mean BACE. Zawahiri also exhibited low Self-Confidence (SC) in those two selections, potentially suggesting recognition of the limits of his authority. Again, the LTA results should be interpreted with caution.

Table 1. Brief description of Hermann's (2002) Leadership Traits along with a comparison of ProfilerPlus Baghdadi and Zawahiri with 87 Heads of State.

Trait	*Description*	*Norms*	*Baghdadi*	*Zawahiri*
Conceptual Complexity (CC)	Degree of differentiation that the target demonstrates in describing or discussing other people, places, policies, ideas, or things.	Mean=0.44 Low < 0.37 High > 0.62	0.66	0.62
Belief in Control Over Events (BACE)	Degree of control the target perceives over the environment, akin to self-efficacy.	Mean=0.44 Low < 0.30 High > 0.58	0.39	0.18
Self-Confidence (SC)	The target's sense of self-importance, or image of his or her ability to cope adequately with objects and persons in the environment.	Mean=0.62 Low < 0.44 High > 0.81	0.21	0.13
Task Orientation (TO)	The target's relative emphasis on interactions with others when dealing problems as opposed to focusing on the feelings and needs of relevant and important constituents.	Mean=0.59 Low < 0.46 High > 0.71	0.58	0.47
Distrust (D)	Wariness about others or the degree of the target's suspicion of the motives and actions of others.	Mean=0.41 Low < 0.25 High > 0.56	0.03	0.01
In-Group Bias (IGB)	A worldview in which one's own group (social, political, ethnic, etc.) holds prominence is perceived as superior, and/or there are strong emotional attachments to this in-group.	Mean=0.42 Low < 0.32 High > 0.63	0.09	0.22
Need for Power (NFP)	Degree of target's concern for establishing, maintaining, or restoring one's power and/or control, influence, or have an impact on other persons or groups.	Mean=0.50 Low < 0.37 High > 0.62	0.25	0.30

Discussion

There are numerous methodological limitations that constrain some of the findings. Among them include the restriction to unclassified sources only on both the Zawahiri and Baghdadi profiles. For the Zawahiri profile specifically, it was updated to include the discourse with Baghdadi, but the source material heavily weighted to pre-2011 assumption of power after Bin Laden's death. Finally, the lack of information on Baghdadi and/or temporal constraints biases analysis toward what he is not (e.g. Zawahiri) instead of what the data suggests he is. Limitations in IC scoring include the reliance open sources, which are perhaps less revealing than other forms of communication. The automated scoring through ProfilerPlus, while less laborious, must also be considered less precise. Nevertheless, the use of automated text analyses on a larger corpus of data can be a valid means of independently corroborating the hand-scored text. The comparative profiles should be considered preliminary at best, and thus confidence in the assessment is low to moderate. Further analysis would be required to increase the confidence level in any specific conclusion.

Despite the preliminary nature of these findings, there is some operational utility. ISIL's thematic content (Kuznar, 2014), particularly in Adnani's comments, and their desired target audience indicate multiple risk factors for radicalization (Crossett & Spitaletta, 2010). ISIL targets adolescents (identity versus role confusion), young adults (intimacy versus isolation), and middle adulthood (generativity versus stagnation) (Erikson, 1980). The continuity of message across multiple demographics (males 12-18,19-39,40-65) and psychological vulnerabilities makes for a

coherent master narrative. The ISIL narrative is not novel, but it is compelling; ISIL leaders have a nuanced understanding of their desired target audiences. Whether it was their collective experience in prison or their current tactical success, the ISIL leadership understands and is able to articulate the strength of the bonds created on the frontlines of such a conflict. While Whitehouse and colleagues (2014) recent research is on Libyan revolutions, the strength of the social relationships cultivated in conflicts is powerful, particularly to those resolving the conflict of intimacy versus isolation in young adulthood (Erikson, 1980). Currently, their actions align with their rhetoric (specifically the success theme), which increases their credibility. Baghdadi (and ISIL leadership) is likely dealing with the crisis of generativity versus stagnation; the question of how to make their lives count (Erikson, 1980). Their significant relationships are with one another and seem to recognize that amongst Sunni males of the same generation. Projecting these crises unto Sunni males seems to resonate, possibly by humanizing the ISIL leadership in a way Zawahiri avoided.

Baghdadi may be a high value target (HVT), but is not likely a high payoff target (HPT). While he has been elevated in stature by the political rhetoric (namely the work of Adnani) Baghdadi's Islamic State is not a cult of personality, however, and their structure may be less vulnerable to decapitation than other groups with more charismatic leaders. The smaller the group, the greater the impact a leader's charisma can have on the group. Charismatic leadership is difficult to maintain, especially as movements grow larger. Charismatic leaders must accomplish these four functions: (1) maintain the public persona of the leader; (2) moderate the effects of the psychological identification of followers with the leader; (3) negotiate the routinization of charisma; and (4) achieve frequent new successes (Post, 2005). To address the first and second, charismatic leaders must be seen and heard from on a regular basis through both staged public displays and small appearances before regular members of the group. However, the leader must balance this exposure with an aura of mystery and in some cases a sense of supernatural power (to address the third issue, above), and this requires occasional segregation or isolation from his or her followers. Such isolation has the potential to stem negative feedback from group members; it can also lead to future decisions being made without the consideration of all necessary information and a subsequent failure and internal fracture over direction. Of course, public exposure entails greater security risks (Bos et al., 2013). Despite having a self-declared Caliph, ISIL may be less vulnerable to decapitation than other groups with more charismatic leaders. Baghdadi is likely to be perceived as more charismatic than Zawahiri; however, the relative charisma of a leader may not necessarily translate into lower-level recruitment. Furthermore, charisma is subjective, as different communities possess varied expectations from their leaders. While public opinion (on Twitter) of Zawahiri was as varied as other forms of media, there was more widespread rejection of Baghdadi (Chin & Kluver, 2014). While Baghdadi may lack the charisma of more demonstrative revolutionary leaders, he and his leadership apparatus are likely more attractive to the younger generation of Islamic extremists than Zawahiri is.

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ISIL's Inter-Organizational Relationships: Conflict and Cooperation (Dr. Philip Potter,[39] University of Virginia)

Key points

- Most inter-group cooperation with ISIL up to this point has not led to new tactics etc. but has grown numbers and resources.
- ISIL's strategic success has been a potent attractor for the rank and file of organizations, but leaders have been more inclined to keep their distance in order to maintain autonomy.
- ISIL's relationship with al Nusra has been strained and occasionally violently competitive, but since the onset of airstrikes in recent months has been primarily cooperative.
- Future airstrikes are likely to be more productive to US goals if targets are selected that are less likely to shift ISIL blame onto moderate groups.
- Given the diversity of militants and organizations active in ISIL, any strategic decapitation of ISIL should be targeted to avoid a complete breakdown in hierarchy until the organization can manage a strategic retreat. The breakdown of hierarchical leadership prior to strategic consolidation risks splintering the coalition into a less manageable group of loosely affiliated and controlled militant factions.

Over a surprisingly short period of time, ISIL has transitioned from the largely marginalized and defeated remnants of al Qaeda in Iraq to the preeminent militant organization operating in Syria and Iraq.

As it has grown in strength, ISIL has coopted or entirely swallowed up diverse competitor organizations at a nearly unprecedented pace, and this process has, in turn, strengthened the organization still further. ISIL's operational success has proven a powerful attractor that has drawn in other organizations or portions of their membership. It has not, however, merely been the power of attraction that has made ISIL the hub of the network of militant organizations operating in Syria and Iraq. Many of these inter-organizational relationships feature a substantial element of coercion, with ISIL forcibly usurping units or compelling organizations' cooperation.

The result is a network of relationships that is unusually broad, but also somewhat shallow. That is, ISIL has many relationships with other militant organizations, but a disproportionate number of them have proven transitory and fragile. This distinctiveness arises from ISIL's unusually high operational capabilities and organizational control. Other militants have had little choice but to engage with ISIL given its strength but have kept some distance out of fear for their organizational autonomy over the long run.

The implication is that the existing pattern of organizational relationships (both cooperative and competitive) is susceptible to disruption both directly from airstrikes and external pressure from Iraqi forces, and indirectly through any downward trend in ISIL's capabilities or fortunes. Evidence suggests that external pressure on ISIL from airstrikes and government advances have actually served to improve

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strained ties between ISIL and other Islamist organizations operating in Iraq and Syria, but has further driven a wedge between this block of groups and more moderate and secular militants.

The remainder of this section will outline the causes and consequences of ISIL's inter-organizational relationships. The analysis will begin with a discussion of our findings to date in the impact of cooperative relationships between violent non-state actors. I then apply these lessons to discussion of ISIL's cooperative and competitive relationships. The section concludes with a discussion of the likely implications of airstrikes and other disruptions of ISIL's capabilities.

Historical Context: Why Inter-organizational Relationships Matter

In our research, funded by the Minerva Research Initiative, we have gathered exhaustive data on all known relationships between violent non-state actors over the last 40 years. The headline finding from this effort is that the extent and depth of these relationships matter a great deal for capability. **Organizations that are linked cooperatively to a deep network of other organizations tend to be both more lethal and more efficient in that lethality** as measured by the number of fatalities they inflict and number of fatalities per attack.[40]

Figure 1 demonstrates this relationship for all organizations from active between 1998 and 2008. The panel on the left indicates that predicted fatalities increase from about 10 to about 70 as an organization's cooperative relationships increase. The panel on the right indicates that the number of fatalities per attack increases from about 1 to about 8 over the same range.[41]

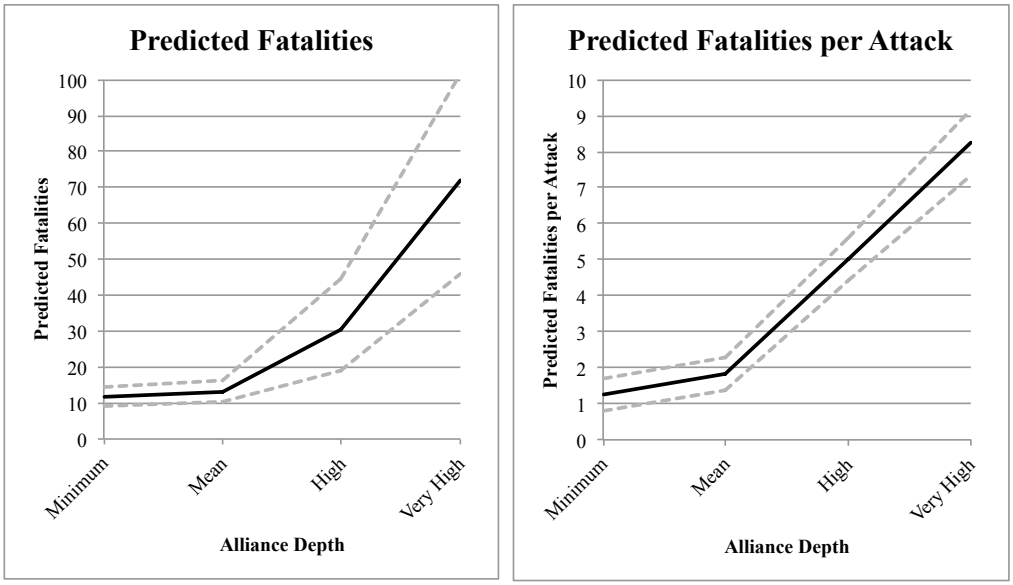

Figure 1 Organizational ties and lethality

[40] Michael Horowitz and Philip B.K. Potter "Allying to Kill: Terrorist Intergroup Cooperation and the Consequences for Lethality" *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* (2014) vol. 58, no. 2, pp.199-225.
[41] The solid line is the predicted trend. The dotted lines are the bounds of the .95 confidence interval. A full explanation of this figure and the models that give rise to it can be found in Horowitz and Potter (2014).

Tactical diffusion is an additional concern when militant organizations ally. Some reports suggest, for example, that as foreign fighters in Iraq moved on to Afghanistan during 2008 and 2009, they providing a natural bridge for the diffusion of tactical knowledge.[42] The transmission of knowledge allowed groups in Afghanistan to learn some specific advanced IED design and explosive techniques from those with experience in Iraq.

Suicide bombing techniques have also generally diffused through established inter-organizational relationships. For example, the well-documented relationship between Hezbollah and Hamas led to an increased use of suicide bombing.[43] In 1992, after a period of turmoil, Israel expelled 415 members of Hamas and Palestinian Islam Jihad (PIJ) to Lebanon, where they came into contact with leaders of Hezbollah, specifically Imad Mughniyeh.[44] When most of the expelled members of Hamas and PIJ returned to Israel the next year, the casualties per attack for these groups increased from about 2 per attack to around 10, owing mostly to increased use of effective suicide bombing. This rate was approximately the same as Hezbollah's, demonstrating the convergence in capability resulting directly from the alliance. Additionally, Hezbollah has used these ties to spread deadly weapons in the Gaza Strip, using men such as Adnan al-Ghoul as hubs for the distribution of weapons and knowledge. For example, Hamas apparently used connections and funding from Hezbollah to buy precursor technologies for crude mortars and Qassam rockets.

Given these precedents, ISIL's extensive relationships in the region raise immediate concern about both the augmentation of capabilities and the diffusion of tactics. However, it should be noted that **ISIL's inter-organizational relationships stand in contrast** to the typical alliance formation patterns that we have observed in our prior work, including that observed between Hezbollah and Hamas.

The most common model of alliance formation between militant non-state actors is based on "preferential attachment," meaning selective but deeper engagement with organizations that have complementary capabilities or resources. The preferential attachment model tends to be particularly disruptive because it leads organizations that join forces to merge complementary endowments. For example, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) forged just such an alliance. As is generally the case in such cooperative relationships, the PIRA-FARC relationship translated into increased effectiveness for both organizations. During one raid, the Colombian army found FARC-operated mortars with similar design principles to those used by the PIRA in Northern Ireland.[45] A 2002 committee report from the US House of Representatives noted that, after interacting with the PIRA, the FARC began to employ startlingly effective new tactics—the Columbian

[42] Shanker, Thom. 2009. "Makeship bombs spread beyond Afghanistan, Iraq." *New York Times*, October 29.
[43] Pedahzur, Ami. 2005. *Suicide terrorism*. Malden, MA: Polity.
[44] Ricolfi, Luca. 2005. "Palestinians, 1981-2003." In *Making sense of suicide missions*, ed. D. Gambetta. New York: Oxford University Press.
[45] Murphy, John F. 2004. "The IRA and the FARC in Colombia." *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence* 18 (1):76-88.

police lost more than 10 percent of their bomb technicians in the year after it was implemented.[46] For the PIRA, the relationship yielded primarily financial benefits: coca money from the FARC helped fund PIRA weapons purchases and pay for personnel and weapons.

In contrast, many of ISIL's relationships have been based on either the organization's attractiveness to the membership of other organizations due to its operational success or more forced relationships that emanate from the organization's general suspicion of competitors. The implication is that the capabilities offered by these other groups is similar/non-complementary to what ISIL has already. Moreover, engagement between the organizations is shallower due to tensions between leadership that reduce coordination.

Even so, such relationships can substantially augment capabilities by incorporating additional units into ISIL's ranks and thereby allowing the organization to quickly grow far more quickly than it otherwise could. In addition, some of these units are well equipped (sometimes with western aid) and bring these resources to the ISIL cause.

ISIL and Inter-organizational Competition and Cooperation

ISIL's relationships with other organizations in the region are complex. The organization's well-known and documented origins lie in organizational competition and conflict. As the inherited organization of al Qaeda in Iraq, ISIL rose to prominence by splitting from al Qaeda central (or at least ignoring its clear and stated preferences) and moving into Syria. This move was only possible due to the general weakness of al Qaeda central authority, which has effectively devolved operational autonomy to its affiliates and left allied organizations to pursue their own ends.

The move into Syria brought Baghdadi and al Qaeda in Iraq into a complex, mixed relationship with Jabhat al Nusra – the al Qaeda affiliate already established there. Baghdadi initially announced a merger between the two organizations to form ISIL, but never fully incorporated al Nusra into this vision.[47] Jawlani, al Nusra's leader, responded respectfully but reaffirmed his organizations ultimate allegiance to Ayman al-Zawahiri while maintaining both the al Nusra name and its operational independence.[48] From these awkward origins emerged a relationship that has been highly fraught, occasionally violently competitive, but primarily cooperative. As I will discuss in more detail, this cooperation appears to have solidified in recent months.

In general, ISIL's rapid success (first against Assad's forces and then in Iraq) has proven to be a potent attractor to membership of other groups, if not leadership. Evidence suggests that in addition to elements from al Nusra, units from the Free Syrian Army, many smaller Islamist organizations, and Sunni

[46] Majority Staff of the House International Relations Committee. 2002. "Investigative findings on the activities of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Colombia." Washington, D.C.: Committee on International Relations, US House of Representatives.

[47] Al-Furqan Media, "Announcement of the Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham: Speech by the Commander of the Believers Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, May God protect him."

[48] Al-Manarah al-Bayda, "Speech by Abu Muhammad al-Jawlani," April 10, 2013

tribes willingly joined the ISIL bandwagon as the organization's success crescendoed.[49] ISIL's victories have drawn increasingly diverse connections from much further afield as well. For example, in November this week a splinter group of the Taliban, Jundullah, allegedly pledged its allegiance to ISIL. While this is a relatively small faction, the shift could be meaningful. Pakistan contains an ample supply of militants who could substantially augment ISIL's capabilities, but they have traditionally been tied to Mullah Omar and by extension have strong historical ties to al Qaeda central (which ISIL remains partially at odds with, though the extent and durability of that rift are unclear).[50]

That said, individuals and units for the same organizations have also been forcibly co-opted under ISIL command. ISIL's strength has forced organizations operating in the same space to make deals and forge seemingly cooperative relationships. The inevitable response has been a great deal of reticence to hand over operational control. This ambivalent cooperation characterizes, for example, the relationship with Ahrar al-Sham. In general, particularly when it was at the apex of its power prior to the onset of airstrikes, ISIL did not "play well with others." In contrast to the standard operating procedure of al Qaeda central, the organization had a demonstrated tendency to, whenever possible, usurp control of other organizations rather than working alongside them.[51]

A Changing Alliance Pattern

There are indications that airstrikes and the subsequent push from Iraqi forces are leading the major Islamist organizations in Iraq and Syria to mend their differences. Since the onset of US led airstrikes there have been media reports of planning meetings between elements from ISIL and al Nusra and *The Guardian* reports that al Nusra members have continued to defect to ISIS. This response was perhaps to be expected – under pressure from outside assault, ISIL represents less of a threat to other organizations and the common enemy prioritizes their shared preferences over their differences. Indeed, ISIL has taken to referring to the campaign as "crusader airstrikes" to foster this sense of unity against an outside adversary.

Even at the leadership level, the outside pressure has led to realignments that solidify traditional alliances and cleavages. Following the onset of airstrikes al Nusra released an audio message from Jawlani threatening retaliation against the west. Most significantly he urged militants operating in Iraq and Syria who had at various points been victimized by ISIL to not use the airstrikes as an opportunity to retaliate – *"[ISIL crimes] should not push any of you to be driven behind the West and take part in the alliance which they want to use to end jihad*."

Airstrikes have also apparently contributed to some defections to ISIL from secular and moderate units, though not clear instances of alliance formation. The impetus for these individuals appears to

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[49] Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, "The ISIS Cavalcade: Round-Up of Some Claimed Martyrs for the Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham," *Jihadology*, July 1, 2013

50 Reuters. "Pakistan Taliban splinter group vows allegiance to Islamic State."
Nov 18, 2014.

51 Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi "The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham" *Middle East Review of International Affairs (MERIA Journal)* Fall 2013

be the perception that the airstrikes represent a setback in war with Assad. For example, the leader of Islamic Front said, *"We have been calling for these sorts of attacks for three years and when they finally come they don't help us." Apparent frustration the focus of attacks* against ISIL rather than the Assad regime has also contributed to the fractures in moderate coalitions. For example, Islamist brigades of the FSA including Suqur al-Sham are thought to have broken with Western-favored rebel factions. According to the *Daily Beast* even rebels allied with the Syrian Revolutionaries Front, one of the brigades under assault from al Nusra, are expressing anger at the renewed US airstrikes. "If the US continues to attack al Nusra, I and my men will swear allegiance to al-Golani [Jawlani]."

On the Islamist side, organizations have been drawn together by shared exposure to airstrikes. The bottom line is that the underlying commonality of interests and ideologies among the Islamist organizations has always made it unlikely that they could be induced to turn on one another completely, and an assault from outside has made this even less likely. Strikes against Khorasan inevitably affect al Nusra since those two factions have been closely allied and sharing space and resources. Ahrar al-Sham was similarly affected and more tightly drawn into the Islamist core as a result.

These targeting choices have put a wedge between the Islamist organizations that have been directly impacted and more moderate oppositions groups with which they had previously had limited, but growing, cooperation. Immune from such attacks, the remaining moderate organizations have been painted as complicit in the western campaign. The turn against moderates with whom there had been at least a prior detente has been relatively swift. For example, al Nusra seized more than seven towns controlled by the rebel groups the Syrian Revolutionaries Front and Harakat al-Hazm, forcing them to retreat or defect. Hazm had been given high tech weaponry including anti-talk missiles by the US, so such defections and collaborations create a clear path for these items to reach ISIL. In sum, the strikes have fundamentally changes the dynamic of inter-organizational relationships within the conflict by creating a pole of opposition to the United States.

The widening rift between moderate and extreme opposition has positives and negatives. On the upside, a firm divide between these groups maintains the moderate opposition as viable partners – something that was called into question by improving ties and membership overlaps with ISIL and other extremist groups. On the downside, the power asymmetries between these elements of the opposition means that the moderate opposition is under even greater pressure and some elements within face an existential threat.

Conclusion

ISIL has a broad network of relationships that have contributed in meaningful ways to its capabilities. Most notably, its relationships have brought manpower and weapons without which the organization could not have grown at the pace that it did. However, the element of compellence in these

relationships has made the network fluid over time. The evolution of this network of relationships among Islamist factions defies simple, unambiguous characterizations but in the broadest possible terms it has shifted from inter-organizational fighting and competition in 2012-2013, to ISIS domination in 2013-2014, to rapprochement in the second half of 2014.

Much as it did for al Qaeda central, outside pressure is leading ISIL to struggle with a loss of operational control over the organizations with which it has forged cooperative relationships. However, this decline in control is accompanied by a decline in threat to their organizational structure, which has allowed organizations with complimentary ideologies to reengage with ISIL. The result is increasing consistency and coherence in the network of organizational relationships in Iraq and Syria with the Islamist organizations aligned on one axis and the moderate and secular organizations aligned on another.

ISIL's preeminence in the web of organizational relationships spanning the conflicts in Iraq and Syria has derives in large part from its own organizational structure. The combination of relatively hierarchical control coming from Baghdadi down through the organization, along with the organizational tendencies and skills of members with backgrounds in the Iraqi military, led to advantages in command and control when compared to other organizations. This, in turn, increased capabilities and made the organization attractive due to its strategic successes. This source of prior strength, however, also suggests the potential for weakness moving foreword. Airstrikes have put pressure on ISIL's organizational structure, killing some leaders and forcing others underground. The result may be less command and control and more violent chaos as organizations that were formerly under ISIL's partial control reassert independence and splinter organizations spin off from the center. Prior work suggests that as a consequence, overall violence, particularly against civilians, may increase while more coherent violence against military and state targets may decline.[52]

There is, however, reason to be cautious about escalating a decapitation strategy. Given the role that ISIL now plays in consolidating an extremely diverse group of militants and organizations, planners should consider implementing a controlled and limited strategy decapitation that maintains enough of the organization's hierarchy for it to stage a strategic retreat. Striking a fatal blow to ISIL's organizational structure prior to such a retreat risks leaving the region awash in loosely affiliated and controlled militant factions.

[52] Abrahms, Max, and Philip Potter. "Explaining Terrorism: Leadership Deficits and Militant Group Tactics." *International Organization, forthcoming.*

A Red Team Assessment of ISIL Competitive Strategies (Dr. Benjamin Jensen,[53] Majors Craig Giorgis & Dan Myers, Marine Corps University, Minerva researchers)

Executive Summary

There are three attributes to ISIL's relative attractiveness. First, its appeal is a function of its connectivity and brokerage. ISIL succeeds in chaotic environments by connecting a family of networks, consolidating interests from these networks, and converting connectivity into power and leverage. Second, ISIL generates appeal and momentum through a vanguard model, using acts of violence to mobilize broader networks of support. The level of violence and sheer spectacle ensure that multiple information outlets transmit their message throughout the world. This signal introduces fear, provides inspiration, enables recruitment, and sends other pivotal messages to targeted audiences at key times. ISIL leadership carefully manages these signals in order to maximize the generation of appeal and effect. The third critical factor to ISIL's success is its leadership. The group's leadership is responsible for ensuring connectivity to other networks, which ensures sustainment of the organization in the near-term. ISIL's future success and ability to last is thus determined by its leadership's ability to bridge networks, generate appeal, and gain momentum.

Key Points

- ISIL's connectivity with a family of networks (illicit, commerce, religious, etc.) allows the group to generate momentum and appeal in chaotic environments by transiting the observe, orient, decide, and act (OODA) loop faster than its adversary.
- ISIL operates within a vanguard model (i.e., small groups using violence to signal political action) that generates two types of appeal: 1) active sympathizers and supporters and 2) temporary alliances of convenience.
- Given the use of networks in a vanguard model, it is incorrect to analyze ISIL through the lens of classic counterinsurgency theory frameworks that focus on relative deprivation and popular support.
- ISIL uses higher degrees of violence to establish extremist credibility (i.e., programming effects) and exploit the signal to recruit along a digital network connecting disenfranchised populations around the world.
- The critical factor to ISIL's success, then, is its leadership. ISIL's leadership successfully integrates tactical success with its strategic goals. In other words, they understand the character of the conflict, have a vision, and implement it faster than their adversaries can respond.

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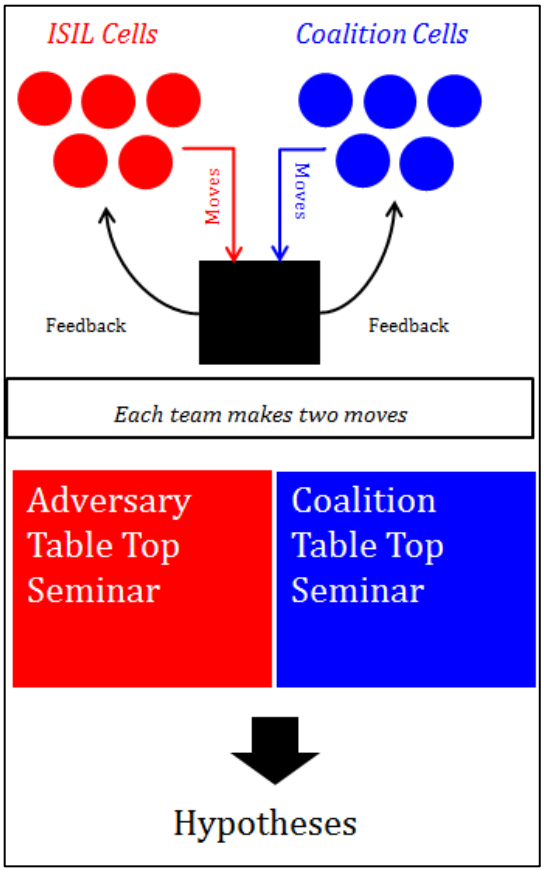
Red Teaming as Competitive Strategies

To complement existing SMA research efforts, Dr. Jensen designed a remote black box war game examining competitive strategies. The war game sought to map adaption pathways (i.e., how actors respond to one another in contact) and their impact on the relative appeal of ISIL. Remote black box war games allow you to map competitive interaction in a more dynamic manner than typical action-reaction-counteraction models allow. Users do not know what the adversary will do, thus maximizing fog and friction each round. Furthermore, the game sought to replicate a broader understanding of power, having each team engage in competitive strategies across each instrument of power (DIMEFIL).



The game consisted of two distinct phases. During phase one, ten teams, acting as cells, competed. Five cells played ISIL and five cells played the Coalition. The ISIL cells compromised of 18-22 year olds who had high multimodal literacy (i.e., media usage patterns above the average). The Coalition cells compromised O4/GS 10-14s national security professionals. During the second phase, Dr. Jensen held a seminar with each group to capture their perspective on how strategic competition shaped the relative appeal of ISIL. Dr. Jensen and his team then translated these findings into research hypotheses on why ISIL is so magnetic. They also analyzed the underlying assumptions in relation to existing subject matter expert (SME) contributions and SMA sponsored research workshops.

Game Findings

In all five iterations, ISIL had the initiative. In fact, it was "initiative" that many respondents felt generated appeal ("it factor"). There was a debate about how long ISIL could retain the initiative. Some of the Coalition players assessed that sufficient coercive pressure from airstrikes and increased cohesion amongst Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) would turn the table in six months. The ISIL players argued that battlefield setbacks were irrelevant to ISIL. ISIL could take a village for propaganda purposes, producing a video to show their success, and lose it the next night. What the world would see is the seizure, not the loss. These players assessed that ISIL's ability to broadcast narratives of success faster than the Coalition's responses was a significant advantage.

Second, ISIL set the tempo. The Coalition tended to be reactive (vs. proactive) and was always, in the words of one player, "a day late and a dollar short." Both sides agreed that ISIL had a greater short-term

capacity to set the conditions for further momentum. The fact that the Iraqi government was still forming, regional competition between Sunnis and Shias, and the broader spillover of the Syrian Civil War combined to create a security vacuum ISIL could exploit. In the words of one player, "chaos gave ISIL the ability to act and generate options; they transitioned the OODA loop faster than the Coalition could." Multiple players agreed that this ability to operate in chaos and generate the perception of support, satisfaction, and acceptance of governance added to the initiative as an appeal generating argument.

The competitive strategy game also produced novel insights with respect to local support and its relationship to relative appeal. Coalition forces tried to separate ISIL from target recruitment population (i.e., disenfranchised young Muslim males) and potential political allies (i.e., Sunni tribal leader in Iraq, Gulf state sympathizers) through a mix of information operations and diplomatic pressure. The strategy seemed awkward and bound to fail. It also tended to backfire. As Coalition and ISIL competed for Sunni tribal leadership allegiance, it undermined the Iraqi state and created the conditions for instability favoring ISIL. Furthermore, wedge strategies proved ineffective against dedicated extremist networks. Efforts to coopt parts of the ISIL leadership only reinforced the in-group dynamic. In the words of one player, "the Coalition's message will always sound lame and like an anti-drug ad." Another player observed that "the Coalition cannot counter deep-seated alienation and frustration in target global Muslim youth population in the short-term (1-3 year horizon); it is just too deep-seated."

In fact, most participants agreed that it was incorrect to analyze ISIL through the lens of classic counterinsurgency theory frameworks that focus on relative deprivation and popular support. When actors are concerned about survival, they will back the actor most likely to protect (or threaten) them in the short-run. In fact, most participants assessed that ISIL did not need broad based popular support. Rather, they needed enough chaos to make temporary local alliances. In this respect, all parties agreed that ISIL operated more in a vanguard model, using propaganda by deed and violence to generate political messages mobilizing various populations to take action.

This propaganda by deed benefited from declining costs of information and spectacle. In all five, separate games, ISIL took the cyber initiative. In part, this was a function of the ISIL player demographic, but the results were still revealing. Global information networks lowered the cost of recruitment. ISIL generated a global, low-cost levee en masse. There were economies of scale; even if the group only appealed to 1% of the Umma for passive support, the message and corresponding appeal factor were high. Furthermore, ISIL players acted more like networks than guerilla cells. They turned information networks and critical infrastructure into weapons. Throughout the game, the greater the audacity of ISIL actions, the more appealing players found them. There was something to spectacle. It seemed to increase the signal-to-noise ratio in global information flows. One player argued that violence against bodies (i.e., beheading) caused a spectacle that circulated via media and attracted attention (think number of views) and possible points of emulation. Appeal was a function of new modes of netwar and use of high spectacle producing actions likely to increase the probability someone "views" the group's message.

Coalition players had difficulty achieving results due to the multiple unique and ambiguous environments in Iraq and Syria. Players routinely applied comprehensive strategies, which experience only mild successes in this non-homogeneous milieu. These strategies were over reliant on consensus based multi-lateral actions. Although weighty, consensus based actions and responses were slow, giving ISIL time to maneuver and counter using many networks and outlets.

To conclude, ISIL possessed the initiative throughout the game, generating momentum and appeal despite the possibility of battlefield setbacks. Their relative attraction stemmed from transitioning the OODA loop faster than their adversary and tapping into global information flows. Though it was not discussed, it is highly likely that the yoking nature of their narrative and its allusions to the Prophet's original struggle only serves to reinforce this appeal. The group is acting in a vanguard model that generates two types of appeal: 1) active sympathizers and supporters and 2) temporary alliances of convenience. These elements are captured in some of the comments by the war game participants:

ISIL Player Comments	Coalition Player Comments
"We have the capacity for a digital, global levee en masse. Global information networks allow us to generate support in a rapid, low cost manner."	"ISIL just committed their version of the Tet offensive. They gained territory but may have culminated if we hit them hard now."
"We are waging Mao's three phases of war simultaneously."	"We strived for a double containment approach using diplomatic networks and limited military power until sufficient Iraqi and Free Syrian combat power could be generated to fix and destroy ISIL. The problem with this approach is that it gave our enemy the initiative in the opening rounds. They kept up global recruitment while we mobilized regional forces."
"Violence is spectacle. It increases the rate at which our message proliferates on global information networks. We didn't need popular local or global support, just enough people to view the message so that we attract 1%."	"Even though we moved at the same time, I always felt I was responding to ISIL vs. shaping the battlefield to weaken their appeal."
"We were Mongol hordes fighting Prussians (i.e., a rigid bureaucracy) in failing states. We had the initiative and could set the tempo. It made us cool."	"My group was so worried about keeping the Coalition together and unified that it limited our range of action and response time. We gave ISIL the initiative through being too big and slow and resulting momentum generated their appeal."

Research Hypotheses: Appeal through Switching and Programming

The game suggested two distinct research hypotheses. First, when read alongside existing SME research, the game results showed that near-term attractiveness and appeal were a function of resource mobilization enabled by brokering fighters and funds across regional and global networks. ISIL attractiveness is a function of connectivity and brokerage.

In network theory, switching refers to the groups that connect various strategic networks. These actors gain better information and can coordinate resources and actions along a larger array of actors. These connections, as weak ties, enable brokerage and broad based mobilization and collective action.[54] Work on shifting alliances in civil wars illustrates how actors able to act as 'switchers' gain advantages in the chaos of battlefield (Kalyvas, 2006) (Christia, 2012).

ISIL links together multiple networks (i.e., switching effects) to generate momentum and appeal. These include not just extremist networks, but disenfranchised Muslim populations and alienated individuals around the world alongside illicit networks for funding and exploiting local political cleavages and economic flows. In fact, the most important network effect is ISIL as a key connector between Sunni extremists and former Baathist leadership. The more groups ISIL connects, the larger the potential population of active and passive supporters they generate. These supporters can be transients. That is, they do not 'support' ISIL in every aspect or consistently overtime. Rather, they make short-term deals. By being the group connecting multiple parties, ISIL generates more options for beneficial deals. They become a market maker and market regulators. Professionals who specialize—whether it be in trade, commerce, marketing, religious leadership, etc.—are a critical enabler of the system.

Another key finding in the competitive strategy game was the relationship between appeal and signal strength. ISIL generated appeal through telling a story that links together multiple communities. It situates and rationalizes urban migrant frustrations in the developed world while also contextualizing and linking the regional sectarian conflict and decline of authoritarian states and governance structures in the Middle East. The actor able to tell a story that gives meaning to these events simultaneously generates cohesion and appeal.

Programming is a form of network power in which an actor sends out signals defining power relations and shaping protocols of behavior in their interest (Castells, 2011). Actors send signals across a loose network altering behavioral incentives.[55] As new actors receive the message, they coalesce around these signals, as frames assigning agency and responsibility to particular groups of actors.[56] These descriptive frames, once reproduced, diffuse and shape behavior through forming enduring narratives and knowledge systems. [57] In other research, less powerful political actors can use programming type affects, as legitimation strategies, to mobilize support and deny rival coalitions by more powerful actors (Goddard, 2008).

Through programming, ISIL is acting in a vanguard model. They use higher degrees of violence to establish extremist credibility (i.e., programming effects) and exploit the signal to recruit along a digital network connecting disenfranchised populations around the world. The higher the degree of violence, the stronger the signal in the network and the more likely it spreads through the network. Furthermore,

[54] On the strength of weak ties, see (Granovetter, 1973). On how switching, as a form of brokerage and network connection as it relates to social movements and mobilization, see (Douglas McAdams, 2001) (Tilly, 2004) (Tarrow, 2006).
[55] For work on argument formations, see (Entman, 2004)
[56] A similar dynamic is at play in Harrison White's work on identity and control (White, 1992).
[57] For work on narrative analysis and distributed knowledge systems, see (Franzosi, 1998) (Moreland, 1999)

as the message circulates, it generates momentum and allows ISIL to expand their appeal despite overall, limited support. ISIL also possesses the ability to control the timing of the signal ensuring it is broadcast at optimal times, which maximizes the potential momentum and appeal gain. Furthermore, ISIL can target the audience to which the signal is released by choosing specific media outlets (i.e. YouTube, Facebook, twitter, etc.) used by target demographic groups.

Game Findings in Context

Read alongside the SME elicitation and SMA research workshops, the game findings also suggest an entirely different way to frame the problem. There is a risk in viewing a vanguard movement like ISIL through a traditional lens based on classic counterinsurgency theory emphasizing categories like local support and capacity to control. First, these lines of inquiry tend to assume that size matters. That is, the greater the degree of popular support and Umma support, the greater the potential combat power. Yet, the game suggested that mass was not the operative principle of war. Rather, appeal was a function of working across networks and generating options faster than the adversary. Speed and agility seem to be as important, if not more important, than mass in this context.

Second, there is no such thing as discrete allegiance in a war zone. Most perspectives tended to assume a constant. That is, locals or members of a global Umma supported ISIL at fixed, constant rates (e.g., 50% of individuals support for ISIL). The goal therefore becomes to shift the level of support in the aggregate, tipping the population towards support for their local government and against ISIL (i.e., 10% support for ISIL). This line of thinking is consistent with COIN doctrine. Yet, individuals tend to shift allegiances and play all sides to find the best "deal" at any given point. I may be 100% against ISIL when I talk to a member of the Coalition and 100% against the Coalition when I talk to ISIL representatives. Allegiance can be fungible and shifting. Combined with the insight that mass may not be the operative principle of war when confronting a vanguard movement, this finding suggests that the group that can broker more relationships has the potential to generate shifting support networks.

Competing Hypotheses: The Axes of Attraction

Reading the game findings against the larger SME and SMA workshop insights generates a set of four competing perspectives on ISIL's appeal. There are two critical dimensions along which to consider the group's magnetism: 1) the external opportunity window and how the group leverages regional and global events to generate appeal; and 2) internal, organizational capacity and how ISIL operates more efficiently than other actors in its conflict system.

First, ISIL is a symptom of a larger disease: the dissolution of modern forms of governance in the Middle East in the wake of the Arab Spring and Syrian Civil War and regional sectarian competition. The group is one of many militant Islamist proxy organizations used by Sunni-aligned states in pursuit of their regional interests. This form of proxy strategy competition does not imply that ISIL lacks its own political will or objectives, but that it serves as an effective political and military hedge for Sunni governments (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, etc.) against Iran and its strategic ally, Syria. Although ISIL lacks an official state sponsor, it has sufficient unofficial or covert support to sustain itself in the near term. Second, ISIL has successfully married Arab Sunni [trans]-nationalism to militant Islamism while also retaining, on the

surface at least, a wide international, inter-ethnic Sunni appeal. Regionally, this has meant that ISIL has capitalized on non-Sunni (mis)rule in Syria and Iraq . . . the Syrian and Iraqi governments' alienation of Sunni elites, and people have created the conditions in which ISIL is a preferable alternative to the status quo. Globally, it has effectively tapped into the deep well on the Sunni Umma. Additionally, ISIL has been successful at marketing its ideology to disenfranchised minorities throughout Africa, Europe, and the US The flock of foreign fighters and the tacit support serve as examples of their success overseas. Appeal, then, at the local, regional, and global level is a function of state weakness and regional competition.

Second, ISIL is better able to convert its resource inputs and temporary alliances into combat power than other groups in the area. They are more cohesive and efficient. The external opportunity window does not account for ISIL's success and magnetism above other regional Sunni militants, such as al-Nusra. The critical factor to ISIL's success then is its leadership. ISIL's leadership successfully integrates tactical success with its strategic goals; in other words, they understand the character of the conflict, have a vision, and are implementing it. Perceptions of security, governance, justice, and economic potential follow military victory, all of which is incorporated into a strategic narrative that links together multiple actor networks.

External Opportunity Window ↓ / Organizational Capacity →	*Low*	*High*
Low	ISIL has **LOW** organizational capacity (i.e., weak C2, declining $, less than sophisticated rhetoric, local alliance wedges, etc.) **AND** a regional "perfect storm" window is rapidly closing due to Coalition pressure and changing regional political calculus (i.e., new Iraqi government, sustained push by Gulf states, etc.)	ISIL has **HIGH** organizational capacity (i.e., strong C2, $, sophisticated rhetoric, local alliance planning, etc.) **BUT** the "perfect storm" window is rapidly closing due to Coalition pressure and changing regional political calculus (i.e., new Iraqi government, sustained push by Gulf states, etc.)
High	ISIL has **LOW** organizational capacity (i.e., weak C2, declining $, less than sophisticated rhetoric, local alliance wedges, etc.) **BUT** the "perfect storm" will sustain itself (i.e., sectarian tension, broad questioning of governance)	ISIL has **HIGH** organizational capacity (i.e., strong C2, $, sophisticated rhetoric, local alliance planning, etc.) **AND** the "perfect storm" will sustain itself (i.e., sectarian tension, broad questioning of governance)

This matrix suggests three problem frames in relation to ISIL's appeal:

Lucky Fools

ISIL is a “flash in the pan” and prone to tactical and operational miscalculation likely to result in a near to midterm loss of momentum. **BLUF: they got lucky**. The analytical anchor for this perspective is al-Anbar and the awakening. ISIL will govern poorly and wither away under pressure from above and below. Their appeal is transitory and likely to wither as long as the Coalition does not overreact.

The Perfect Storm

ISIL is not a “flash in the pan” and reflects the convergence of multiple regional dynamics from the ongoing war in Syria to Arab autumn, shifts in the global jihadi marketplace, and prevalence of ungoverned spaces along the Iraq-Syria border. **BLUF: their gains and appeal depend on continued regional conflict in MENA and ungoverned spaces (safe havens).** The group’s appeal is relational. They may not be loved, but they are a better alternative than a Syrian Civil War and an Iraqi government seen as allied to Iran. Additionally, the more appeal and momentum gained in nations outside of Iraq and Syria detracts from the overall efforts to allocate resources to combat the source of the growing problem in the source countries.

Netwar 2.0

ISIL reflects an emerging form of netwar that eclipses past models. There is a “change of kind as opposed to a change of degree” marking a new character of war. **BLUF: They are rock stars; the group is well run, sophisticated, and leverages a broader array of instruments of power than previous non-state actor movements producing a distinct competitive advantage.** They are magnetic because multiple global communities and political actors perceive this shift and expect future success (i.e., it is not success breeds success, but expectations of future success that generate near-term gains in resources and support). Their appeal is likely to grow and even if the group experiences setbacks in Iraq or Syria, they are likely to push into Jordan and Turkey. Their appeal is more a function of audacity (seizing terrain, sparking unrest) than holding terrain against counterattack.

Branding the Caliphate?: Online Media Framing from a Self-Proclaimed State (Dr. Laura Steckman,[58] Whitney, Bradley and Brown)

In June 2014, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) declared the establishment of an Islamic caliphate in Iraq and Syria. Shortly after the announcement, ISIL released its first edition of *Dabiq* magazine, so titled in order to reference

> …the area named Dabiq in the northern countryside of Halab (Aleppo) in Sham. This place was mentioned in a hadith describing some of the events of the Malahim (what is sometimes referred to as Armageddon in English). One of the greatest battles between the Muslims and the crusaders will take place near Dabiq (Edition 1, 4).

The magazine appears to be propaganda intended to disseminate the ISIL narrative, persuade Muslims to support ISIL, and build legitimacy for ISIL's claim that it has established a caliphate, restoring the successors to Mohammed. For non-ISIL supporters, the magazine is evidence of the dangers that the group and other militant jihadists pose to non-Muslims. From ISIL's perspective, could *Dabiq* be part of a larger strategy and does it offer a distinct perspective when compared to other militant jihadist publications?

No analysis of ISIL's motivations and beliefs can be completed in a vacuum, nor is this analysis an attempt to justify ISIL in any way. Instead, it is a preliminary endeavor to assess ISIL's perception of itself as a state in terms of Nation Branding Theory, analyzing ISIL's overtures at branding itself. Based on ISIL's announced establishment of a caliphate and its most recent name change to "Islamic State," ISIL clearly espouses that it is a state. Additionally, ISIL did not just form any state, it professes to have formed a caliphate that parallels the first caliphate (632-634 CE) in which Abu Bakr al-Siddiq conquered parts of Iraq and Syria (IslamWeb 2006). ISIL's caliph changed his name to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi to reflect his ability and right to lead.[59] *Dabiq's* monthly releases indicate that it is a serial periodical intended to spread ISIL's news and ideals. The magazine could, therefore, be viewed in the context of nation branding based on ISIL's belief that it has established a state and with the assumption that ISIL views the caliphate and its politico-religious nature conterminously with a Sunni Muslim nation. The subsequent analysis examines ISIL's nation-brand, as conveyed through *Dabiq*, through content analysis of the magazine and two frameworks for examining a nation-brand, namely Anholt's (2006) Nation Brand and Competing Identity Hexagon and Dinnie's (2008) unnamed conceptual model.[60]

Nation Branding in Theory

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[59] According to the United Nations, al-Baghdadi's real name is most likely Awwad Ibrahim Ali al-Badri al-Samarra. See UN Security Council 2011.

[60] This analysis only covers the English-language version of *Dabiq*. Additional comparisons between different language versions could constitute future research to examine whether ISIL is promoting a single global message or is trying to be more "glocal" (global + local) in its approach.

Nation branding comprises a relatively young field of research.[61] It began in the mid-1990s with the perception that corporate branding and techniques could be applied to places including nations, cities, and tourist destinations. However, nation-states are not singular entities that sell tangible products. They are complex entities encompassing diverse populations and, in marketing terminology, contain stakeholders and consumers, both domestic and external. ISIL is not a nation or nation-state as they are currently defined; ISIL is also not externally recognized as a legitimate governing body. While these details complicate an analysis of ISIL's nation-brand, they do not preclude an assessment of how ISIL may view itself.

Simon Anholt (2006), often considered the founder of nation branding theory, developed the Nation Brand and Competing Identity Hexagon (NBCI). The model is a benchmark standard for measuring nation branding and "competitive identities," referring to the belief that national image equates better with national identity and competitive politics and economics than it emulates corporate interests. While potential exists to utilize Anholt's theory in conjunction with ISIL's *Dabiq* magazine, the hexagon is not applicable to ISIL's alleged caliphate. The hexagon measures a nation's brand by examining its people, culture and heritage, investment and immigration, governance, exports, and tourism using quantified and quantifiable data.[62] These data sets do not currently exist for ISIL. Additionally, *Dabiq* magazine does not address actual matters of governance, exports, tourism, or investment and immigration, leading to too many information gaps to draw any conclusions from the model. The absence of data for three and a half sections of the hexagon reiterates that ISIL does not conform to current definitions of a state. Therefore, a more flexible model is required to examine the magazine as a tool to communicate ISIL's perception of its nation-brand.

Keith Dinnie (2008, 15), founder of the Center for Nation Branding and a professor in the Netherlands, defines a nation-brand as a "unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences." He developed a conceptual model to explain the components of identity and image that construct, in aggregate, the nation-brand.

Dinnie's Conceptual Model of the Nation-brand – Top Level

[61] Despite differences between the terms nation and state, nation branding appears to use the terms nation and state interchangeably. There are scholar who differentiate by using "state branding" to refer solely to the economic branding of a state (e.g. "made in country x" products and labels). For an example of state branding, see van Ham 2001.
[62] For a discussion of the method, see GFK America 2014.

Dinnie categorizes the components that comprise that nation-brand into three bins that speak to its formation and development. Nation-brand identity consists of socio-cultural components including history, language, territory, political regime, architecture, education/art, and religion. The communicators, or the people and objects that can disseminate or project the nation-brand identity, include cultural artifacts, brand ambassadors, foreign policy, prominent figures, and online media. The nation-brand image is conveyed through the socio-cultural aspects of identity transported through the communicators and is reflected in/by domestic consumers, external consumers, media, government, and firms and investors.

Dinnie's conceptual model formed the basis to explore whether *Dabiq* might contain insights into an ISIL-conceived nation-brand. Each key component from the model received an operational definition to prepare it for a content analysis dictionary and coding scheme. For components in the identity bin, definitions were broad so that historical references and mentions of ISIL's political regime were coded. The territory component differed in that it included mentions of gaining land, neighborhoods, and cities as well as mentions of an opponent's loss of territory. Components in the communicators bin were marked when they were mentioned, with the exception of the brand ambassadors. When the text referred its readers to perform an act in the name of ISIL, these instances became coded as calls for brand ambassadors. For example, *Dabiq's* second edition contains instructions for its readers such as "try to record these bay'at and then distribute them through all forms of media including the Internet" (Edition 2, 3). Definitions for the image bin focused on ISIL's statements of its reality. These mentions included references to the state of the media and government as well as statements of what ISIL claims it does for its consumers, such as "The Islamic State distributes the share of ghanimah designated for orphans" (Edition 2, 38). In this case, the statement appears to be for its domestic consumers, though many examples could apply to both domestic and external consumers, and were therefore coded for both.

After coding completion, a coding frequency analysis contained several points of note. First, it revealed that none of the magazines mentioned architecture, education/art, or firms and investment.[63] The lack of discussion on these points suggests that ISIL considers these components unnecessary/unimportant or has left these topics alone for the time being. Language and cultural artifacts appeared in only two of the four editions, making them also seem to be of lesser importance to ISIL. Only the second edition applied to the brand ambassadors with explicit instructions to the magazine's target audience to advertise and/or advocate publically for ISIL. The other editions contain implicit instructions and implications. It could be argued that the magazine's existence could be coded as soliciting brand ambassadors but this does not fall within the scope of the coding scheme. Of the three bins, the analysis showed that the magazines placed more emphasis on the nation-brand identity, the sociocultural

[63] The lack of cases on education may be partially misleading. The definition entailed references to schools, classes, pupils, and curriculum. One could make the case that ISIL views education in terms of Muslim teachings and that reciting the Quran is a form of education. If recitation counts as education, *Dabiq* mentions recitations twice. Both reference the idea that the Quran cannot solely be a book of chanting and recitation and instead must be understood as a guide for governance and enforcement. However, regardless of how education is addressed in the magazines, ISIL has issued policy on its approved educational curricula and standards. See Middle East Background 2014.

aspects of Iraq and Syria, than the communicators or the nation-brand image. The nation-brand image, how ISIL depicts reality on the ground, received the second highest coding count. Across the bins, the components with the highest coding frequencies were territory, political regime, religion, prominent figures, domestic consumers, and external consumers.

A preliminary assessment of ISIL from the standpoint of nation branding based on Dinnie's conceptual model suggests that ISIL is aware of nation-brand identity, communicators of that identity, and image. The group places emphasis on territory, political regime, and religion; communicates these pieces of information through prominent figures and by using *Dabiq* and other web publications; and shapes its image for consumers, more specifically Sunni Muslims, both domestic and abroad. Because the magazine focuses on promoting elements of nation-brand identity, it may indicate that ISIL is still in the process of shaping its narratives and solidifying how it perceives its own identity. At the same time, the prevalence of nation-brand image content suggests ISIL's conceptualization of its nation-brand is close to being finalized and that future content will not deviate greatly from the material and messaging already produced. ISIL's consistent messaging and themes may contribute to the group's appeal: ISIL said it would establish a caliphate and, regardless of the legitimacy question, it claims this accomplishment; it said it would expand and appears, at least according to *Dabiq*, to continue expanding successfully. Target audiences who perceive a consistent message and believe that ISIL has produced substantive proof on these claims may feel inclined to support ISIL and its objectives.

Competing Messages

The preliminary content analysis featured above suggests that ISIL is in the process of creating a nation-brand and is doing so deliberately through *Dabiq*. From the outside, ISIL's efforts appear to follow the same vein as other militant jihadist groups worldwide. Even though ISIL uses strategies that appear similar to groups such as Al Qaeda (i.e., taking advantage of the Internet as a media to disseminate information inexpensively), the question arises as to the distinctiveness of ISIL's rhetoric in comparison to these other groups in the region with potentially competing interests. As an initial test, a word frequency analysis was performed on the current four editions of *Dabiq* and AQ's new magazine *Resurgence*,[64] released at the end of October 2014. The results appear in the two word clouds below:

[64] Prior to February 2014, ISIS and AQ had what appeared to be a tense but cooperative relationship. The groups split when ISIS decided that AQ's strategies were too soft and it had taken an ideologically-flawed path. For a more detailed discussion, see Habeck 2014.

Word Frequency Analysis: ISIL's Dabiq Magazine, Editions 1-4

Word Frequency Analysis: AQ's Resurgence Magazine

While these word clouds could be further refined with additional stop word removal, consolidation of singular and plural words, and the placement of certain words into phrases, a quick perusal of these two clouds illustrates that there are similarities and striking differences in the rhetoric. Words used with the highest frequency (e.g., Allah, Islamic, Muslim) appeared in both document sets. *Dabiq's* rhetoric focuses more on religion (e.g., Prophet, the Messenger, hijrah, and other transliterated Arabic terminology). AQ's rhetoric centers on warfare (e.g., Mujahideen, soldiers, drones, armies, forces, military, etc.). Both magazines discuss geography and terrain, with *Dabiq's* geographic references being

primarily local (e.g. Iraq, Syria, the Sham, land, etc.), whereas AQ has a broader international interest (e.g., America, Pakistan, Waziristan, India, Palestine, Israel, Africa, the Subcontinent, Bangladesh, etc.). Some overlap between the two publications does exist, though the more obvious differences indicate that ISIL emphasizes religion and the territory it currently occupies. In contrast, AQ espouses foreign expansion and simultaneous conflict on multiple national fronts, which is not an apparent deviation from its previous narratives.[65]

This word frequency analysis, albeit limited in scope to a small volume of English-language material, suggests that ISIL's rhetorical strategy involves the creation and dissemination of a distinct nation-brand, as defined by its leaders and stakeholders, to its consumers. The uniqueness of the caliphate and the prominence of religion in its messaging may resonate with its customers, who are predominantly domestic and external Sunni Muslims.

Conclusion

The content and word frequency analyses seek to explain how ISIL's *Dabiq* magazine may play a role in ISIL's branding of itself as a nation that provides its target audiences (domestic and external) with a unique form of government that has never existed in modern history. ISIL's rhetoric shows that it is shaping its identity and crafting a new narrative based on this pre-modern history and its own interpretation of Islam. ISIL communicating its understanding of identity through multiple means, including prominent figures and online media; it projects its self-conceptualized identity to encourage potential consumers to "buy in" to its vision. These preliminary conclusions are indicative of what the analyses suggest.

These preliminary findings recognize the need for additional research. Usage of a single source, *Dabiq* magazine, limits the analysis, potentially misses relevant context, and may introduce bias. In order to understand ISIL's strategies and motivations, data should be obtained directly from ISIL. However, while this is not possible, *Dabiq* and other forms of propaganda serve as proxies for analysis. ISIL's media provides insights into how it targets audiences and projects what it wants them to believe. From the analysis, ISIL uses its rhetoric strategically in its magazines to promote a state and government designed to support Sunni Muslims while subjugating all other populations. The caliphate, whether real or imagined, appeals to some Sunni Muslims, as evidenced by the influx of foreign fighters to the region.[66] The rhetorical strategy, which includes pictures and stories, focuses on the benefits ISIL claims to offer and sends the message to Sunni Muslims that ISIL takes care of its "citizens." This message is likely to resonate with individuals who believe the rhetoric. The message, as well as the messenger, is part of the nation branding effort. However, though the indications are that ISIL is building a brand, it is not yet known to what extent this brand has, or can create, brand equity.

References

[65] These results are not entirely unexpected due to the groups' shared history. Future analysis should seek to examine publications from militant jihadists in the region, such as the AQ-affiliated Jabhat al-Nusra, to determine the degree to which its messages align and compete with ISIL's.

[66] Foreign fighter estimates usually average 15000 for Iraq and Syria. For more information see Ackerman 2014.

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The Validity, Viability—and Possible Value—of Neuro-cognitive Science and Technology in Operational Intelligence and Deterrence (Drs. James Giordano and Rachel Wurzman, Georgetown University Medical Center)

Abstract

Neuroscience and neurotechnology (neuroS/T) are of ever growing interest in and to national security, intelligence, and defense (NSID) endeavors. The potential utility of nueroS/T approaches in NSID operations remains speculative. Yet, the pace of progress in neuroS/T continues to increase as the creation of new tools and theories continues. It is vital to (1) acknowledge that neuroS/T progress in areas relevant to NSID is real and (2) pragmatically view the capabilities and limitations of these devices and techniques, and the potential pitfalls of—and caveats to—their operational use. This essay describes current, in-development, and proposed neuroS/T approaches, including a novel method, NEURINT (neural intelligence) and describes the focus, capabilities, limitations and potential utility of these techniques and tools in assessing and deterring information transfer and violent behaviors of hostile agents and actors. It is concluded that while considerable research and development of neuroS/T exists, the challenge—and opportunity—will be to engage testing and evaluation toward the operational validity, viability, and value of specific approaches in operational intelligence and deterrence settings.

Key Points

- Neuro-cognitive science and neurotechnology (neuroS/T) can provide insights into patterns and mechanisms of individual and group cognition, emotions, and behaviors
- There is a growing body of information that defines the ways that individuals and groups neurologically respond to, and are affected by, various types of information including narratives, propaganda, and environmental conditions.
- While neuroS/T approaches—and the information they yield—is valid in laboratory and certain field settings, specific types of neuroS/T may prove to be most useful in intelligence gathering and deterrence operations.
- The current challenge—and opportunity—is to translate the science and technology to operational settings.

Neuro-cognitive Science and Neurotechnology: From Bench to Battlescape

Neuro-cognitive science has become increasingly interdisciplinary, and has been a nexus for the development and use of a wide range of technological innovations (viz. - neurotechnology). Taken together, neuroscience and neurotechnology (i.e., neuroS/T) are of ever-growing interest in and to national security, intelligence and defense (NSID) endeavors (see Giordano, 2014a, for overview). Recent Strategic Multilayer Assessment (SMA) conferences considered the potential impact of neuroscientific understanding of aggression, decision-making, and social behavior on policy and strategy pertaining to NSID deterrence and influence campaigns (see *SMA Reports*: May 2014; April 2013; February 2013; July 2012; June 2012). These reports highlighted: 1) potential ways that neuroscientific

insights into individual, collective, and inter-group social behavior might be used to better understand threat environments in increasingly interdependent and changing environments; 2) the utility of neuroS/T for NSID analysis operations in the context of conflicts with state and non-state actors; and 3) how neuroscientific understanding of aggression may influence strategies for deterrence.

The relative nascence of neuroscience and much of neurotechnology is such that the potential utility of these approaches in NSID operations remains speculative. Yet the pace of progress in neuroS/T continues to increase as the creation of new tools and theories continue to build valuable heuristics for understanding human thought, emotion and actions, and operationalizing tools and techniques to assess and affect these dimensions for individual and collective engagement. Such speculation must acknowledge that despite neuroS/T progress in these areas is real, and must pragmatically view the capabilities and limitations of these devices and techniques, and the potential pitfalls of— and caveats to— their use (Giordano and Wurzman, 2011).

NeuroS/T Use in Intelligence Strategy and Operations

The human dimension presents unprecedented challenges for improved strategic intelligence. We assert that this prompts discussion about the possibilities for using neuroS/T to augment methodological approaches of traditional intelligence, in order to fortify utility in asymmetric conflicts and irregular warfare. Certain neuroS/T may be particularly well suited to affect performance in, and of, the intelligence community. While communication technologies generate valuable sources of intelligence to provide strategic insight into human and social domains of conflicts, the volume and complexity of such information also generate steep challenges for analysts and their assistive technologies. As the volume of available information swells, the tasks of both human analysts and the technologies they use are becoming ever more reciprocal and inter-dependent. Neuro-cognitive technology can enable pre-processing and sorting of large quantities of complicated information in order to augment human analysts' formulating a cohesive picture from which to draw necessary inferences about the capabilities and intentions of (friendly, neutral or hostile) intelligence targets.

The widespread and inexpensive use of sophisticated communication technology (i.e.- social media) and difficulty of allocating resources to gather intelligence-focal "signals" over evermore increasing, non-relevant "noise" has made more coherent collection and interpretation of intelligence information a priority (NAS 2008; Pringle and Random, 2009). Yet, information technology presently requires human programming and implementation of human-conceived (and biased) models to parse the volume and types of information collected. Moreover, some information remains problematic to collect (e.g., attitudes and intentions of human subjects). Neurotechnologies can facilitate and enhance collection and interpretation capabilities and, thereby, might decrease the fallibility of "human weak links" in the intelligence chain. Neurally-linked, advanced computational strategies (i.e., brain-machine and machine-brain interfaces; BMI/MBI respectively) can be applied to employed singularly, or in tandem, with networked hierarchies of sophisticated BMIs, to mediate access to, and manipulation of, signal detection, processing, and/or integration in the management of massed data (Giordano, 2014b).

NeuroS/T Applications: Interpreting Narratives

Strategic intelligence gathers and analyzes information about the capacities and intentions of agents and actors of foreign countries and can also entail political analyses. Such individual-to-social-to-political analyses, and the predictions derived from them, are difficult due to individually determined actions of numerous and varied agents involved. Understanding the bio-psychosocial factors that influence individual and group dynamics, and being able to detect these variables with high ecological validity (e.g., "in the field" under real-world conditions), is important to both descriptive/analytic and predictive intelligence. NeuroS/T can play a valid role in this effort, but the question remains if and how such approaches can—and/or should—be operationalized.

Toward this end, we believe that a combination of 1) advanced socio-cultural neuroscientific models of individual-group dynamics based upon theories of complexity adapted for use(s) in anthropology; 2) computing and BMI frameworks (perhaps as speculated above); and 3) information gained from neuroimaging that detects/depicts and defines effects of information (e.g. narratives, discourses, etc.) on mental states and decision-biases of key or representative individuals (and groups of individuals), might improve forecasting of recruitment activities and/or violent behavior.

However, intentions (versus cognitive and/or emotional states and their associated neural signatures) are difficult to detect using existing neuroS/T methods. This affects and alters the modeling approaches that could—and should—be used to describe or predict individual or group activities. As well, it is important to consider the potential of technological interventions to alter events. Here, lessons may be learned from prior experience with psychological warfare (Goldstein and Findley, 1996). Given the overarching applications of neuro-cognitive and psychologically viable approaches, there is interest in employing neuroS/T to augment the role, capability, and effect(s) of psychological operations as a "force multiplier" in both political and military tactics.

However, such use of neuroS/T emphasizes problems of cultural intelligence and how these generate psychosocial obstacles to achieving tactical ends. Tactical deficits may be related to the military approach to psychological-political warfare as being centered upon a "conflict of ideas, ideologies, and opinions" while not adequately emphasizing notions such as "cultural and political symbols, perceptions and emotions, behavior of individuals and groups under stress, and cohesion of organizations and alliances" (Lord 1996). Even if aware of such variables, directly affecting "the minds and hearts" of targeted hostile agents and actors might provide difficult because of failures to correctly define and predict which factors may influence aspects of psychological warfare (such as the severance or formation of alliances and collectives' reactions to the threat of integrity).

An appeal of neuroS/T in psychological operations lies in the (theoretical) potential for use to 1) define substrates and mechanisms related to culturally relevant cognitions and behaviors and 2) directly affect perceptions, emotions, behaviors, and tendencies for affiliation. The most obvious possibility is to use neuroS/T to assess and affect cognitive capability, emotions, and/or motivations. Arguably, a more culturally invariant framework for conceptualizing cultural norms is required before we can understand how they interact with neural substrates to influence behavior.

The Sociocultural Content in Language (SCIL) and the Metaphor programs at IARPA seek to better recognize norms across cultures. The Narrative Networks program at DARPA employs a specifically neuroscientific approach to understand and model the influence of narratives in social and environmental contexts and seeks to "develop sensors to determine their impact on individuals and groups." We predict that a better understanding of the neural causes and effects of narratives will contribute significant insight into the reciprocal (neuro-) biological, psychological, and socio-cultural effects on brain development, function, and behavior, in a way that can be leveraged for operational analysis, and intervention/deterrence.

NEURINT (Neural Intelligence): A Potentially Novel—and Integrative—Approach

Consensus at recent Strategic Multi-layer Assessment (SMA) conferences expressed needs for better frameworks to analyze and influence human factors in threat environments. In particular, there is a need to comprehend the often-concealed influence of social and cultural norms on perception, cognition, decision-making, and behavior in individuals and collectives. The Social Media in Strategic Communication (SMISC), Strategic Social Interaction Module (SSIM), and Narrative Networks programs at DARPA reflect the growing awareness of the critical roles that social identities, cryptic cultural norms, and narratives play in providing the necessary contexts of strategic intelligence at the individual and group levels. Furthermore, there is recognition of the neural basis of such effects, operating both upon the subject and the analyst or decision-maker. Taken with other DARPA and IARPA programs (e.g. those previously mentioned), these approaches create opportunities for neuroS/T to augment understanding of neuro-cognitive processing of behavioral and semantic cues that may be present in narratives, and other forms of social engagement (e.g. media, etc.) that influence recruitment, conjoinment, and which motivate behaviors.

In this light, we posit the viability of employing neuroS/T in a novel intelligence framework, which we call "NEURINT" (i.e., neural intelligence; Wurzman and Giordano, 2014; see also *SMA Report*, November 2014). NEURINT accesses interactions between the "story" and the "attribute" (or the "who" and the "what") represented by an individual's narrative and biometric data. An important factor is the assumption that relationships between biometric patterns and neural activity are individualistic; thus the utility in understanding these variables is not to identify the "what" of a person (e.g., typing or categorizing or otherwise reducing according to patterns digital data) but to recognize their contingency (e.g., between the brain, body, and biography).

By first cross-correlating putative neural mechanisms of experiences and individuals' biometric patterns, NEURINT collection shifts the process from "reading" (off) the body to one of "listening" (in) to the body. Biometric analyses alone are often used to verify identification and thus "reduce singularity and uniqueness to sameness" (Ajana 2010). A complementary understanding of the relationships of biometrics (as well as the embodied experiences they reflect) to neurological signals prevents the inadvertent "reduction of the story to its attributes." This requires that any biometric or behavioral indicators that are collected and analyzed (with an aim to draw inferences about subjective phenomena in target populations) must first be studied using rigorous research methods to establish a neural framework for understanding such phenomena.

On the other hand, the analysis of NEURINT is also inextricable from influences afforded by social, cultural, and psychological environments of individual analyst(s) (as well as the target subject(s).) Therefore, as an analysis tool, NEURINT does not yield products with predictive validity that can be considered independently. Instead, its outcomes dynamically enhance analysis and utility of HUMINT and SIGINT/COMINT (of which NEURINT may be considered to be essentially comprised.) This is because the analyst's own cognitive filters are subject to the neuro-cognitive effects of cultural norms and narratives. By its contingent nature, NEURINT engages the analyst in an interpretive process that maintains an open process of reinterpretation and expandability.

NEURINT analysis may be used to provide insight about identity and active narratives in target populations. In turn, these may suggest tools, strategies, or direct interventions for improving identification, communication, and rapport, which thereby enhance collection and nuance the analyses of HUMINT and SIGINT/COMINT. NEURINT may be collected as narratives from electronic sources or as human biometric observations during social interaction or surveillance. NEURINT provides an additional layer of context to HUMINT and SIGINT by suggesting which neuro-cognitive systems and processes are engaged at the time of the observed behavior.

NEURINT might provide for real-time identification of sacred narratives being invoked during an interview, which might then specifically guide later interpretation, filtering, and analysis of information. NEURINT may be of value for optimizing communication with individuals or groups by catering to cognitive styles or perceptual sensitivities. Finally, an additional tier of insight may be afforded by systematically relating evidence-supported inferences about the analyst's cognition and perceptions (i.e., based on biometric signals or possible proxy linguistic indicators) to those inferred from observations of the subject. One example of a research program essentially aligned with the principle strategy of NEURINT is IARPA's Tools for Recognizing Useful Signs of Trustworthiness (TRUST) program. TRUST leverages inter-subject variability and dynamic interaction between a sensor and its target to validate a subjective perceptual process for assessing a behavioral trait or tendency in a target.

In this way, NEURINT could be used to (1) enable strategic and/or tactical engagement with, or manipulation of individuals' or groups' psychological state(s) to achieve best advantage in kinetic and non-kinetic deployments; (2) provide insights for development of counter-narratives that exert maximal effect upon target individuals' and groups' neuro-cognitive processes; and/or (3) develop information and/or cyber-based approaches to influencing content and effect(s) of various forms of messaging used by target individuals and groups (e.g., social media, etc.).

Conclusion

At present, specific NEURINT methodologies have yet to be developed. However, their potential is tantalizing. While NEURINT research and its enabling technologies require sophisticated equipment, the collection and analysis of NEURINT may not need to assume a highly technical form for operational deployment, which might overcome obvious obstacles such as equipment size and the lack of ecological validity. As well, there has been limited operational translation of neuroS/T within intelligence and deterrence initiatives. The task is to define if and how specific neuroS/T-based approaches can and

should be employed in a variety of intelligence and deterrence frameworks, settings, and situations. We offer that extant research and development stands poised for testing and evaluation under a number of field conditions (see, for example Giordano, 2014a, for overview of currently available tools and techniques that are, and can be, utilized within NSID initiatives). Without doubt, there are defined limitations to each and every neuroS/T approach. Yet, current limitations can be rightly viewed as challenges and opportunities for tomorrow's science and technology. Our ongoing work is dedicated to studying and developing a more convergent scientific and technological paradigm to compensate for extant constraints and limitations, to enable more detailed scientific information and create technologies that can be soundly employed/deployed in operational settings.

Acknowledgements

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IV. ISIL External and Umma Support

ISIL Affinity Study (TRADOC[67]/G-2 Operational Environment Lab)

Abstract

In July 2014, Special Operations Command-Central (SOCCENT) requested that the Strategic Multilayer Assessment Office (SMA) initiate a short-term effort to assess the appeal of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The TRADOC G2 Intelligence Support Activity (TRISA) Operational Environment Laboratory (OEL) supports this effort with Athena simulation analysis. The Asymmetric Warfare Group (AWG) identified an opportunity for an Athena Support Team (AST) to embed with SOCCENT at MacDill Air Force Base, 15 September to 17 October 2014, to leverage the Athena simulation to assist SOCCENT's understanding of ISIL's appeal and support SOCCENT planning efforts.

The study team established four initial insights:

- Based on their beliefs, ISIL has little broad based appeal in Iraq. Their two key Iraqi allies—Sunni Tribalists and Neo Baathists—are allies of convenience against the Government of Iraq (GoI), rather than allies of ideology.
- A positive affinity for ISIL by the populations of Qatar, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Egypt, Yemen and Algeria has resulted in an environment that is conducive to unsanctioned recruitment and support. This positive population affinity will require intervention by regional governments to disrupt ISIL recruitment and support.
- Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Qatar have mismatched governmental and population affinities for ISIL in which the population affinity for ISIL is substantially higher than their respective government's affinity towards ISIL. This raises the issue of the government changing their behaviors to close this mismatch or potentially facing civil tension from segments of their population over the issue of ISIL.
- The GoI leadership transition from al Maliki to al Abadi DID NOT improve affinities between GoI and the Sunni Civilian Groups. This transition induced an erosion of al Abadi's Shia political base, potentially limiting the level of GoI/Sunni reconciliation.

Methodology

This report captures a summary of the study team's analysis and identifies several insights that were derived from research, Athena simulation runs, and analysis. The Athena simulation is a scalable, laptop-based, decision support tool that allows analysts to explore complex social science components of the operational environment. Athena enables analysts to account for the intricacies of socio-cultural interactions over time and to project PMESII-PT (Political, Military, Economic, Social, Infrastructure, Information, Physical Environment, and Time) trends over time.

[67] The point of contact for this effort is Mr. Mel Cape, Deputy Director TRADOC Models and Simulations Directorate, melvin.r.cape.civ@mail.mil.

The study question—what makes ISIL so magnetic, inspirational, and deeply resonant with a specific, but large portion of the Islamic population?—guided the study team as a framework for analysis.

In order to quantifiably assess the appeal of ISIL, the AST used the Athena simulation to calculate affinities for ISIL in the construct of the SMA ISIL analytical framework.

Affinity in the Athena simulation is:

- The depth of feeling or support between one Civilian Group or Actor and another.
- Affinity is a measurement from +1.0 to -1.0 computed by comparing the belief systems of two entities.
- Does not have to be symmetrical.
- Building block that influences relationships, support, influence, and control.

Figure 1 shows the six steps that AST used to quantify the appeal of ISIL. This paper covers the first three steps—initial beliefs, Athena processing, and relationships. The classified full study report covers the subsequent three steps.[68] The AST used Monitor 360 products to generate the majority of the 11 beliefs the study team developed for each Civilian Group and Actor. The study team assigned a position and emphasis for each belief and then proofed their work with SMEs and the DIA Regional Expertise Cultural Training Center. This allowed the team to develop baseline relationships (affinities), which it then confirmed/calibrated by social media analysis. The team then met with SOCCENT/UAPs to assess potential futures and then applied these futures in the Athena simulation to develop ISIL relationships over time.

[68] For a copy of the classified (SECRET//NOFORN) report contact Mr. Mel Cape Deputy OEL Director 913-684-7909, melvin.r.cape.ctr@mail.mil.

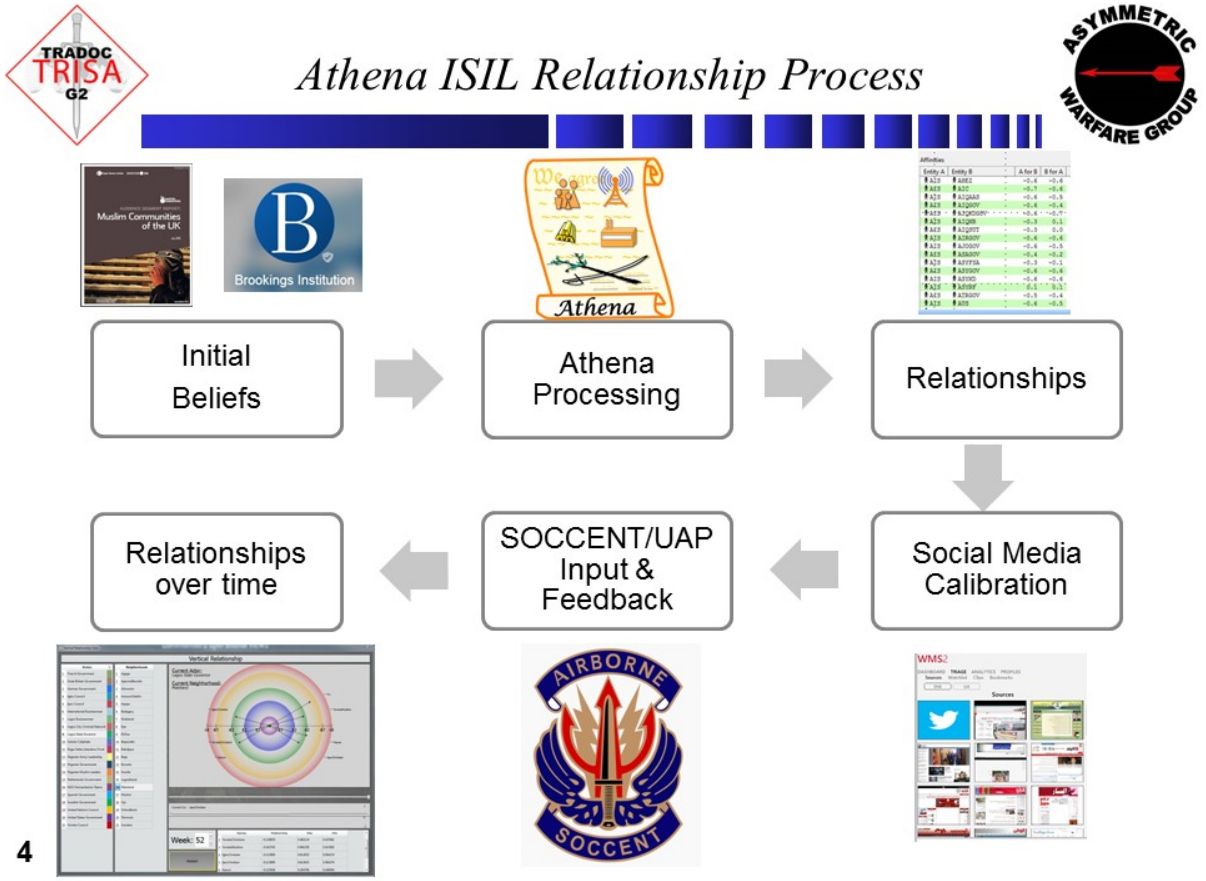

Figure 1: Affinities in the Athena simulation are derived from the beliefs of both Actors and Civilian Groups

Insights

The AST used the SMA analytical framework for ISIL, which decomposes ISIL appeal into five separate categories: Local Elite Power Base, Capacity to Control, External (State/NGO), Umma Support, and Civilian Support. Of this framework, the AST was able to use the Athena simulation to assess affinities on all of the categories except control. From this analysis four insights emerged.

Insight 1

Based on their beliefs, ISIL has little broad based appeal in Iraq. Their two key Iraqi allies—Sunni Tribalists and Neo Baathists—are allies of convenience against the Government of Iraq (GoI), rather than allies of ideology. Figure 2 shows how the Neo-Baathist and Sunni Tribalist civilian groups have neutral affinities for ISIL (-.1 and 0 respectively), while Figure 3 shows the neutral affinities for ISIL from the Neo-Baathist Leadership and Tribal Elites (-.1 for both).

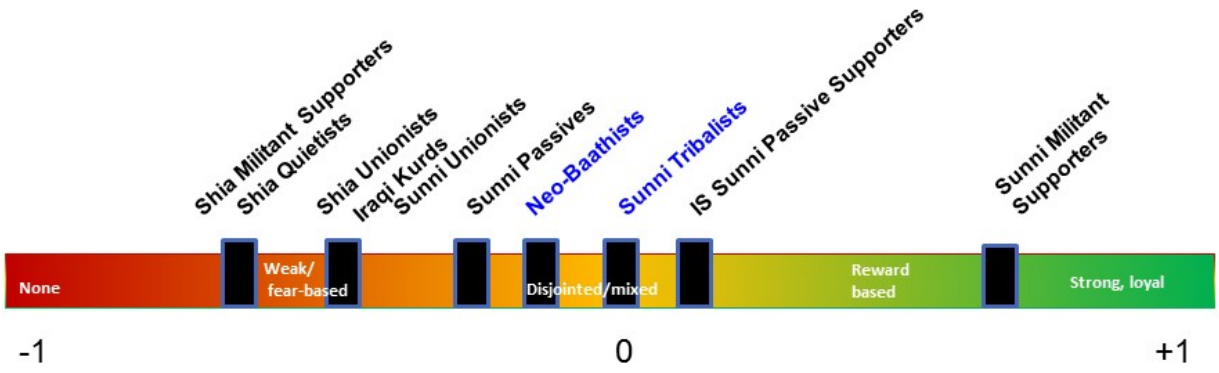

Figure 2: Both the Neo-Baathist and Sunni Tribalist Civilian Groups have neutral affinity for ISIL

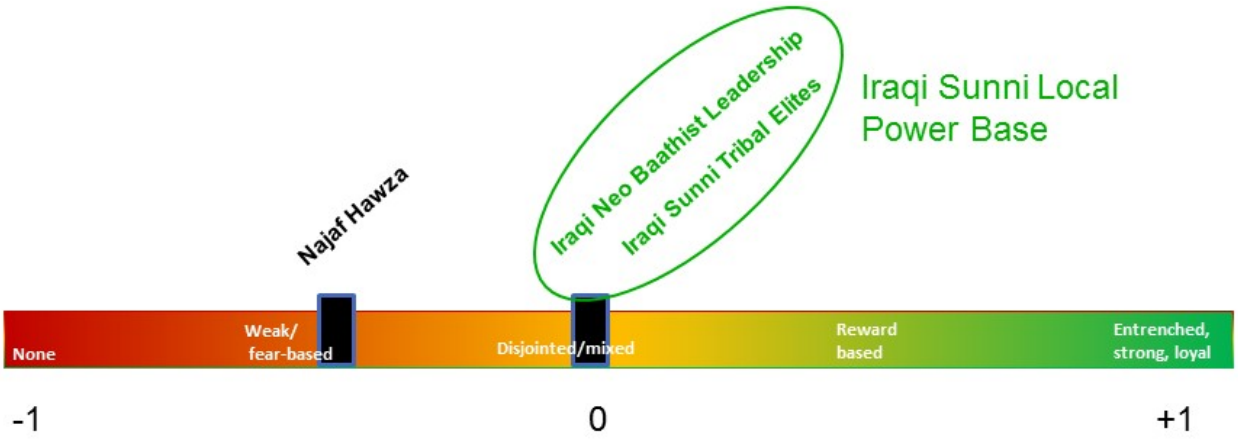

Figure 3: The Iraqi Sunni Local Power base also has a neutral affinity for ISIL

Insight 2:

A positive affinity for ISIL by the populations of Qatar, Turkey, KSA, Libya, Egypt, Yemen and Algerian has resulted in an environment that is conducive to unsanctioned recruitment and support. This positive affinity will require their government's intervention to disrupt ISIL recruitment and support. Figure 4 shows the range of regional population affinities for ISIL.

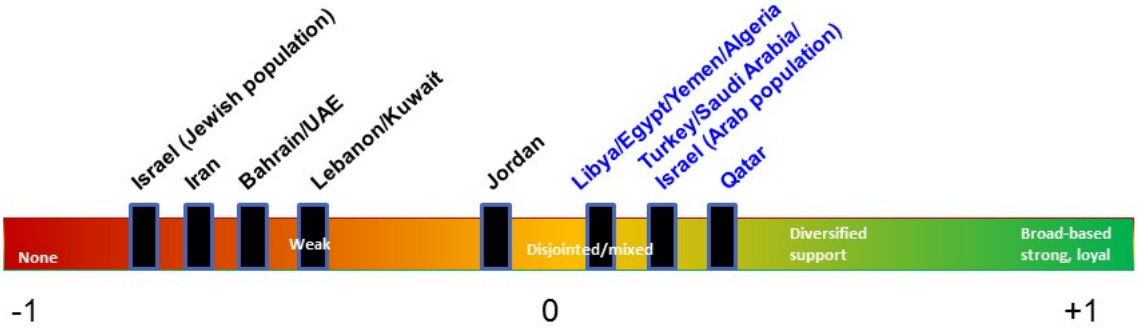

Figure 4: The populations of several Middle Eastern countries have slightly positive affinities for ISIL

Insight 3

Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Qatar have mismatched governmental and population affinities for ISIL in which the population affinity for ISIL is substantially higher than their respective government's affinity towards ISIL. This raises the issue of the government changing their behaviors to close this mismatch or potentially facing civil tension from segments of their population over the issue of ISIL.

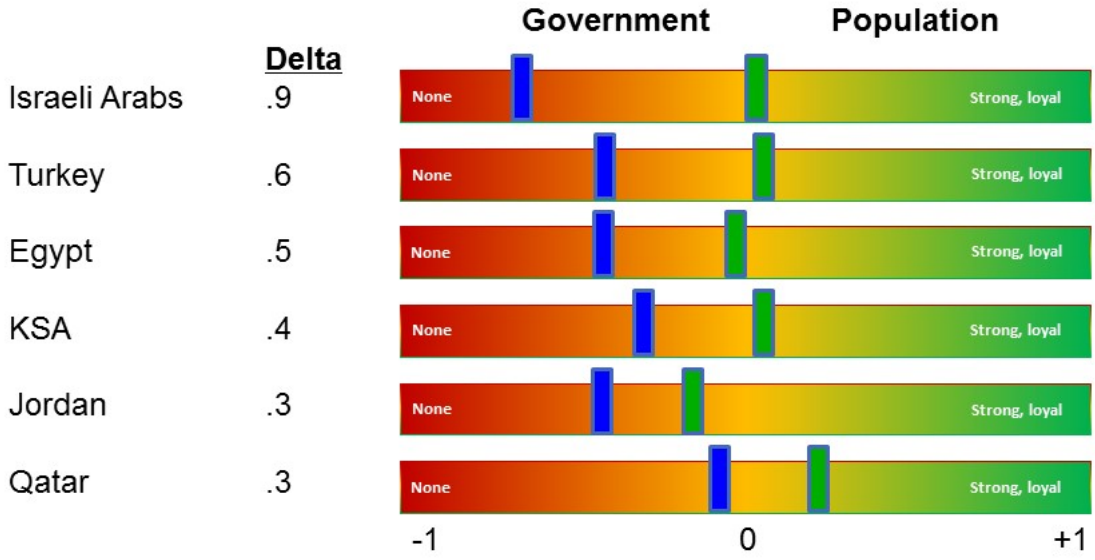

Figure 5: Several regional governments have mismatched governmental and populous affinities for ISIL

Insight 4

The GoI leadership transition from al Maliki to al Abadi DID NOT improve affinities between GoI and the Sunni Civilian Groups. This transition induced an erosion of al Abadi's Shia political base, potentially limiting the level of GoI/Sunni reconciliation.

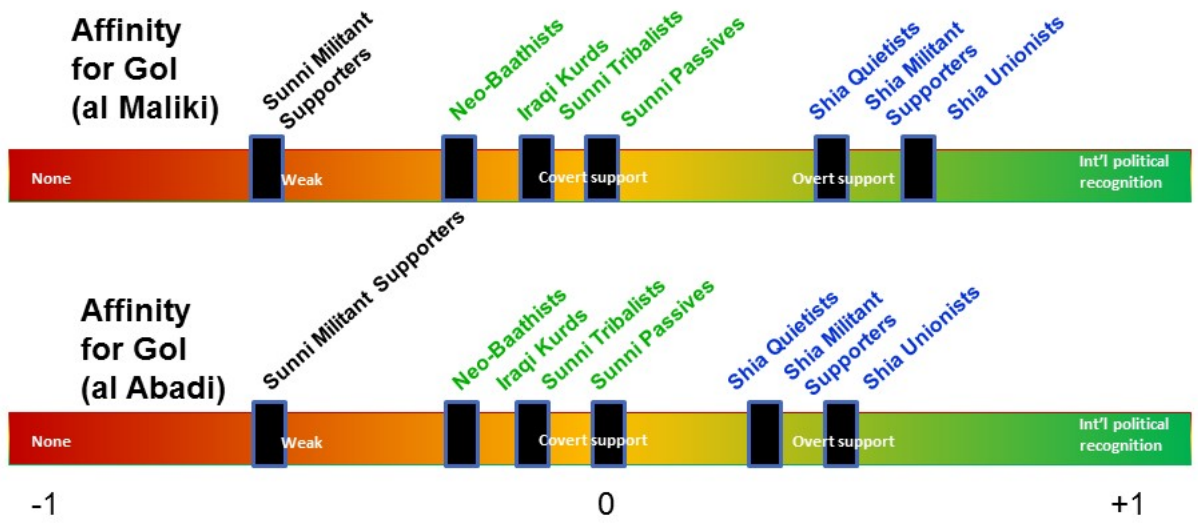

Figure 6: The more the GoI reach out to Sunnis the more they erode their political base.

Conclusion

While this study cannot categorically state the reasons why ISIL has support in Iraq and Syria, it can show that ISIL's appeal is relatively narrow amongst the overall population. In Iraq, two of its key allies, the Neo-Baathists and Sunni Tribalists, are not ideologically wed to ISIL but see ISIL as allies of convenience against the GoI. While the al Abadi government is appearing to be receptive towards rapprochement with the Sunni population *writ large,* it will take a combination of GoI action and ISIL misstep to leverage these groups towards the government. Regionally, the majority of the populations' affinities are not aligned with ISIL but, in several countries, the affinities for ISIL are slightly positive. This results in an environment that is conducive to unsanctioned recruitment and support for the portion of the population attracted to ISIL. This positive population affinity will require their government's intervention to disrupt ISIL recruitment and support. However the regional governments (and the US) need to be cognizant that governmental action against ISIL may potentially lead to their facing civil tension from segments of their population over the issue of ISIL.

Understanding the Threat: Explaining the Rise the Appeal of the Islamic State (Mr. Jonathon Cosgrove, Mr. Muayyad al-Chalabi, Mr. Lee Slusher, & Dr. Stacey Pollard,[69] Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory)

In summer 2014, Major General Nagata, Commanding General of SOCCENT, requested the Pentagon's Strategic Multilayer Assessment office engage with experts from think tanks, academia, and other research facilities to study the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The general was particularly interested in ISIL's seemingly magnetic appeal. How could such an organization seize so much territory and attract so many recruits in such little time? The APL conducted research on behalf of the Army's Asymmetric Warfare Group to address exactly this topic—explaining the rise and appeal of ISIL. This study concluded that ISIL's ascent was the result of a confluence of favorable conditions—a perfect storm.

First, longstanding grievance-based narratives made Sunnis in the region and farther afield susceptible to ISIL's messaging. Although these narratives were varied, each provided fertile ground for ISIL's master narrative. These include victimization, the plight of Iraqi Sunnis, the Sunni-Shia divide (and broader regional proxy war), an alternative to chaos and an alternative to the modern nation-state.

Second, the sectarian strife in Iraq produced a marginalized Sunni population, especially in the country's northern and western portions. With the US withdrawal, Baghdad's Shia-dominated government intensified its repression of Sunni demands for greater political and economic inclusion. This prompted many Sunnis to form or reassemble various militias. In this chaos, ISIL (then the Islamic State of Iraq) resonated with the local population, not because the people agreed with its worldview, but because the group was effective in fighting the Shia. The Syrian Civil War then provided ISIL an opportunity to attract recruits, receive external donor funding, better organize and, ultimately, grow into a much more formidable force (the Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham, later the Islamic State.) This stronger, more mature entity expanded in Iraq, capturing key cities in western and northern Iraq. The establishment of a caliphate allowed the group to surpass Al Qaeda as the world's most prominent Islamist group.

Third, the organization has made use of several methods to further expand its ranks. The organization has "low barriers to entry," meaning it accepts recruits from diverse backgrounds, forgoing the type of vetting process common in other extremist groups. Also, the group's success has created a snowball effect in that many flock to ISIL simply due to its success to date. Lastly, the group employs a sophisticated media apparatus to propagate its message.

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Key Narratives That Gave Rise to ISIL

ISIL's master narrative paints a picture with a history of lost glory, humiliation, and injustice in the background and ongoing civil war and failed governance in the foreground. In the center of this image is ISIL, and it alone is leading Muslims to the destiny the world has denied them, all the while purifying Islam and vanquishing enemies. This master narrative is, in fact, a cartoonish depiction of the group's ruthless and opportunistic rise. Nonetheless, ISIL is able to recruit from local populations and draw enthusiastic volunteers from around the world. The reason for this supposed magnetism is that a confluence of narratives, some centuries old, continues to produce fertile ground for ISIL propaganda and recruitment.

Victimization

ISIL benefits from long-standing narratives that center on victimization, resentment, and the loss of past glory. Some of these narratives are specific to the Arab world, but many others permeate the broader international Islamic community. This diffusion of ideas occurs because of the Arabian Peninsula's status as the birthplace of Islam and the resulting sense of community felt by Muslims outside of the region. Hence, many grievances that might otherwise have been regional in nature became sources of discord for Muslims around the world. Such grievances are many and varied. Examples include, but are not limited to, a longing for the golden age of Islam, colonialism, the establishment and continued existence of Israel, the US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the ongoing drone war.[70] This list of grievances represents many separate issues that have occurred over hundreds of years, but in the context of this victimization narrative, these injustices, real or perceived, blend into a mutually reinforcing story of oppression.[71] This narrative makes it possible for ISIL to posture itself as a savior of sorts, offering both redemption and empowerment.[72]

The Plight of Iraqi Sunni Arabs

The Sunni Arab rebellion in Iraq presents another narrative that favored ISIL expansion.[73] There continues to be extensive opposition among Sunni Iraqi Arabs to the changes that occurred in Iraq after the United States' 2003 invasion, including de-Baathification and the 2005 constitution. They believe the US-brokered Shia–Kurd alliance occurred entirely at the expense of their own communities and that this alliance has produced widespread disenfranchisement. This Sunni Arab narrative exists separately from the Islamist and caliphate narratives ISIL propagates,[74] but it created an opening for ISIL to forge

[70] Pollack, K., & Hamid, S. (2014). Summary of Dr. Ken Pollack and Dr. Shadi Hamid (The Brookings Institution). In *Multi-Method Assessment of ISIL: SME Interview Summaries Booklet* (p. 92). Strategic Multilayer Assessment.
[71] Haddad, F. (2014). Summary of Dr. Fanar Haddad (National University of Singapore). In *Multi-Method Assessment of ISIL: SME Interview Summaries Booklet* (pp. 72-74). Strategic Multilayer Assessment.
[72] Yahya, M. (2014). Summary of Dr. Maha Yahya (Carnegie). In *Multi-Method Assessment of ISIL: SME Interview Summaries Booklet* (pp. 115-117). Strategic Multilayer Assessment.
[73] The Sunni rebellion in Iraq: Desperate odds. (2014, June 21). *The Economist*.
[74] Natali, D. (2014). Summary of Dr. Denise Natali (Institute for National Strategic Studies). In *Multi-Method Assessment of ISIL: SME Interview Summaries Booklet* (pp. 44-46). Strategic Multilayer Assessment.

alliances with ex-Baathists and Sunni tribal leaders, many of whom seek security and a means to exact revenge on Baghdad for its neglect of Sunni regions.[75]

Sunni/Shia Antipathy

Although the Sunni–Shia schism has existed for fourteen centuries, it is important to note that the two sects have not lived in perpetual conflict. "Sunni and Shia Muslims have lived peacefully together for centuries. In many countries it has become common for members of the two sects to intermarry and pray at the same mosques."[76] However, it is also true that a cold war of sorts is ongoing in the Middle East, with Saudi Arabia and other Sunni countries engaging in a proxy war with Iran, the Assad regime, and Shia militant groups, such as Lebanese Hezbollah.[77] The fear of Persian and/or Shia domination is a powerful motivator for many Sunnis, to such an extent that allying with Islamists such as ISIL may seem necessary.

An Alternative to Chaos

"An environment of chaos and great suffering has allowed [ISIL] to emerge."[78] The Syrian Civil War and sectarian strife in Iraq have forced many to seek protection. These crises predate ISIL's rise, despite the group's ongoing and active participation in both, and one of ISIL's messages is that it provides stability in the midst of chaos. For many, the decision to join with ISIL has little or nothing to do with the group's purported magnetism or with the tenets of Islam. It is more of an issue of survival. The breakdown of traditional institutions produced a search for alternatives. Although extreme and unforgiving, ISIL's version of governance still provides some measure of order.[79]

An Alternative to the Nation-State

In addition to providing limited security and stability, ISIL brands itself as an alternative to the modern nation-state. At a Ramadan celebration in August 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi presented a map that displayed "a borderless country stretching from the edge of Iran to the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula and across North Africa—a near re-creation of the eighth-century Abbasid caliphate, the first Islamic empire."[80] This goal is more than an attempt to wrest power from regional leaders. The group wishes to replace existing borders and forms of governance with an idealized Islamist model based on

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[75] Khatib, L., & Abou Zeid, M. (2014). Summary of Dr. Lina Khatib and Dr. Mario Abou Zeid (Carnegie). In *Multi-Method Assessment of ISIL: SME Interview Summaries Booklet* (pp. 89-91). Strategic Multilayer Assessment; Bew, J., & Maher, S. (2014). Blowback. *New Statesman, 143*(5215), 22-26; and Wood, G. (2014, September 10). The Three Types of People Who Fight for ISIS. Retrieved from http://www.newrepublic.com/article/119395/isiss-three-typesfighters? utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_term=TNR% 20Daily Newsletter&utm_campaign=TNR Daily Zephyr with LiveIntent – 09112014

[76] The Sunni-Shia Divide. (n.d.). Retrieved October 14, 2014, from http://www.cfr.org/sunnishia

[77] Gause III, G. (2014, August 25). ISIS and the New Middle East Cold War. Retrieved from http://www.brookings.edu/ blogs/iran-at-saban/posts/2014/08/25-isis-new-middle-east-cold-war

[78] Katulis, B., Lang, H., & Singh, V. (2014, September 10). Defeating ISIS, An Integrated Strategy to Advance Middle East Stability.

[79] Pollack, K., & Hamid, S. (2014). Summary of Dr. Ken Pollack and Dr. Shadi Hamid (The Brookings Institution). In *Multi-Method Assessment of ISIL: SME Interview Summaries Booklet* (p. 92). Strategic Multilayer Assessment.

[80] Baker, A., Crowley, M., Thompson, M., & Aysha, R. (2014). A Nightmare Returns. *Time, 183*(2), 30.

an exclusionary view of Islam.[81] This narrative gains traction on several levels. Although it rouses historical fervor for Islam's golden age, the narrative also has contemporary appeal, presented as a forceful undoing of the Sykes–Picot Agreement.[82] All the optimism and enthusiasm of the Arab Spring has produced little in the way of better governance. In fact, many Arab countries experience far more insecurity and political exclusion today than before the revolutions. This sense of squandered hope buoys ISIL's alternative state model.

The Exploitation of Regional Instability

While narratives provided the informational backdrop for ISIL's appeal, the group was able to take advantage of regional instability to transform its goal of a state into reality. This is particularly noteworthy because, although the group had not been defeated, it was substantially marginalized by the late 2000s. However, in the span of four years, ISIL became the region's most powerful Islamist actor and even had eclipsed al Qaeda as the world's preeminent Sunni extremist organization.

An Iraqi Sunni Alliance

During the US occupation of Iraq, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was detained for approximately four years until 2010 at the US-run prison, Camp Bucca.[83] This period proved formative for al-Baghdadi and his future Islamic State. It was at Bucca where the leader forged relationships with those who later became his closest deputies. Although some of these individuals were Islamists with no military experience, al-Baghdadi seemed to have "a preference for military men, and so his leadership team includes many officers from Saddam Hussein's long-disbanded army."[84] Furthermore, Mike Knights of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy noted, "discontent in the military was widespread near the end of [Saddam's] rule, and underground Islamist movements were gaining strength, even inside the military."[85] Internment at Camp Bucca created the opportunity for like-minded Sunni Arab Iraqis to congregate and form bonds, thereby strengthening existing Islamist tendencies. The incorporation of such veterans into al-Baghdadi's group offered several advantages. First, these individuals possessed the necessary skills and discipline not just to mount successful military operations (many had experience fighting the Americans) but also to administer bureaucracy, including finance, logistics, and recruitment. Such warfighting and management expertise has allowed ISIL to function more as a government with an army than as a terrorist or insurgent group. Second, many of these Iraqi Sunnis, including former Baathists, had extensive local contacts and knowledge.[86] They had been leaders during the time of Sunni

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[81] Michael, K., & Dekel, U. (2014, June 24). ISIS Success in Iraq and Syria: Strategic Ramifications.
[82] Islamic State. (2014, June 29). The End of Sykes-Picot. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FWHn96DXRDE.
[83] McCoy, T. (2014, June 11). How ISIS Leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi Became the World's Most Powerful Jihadist Leader. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/06/11/how-isis-leader-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-became-theworlds- most-powerful-jihadi-leader
[84] Hubbard, B., & Schmitt, E. (2014, August 27). Military Skill and Terrorist Technique Fuel Success of ISIS. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https:// sslvpn.jhuapl.edu/2014/08/28/world/middleeast/,DanaInfo=www.nytimes.com army-know-how-seen-as-factor-in-isis-successes.html
[85] Ibid
[86] Ibid

Arab hegemony in Iraq. For many, their marginalization at the hands of the Maliki government represented a loss of status, power, and prosperity. By 2013, Sunni protests against the Baghdad government called for greater political inclusion. Maliki and his alliance dug in, responding with the concentration of partisan power and the violent suppression of Sunni protests using ISF, combined with the selective purging of Sunni political rivals.[87] Iraq's various Sunni communities responded by regrouping, reactivating their militias, and retaliating against the Iraqi government and ISF.[88] ISIL was one such militant group, but by this point it had grown stronger than other groups because of the chaos in neighboring Syria.

Capitalizing on the Syrian Civil War

In its 2010 annual report on civilian casualties in Iraq, the U.K.-based Iraq Body Count noted a drop in the number of deaths from previous years but "warned of a lingering, low-level conflict in the years ahead."[89] Although this assessment depicted Iraq as being far from peaceful, it was an acknowledgment that the chaos of earlier years had waned. A primary reason for the decline in violence was that the once-powerful Sunni rebellion had also diminished, due in large part to the popular uprising and successful Coalition operations against ISIL's predecessor, the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI; formerly known as al Qaeda in Iraq).[90] The Syrian Civil War changed this dynamic because it "left a vacuum of authority in large tracts of [Syria and] fueled a resurgence of the [ISI]."[91] With al-Baghdadi and his new Iraqi allies now out of US custody and with the freedom to operate in neighboring Syria, ISI morphed into the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). In Iraq, the group intensified its campaign of suicide bombings and car bombings and, by 2013, had caused the "highest monthly violent death tolls since 2008."[92] That same year in Syria, the group had become so strong that it challenged the primacy of the al-Nusra Front, al Qaeda's franchise in the country. Al-Baghdadi "claimed [ISIL] had founded the al-Nusrah Front in Syria and that the groups were merging. Al-Nusrah Front, however, denied the merger and publicly pledged allegiance to [al Qaeda] leader Ayman al-Zawahiri."[93] Al-Zawahiri decided to intervene and publicly chastised Baghdadi. In response, Baghdadi announced "I have to choose between the rule of God and the rule of Zawahiri, and I chose the rule of God."[94] This bold denunciation, coupled with ISIL's increased

[87] Make or Break: Iraq's Sunnis and the State (Middle East Report N°144). (2013, August 14). Retrieved from http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-iran-gulf/iraq/144-make-or-break-iraq-s-sunnis-and-the-state.aspx
[88] Rayburn, J. (2013, May 8). Iraq Is Back on the Brink of Civil War: Sectarian Strife Is the Worst It's Been in Many Years – and Syria Isn't Helping. *New Republic*.
[89] Iraq War Deaths 'Drop in 2010. (2010, December 30). Retrieved from http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/ 2010/12/201012302516691853.html
[90] McCoy, T. (2014, June 11). How ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi became the world's most powerful jihadist leader. *The Washington Post*.
[91] Ibid
[92] National Counterterrorism Center. (2014, January 1). Al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) - Terrorist Groups. Retrieved from http://www.nctc.gov/site/groups/aqi.html
[93] Ibid
[94] Baker, A., Crowley, M., Thompson, M., & Aysha, R. (2014). A Nightmare Returns. *Time, 183*(2), 30.

stature in both Iraq and Syria, inspired the majority of al-Nusra's foreign fighters and many of its top commanders to defect to ISIL.[95]

Further Differentiating Itself from al Qaeda

Al-Baghdadi's quarrel with al-Zawahiri continued and, in February 2014, al Qaeda formally disavowed any affiliation with ISIL.[96] Nonetheless, ISIL continued its public criticism of al Qaeda and, in spring 2014, an ISIL spokesman criticized Zawahiri for "being slow to respond to revolutions in Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt" and "failing to take the fight to Iran and for obsessing about the 'far enemy' (the United States), leaving Sunnis open to the revenge of Shias."[97] By June 2014, ISIL had changed its name to the Islamic State, signifying its belief that the group now represented the singular Islamic caliphate and that al-Baghdadi had become the "leader for Muslims everywhere."[98] ISIL's successful establishment of a Sharia state to demand the loyalty of Muslims everywhere contrasted sharply with al Qaeda's unending promise of an eventual caliphate.[99] Furthermore, ISIL's operations aim to "seize important border crossings, dams, and oil fields or to weaken competing militias in territorial strongholds, but also to purify Islam by force, using brutal public executions and amputations to intimidate and deter potential rivals."[100] In other words, ISIL has begun to engage in the business of state-making, whereas al Qaeda still focuses on "waging a protracted war of attrition against the West, specifically aiming to bleed the United States."[101]

External Support

Because of the clandestine nature of external support to various groups fighting in Syria and Iraq, it is difficult to determine precisely which entities provide material and financial assistance to ISIL, as well as the amount and type of this aid. However, some of the broader issues relating to external support are known. Many external actors view the Syrian Civil War in the context of the wider Sunni–Shia proxy war with "Russia, Iran and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah helping the government and with Saudi Arabia and Qatar providing the main support for the rebels."[102] Concerning the latter, much aid (money, weapons, and other supplies[103]) has flowed into the conflict zone more as a means to support the

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[95] Ibid

[96] Sly, L. (2014, February 3). Al-Qaeda disavows any ties with radical Islamist ISIS group in Syria, Iraq. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/al-qaeda-disavows-any-ties-with-radical-islamist-isis-group-in-syria-iraq/2014/02/03/2c9afc3a-8cef-11e3-98ab-fe5228217bd1_story.html

[97] Bew, J., & Maher, S. (2014). Blowback. *New Statesman, 143*(5215), 22-26.

[98] Sunni Rebels Declare New 'Islamic Caliphate. (2014, June 30). *Al Jazeera English*. Retrieved from http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/06/ isil-declares-new-islamic-caliphate-201462917326669749.html

[99] Braniff, W., & Pereira, R. (2014, August 28). A Tale of Two Caliphates. Retrieved from http://www.start.umd.edu/news/tale-two-caliphates

[100] Ibid

[101] Ibid

[102] Hubbard, B. (2013, November 12). Private Donors' Funds Add Wild Card to War in Syria. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes. com/2013/11/13/world/middleeast/private-donors-funds-add-wildcard- to-war-in-syria.html?_r=0

[103] Dickinson, E. (2013, November 16). Playing with Fire: Why Private Gulf Financing for Syria's Extremist Rebels Risks Igniting Sectarian Conflict at Home. Retrieved from http://www.brookings.

overthrow the Assad regime than as an endorsement of any particular rebel group[104] (although some individual donors likely support specific causes, including Islamic extremism.) This external support has altered the composition and effectiveness of fighting groups, "exacerbating divisions in the opposition and bolstering its most extreme elements."[105] Even though many actors who provide support, such as those in the Gulf countries, must contend with the domestic security threat that Islamic extremist groups pose, the reality is that extremists tend to be the most effective in combating the Syrian regime.[106] Hence, extremists are often the recipients of such aid, much of which is channeled through the Kuwaiti financial system.[107] A similar dynamic exists in Iraq where the same external actors wish to combat the primacy of the Shia-dominated central government.[108]

In both the Syrian and Iraqi contexts, the motivation of external actors to provide support was to combat the larger threat of Shia and Shia-allied enemies. Perhaps unintentionally, this support aided ISIL's reconstitution after the group's near marginalization in Iraq before the US withdrawal. After all, ISIL was but one of many rebel groups that reaped the rewards of this phenomenon. This represents yet another way in which ISIL's ascent would not have been possible without regional instability.

Successful Recruiting Practices and Trends

Although ISIL has gained many followers through alliances of convenience and outright coercion, the group continues to draw new, willing recruits, many of whom come from outside of the conflict zone and even outside of the region altogether. This is due primarily to ISIL's inclusive membership standards, continued battlefield success, and vigorous media efforts.

Low Barriers to Entry

Many terrorist groups rely on a vetting process to guard against infiltrators and informants, as well as to maintain a common culture or identity within the group. In such scenarios, new recruits are accepted only if an established member of the group vouches for the newcomer.[109] ISIL, on the other hand,

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edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2013/12/06 private gulf financing syria extremist rebels sectarian conflict% 20dickinson/private gulf financing syria extremist% 20rebels sectarian conflict dickinson.pdf

[104] Worth, R. (2014, January 7). Saudis Back Syrian Rebels Despite Risks. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/08/world/middleeast/saudis-back-syria-rebels-despite-a-lack-of-control.html?_r=0

[105] Hubbard, B. (2013, November 12). Private Donors' Funds Add Wild Card to War in Syria. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes. com/2013/11/13/world/middleeast/private-donors-funds-add-wildcard- to-war-in-syria.html?_r=0

[106] Worth, R. (2014, January 7). Saudis Back Syrian Rebels Despite Risks. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/08/world/middleeast/saudis-back-syria-rebels-despite-a-lack-of-control.html?_r=0

[107] Dickinson, E. (2013, November 16). Playing with Fire: Why Private Gulf Financing for Syria's Extremist Rebels Risks Igniting Sectarian Conflict at Home. Retrieved from http://www.brookings. edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2013/12/06 private gulf financing syria extremist rebels sectarian conflict% 20dickinson/private gulf financing syria extremist% 20rebels sectarian conflict dickinson.pdf

[108] Rogin, J. (2014, June 14). America's Allies Are Funding ISIS. *Daily Beast*. Retrieved from http:// www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/06/14/america-s-allies-arefunding- isis.html

[109] Maher, S., Neuman, P., & Carter, J. (2014). Summary of Mr. Shiraz Maher, Dr. Peter Neuman, Mr. Joseph Carter

promotes universalism.[110] As long as one submits to ISIL's interpretation of Islam and obeys the group's leaders, ISIL seems unconcerned with a potential recruit's race, native language, country of origin, or even one's previous religious affiliation (converts are welcome.) This constitutes what some experts have referred to as "low barriers to entry," a characteristic that likely contributes to ISIL's appeal and, more specifically, to its ability to recruit foreign fighters. The benefits of such low barriers include the opportunity to attract experienced fighters from places such as Chechnya and Bosnia and the ability of ISIL to stand out as a choice for would-be jihadists.[111] Especially in the case of Syria, many foreign fighters arrived in the region without a preexisting group affiliation. ISIL's accommodation of foreigners has made it a more appealing choice.[112]

Success Breeds Success

A common goal for all Islamist groups is the creation of a caliphate. However, this aim is usually portrayed as aspirational in nature because Islamist militant groups are rarely able to seize large territories or consistently govern these spaces. ISIL has achieved this goal, albeit for a matter of months. In addition, the territory that ISIL occupies has greater historical significance than the ground occupied by al Qaeda affiliates in Yemen, North Africa, and East Africa (e.g., ISIL's claimed capital city, Raqqa, was also one of the capitals of Islam's golden age). To many, this is evidence of ISIL's claim that its empire will grow to the proportions of the famed eighth-century caliphate.[113] ISIL's success has a more modern appeal as well. Its territorial gains "eliminated" one of the international borders created in the Sykes–Picot Agreement, representing a victory against colonialism (another regional grievance) while leveraging decades-old sentiments toward pan-Arabism.[114] Such success presents a more immediate and tangible benefit, allowing it to stand out in the crowded assortment of militant groups currently fighting in Syria. To many would-be fighters, ISIL now represents the winning team, and this fact continues to attract recruits.[115]

Robust Media Apparatus

ISIL has its own media arm, the al-Hayat Media Center, which produces high-quality videos as well as

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(International Centre for the Study of Radicalization). In *Multi-Method Assessment of ISIL: SME Interview Summaries Booklet* (p. 41). Strategic Multilayer Assessment.

[110] Klausen, J. (2014). Summary of Dr. Jytte Klausen (Brandeis University). In *Multi-Method Assessment of ISIL: SME Interview Summaries Booklet* (p. 110). Strategic Multilayer Assessment.

[111] Maher, S., Neuman, P., & Carter, J. (2014). Summary of Mr. Shiraz Maher, Dr. Peter Neuman, Mr. Joseph Carter (International Centre for the Study of Radicalization). In *Multi-Method Assessment of ISIL: SME Interview Summaries Booklet* (p. 41). Strategic Multilayer Assessment.

[112] Baker, A., Michels, P., Urquhart, C., Calabresi, M. (2014). Blowback. *Time, 184*(1), 36.

[113] Baker, A., Crowley, M., Thompson, M., & Aysha, R. (2014). A Nightmare Returns. *Time, 183*(2), 30.

[114] Haddad, F. (2014). Summary of Dr. Fanar Haddad (National University of Singapore). In *Multi-Method Assessment of ISIL: SME Interview Summaries Booklet* (pp. 72-74). Strategic Multilayer Assessment.

[115] Harkins, G. (2014, September 16). 5 Things to Know about Islamic State's Military Capabilities. *Marine Corps Times*. Retrieved from http://www. marinecorpstimes.com/article/20140916/NEWS/309220025/5-thingsknow-about-Islamic-State-s-military-capabilities; Outline of Naval Postgraduate School ISIL Assessment. (2014). In *Multi-Method Assessment of ISIL: SME Interview Summaries Booklet*. Strategic Multilayer Assessment.

glossy annual and monthly reports on the group's activities. In addition, the group is active on many social media sites, including JustPaste, SoundCloud, WhatsApp, Kik Messenger, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and Ask.FM.[116] ISIL's sophistication with social media goes beyond mere usage. The group actively employs strategies to distort its online presence, make it appear more formidable, and drown out competing messages. One such technique is organized hashtag campaigns "in which the group enlists hundreds and sometimes thousands of activists to repetitively tweet hashtags at certain times of day so that they trend on the social network."[117] This approach has been successful, for example, in outperforming hashtags associated with al-Nusra Front, even though the groups have similar numbers of online supporters.[118] It is also worth noting that much of ISIL's presence on social media comes from sharing messages posted by a comparatively small group. One study of ISIL's Twitter usage "identified the top 50 users in terms of centrality made up about 20% of the tweets."[119] When communicating via media, ISIL uses intentional multiplicity in its narratives.[120] Messages contain both harsh images (such as beheadings) and softer images (such as members smiling while holding jars of Nutella).[121] ISIL tailors its messages differently depending on its intended audience and desired outcome. This is a very systematic approach that takes local context into account.[122] Problems are presented as having come from outside the group, whereas solutions are presented as having come from inside the group. This serves to polarize support.[123] "Perhaps surprisingly, most ISIL propaganda focused on securing and expanding the State, not on attacking the West."[124] Therefore, these messages focus on battlefield effectiveness, the provision of essential services and aid, and the imposition of law and order.[125]

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[116] Freakin, T. (2014, September 2). Gateway to Radicalisation. *The Strategist, The Australian Strategic Policy Institute Blog*. Retrieved from http://www. aspistrategist.org.au/gateway-to-radicalisation; [116] Hubbard, B., & Shane, S. (2014, August 30). ISIS Displaying a Deft Command of Varied Media. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/31/ world/middleeast/isis-displaying-a-deft-command-of-varied-media. html

[117] Berger, J. (2014, June 16). How ISIS Games Twitter. *Atlantic*.

[118] Ibid

[119] Maher, S., Neuman, P., & Carter, J. (2014). Summary of Mr. Shiraz Maher, Dr. Peter Neuman, Mr. Joseph Carter (International Centre for the Study of Radicalization). In *Multi-Method Assessment of ISIL: SME Interview Summaries Booklet* (p. 42). Strategic Multilayer Assessment.

[120] Ibid

[121] Pollack, K., & Hamid, S. (2014). Summary of Dr. Ken Pollack and Dr. Shadi Hamid (The Brookings Institution). In *Multi-Method Assessment of ISIL: SME Interview Summaries Booklet* (p. 92). Strategic Multilayer Assessment.

[122] Khatib, L., & Abou Zeid, M. (2014). Summary of Dr. Lina Khatib and Dr. Mario Abou Zeid (Carnegie). In *Multi-Method Assessment of ISIL: SME Interview Summaries Booklet* (pp. 89-91). Strategic Multilayer Assessment.

[123] Ingram, H. (2014, September 16). Islamic State: Not Unique. *The Strategist, The Australian Strategic Policy Institute Blog*. Retrieved from http://www.aspistrategist.org.au/islamic-state-not-unique/?utm_source=feedly&utm_reader=feedly&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=islamic-state-not-unique

[124] Hubbard, B., & Shane, S. (2014, August 30). ISIS Displaying a Deft Command of Varied Media. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/31/ world/middleeast/isis-displaying-a-deft-command-of-varied-media. html

[125] Khatib, L., & Abou Zeid, M. (2014). Summary of Dr. Lina Khatib and Dr. Mario Abou Zeid (Carnegie). In *Multi-Method Assessment of ISIL: SME Interview Summaries Booklet* (pp. 89-91). Strategic Multilayer Assessment.

Conclusion

ISIL's dramatic battlefield successes of 2014 brought the organization to the forefront of international consciousness. Many wondered how a group that appeared to have been marginalized only a few years earlier was able to return from the brink of collapse, declare statehood, and even supplant al Qaeda as the world's dominant Islamist entity. ISIL's seemingly unimpeded ability to expand its territory and attract recruits from abroad conveys a sense of magnetism. The purpose of this assessment was to determine the origins of ISIL's charisma—real or perceived. This examination made clear that although ISIL's success is due in part to its capabilities and tangible resources, the organization's rise is primarily the result of a confluence of narratives and events—a perfect storm. Long-standing regional narratives of injustice and victimhood have calcified in the face of the Syrian Civil War and intractable sectarian strife in Iraq. ISIL, in turn, has capitalized on this widespread despair and instability to forge powerful alliances, swell its ranks, and capture sizable tracts of land. The group has used its robust media capabilities to amplify its battlefield successes, thereby allowing ISIL to posture itself as the modern-day caliphate.

Understanding the Rise of ISIL in Iraq and Syria, and Its Appeal in the US (Drs. Clark McCauley & Sophia Moskalenko,[111] Bryn Mawr College, START, DHS)

Abstract

We use social movement theory to analyze the rapid rise of ISIL in Syria and Iraq as a perfect storm of political opportunity and material and human resources forwarded with a "Sunni Salvation" framing. Then we use 2014 polling data from US Muslims to argue that foreign fighters from Western countries are motivated more to fight Bashar al-Assad than to join ISIL, with only a small proportion of US Muslims having a favorable opinion of ISIL. These results lead us to suggest that the appeal of ISIL to Sunnis in Syria and Iraq is based in sectarian threat, whereas appeal to Western volunteers has more to do with individual psychology than sectarian division. We present several suggestions for US strategy and tactics in relation to ISIL, notably that the US strategy should leave military action to the three strong states surrounding ISIL: Iran, Israel, and Turkey.

Key Factors in the Rise of ISIL: A Social Movement Perspective

Social movement theory suggests a perfect storm of factors known to encourage and strengthen new political organizations.

Political Opportunities (Meyer & Minkoff, 2004)

1. Rebellion in Syria, weak and corrupt state in Iraq
2. Civilians in Syria in chaos of civil war became desperate for predictability and order
3. Sunni in Iraq experience status loss and suppression under Shi'a government, Shi'a police, and Shi'a security forces
4. Jujitsu politics: US over-reactions can encourage new support for ISIL, building ISIL status (New York Times, 29 Sep 2014; Public Broadcasting System, 1 Oct 2014)

Resources (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004)

1. Iraqi army too corrupt to fight, US arms become ISIL arms (material resources)
2. Military expertise from Saddam Hussein's army (human capital)
3. Organizational/administrative expertise from Saddam Hussein's party/government (human capital)
4. Recruits flow from political opportunities and cultural framing per above (human capital)
5. Recent Sunni model of martyrdom for Islam (moral capital)
6. Volunteer Internet posters, who according to one anonymized source, far outnumber and outproduce US posters in the war of ideas (human capital). This is asymmetric conflict with US the weaker side

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Framing (Benford & Snow, 2000)

1. Sunnis assume they should dominate Shi'as because their religion should dominate apostasy and historically has dominated
2. Sunnis were dominated by Shi'as in Iraq under Maliki and by Baathists/Shi'as in Syria—humiliation
3. Sunni tribes who participated in the Awakening Councils against Al Qaeda in Iraq felt stabbed in the back when US left them to the mercies of Maliki and the Shi'a
4. ISIL mobilizing frame is that uncompromising pure Sunni Islam can restore Sunni dominance in a purified Sunni caliphate

Tactics

1. Violence against non-Sunni civilians to encourage ethnic and religious cleansing to produce a pure Sunni population that is easier to control and cleansed of the contamination of other religions
2. Picturesque violence against US/Western civilians to encourage US over-reaction and status for ISIL as leading enemy of the US and to reinforce the flow of ransom money

ISIL appeal to Western recruits: Polling data from US Muslims

We have been testing an Internet polling model for tracking opinions of US Muslims. This model offers faster turnaround than the Pew telephone polling model of 2007 and 2011: two months versus over a year. The Internet model is also cheaper: less than $50,000 versus over $1 million.

Between 23 September and 4 November 2014, we conducted an Internet poll with results from 211 US Muslims believed to represent the population of about one million adult US Muslims. This poll included three questions about US Muslims going to fight in Syria.

How do you feel about US Muslims going to Syria to fight against Bashar al-Assad?

About a third of respondents "don't approve of US Muslims going to Syria to fight" (74, 36%). Another third are "not sure what to think about this" (66, 32%). Thirty-three respondents (16%) said they would not do it themselves, but would not condemn anyone who did. The two most radical answers to this question were chosen by a total of 33 respondents, with 21 (10%) saying that it is "morally justified to go to fight in Syria," and 12 (6%) saying that "joining the jihad in Syria is required of any Muslim who can do it." Thus US Muslims are about evenly split about going to fight against al-Assad, with about one third approving, one third not sure, and one third disapproving.

Have you ever heard of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant otherwise known as ISIL?

The great majority of respondents (166, 80%) answered "yes" to this question: 24 (12%) had not heard of ISIL, 15 (7%) were not sure, and 2 (1%) refused to answer.

From what you know, what is your opinion of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant otherwise known as ISIL?

Most respondents (115, 64%) had a "very unfavorable" opinion; 16 (9%) had a "somewhat unfavorable" opinion; 23 (13%) had "neither favorable nor unfavorable" opinion. The two most radical answers to this question were chosen by a total of 27 respondents: 14 (8%) had a "very favorable" opinion, and 13 (7%) had a "somewhat favorable" opinion. Thus only about 15 percent of US Muslims have a favorable opinion of ISIL, whereas 73 percent have an unfavorable opinion.

Finally, the poll indicates that many US Muslims are ignorant of, or do not care about, the distinction between Sunni and Shi'a strains of Islam. When asked their religious tradition, 31 percent of respondents chose "Muslim, non-specific" (versus 49 percent Sunni, 9 percent Shi'a).

Notable in these results is the fact that more respondents favor going to fight against al-Assad than have favorable opinions of ISIL (32 percent versus 15 percent). But it is also important to note that there is no strong norm against going to fight in Syria: one third of US Muslims favor going to fight and another third are not sure what to think about this.

Conclusions

1. The social movement factors identified above will remain to power ISIL in Iraq and Syria even if Western volunteers could be reduced to zero.
2. Most of these factors do not apply to mobilizing Western volunteers. ISIL appeal in Iraq and Syria is a different psychology than ISIL appeal to Western volunteers. In particular the Sunni vs. Shi'a divide in Syria and Iraq is weaker in the US, where about a third of our respondents chose "Muslim, non-specific" rather than Sunni or Shi'a identity.
3. We suspect that ISIL appeal to Western volunteers depends less on fear of Shi'a domination and more on mechanisms identified in our book *Friction* (2011): personal grievance, group grievance (mostly vs. Assad), thrill and status seeking, escape from personal problems, and personal identification with someone already militant. These multiple mechanisms suggest that there is no useful profile of Western volunteers.
4. Our preliminary polling results from September and October 2014 indicate that only about a third of US Muslims disapprove of going to fight in Syria, whereas about 75 percent disapprove of ISIL. We suspect therefore that many of the US Muslims going to Syria are not going with the intent to join ISIL but are mopped up by ISIL operatives as they arrive at Syrian border. Once having joined, they learn ISIL ideology and talk as if ISIL had been their goal in leaving the US
5. It appears that ISIL intolerance and violence are already shifting Sunni opinion in Syria against ISIL (Abbas, 2014; Moslawi, Hawramy & Harding, 2014). Perhaps ISIL, like the old Soviet Union, may crumble faster than we currently imagine. If so, Western volunteers will not save ISIL, and Western countries might be safer allowing volunteers to leave for Syria with the understanding that they will not be allowed to return.

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Understanding the Dynamics of ISIL Mobilization: The Challenge of Foreign Fighters (Dr. Jocelyne Cesari, Georgetown University; Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs; and Harvard University)

Several distinctions are in order to appropriately evaluate the ideological influence of ISIL. First, its influence in combat zones like Syria and Iraq are not primarily related to its ideology but to local political conditions. When it comes to foreign fighters, however, ideology plays a more significant role but follows different patterns according to political and national contexts. In Muslim countries outside the combat zones, the attraction is linked to the pre-existing political forms of Islam. In other words, the higher influence of Islam in politics and legal systems, the greater probability of attraction of ISIL (Cesari, The Awakening of Muslim Democracy: Religion, Modernity and the State, Cambridge University Press, 2014). In the West, the attraction comes from the lack of symbolic integration of Islam (not simply lack of socio-economic integration Muslims). It means that lack of political acknowledgement of Islam as a legitimate component of secular democracies makes Muslim more vulnerable to the message of ISIL. Both in majority and minority contexts, ISIL's discourse has to be analyzed as the most recent expression of the global ideological cluster called Salafism.

Even though it does not incite terrorism directly, *Salafi* doctrine does provide the same religious framework that is used by radical groups such as Al Qaeda and ISIL. As such, it therefore contributes to the sense of familiarity or proximity that terrorists experience in joining radical groups. Although *Salafi* doctrine is not the exclusive interpretation of Islam available in Muslim countries or among Muslim minorities, it has become central in the way that Muslims deal with their religious tradition. For example, most of the materials provided to teach or learn about Islam in Europe follow this particular interpretation of the Islamic religion. Western countries have thus paradoxically proven to be fertile ground for the growth of puritanical and intolerant interpretations of Islam.

What, then, is the *Salafi* intellectual framework? It may be generally defined as a variant of "pan-Islamism." This term refers to those religious or political transnational movements that emphasize the unity of the *Ummah* (the community of believers) over specific cultural, national, or ethnic loyalties. The idea of the *Ummah* has been an important element of Islamic thought, particularly during the decline of the Ottoman Empire before World War I, and has been closely associated with the preservation of the caliphate. Today, communication technology and the circulation of people and ideas make the *Ummah* all the more effective as a concept, especially considering that nationalist ideologies have been on the wane. The imagined *Ummah* takes a variety of forms. The most influential of these forms are fundamentalist in the sense that they emphasize the revealed Text and a Muslim unity, which transcends national and cultural diversity. It is for these reasons that these groups may be described as pan-Islamist (the restoration of the caliphate is no longer a major element of such movements).[112] These

[112] The *Hizb ut-Tahrir* party is one of the most important contemporary pan-Islamist movements arguing for the restoration of the caliphate. Founded in Jerusalem in 1953, it claims branches in the Muslim world as well as in Europe and the United States. In Great Britain, the party is known under the name *Muhajirrun*, and has been active

pan-Islamist movements should not be constructed as monolithically reactionary or defensive. A distinction must be drawn between the *Wahhabi*/*Salafi* and *Tablighi* movements on the one hand and the Muslim Brotherhood on the other.

The *Wahhabi* interpretation of Islamic tradition emerged in the eighteenth century in the Arabian Peninsula, in the teachings of Muhammad Ibn Abdel Wahab (1703-1792). Wahab's literalist interpretations of the Qur'an became the official doctrine of the Saudi kingdom upon its creation in 1924. *Wahhabism* is characterized by an extreme hostility to any kind of intellectualized criticism of tradition. Mystical approaches and historical interpretations alike are held in contempt. Orthodox practice can be defined as a direct relation to the revealed Text, with no recourse to the historical contributions of the various juridical schools (*madhab*). In this literalist interpretation of Islam, nothing must come between the believer and the Qur'an. Such mediators as customs, culture, and Sufism must all be done away with.

The contemporary heirs of this rigorist and puritanical line of thought are known as *Salafi*. The chief difference between modern *Salafi* Islam and the original *Wahhabi* period, therefore, is that the decisions and interpretations of *Salafism* are no longer limited to the Saudi kingdom, but spread throughout the entire Muslim world. "*Salaf*" refers to the devout elders who served as companions to the Prophet Mohammed, but *Salafiyya* was initially a reformist movement created in the nineteenth century. Though the early *Salafi* leaders, including Mohammed Abduh, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, and Rashid Rida, promoted a return to the revealed Text and the *Hadith*, they were not by any means anti-intellectuals, and were in their time considered progressive.[113] Nonetheless, by the end of the 1970s, the Saudi government had succeeded in transforming *Salafiyya* into a conservative theology. The *fatwas* of Sheikh Abdul Aziz Ibn Baaz, Grand Mufti of the Saudi Kingdom who died in 1999, and of Sheikh Al-Albani are the shared points of reference for their disciples in Europe and the United States. The movement has succeeded in imposing their beliefs not as one interpretation among many, but as the orthodox doctrine of Sunni Islam. The considerable financial resources of the Saudi government have certainly helped in creating this religious monopoly.

In the past two decades, the rivalry between Saudi Arabia, India, Pakistan, and Iran over leadership of the Muslim world has rapidly intensified. Within this atmosphere of competition, Europe and the United States have become crucial battlegrounds, as evidenced by the massive rise in the sum of petrodollars distributed in these parts of the world. The proliferation of brochures, free Qur'ans, and new Islamic centers in Malaga, Madrid, Milan, Mantes-la-Jolie, Edinburgh, Brussels, Lisbon, Zagreb, Washington, Chicago, and Toronto; the financing of Islamic Studies chairs in American universities; the growth of Internet sites: all of these elements have facilitated access to *Wahhabi* teachings and the promotion of *Wahhabism* as the sole legitimate guardian of Islamic thought.[114]

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in the public sphere, particularly before 9/11. See Suha Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest: Hizb al-Tahrir and the Search for the Islamic Caliphate* (London: Grey Seal, 1996).

[113] For example, the position taken by Mohamed Abduh, Grand Mufti of Egypt, who toward the end of the nineteenth century came out against polygamy and for equality in divorce proceedings.

[114] See <http://www.saudinf.com>.

It is extremely difficult to gauge the precise influence exerted by *Wahhabism* on Muslim religious practice. In the case of European and American Muslims, the influence cannot be measured by statistics alone. In a minority culture that lacks both institutions for religious education and the means to produce new forms of knowledge, the accessibility of *Salafism* is a primary reason behind its popularity. The widespread diffusion of *Salafi* teachings means that even non-*Salafi* Muslims evaluate their Islamic practice by *Wahhabi* standards. In other words, even if most Muslims do not follow *Wahhabi* dress codes—a white tunic, a headcovering, and a beard for men and a *nikab*[115] for women—the *Salafi* model has nonetheless come to define the behavior of the "good Muslim."

Another group that takes a traditionalist and legalistic approach to Islam is the *Tabligh*, sometimes referred to as the "Jehovah's Witnesses of Islam." The *Tabligh* is usually described as a pietist and apolitical movement whose primary aim is to strengthen Muslim orthodoxy.[116] A sub-sect within the larger *Deobandi* movement, the *Tabligh* movement was founded in 1927 by Maulana Muhammad Ilyas, a devout Muslim scholar who lived in New Delhi and died in 1944. The essential principle of *Tabligh* is that every Muslim can be a vehicle for the values and practices of Islam.[117] The most important aspect of Islamic practice is the mission, which consists of the missionary devoting one hour per day, one day per week, one week per month, or one month per year to go and spread the word of Islam. The mission can take place in the city of the missionary, in his country, or in more distant destinations outside of India and Pakistan. The annual gathering of *Tabligh* in Lahore is the largest regular gathering of Muslims, excepting only the pilgrimage to Mecca. Today, competition rages in the West between *Tablighis* and *Salafis*, and anathemas rain down from both sides. One 1997 *fatwa* from Sheikh Ibn Baaz named the *Tabligh*, as well as the Muslim Brotherhood, as one of the 72 heretical sects of Islam.[118]

These movements indicate the emergence of fundamentalism as a global phenomenon. Global fundamentalism is defined, above all, by an exclusive and hierarchical vision of the world, as well as by a taxonomy of religions that places Islam at the top. The expanded use of the term "*kafir*" (infidel or heretic), for example, is very common among *Wahhabis* (more than among *Tablighis*). In the classical Islamic tradition, *kafir* is used only for polytheists, not for members of competing monotheistic faiths. In globalized fundamentalist groups, however, it has been extended to include Jews, Christians, and

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[115] Cloth covering the face, according to *Wahhabi* law.

[116] See S. Abdul Hassan Ali Nadwi, *Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Ilyas Aur Un Ki Dini Dawa't* (Lucknow: Tanwir, 1964).

[117] The six principles of *Tabligh* are: 1) *Kalima* (the attestation of faith), 2) *Namaz* (prayer), 3) *Ilm* and *Dhikr* (knowledge and remembrance of God), 4) *Ikram-e-Muslim* (respect for Muslims), 5) *Iklas-e-Niyat* (purity of intention and sincerity), 6) *Tafri-e-waqt* (taking time for *Tablighi* duties, self-reformation and proselytizing). See Jan Ali, "Islamic Revivalism: The Case of Tablighi Jamaat," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 23, no. 1 (April 2003): 173-181.

[118] For the complete English text of this fatwa, see <http://www.allaahuakbar.net/ tableegi_jamaat/>. Sheikh Abdul Azeez Ibn Baaz, born in 1909 in Riyadh, began his religious education in the family of Ibn Abdul Wahab. He held numerous posts within the kingdom's religious hierarchy, and was Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia from 1992 until his death in 1999.

sometimes even non-practicing Muslims.[119] A representative example of this approach is the following *fatwa* on whether Jews and Christians can be considered infidels, published on the Belgian website Assabyle.com. After referencing several applicable *sura* (chapters of the Qur'an), the sheikh concludes that, "Jews and Christians who do not believe in Mohammed and deny his Prophecy are infidels." But his argument goes still further, eventually concluding that, "He who does not consider to be a infidel one who follows a religion other than Islam, such as the Christians, or who doubts their vileness or approves of their ways, he himself is a infidel."[120]

The *Salafi* world is thus divided into Muslims and infidels, and the West, seen as the breeding ground for moral depravity, is always placed in a negative light. Such logic informs an essay entitled "The Choice Between the Burka and the Bikini," by Abid Ullah Jan,[121] in which the author contrasts women's respectable status in Islam to their status in the West, bound to the dictates of fashion and the constant objects of Western sexual depravity. This dichotomy can also be seen in the writings of Sheikh Abdur Raman Abdum Khaliq. He opines on Assabyle.com that the role of every good Muslim is to declare that Muslims are members of the greatest nation that humanity has ever known, and to proclaim the superiority of Islam throughout the world: "It suffices to note that the call to unify the religions, the effort to bring the various religions together, and their presentation as a homogenous and unified vision is a ploy on the part of the infidels that seeks to confuse truth and lies, and to eradicate Islam by torpedoing its foundations and leading Muslims into wholesale apostasy."[122]

Another characteristic common to these movements is a worldview that sorts the different aspects of life—such as family, work, and leisure—according to the opposition between *haram* (forbidden) and *halal* (permitted). Everything that did not already exist or happen during the time of the Prophet is an innovation and is thus *haram*. Khaled Abou El Fadl has called this mode of interpretation "The Culture of *Mamnu'* ('It is forbidden')."[123] Islam as it existed during the time of the Prophet, especially during Muhammad's residency in Medina, is idealized and essentialized, functioning as an "epic past"[124] and an ideal model for life in the present. The smallest aspect of this period serves as the basis for the present day, for "In this era, everything is good, and all the good things have already come to pass."[125]

Another characteristic common to both *Tablighis* and *Salafis* is their extreme inflexibility regarding the status of women. The rules determining proper attire for women—namely a *hijab*, a long loose garment covering the entire body—are presented as absolute. *Salafis* are more extreme in their views on dress than the *Tablighis*; for the former group, a woman must cover not only her hair but her face and hands as well. The *nikab*, gloves, and the long tunic fashionable in Saudi Arabia distinguish the *Salafi* woman

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[119] Jocelyne Cesari, *When Islam and Democracy Meet: Muslims in Europe and in the United States* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).
[120] See <http://assabyle.com/index.php?id=510>.
[121] See <http://www.allaahuakbar.net/womens/choice_between_burqa_ and_bikini.htm>.
[122] See <http://www.assabyle.com>.
[123] Khaled M. Abou El Fadl*, Conference of the Books: The Search for Beauty in Islam*. (New York: University Press of America, 2002), 125. For more details on his work, see Chapter 8.
[124] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University Press of Texas, 1981).
[125] Ibid., 15.

from the *Tablighi*. The latter also wears a long tunic, but in a neutral color (not necessarily black), and covers her hair with the *hijab*. *Tablighi* men, for their part, wear tunics that go down to their ankles, while *Salafi* tunics come just below the knees.

This puritanical interpretation of women's behavior includes not only dress, but also women's roles as wives, mothers, daughters, and participants (or non-participants) in the community. Mixed-gender interaction is forbidden in both public spaces and schools, and male superiority is constantly reaffirmed, along with the Qur'anic legitimacy of corporal punishment for women.[126] It is the question of women's status within the family and society that allows the various interpretations of Islam to be placed on a spectrum from reactionary to liberal.[127] Additional criteria are the respective opinions of the radical movements on political participation and citizenship, in both Western and non-Western societies. Fundamentalist movements, in particular the *Salafis*, reject political participation, holding that the believer must maintain a separatist stance in relation to public institutions. An example of this position is the 1996 *fatwa*, issued by an American *Salafi* group, approving the actions of Abdul Rauf, a black Muslim basketball player who refused to rise for the singing of the American national anthem.[128]

Today, a fundamental question is whether these interpretations of Islam, based on anachronistic and ahistorical readings of scripture, have a necessary correlation with the violence and development of *jihadi* movements. These radical interpretations do contain similarities with *jihadi* discourse, using the same vocabulary (especially when discussing the West) and often even the same religious terminology. This fact may explain the connection many young people perceive between *Wahhabism* and *jihadism*. One must not therefore assume, however, that all *Wahhabis* eventually become *jihadis*. Other factors, such as the level of political socialization and the education of the youths in question, are also decisive in this respect.[129] We should note that the majority of *jihadis*—such as Hamas in Palestine, GIA in Algeria, or *Jamaat Islamiyya* in Egypt—are not pan-Islamists. The obvious exception here is Al Qaeda, which has brought *jihad* to the global level. It is on this precedent that ISIL can also reach out to different Muslims across nations and cultures.

The Internet has increasingly become a source of information on Islam, and its relative anonymity renders it a medium that is inherently difficult for policymakers, intelligence organizations, and law

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[126] The Qur'an, 4:34.

[127] A distinction must be introduced here regarding the status of women in the *Tabligh*. Because married women are allowed to do missionary work, they receive an intense Islamic education and can be taken away from the family circle and their conjugal duties. A dissonance is thus created between the theoretical vision of the ideal woman and the reality of women within *Tabligh*. In other words, one consequence of women's participation in *Tabligh* is to modernize, in a certain fashion, the condition of women and to make women more autonomous—in spite of the extremely conservative discourse on the role of the Muslim woman which dominates *Tabligh*. See Yoginder Singh Sikand, *The Origins and Development of the Tablighi Jama'at, 1920-2000: A Cross Country Comparative Study* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2002).

[128] Khaled M. Abou El Fadl, *And God Knows the Soldiers: The Authoritative and Authoritarian in Islamic Disourses* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2001).

[129] Cesari, *When Islam and Democracy Meet* (2004).

enforcement to regulate. It allows far-flung terrorist networks the ability to communicate, fundraise, disseminate fatwas, garner support, proselytize, and undermine public opinion in target countries. [130]

It is important to emphasize however, that social media do not create ISIL success but that this success is facilitated by the preexisting presence on the Internet of the Salafi interpretation of Islam. In other words, it is not simply because ISIL has a savvy use of social media that it is far reaching but because its use of social media expands and amplifies a religious message already dominant on the Internet.

[130] Shiraz Maher. "Road to Jihad." Index on Censorship Volume 36, Number 4 (2007): 144-147.

Texas A&M University Media Monitoring: Representations of ISIL in Arabic Language Social Media (Ms. Jacquelyn Chinn and Dr. Randy Kluver,[131] Texas A&M University)

The Texas A&M team assessed how influential users in the Arabic language Twittersphere responded to ISIL messages and events, with the aim of assessing support for ISIL in the *ummah*. The Web Monitoring System, developed by Raytheon BBN Technologies and SDL plc with sponsorship from DoD/CTTSO, provided access to the critical data and tools for analysis. We defined the *ummah* as the larger community of Muslims in the Arabic language Twittersphere. Although it would be incorrect to assume that all Arabic language twitter users are members of the *ummah*, Twitter serves as a proxy indicator of public opinion across the region. We assessed *ummah* support and longevity of ISIL with the following research questions:

- To what extent is there receptivity to ISIL messaging in the Arabic language Twittersphere? Are there schisms and resistance to ISIL messaging? Are there key points of disagreement upon which the US could capitalize?
    - What is response to important ideological terms (sharia, ummah, beheading, etc.)?
    - What does network analysis reveal about the central nodes in web activity? For ISIL users? For other key opinion leaders?
- What are the ideas that are particularly compelling and widely redistributed?
- What is the nature of discourse around competing leaders across the Arabic Twittersphere?
    - ISIL leader al Baghdadi
    - Al Qaeda leader al Zawahiri
- To what extent is there support for US governmental or military involvement across the Arabic Twittersphere? To what extent is there support for US policy towards ISIL generally?
    - Response to President Obama's 9/10/14 ISIL policy speech.

We found that support for ISIL in the region was limited, yet support for Western intervention and policies was also limited. Arabic language Twitter users spent a great deal of time criticizing perceived Western hypocrisy in the region. This is a theme that resonated both within and outside the region and likely serves as a key theme used to attract foreign fighters via social media. We found preliminary evidence highlighting Twitter's network disruption strategy, with ISIL-affiliated users tending to be consistently deactivated when followings reached around 6,000 users. Based on a lack of broad public support for ISIL's goals, we hold that ISIL will likely be a flash-in-the-pan; ISIL is unlikely to change the

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regional view of the caliphate. However, we also acknowledge that small networks can still do significant damage to the community.

Key Findings

- Based on Arabic language Twitter activity, support for ISIL in the region is limited, yet support for Western intervention and policies also limited
- ISIL networking patterns on Twitter are distinct and have largely adapted in response to Twitter's network disruption strategy
- Even though they are unlikely to change the regional view of the caliphate, small networks can still do significant damage to the community

Background

Coverage of ISIL social media strategy in the popular press has indicated that the organization's reach on social media is sophisticated, extensive, and aggressive. However, analysis of ISIL networking patterns on Twitter indicates that the strategy is not as sophisticated or mature as news coverage would indicate. This study assessed the extent to which ISIL had broad support in the Arabic language social media space (a digital dimension of the *ummah*). We analyzed the extent to which ISIL ideology gained widespread traction in Arabic language Twitter activity, indicating possibilities for long-term staying power.

Tools

This study utilized the Web Monitoring System (WMS), a technology developed by Raytheon BBN Technologies and SDL plc with sponsorship from DoD/CTTSO. Our analysis captured a broad spectrum of the Arabic language Twittersphere seeded by approximately 330 influential Arabic language Twitter users, representing a cross-section of the Arabic speaking states in the Middle East, Levant, and Gulf States. User influence was determined based on a combination of numerous variables: number of tweets posted in a 24 hour period, topics of tweets, number of followers, occupation, and societal status (e.g., activist, political commentator, religious figure etc.). However, each country exhibited different characteristics of influence (e.g., varying degrees of technical, governmental, and cultural limitations). As a result, the number of profiles from any particular country is loosely based on the degree of technological saturation as well as the number of active tweeters in the Twittersphere. We also added approximately 50 Twitter users who are sympathetic to ISIL to the seed list. 90 ISIL affiliated users were initially identified, but Twitter deactivated a number over the course of data collection.

The WMS captures between 0.5-1 million tweets per day of all original content from the seed list, all retweets of these users, and all mentions of these users on Twitter. Thus, the corpus of data functions as a proxy for regional public opinion on Twitter.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent is there receptivity to ISIL messaging in the Arabic language Twittersphere? Are there schisms and resistance to ISIL messaging? Are there key points of disagreement upon which the US could capitalize?

Analysis revealed that response to ISIL messaging was broken down into specific sub-communities.

1. Majority Users

   This community included the broad majority of 330 mainstream, influential users. Most within this sub-community rejected ISIL framing of key issues (e.g., role of *sharia*, what a *caliphate* is and its necessity, who constitutes the *ummah*, etc.). They also strongly rejected the brutality of ISIL. At the same time, this group was not necessarily pro-West in orientation either, but more so invested in the status quo of the region. The data demonstrated a great deal of content that was critical of the US and of its allies in terms of specific regional action and in general sentiment toward the United States.

2. Disaffected Isolates

   This community included individuals that were not supportive of the means ISIL used to redress grievances with the status quo in Iraq and Syria. Yet at the same time, these users were not invested in the regional status quo, in the areas of political configuration or economic structures. The group disagreed with ISIL's violent means and ideological justification for bringing about revolution in the region, yet agreed for the need for revolution and change in the region.

3. ISIL Supporters

   The community of ISIL Twitter users was significantly smaller than popular press coverage suggested. By following out the network of ISIL supporters on Twitter, our preliminary findings indicated that the community ranged between 4,000-6,000 users (though there were isolated nodes that were larger). Twitter consistently deactivated profiles that exceeded 6,000 followers. We hypothesize that a particular algorithm is used to deactivate extremist users that reach a particular level of influence in the network. ISIL supporters adopted messaging practices that glorified ISIL violence, ideology, and goals, and consistently promoted ISIL branding in the building of profiles. ISIL sympathizers also consistently redistributed news stories that supported ISIL's agenda. Other predominant themes included a mocking of Western attempts to understand ISIL and a caricaturing of US officials.

One of the predominant areas of disagreement centers around the notion of "*caliphate*."

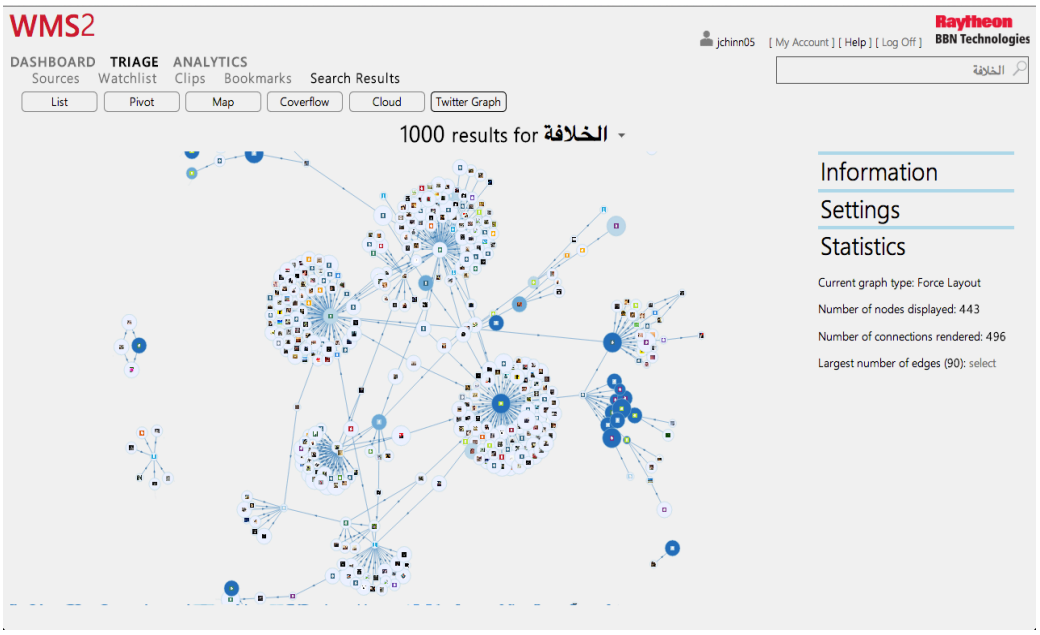

Figure 1: Broad disagreement as to what constitutes a "caliphate" in the community. Lack of rigidity in the distinctness of networks formulated around the term, with a great deal of interconnections. This indicates unsettledness of opinion, and openness to multiple perspectives.

Research Question 2: What are the ideas that are particularly compelling and widely redistributed?

1. Majority Community

   Themes that were particularly compelling and widely redistributed within the majority community of users included a strong rejection of both ISIL ideology and violence. At the same time, users also strongly rejected US policy and hypocrisy with a particular frustration regarding US inaction in Yemen in response to the al-Houthi rebellion.

2. Syrian Users

   Another predominant community that emerged was the subset of Syrian users who redistributed a great deal of content highlighting the plight of Syrians. This content included both a rejection of Assad and ISIL. The focus of the material was on human rights and human suffering in Syria as a result of the conflicts with Assad and ISIL.

3. ISIL Supporters

   ISIL redistribution patterns on Twitter were unique. Users typically did not retweet one another, and instead formed poorly structured, loose, and immature Twitter networks. However, key referents outside of the ISIL network **that supported ISIL ideological goals** were often re-tweeted. We hypothesize this to be a strategy used to evade detection of the core network. However, within the community, there was a glorification of life under *sharia* and a celebration of the virtues of life within “the caliphate.” Women celebrated the ability to live in purity and

sympathizers celebrated ISIL brutality and conquest in the present and future. Users also frequently highlighted Western atrocities and violence in the region.

Research Question 3: What is the nature of discourse around competing leaders?

The Arabic language Twittersphere received ISIL leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri differently. With the exception of ISIL users or sympathizers, the majority of influential Arabic language Twitter users consistently rejected al-Baghdadi. Conversely, opinion toward al-Zawahiri was much more varied. Prominent intellectuals highlighted al-Zawahiri's recent concerns with ISIL's extremity and violence. Within the ISIL community, there were distinct junctures in opinion. Some ISIL sympathizers demonized Zawahiri, others ridiculed him, and still others demonstrated support and sympathy toward the al Qaeda leader. This fragmentation of opinion was significant and a key division the US can capitalize upon.

Research Question 4: To what extent is there support for US governmental or military involvement? To what extent is there support for US policy towards ISIL generally?

We consistently found very little support for US governmental or military involvement in the conflict across all the sub-communities of users selected for analysis. This was evidenced both in responses to President Obama's September 10th, 2014 ISIL policy speech, and in broader discourse on US involvement in the region. There was widespread frustration concerning the US focus on al-Baghdadi in Iraq and complete lack of attention to al-Houthi's extremist activity occurring in Yemen. While there was a great deal of boundary spanning between communities of discourse concerning ISIL's foundational principles (indicating disagreement) in the area of public opinion towards the US, there was uniform rejection of US policy toward ISIL, US military involvement, and US policy toward the region generally.

Conclusions

As measured by social media, ISIL seems to lack sufficient support in the *ummah* to build long-term political sustainability. There is no substantive agreement as to what a "caliphate" is and how it would work, both within the larger Arabic Twittersphere, and even among ISIL users. At the same time, despite rejection of ISIL's goals and vision, Arabic language Twitter users spent a great deal of time criticizing perceived Western hypocrisy in the region. This is a theme that resonated both within and outside the region and likely serves as a key theme used to attract foreign fighters via social media. As with other forms of media, ISIL social media tells a unitary story, of ruthlessness towards enemies but gentleness towards the *ummah.* Even though they are unlikely to change the regional view of the caliphate, small networks can still do significant damage to the community.

Twitter's efforts to disrupt ISIL communication have been effective and seem to be aimed more so at eradicating network nodes than content. Pro-ISIL content does not seem to detect attention, but large clustering around single sources of reference does. Users have attempted to adjust to this strategy by regrouping both on social media platforms and off platforms, resulting in new accounts being generated with large numbers of instant followers. However, the constant churn in accounts makes it difficult to ascertain the exact network structure and evolution of the ISIL network.

Recommendations

We argue that US efforts to counter ISIL social media efforts should engage with two key strategies for influence and persuasion in the networked environment: programming and switching. Programming involves altering or countering the values and beliefs of networks. Programming networks of communication are generally easier to accomplish with key voices when the network is in its formative stages, as key nodes have the most influence in programming the values of the network. Switching involves connecting and ensuring cooperation of different networks by sharing common goals and combining resources while fending off competition from other networks.

Strategy 1: Programming

US and ally efforts to minimize the impact of ISIL social media should do three things. First, ISIL's narrative about ISIL protection of the *ummah* against the West and/or far enemy should be undermined. The conflict of ISIL is a problem that is really about the Arab world and not at all about the United States. While we acknowledge the geopolitical considerations concerned with eradicating ISIL, framing the conflict as the United States vs. ISIL is one that ultimately strengthens the ISIL narrative. The US and its allies must not play into ISIL themes or grant political legitimacy to the organization, as that reinforces in the minds of potential recruits and the *ummah* that it is a legitimate political movement. Second, the US should stress the duplicity of ISIL in terms of the violence it commits against citizens and its hypocrisy and should also undermine the claims of religious authority and righteousness of the organization. Finally, predominant ISIL themes should not be ignored, but instead should be recontextualized. For example, one widely circulated tweet decried Western condemnations of beheadings by highlighting 8th century beheadings of Muslims perpetrated by Spaniards. Instead of ignoring this particular meme, we argue emphasizing that it occurred in the 8th century as a means of recontextualizing it.

Strategy 2: Switching

Efforts to disrupt the network structure and strategy of ISIL should focus on two areas. First, ISIL's flow of communications should be disrupted. The efforts of Twitter, YouTube, and other social media companies to hinder the flow of communication seem to be having significant effect. This network disruption causes more effort to be spent trying to find the conversation than driving it for ISIL Twitter users. Organizers have been required to pay constant attention to how key users enter and exit the network. They have also been required to quickly distribute propaganda out to mass audiences before a channel is shut down, which lessens their ability to control the message. The other result of these efforts is that content quickly finds its way to the dark web, but due to the increased isolation, the impact of this messaging is minimized. While ISIL can protect its messaging more definitively by avoiding discordant voices, it lacks the ability to influence mass audiences. Second, the US should disrupt the ISIL network by constantly switching in alternative voices to the network. The US and its allies should churn through Twitter handles, join ISIL networks and hashtags, and then counter the underlying message, much as ISIL has done with #worldcup hashtags or other unrelated hashtags.

The Militant Jihadi Message Propagated by ISIL is a Contagiously Virulent Meme in the West—the Ebola of Terrorism (Dr. Anne Speckhard,[132] Georgetown University)

ISIL, Social Contagion, and Memes

The Islamic state known by various acronyms (IS, ISIS, ISIL) came into its own in the summer of 2014 when Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared a Caliphate in Iraq and Syria and himself as the ruling Caliph. This followed on the heels of a series of victories in battles, successfully inspiring ten thousand foreign recruits (Gordts, 2014) to join and winning control over significant swathes of territory. From its onset, ISIL leaders and cadres displayed a profound understanding of the power of engaging with and recruiting potential members via social media. Capitalizing upon the success of their predecessor and ideologically aligned terrorist groups (e.g., al Qaeda, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, al Shabaab, etc.) ISIL has promoted a similar ideology that argues for insurgencies, terrorist attacks, "martyrdom" missions, and the duty to participate in militant jihad. However, ISIL has now regenerated and repackaged an already virulent terrorist ideology into a powerful social meme that, similar to Ebola, is now viral, inciting social contagion throughout the world. The ISIL meme builds on already existing and accepted Islamic dogma that most Muslims treasure, as well as ideological advances that predecessor organizations were able to achieve, distorting Islamic teachings, as they did, into a violent ideology that has become as highly infectious, virulent, and fatal as the Ebola virus albeit via social versus biological factors. However, unlike Ebola, this violent meme does not require person-to-person contact or much socialization to self-replicate—it has gone airborne and travels virally via the Internet and social media—leaving death and destruction in its wake. The epidemic in the West has incited over two thousand men and some women—hundreds from nearly every Western country to join ISIL (Gordts, 2014)—most by physically migrating to Iraq and Syria to join the battle, with some staying at home and acting in place as homegrown terrorists. This paper will briefly discuss the history of how the ISIL meme came into existence, define what it is, and examine its power to infect. It also briefly discusses, from the memetic stance, ways of limiting and inoculating resistance to the power of the ISIL meme to inspire violent terrorist actions.

Brief History of the Militant Jihadi Martyrdom Ideology

In the late 1990's, when al Qaeda formed its nascent movement in Afghanistan they embraced so called "martyrdom" attacks, using them in 9-11 and thereafter. At that time, al Qaeda based their ideology on the dream of setting up an Islamic state, rebuilding an Islamic caliphate, attacking the "far enemy," and using suicide operations (i.e. "martyrdom" missions) to affect changes. Al Qaeda's embrace of "martyrdom" missions was at least in part predicated by the success of the 1983 attacks carried out in Beirut, Lebanon via truck bombs against the US Marine barracks there.

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In the 1980's, there were only five suicide attacks per year but that number quickly grew to one hundred eight per year in 2001, up to four hundred sixty per year in 2005 (Atran, 2006). And by 2013, the total number of attacks occurring over the last three decades grew to three thousand five hundred (Rosner, Yogev & Schweitzer, 2014)—clearly a dramatic increase over the years!

While the non-Islamic related Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were leaders in the early years of suicide attacks, now the majority of suicide attacks are plotted by militant jihadi related terrorist groups using a hijacked form of Islam popularized by al Qaeda in the 1980's—idealizing the suicide operative as a "martyr". Since the eighties, groups following the militant jihadi ideology have carried out more than eighty-five percent of the suicide bombings around the world and, in 2013, militant jihadis perpetrated *almost 95 percent* of all suicide attacks (Rosner, Yogev & Schweitzer, 2014). These were carried out in Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Somalia, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt as well as against US, European, and Israeli targets. And these attacks have been highly lethal. Between 1981 and 2006, twelve hundred suicide attacks occurred around the world. These made up only four percent of all terrorist attacks but caused thirty-two percent of terrorism-related fatalities (Hassan, 2009).

Clearly, al Qaeda hit on a winning ideological strategy of convincing adherents and inspiring offshoot movements that the "martyrdom" mission is a so-called honorable way to fight and die in behalf of the terrorist group's political and religious aims.

The Endless Duty to Engage in Militant Jihad

In 2005, the charismatic al Qaeda ideologue, Anwar al Awlaki recorded his now infamous lecture Constants on the Path to Jihad (written by Yusuf al Uyayri) in which he argued that it was the duty of every Muslim to participate in militant jihad; there were no excuses for not participating and that militant jihad was an never-ending duty—despite territorial victories or defeats the duty to militant jihad continued on basically forever—until the world's end. Countless terrorism attacks have traced their ideological roots back to the instigating voice of al Awlaki including those plotted in 2005 by the Toronto 18—Canadian plotters who in 2005 planned to storm the Parliament with guns, behead their Prime Minister, and detonate bombs around downtown Toronto (Speckhard & Shaikh, 2014b); the 2009 Christmas Day bombing attempt by Umar Farouq Abdulmutallab; the 2010 Times Square bombing attempt by Faisal Shahzad (Gardham, 2011); the 2012 Boston Marathon bomb attacks (Speckhard, 2013) and a 2010 knifing of a former Parliamentarian in London by Roshonara Choudhry a King's College top student (Gardham, 2011); to name but a few. Despite his death by drone attack in 2011, Awlaki continues to live on, casting his hypnotic spell over the Internet as he inspires Muslims into believing that militant jihadi terrorism is a good choice.

While al Awlaki was alive, the choices for those who followed his teachings were to try to join militant jihad by traveling to Pakistan or Yemen to join al Qaeda training camps or to journey to Chechnya, Somalia, Afghanistan, or Iraq to fight jihad there, which many followers attempted to do. Al Awlaki and his group also introduced the concept of staying and fighting in place as a legitimate form and expression of joining the militant jihad—publishing in their notorious Internet magazine *Inspire* recipes of how to "make a bomb in the kitchen of your Mom." Tamerlan Tsarnaev successfully applied this

recipe for the bombs used in his Boston Marathon attack. Adam Gadahn (2010), another al Qaeda ideologue, also encouraged Western followers to "act in place" showing on one of his videos how widely available guns are in in the United States while asking, "What are you waiting for?"

Now with the advent of ISIL, the call to militant jihad has taken on an exultant and feverish pitch. This is because ISIL declared a Caliphate and installed a Caliph—legitimately or not—in a place that fits in with the apocalyptic vision that most Muslims share regarding the final "end times"—in Sham and Iraq (Speckhard & Shaikh, 2014,a). Moreover, it is not difficult to reach unlike al Qaeda before it required a lengthy vetting process. ISIL accepts all comers, claiming in their online and social media propaganda "we are all ISIL." And for those not able to make *hijrah* (travel to ISIL) there is also the option to stay and "act in place"—becoming a lethal homegrown terrorist cadre like the Parliament shooter who recently attacked in Ottawa, Canada (Speckhard, 2014c).

The ISIL Meme

Memes are defined as gene-like information packets that, unlike DNA, carry cultural ideas, symbols, or practices that can be transmitted from one mind to another via written word, gestures, speech, rituals, etc. (Dawkins, 1989). Memes are argued to be an explanation for the spread of ideas, behaviors, and cultural phenomena that rapidly spread from person to person within a culture such as fads, fashions, catch-phrases, melodies, and, in this case, a virulent and violent ideology.

Memes, like genes, are theorized to contain self-replicating instructions that may mutate, respond to selective pressures, compete, be inherited, and may themselves be living structures (Mardsen, 2014). And of course memes that replicate most effectively enjoy the most success, with some being wildly successful—even if they are detrimental, even deadly, to the host—as the ISIL meme often is.

The "martyrdom" ideology that took off in the last decades resulting in three thousand five hundred acts of suicide terrorism—the majority carried out by actors indoctrinated into militant jihadi related ideologies—appears to be one such meme. The ISIL meme builds upon the "martyrdom" ideology claiming that joining ISIL is a means of obtaining personal significance, religious life purpose, living a pure Islamic life; that every Muslim is included and even obligated to participate—traveling or acting in place in behalf of ISIL; and it also declares all opponents to the meme as Takfeer and legitimate targets of ISIL violence. The meme replicates and transmits itself powerfully—even "explosively" and geometrically into the minds of countless others even when the carrier of the meme self-destructs.

Success & Transmission of the ISIL Meme

According to memetics theory (Lynch, 1996), there are a number of features of a meme that leads to more or less success. Some of these include memes that *build or depend heavily upon existing dogma*—that is beliefs that are already widely accepted in the population it is targeting for transmission. In this case, the ISIL meme builds upon beliefs in Islamic martyrdom already accepted in mainstream Islam, but pushing these beliefs to their limits and building upon already existing al Qaeda memetic transfers that caused many Muslims to accept suicide terrorism as a legitimate form of offensive action for Muslims under occupation, invaded by an external force, or facing an overwhelmingly powerful military force.

Likewise, the ISIL meme builds upon the spread and acceptance in many extremist leaning Muslim circles of the narrative that Islamic lands, people, and the religion itself is under attack from Western powers and that "defensive jihad" is therefore justified and an obligation of all Muslims. Likewise, the narrative claims that despotic regimes in the Middle East are the fault of Western powers that thus should be attacked. Chechens and al Qaeda terrorists before the emergence of ISIL also argued that when their enemies used weapons of mass destruction, they too were justified in using such. And in the case of Palestinian and Chechen groups, women were encouraged to join the battle and an ideological basis was created based on fatwas that allowed the women to leave their families to join a terrorist group without asking permission of their male relatives. ISIL has coopted all of this into its meme.

Al Suri, the al Qaeda ideologue, now dead, recognized and predicted that spreading a baseline of acceptance throughout mainstream Muslim culture for basic ideas in support of the "martyrdom" ideology and militant jihadi narrative would in the future allow for a rapid transmission and activation of Muslim individuals into homegrown and self-spawning violent terror cells (Lia, 2008) that could even act independently of the original transmitting group—much like a metastasizing cancer cell sets up its own colony of destruction far from its originating site of operation. Today we see exactly that taking place via the ISIL meme.

Memes that offer *a reward to those who adopt them* are also more successful as *the self-interest factor promotes the meme through society*. In this case, the ISIL meme promises Muslims the possibility of living in a pure Islamic society, belonging versus being discriminated against or socially marginalized, taking part in something meaningful and becoming personally significant, the possibility to take part in a utopian social movement, and possibly bring about the end times as many Muslims expect it to occur. In the case of death, the rewards of "martyrdom"—ensuring that oneself *and* seventy-two members of one's family immediately enter paradise upon their deaths, the comforts of paradise, and the honor and promise of being glorified are all also heady motivators.

Memes are generally transmitted from generation to generation. Thus those memes that *encourage large families and cultural separation* are usually more successful. In ensuring more children and separation from the mainstream culture the meme ensures that the children of the host will likely be infected with the idea from their parents and that cultural separation will create a barrier from exposure to competing ideas. Having many children, keeping a separation from the mainstream culture and emphasis on preserving Islamic beliefs is already a valued social idea among many Muslims. The ISIL meme takes it even further, calling for "hijra"—either physically or mentally cutting oneself off from the mainstream culture to join ISIL, which makes it a strong meme.

A meme that *encourages proselytizing* also helps to replicate the meme horizontally within the generational cohort it has infected, as well as vertically from parent to child, spreading if much faster than if it relied solely on "infection" only via parenting. In this case the ISIL meme is sent out among young people daily via Twitter, Facebook, and other social media platform feeds, virally infecting thousands of those who encounter it. ISIL cadres have taken a page out of the al Qaeda playbook by producing slick magazines and videos as well as using cultural icons such as *Grand Theft Auto* and *Call of Duty* clips into their propaganda materials to convince those who engage with them to join. Interestingly,

ISIL also builds upon the musical traditions of other Islamic extremists groups in producing "nasheeds"—catchy but pleasing political songs in Arabic sung in an Islamic format that also become means of melodiously transmitting its virulent ideology (Marshall, 2014).

A meme that has *preservation built into* it such as encouraging the holder to keep the idea for a long time is particularly strong as it has protection from abandonment and competing ideas. The ISIL meme encourages the holder to join and never leave until death via militant jihad and "martyrdom" occurs or the final end times are brought to bear on earth. The euphoric declaration of a caliphate and the invoking of Quranic verses about the end times, with armies rising up in Yemen, Sham, and Iraq playing a prominent role in the ISIL meme also play into this preservation theme (Speckhard & Shaikh, 2014a). Taking on the ISIL ideology is not only about this life and this death but about the believer's *eternal wellbeing*. He or she must hold on to the meme, as well as work to promote its success, to win eternal life and paradise in the hereafter—a powerful means of advancement for the meme, indeed among Muslims who believe in the afterlife.

A meme that *encourages its holders to attack or sabotage competing ideas and/or those that hold them* also confers an advantage in meme transmission as the meme itself encourages aggression against other memes and their holders. The ISIL meme no doubt encourages aggression against anyone standing against it or offering a competing worldview, declaring holders of other memes Takfeer and deserving of death by brutal means.

Accelerated Propagation of the ISIL Meme

When one looks at the problem of ISIL from a memetic stance, one may want to ask as Paul Mardsen (1998) suggests for any meme—a question that becomes less of "What makes this person want to do x?" and more of "What is it about x that makes people want to do it?"

Right now, with the success of the ISIL meme, particularly within Western audiences, one can see four powerful interacting factors to answer that question:

1. First that the meme capitalizes on the decades long propagation by al Qaeda and affiliated groups of the narrative that defensive jihad is called for and an obligation of all Muslims because Muslims the world over, Islamic lands, and Islam itself are being attacked by the West, a narrative that is strongly supported by selective videos and photos purportedly showing that happening inside conflict zones.
2. This is coupled with the ease by which social media and the Internet facilitates what counter-terrorism expert, Reuven Paz (2011) has dubbed the "University of Jihad" that now exists and is powerfully located in cyberspace. The Internet clearly increases the speed and ease by which the current ISIL meme is able to transmit itself virally across the global population potentially infecting more potential recruits at a geometric rate.
3. When these two factors are introduced to Western Muslims who subjectively or actually experience social marginalization, discrimination, injustice and feelings of depression, powerlessness, and anger over the same, the ISIL meme powerfully counters that by unleashing

feelings of empowerment, personal significance and purpose that moves individuals to act in behalf of the meme—even in many cases when that action is self-destructive to the host. This answers Mardsen's question of what is it about x that make people want to do it…

4. Lastly when ISIL is able to trumpet out victories over what has been, up to now depressing battlefield scenes from the middle east in which Muslims—particularly Palestinians—who most Muslims powerfully identify with—have been defeated and humiliated, the emotions of Muslims who have bought into the narrative (that Muslims the world over, Islamic lands and Islam itself are being attacked by the West) are powerfully engaged in a newfound euphoria and sense of purpose that also moves them into action in behalf of the meme—even if such action is to their own personal self-detriment.

Factors to Resist and Defeat the ISIL Meme

Mardsen (1998) also provides a list of questions to consider in analyzing a meme's staying and self-replicating power. These questions are useful to consider in thinking how to conceptualize and organize useful countering actions to defeat the ISIL meme.

1. What are the particular characteristics of the meme that render behaviors and emotions? In the case of the ISIL meme, it is publicizing any outrage against Muslims and building upon the now widely accepted narrative that Islam, Islamic lands, and Islamic people are under attack coupled with the call for "defensive" jihad using well known Islamic verses to build the case for it and announcing a counter story to humiliating Islamic defeat, one in which ISIL is the new victorious Caliphate, welcoming—even obligating—all Muslims to join.
2. Why are certain people immune to contagion? Muslims are far more contagious than non-Muslims to the ISIL meme, as they are taught from a young age to feel a responsibility for their "fictive kin" (i.e., other Muslims) and already know and accept the verses that are being distorted and offered in support of accepting the meme. The meme can also infect any lost person who is experiencing a cognitive opening to new ideas (i.e., experiencing a trauma, looking for a purpose, or seeking religious conversion to Islam); as the meme extends, the promise of personal significance, belonging, ability to revenge for life's injustices, etc. Immunity, it seems, is conferred by personal emotional health, a committed belief system to a faith system other than Islam, lack of interest in Islam and non-religious seekers. Among Muslims, immunity is conferred when there is a strong nonviolent understanding of Islamic teachings regarding jihad that make it possible to evaluate carefully and reject the claims of the meme and its call of duty to militant jihad and hijrah (migration) to live and fight for ISIL alongside other likeminded extremist Muslims. Converts, often separated from their families by virtue of conversion, looking for "truth" and belonging, often lack this immunity and more easily fall prey to distorted teachings about Islam.
3. How could one develop resistance to contagion? Resistance among Muslims is conferred both by a clear intellectual rejection of claims that militant jihad is a duty of Muslims, that attacking civilians is ever justified, and by the feeling that one belongs to and is supported by a community and thus has no need to join any other. Emotional health and an already existing feeling of personal significance and life purpose also confer resistance.

4. What makes certain people particularly susceptible to contagion and others not? This is an interesting question, as it appears that in the West, the social marginalization, discrimination and feelings of humiliation and powerlessness among immigrant descent Muslims in particular make them susceptible to the ISIL meme. Indeed, we see that feelings of depression, hopelessness, despair, low self-esteem, loss of purpose, etc. are immediately replaced with feelings of euphoria, hope, victory, vision and purpose as a result of engagement with the meme. While these may not be enduring feelings, they are powerful and motivating emotions that lead to behaviors of joining, supporting, and carrying out aggressive actions proposed by the meme.
5. What are the limiting factors of the contagion phenomena in both time and space? With the unbounded reach of the Internet there were, at first, *no* limiting factors. However, now that Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and other social media platforms are shutting down ISIL propagating sites, there *are* limits. It appears the ISIL cadres are putting up a good fight in this regard—reopening and migrating users to new social media accounts before they can be shut down. Success in this area will depend upon how well ISIL cadres continued to demonstrate their proficiency to dodge shutdown maneuvers in social media sites, skills for which they have demonstrated high proficiency.
6. Is social contagion bounded? It appears not to be. Vulnerable Muslims and those considering religious conversion seem the most susceptible to it. Healthy individuals, well knit into supportive communities and those who are already committed to a set of faith beliefs that do not support terrorist violence are the most protected from becoming infected.
7. Can the social contagion epidemic burn itself out? In the case of ISIL, this is a very real possibility. We saw with the first iteration of al Qaeda in Iraq (i.e., al Qaeda 1.0) the group engaged in too much sectarian and terrorist violence with a negative backlash among their support base. Other militant jihadi groups such as the Chechen terrorists also faced a fierce global backlash after the Beslan school takeover, which was also seen as having gone too far overboard into a violent space. ISIL has demonstrated ruthless violence and will likely also eventually encounter pushback for it.
8. How does a contagious epidemic become an endemic trait in the social world? Given the success of the al Qaeda narrative regarding the worthiness of "martyrdom" missions, terrorism, and acceptance of the narrative that Muslims are under attack by the West and thus "defensive" jihad is called for and justified, coupled with the savvy ability of ISIL proponents to use the Internet as a vector of transmission, the ISIL meme has the possibility of becoming a rampant and prevalent way of thinking if it is not somehow countered by being discredited or replaced with a compelling competitive narrative. While some argue that can only be done by Muslims; that is not in the least bit true. The same emotions and needs that are positively engaged by the meme must be engaged by those hoping to discredit it—originating in Muslim sources or not.
9. Is it possible to quarantine areas exposed to contagion or quarantine those who have been infected? Yes.
10. Can individuals be vaccinated against contagion? Yes, inoculating vulnerable populations with a clear understanding that there is NO cause that justifies intentionally targeting and killing innocent civilians and NO religion that supports doing so will limit this meme. This can be done

in mosques, schools, and over the Internet and will be most powerful if it also incorporates emotionally based arguments, stories, and pictures similar to what ISIL is currently using.

11. How long is the incubation period, that is, the time from exposure to infection? Given the groundwork laid by al Qaeda over the past decades advocating the "martyrdom ideology" and Awlaki's charismatic and popular lectures in behalf of the duty to carry out jihad it appears that it now takes only a very short incubation period among vulnerable Muslims and converts to Islam who are exposed to the ISIL meme for it to take root and quickly activate within its host—often to the host's personal demise.
12. What are the primary vectors of contagions, that is, what are the primary channels of infection? The Internet and social media, friendship, and religious networks.
13. Are contagions specific or diffuse? Both.

While space constraints do not allow further discussion, suffice it to say the author is ready and able to do battle with ISIL on all of these fronts.

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Radicalization Is Overrated (Mr. Andrew Bringuel[133] and Ms. Natalie Flora, FBI[134])

Abstract

Radicalization is overrated when assessing motive for criminal behavior. Scholars and forensic behavioral scientists spend a career trying to understand why someone commits an act of criminal violence. The environmental factors that facilitate and provide access for committing criminal violent acts are of equal significance. It is important that any strategy looks beyond the radicalization process in order to identify the reasons criminal enterprises survive leadership changes as well as changes in environment. So the question of how ISIL has become a magnetic and inspirational group that deeply resonates with a specific, but large, portion of Islamic population allowing it to draw recruitment of foreign fighters; money & weapons; advocacy; general popularity; and finally support from other groups such as AQAP and BOKO Haram has to be asked in terms of the "why" as well as the "how".

A common thought among civilians, politicians, and even some police is that all members of a terrorist organization are radicals, extremists, or fanatics. This is not always the case and perhaps the most overrated aspect of countering terrorism. For this paper, the terms radical, extremist, and fanatic will be used interchangeably and commonly defined as individuals and/or group members who believe they own the absolute truth regarding an object issue and are unwilling to accept alternative truths. In this static belief state, the individual is likely to have a dichotomous view of opposing viewpoints. This can be referred to as "the box," which is a belief state wherein a person suffers from cognitive closure and is intolerant and unaccepting of alternative truths and later becomes known as a radical, extremist, or fanatic. In this dichotomous mindset, the opposition is quickly objectified, often demonized, and it becomes easier for the commitment to the belief state which transitions to a necessity for behavior. This necessity can manifest as unlawful behavior against people or property to coerce a government or segment of a population in furtherance of political or social objectives.

This paper will discuss how:

- "The box" is a belief state wherein a person suffers from cognitive closure and is intolerant and unaccepting of alternative truths and becomes known as a radical, extremist, or fanatic
- Radicalization is overrated because individuals can commit acts in service of terrorist organizations even when they are acting for personal or economic motivations
- There are two distinct elements involved in considering radicalization: the individual's anchors, definitions, and narratives (motives) as well as the group's anchors, definitions, and narratives (goals/objectives)
- There can be stability and balance with predictability of behavior when there is congruency and/or dissonance between the individual's motives and the group's goals

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[134] Views expressed are not those of DOJ and/or FBI, but only those of the author.

- Recruitment can be done in a forced, passive, or assertive manner
- Motivations for radicalization or participation in mass movement groups can vary depending on the individual and can broadly be categorized as personal, economic, social, or political

Radicalization is Overrated

Instead of focusing on the group member's mindset, the most productive way to counter terrorism is to study the message, messenger of that message, and methods by which the message is delivered. Relatedly, understanding the origins of a terrorist organization is an important element in this analytic process.

There are two types of social movement groups: inclusive mass movement groups (IMMGs) and exclusive mass movement groups (EMMGs), with the type defined by the group's goals and objectives as well as the methods used to achieve these goals and objectives. Some common aspects between the two types of social mass movement groups is the rationalization process that leads to entering a concept known as "the box," which is a belief state wherein a person suffers from cognitive closure and is intolerant and unaccepting of alternative truths. These people are known as radicals, extremists, or fanatics.

All groups share similar aspects in terms of how they develop new members. IMMGs put a premium on recruiting and developing dynamics thinkers who may be tolerant and accepting of opposing viewpoints or thinkers who are tolerant but unaccepting of other viewpoints. However, there will be members who nevertheless will be inside the box as absolute thinkers and, as a result, are intolerant and unaccepting of other viewpoints, even if the group's characteristics are tolerant and accepting of other viewpoints. On the contrary, as much as EMMGs recruit and develop members to be in the box, some of those recruited will be less than radicalized. These non-radicalized members may be just as lethal as the radical true believer because the group's characteristics promote radical action.

Motivations for Joining Groups

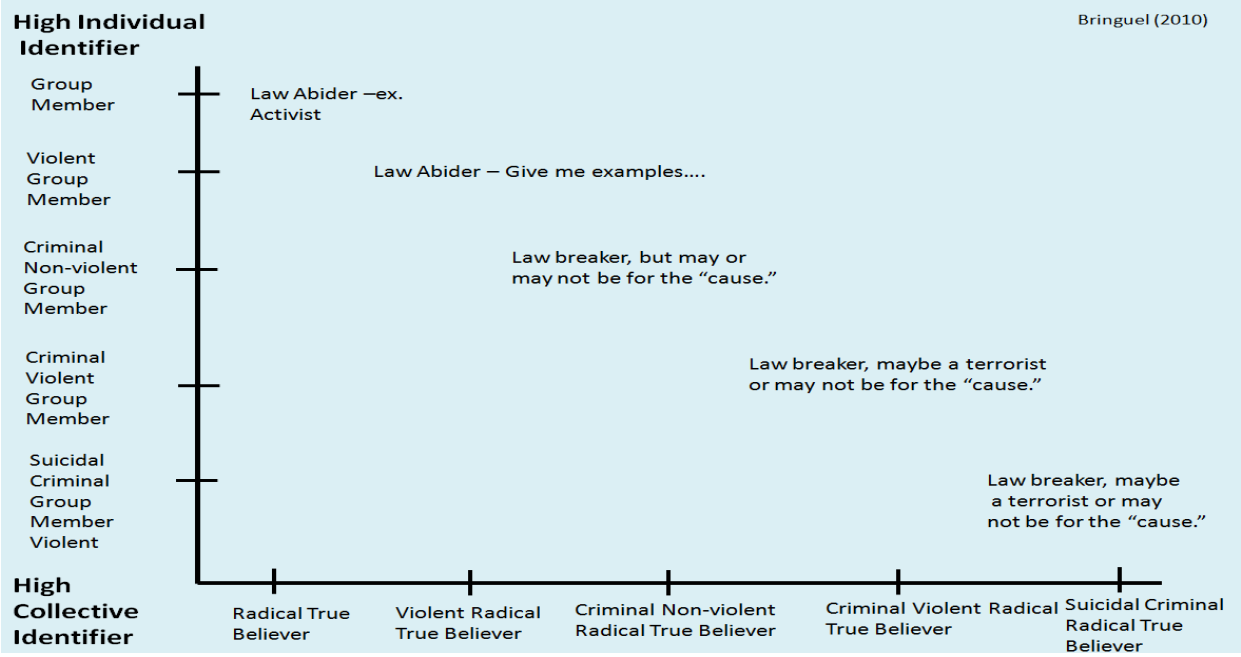
There are four broad categories for motivations in joining groups, consisting of personal, economic, social, and/or political. While most members have a combination of these "whys," these four represent a strong base to study the more complex and nuanced rationalization of belief states and necessary behaviors. Many scholars have theories regarding motivation for radicalization. These include but are not limited to:

- Dr. Clark McCauley's trajectory for revolutionary violence, which includes group grievance (social/political), individual grievance (personal), love (personal), risk and status (personal/economic), slippery slope (personal), and unfreezing (personal) (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008).
- Dr. J. Reid Meloy's taxonomy for true believers that includes the unwavering true believer (personal, social, political), affiliative [sic] true believer (personal), opportunistic true believer

(personal, economic), criminal true believer (personal, economic), psychotic true believer (personal), and betrayer true believer (personal) (Meloy, 2011).

It is important to remember that personal and/or economic motives for crime are not considered terrorist motives. However, a group member that is economically and/or personally motivated who commits unlawful violence against people or property to coerce a government or segment of the population acting in furtherance of a terrorist organization's social or political objectives is still considered a terrorist in American courts. On the other hand, a person who is personally or economically motivated may be intolerant and unaccepting of alternative truths, reside in the box, and be considered a radical, extremist, or fanatic. They may even commit unlawful violence against people or property but not doing so to coerce a government or segment of the population in furtherance of social or political objectives. We can still call these individuals criminals and in some cases murderers, but labeling them terrorists would be inaccurate. Therefore, radicalization is overrated because even non-radicalized individuals can and will act in service of a terrorist organization's goals for their own personal and economic gain.

How a member's belief state manifests in terms of behavior can be defined by their actions. The chart below works for members of IMMGs as well as EMMGs and breaks each down by their range of identity as individual group members or collective identifiers. Also, it defines their behaviors as either lawful or unlawful and allows for lawful violence even for social and/or political objectives. For example, a police officer could be considered a violent group member because he is willing to use "lawful violence against people or property to coerce a segment of the population in furtherance of political and/or social objectives." This is different from the criminal violent group member who uses "unlawful violence against people or property to coerce a segment of the population in furtherance of political and/or social objectives."



Recruitment Process

IMMGs and EMMGs both use the same process for recruiting new members, but have less control on how the individual processes their personal anchors (values, interests, needs, incentives), definitions, and narratives against the group's anchors, definitions, and narratives. The group forms a baseline for expected norms of behavior and seeks stability and balance where there is predictability of behavior against the baseline. The group will use both trust and control mechanisms in an attempt to balance and maintain this state of stasis within the relationship. All relationships have conflict that requires judicious use of trust and control through five conflict resolution styles consisting of competing/contending, compromising, collaborating, accommodating, and yielding (Thomas & Kilman, 2011). The challenge is choosing the most effective form of conflict resolution for the appropriate time, space, or context. This means in order to develop stronger bonds within a group structure, all groups use similar processes even when their messages, messengers, and methods may be very different. This is true within EMMGs. AQC is different from ISIL not necessarily because their message or messengers are different, but how their choice of methods varies so significantly. Analyzing these three elements might reveal significant vulnerabilities between criminal enterprises that can lead to greater mistrust and dissonance.

All IMMGs and EMMGs recruit members in three different ways: forced, passive, or assertive. Forced recruitment is when an outside entity requires group participation (e.g., a young kid soldier in the Lord's Resistence Army or a conscript in Israel). Passive recruitment is when someone radicalizes himself or herself using outside sources and information (e.g., a young convert who "self-radicalizes" online or a teenager impressed by the US military's commercials on TV). Assertive recruitment is when an individual actively recruits another individual (e.g., a young brother who loves his older brother, willing to kill alongside him or a son following his father's path to the coal mines in Appalachia). All humans have been force recruited into at least two groups: our family we were born into and the first religion we were indoctrinated into. Furthermore, rational choice allows us to determine how close we identify with our families and if we continue to practice our "original" religion. While every group would prefer congruency between the member's anchors, definitions, and narratives and the group's anchors, definitions, and narratives, they will settle for conformity even if there is dissonance between belief and behavior. These recruitment processes include:

- **Indoctrination**
    - Personal motivations for joining group (biographical triggers, personality, and biology)
    - Introduction to group's anchors, definitions, and narratives
    - Introducing a new social contract (baseline for the relationship)
    - Repetitive use of group pledge or oath
    - Often assigning a new personal name
    - Often assigning a new group name

- **Initiation**
    - Isolation of the new recruit
    - Surrendering personal identity in favor of the group's potentially including a uniform, tattoo, other identifier
    - Tests for standards of behavior/performance including physical and mental
    - Tests of obedience
    - Tests of conformity and loyalty including initiation (hazing) rites, ceremonies, or customs
- **Education**
    - Studying of group's narrative (ideology and social contract)
    - Testing of recruit's knowledge regarding group's ideology and social contract
- **Rationalization**
    - Rationalization is reasoning a belief state that allows for contextually dependent identity within a group. This includes using personal anchors and defining them as inhibitors (suppressors) and/or activators (triggers) for constructing a personal narrative that may or may not align with the group's anchors, definitions, and narrative.
    - Some believers may be more influenced by group analytics and group reasoning (groupthink) of the situational environment, resulting in a collective identity while others may be more influenced by personal analytics and personal reasoning of the belief state and thus develop more individualized identity within the group.
    - Member's behaviors often contribute to future anchors used by the group.
    - Some members rationalize a collectively identified absolute belief state as a "radical, extremist, fanatic true believer" or an individually identified absolute belief state as a self-interested mercenary. These group members are just as absolute in terms of their static mindset as the collective radical. For them, the cause is not the cause, but they may be just as willing to kill or be killed. Both the radical and the mercenary suffer from cognitive closure as they become intolerant and unaccepting of alternative truths. The rest of the group members, who are scattered in a contextual range of dynamic thinkers between collective identifiers and individual identifiers, are continuously assessing the value of their anchors, definitions, and narratives against the groups. These members may be committed to the group even if their belief state is incongruent with the group's baseline for behavior. The members may also be willing to kill or be killed, but are not absolute believers.

- Both IMMGs and EMMGs have members who vacillate along a membership bell curve consisting of individual identifiers and collective identifiers with most conforming to the group's baseline of expected norms for behavior, even if there is a lack of congruency between each members' anchor, definition, and narrative. Not all EMMGs are homogenous because the group is made up of different personalities, with different biographical triggers, and different ways of interpreting their contextual environment. This is why members, even radicalized members, can disengage from the group.

- **Mobilization**

  - All members of IMMGs and EMMGs will commit themselves to planning criminal behaviors and/or law abiding behaviors depending on their calculation of inhibitors/activators related to personal A/D/Ns as well as the group's A/D/Ns

  - Logistics, planning, and recruitment vary with specific acts

  - Trial runs and probes are often used

  - Individuals or groups may also go into isolation in rural areas particularly to practice the use of chosen method of action (i.e., explosives)

  - This may further allow criminal members of the group to develop a level of **"commitment to the belief state"** that then manifests into action out of a sense of **"necessity for behavior"**

- **Action**

  - Acts will often be preceded by ritualistic behavior that may include prayer and oaths of commitment.

  - Actions may include activism (law abiding), non-violent criminal extremism (civil disobedience), or criminal terrorist behaviors (unlawful violence against people or property).

Moving Forward

So how important is it to understand the question, "why is ISIL a magnetic and inspirational group that deeply resonates with a specific, but large, portion of Islamic population allowing it to draw recruitment of foreign fighters; money & weapons; advocacy; general popularity; and finally support from other groups such as AQAP and BOKO Haram?" Look at the problem in terms of the message, messenger, and methods. The why question is important to understanding the message and perhaps the messenger, but it must be asked along with what methods are used to achieve their goals.

Groups with a high degree of diversity operate effectively and efficiently as long as their group member's plurality does not polarize into static thinking. Baseline inflexibility is a typical characteristic of EMMGs, which are susceptible to splintering and fractionalization. Typically IMMGs have better resiliency because their baseline is not as rigid. It may not be necessary for ISIL to develop thousands of radicalized collective identifiers swearing their allegiance to Al-Baghdadi to be successful in forcing

changes in governance in Iraq, Syria, and beyond. If ISIL is successful in using oppressive social controls, they can force conformity without acceptance to their group's A/D/Ns. This is more than likely the case with many Iraqi citizens who now live under ISIL controls. They may not accept the ISIL narrative, but rather tolerate it in order to remain alive. Conformity can exist with a congruent or incongruent belief state as one makes a rational choice to accept the unwanted baseline because it is the lesser of two evils.

Criminal networks are susceptible to infiltration because they often engage with individuals or groups outside their trusted domain. Flat-based heterogeneous networks can often outperform tall hierarchical homogenous groups that are less flexible to changes in the baseline for expected norms of behavior. It is certainly a goal of ISIL to develop coalitions of trust among other Sunni criminal extremist groups like Boko Haram and to leverage alliances of convenience with former members of the Ba'athist Iraqi elite. The challenge for the United States coalition will be to disrupt the trust among these nodes by examining weaknesses in the message, messenger, and methods. Understanding the "how" question may reveal what response methods will be most effective. Altering the environment with air strikes and support of opposing forces is but one tactic to disrupt ISIL's baseline. Having the message come from the Arab world with Arab voices as messengers is equally necessary.

ISIL's failure may ultimately depend on the leveraging of alliances of convenience among Arab nation state partners. Facilitating continued rivalries between rebel factions like AQC, al-Nusra, Army of Mujahedeen, and the Free Syrian Army (FSA) is an example of such success. Creating environments wherein moderate Sunnis see value in standing up to the EMMG ISIL as a criminal organization is critical to any strategy. Continuing to define ISIL as a criminal enterprise (method) regardless of their ideology (message) through the media is also critical. Dismantling the messengers of ISIL like al-Baghdadi using military and intelligence assets will weaken their command and control.

Developing environments where Sunni tribes trust a coalition of Arab and Shia partnerships from Baghdad, Tehran, Ankara, and Riyadh is critical to the success of this strategy. The challenge in this process will be to look beyond the "why" of radicalization and creatively develop environments to make the "how" possible. The question remains whether the Arab coalition can construct a narrative that includes commonly held values among the diverse political landscape in order to create lasting stability and balance wherein predictability of behavior exists. This will only be possible if the baseline for expected norms is created and owned by all parties in the region.

While part of the strategy should include understanding why individuals choose to join EMMGs to commit criminal behaviors, the strategist must keep in mind that not all members of EMMGs are radicalized. Because these individuals are not radicalized, they are more susceptible to having their relationships and attachment to the EMMG disrupted by environmental factors. Understanding how to manage the environment to create these disruptions can be just as important as understanding why some individuals join these movements. This process is not linear. It includes the dynamic elements of any relationship with the inevitable conflicts and disruptors. Some partners needed in the fight against ISIL may respond better to higher levels of control while others will respond to trust elements.

Examining the message, messenger, and method allows one to create a strategy to infiltrate, dismantle, and neutralize ISIL as well as create environments to facilitate the plan.

Some regional partners may not agree completely with the coalition's choices and the challenge will be to create environments where they see value added to their goals and objectives. An example is Iran where there may be value in a limited but separate association regarding actions against ISIL, which may have short-term benefits. Clearly, Iran is looking to demonstrate their influence in both Syria and Iraq where ISIL operates. Perhaps this limited engagement with Iran may reveal some of their strengths and weaknesses providing longer-term intelligence benefits regarding their means and methods that go beyond the ISIL threat. The point being that It is less important that all forces in the coalition against ISIL embrace the same A/D/Ns and more important that they share a need to neutralize ISIL. In that sense, homogeneity, like radicalization, is overrated.

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De-Romanticizing the Islamic State's Vision of the Caliphate (Dr. Steven Corman,[135] Arizona State University, Center for Strategic Communication, HSCB, Minerva researcher)

Abstract

The Islamic State, like other Islamist extremist groups, promotes two related narratives of the collapse of the historical Caliphate. The first is a catastrophe, caused by the Jews and Crusaders, that resulted in domination and oppression of Muslims, harm to the religion, and exploitation of Muslim lands. The second is a call for restoration of the ideal system of government. In fact, the Caliphate was far from ideal, being marked by infighting, conflict, assassination, and war. Extremists obscure this history by editing "inconvenient details" to create a romantic history and generate support for their vision by promoting an imagined community of unified Muslims while using strategic ambiguity to suppress discussion about its details. This creates a brittle ideology that can be countered by deconstructing the imagined community, challenging strategic ambiguity, and de-romanticizing the history of the Caliphate

Key Points

- Islamist extremists present the Caliphate as an ideal system that was destroyed in a catastrophe cause by Jews and Crusaders
- They present restoration as a solution to all the Muslims' problems, that will unite the ummah and end discrimination based on color and nationality
- Their key ideological devices are an imagined community, strategic ambiguity, and a sanitized history of the Caliphate
- This is a brittle ideological system that can be pressured by deconstructing the imagined community, challenging strategic ambiguity, and de-romanticizing the history of the Caliphate

The Center for Strategic Communication (CSC) recently published a white paper discussing ways to de-romanticize ISIL's vision of the Caliphate (Furlow, Fleischer & Corman, 2014). This is an abridged version of that paper, supplemented with some commentary from colleagues since it was published. Our study was based on texts drawn from the CSC extremist narrative database, developed for the DoD Human Social Culture Behavior modeling program. It contains over 5000 open source texts from al Qaeda and related groups from the mid-1990s to present and a number of recent entries are from ISIL. About 400 texts contain the keywords "Caliph" or "Caliphate." Though only a few of these are from ISIL, they are representative of the larger group, indicating that the Caliphate visions of ISIL and other extremist groups are essentially the same. We performed a qualitative analysis of these texts to uncover the narrative themes and ideological devices that make up the extremist vision of a modern-day Caliphate. This chapter describes the results of that analysis, narrative and ideological devices we found, and implications for countering ISIL's strategic communication about the Caliphate.

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The Extremist Caliphate Narrative

Historians consider the Caliphate to have existed in one form or another from 632 to 1924. This period begins with the Rashidun Caliphate, led by the "Rightly Guided Caliphs" following Muhammad's passing. It ends with the fall of the Ottoman Caliphate and the secularization of Turkey under Kemal Ataturk in the early 1920s. Extremists maintain a romantic and sanitized history of this political institution, lamenting its passing and calling for its restoration. Narratives are rarely singular stories; typically, they are systems of related ones. The Caliphate narrative is no exception, consisting of one narrative of the demise of the institution, which forms the basis for another about its restoration.

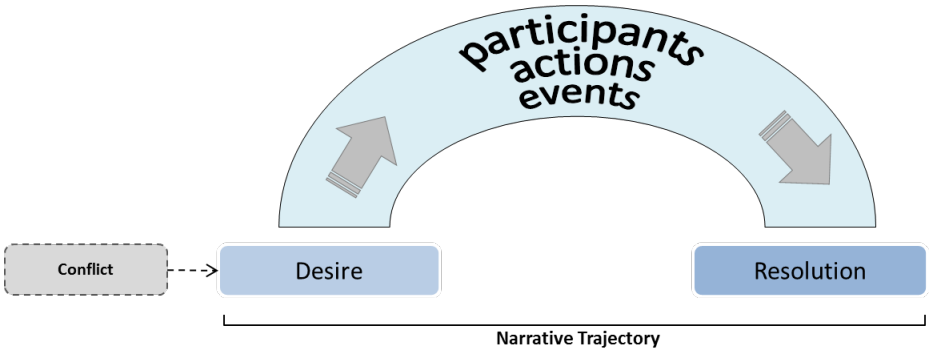

Figure 1 The narrative arc

We can understand this most easily using the idea of the narrative arc (Figure 1; Halverson, Goodall, & Corman, 2011). It represents what narratologists believe must be present to make for a "good story." It is grounded in conflict (or some other kind of deficiency), which leads to desire. The desire is fulfilled by the resolution, and the arc is a trajectory of participants, actions, and events that leads from the desire to the resolution.

The extremists' demise narrative of the Caliphate is a tragedy. The conflict is between Islam and its enemies: the Jews and Crusaders. The enemies' desire is to destroy Islam and subjugate the Muslims. Over the nearly 1300-year history of the Caliphate, their efforts—plus failings of the Muslims—lead to its collapse in 1923. The resolution is a catastrophe in which Western colonial powers and other threats dominate and oppress the Muslim ummah, severely harm the religion, and exploit Muslim lands.

This resolution forms the conflict that grounds the second narrative of the extremists, a romance that portrays the restoration of the Caliphate. The resolution of the previous story creates a desire among Muslims to recreate the Caliphate. The resolution of a restored, united ummah under a Caliphate guided by divine law is *projected into the future*, a powerful motivating device in strategic communication terms. According to the extremists, it is the duty of Muslims everywhere to work—i.e., to participate in the arc—to bring about this goal.

The Ideal Caliphate and its Collapse

Islamist extremists paint a grossly idealistic portrait of the Caliphate as a form of governance. This romantic story extends not only to the Caliphate as a governing institution, but its ability to unite the

whole of the ummah, overcoming "false" differences in identity based on nationality or ethnicity. Take, for example, this statement by an unidentified contributor to the al-Tahaddi Islamic Network forum, in 2011:

> It is the Divine system, the Islamic system, the system where there is no injustice or flaws…It is the Islamic Caliphate which gives you the freedom to live in all Muslim countries, where there is no discrimination between Arabs and non-Arabs, and where there is no discrimination based on color or nationality. It is not Arab nor regional, rather, it is Islamic.

This is not unlike a child's vision of heaven: It is a place where the streets are paved with gold, everyone is happy, and you get to eat all the candy you want. By portraying the Caliphate in this way, extremists promote the idea of a monolithic and united Muslim community, obscuring not only historic divisions of ethnicity, nationality, and creed, but modern diversity among Muslims as well. This step is necessary because in extremist rhetoric, the Caliphate is a singular institution, encompassing the entire world's Muslim population.

Since the Caliphate is perceived as an ideal form of government, extremist discourse portrays its ending as a catastrophe, which weakened Islam and allowed outside forces to do irreparable harm to the unity of the ummah and Islam as a whole:

> The worst catastrophe that befell the Ummah was the collapse of the Caliphate that was defending the religion of Muslims and managing their life according to the Sharia. The Ummah was controlled by a group of agent rulers who implemented the plots of the Jews and the Christians against the Ummah of Islam in order to disturb it from within and destroy it from without: to destroy its creed, ideas, culture and manners. They are destroying every seed that can be planted in the righteous soil of the Ummah. They are fighting its righteous sons who want God's word to be superior and religion to be only from God. (al-Fajr, 2009).

The writer refers to the secularization of Turkey in 1924 by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. Often discussed as the "fall" of the Ottoman Caliphate, it is one of the *master narratives* of Islamist extremism (Halverson, et al, 2011). It is seen by Islamist extremists as a grand ruse and sinister conspiracy against Islam. Ataturk, the Ottoman general and founder of modern Turkey, was in reality secretly Jewish and in league with Zionists to end the Caliphate. Combining this Zionist plot with the Sykes-Picot agreement, which divided Arab lands after the end of World War I, the extremists paint a picture of a Western-Jewish-Christian plot against the Muslims that destroyed the divine system of governance that had ensured unity, justice, and peace for all Muslims.

The Historical Reality

In reality, the Caliphate was not unified, just, or peaceful. From the beginning, reign of the Rightly Guided Caliphs (or Rashidun Caliphate) was plagued with conflict. First, there was no agreement on who would succeed the Prophet. Muhammad left no clear instruction on who was to take over leadership of the Muslim community upon his death. He had no sons that lived to adulthood, so passing leadership in a hereditary fashion meant that it would have to go to Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, Ali ibn Abu

Talib. Not all *al-Sahaba* (Companions of the Prophet) agreed that Ali was the right man to lead. There was a fierce debate and, in the end, Abu Bakr as-Siddiq was elected as the first *khalifah* (successor). His leadership lasted only two years, and was marked by the Ridda War, or "War of Apostasy," against a group of breakaway Arab tribes who had allegiance only to the Prophet.

Abu Bakr was the only one of the Rightly Guided Caliphs to die of natural causes. The remaining three were all assassinated. Uthman was notoriously corrupt and, more than any other Caliph, saw himself as a king. The situation became so bad that other Companions of the Prophet called for "jihad against the Caliph" (Madelung, 1997), and he was ultimately murdered by a mob that broke into his house.

Ali was opposed from the beginning. He had to take unpopular actions to deal with the consequences of Uthman's corruption. He also negotiated with Uthman's cousin Muawiyah about how to deal with Uthman's killers. This angered a group later known as the Kharijites, who believed Ali had betrayed the office of the Caliph. They stabbed him with a poisoned sword.

This is not the place for a complete review of the history of the Caliphate (see Lapidus, 2014). But in a nutshell, from there it was all downhill. After Ali's death and the end of the Rashidun Caliphate, Muawiyah took the title of Caliph and thus began the Umayyad Caliphate. This was the cause of one of the most significant schisms in religious history, the split between the Sunnis and Shia. Ensuing years are tales of continuous conflict with breakaway Sultanates and Emirates and simultaneous, competing Caliphates. The penultimate Ottoman Caliphate, though it became the nominal representative of the Muslims, suffered repeated and significant losses to the Russian Empire, proving that a Caliphate is no protection from invasion and domination.

Ideological Devices

As the preceding section implies, the extremist vision of the Caliphate is vulnerable. It relies on three ideological moves that are interconnected such that challenging one or more of them has the potential to weaken the entire ideological system. The extremist vision depends on an imagined community of Muslims, which is sustained by strategic ambiguity about plans for the restored Caliphate, which is enabled by the romanticized history of the institution. Let us examine each of these devices in turn.

Imagined community is Anderson's (1991) term for people who think of themselves as part of a community even though they have never met and may not live near one another as they would in a normal community. According to Anderson, people who share a common currency, common language, military, police force, news outlets, entertainment media, and so on all develop a kinship with each other even if particular individuals never meet. For example, Americans traveling abroad feel this kinship with other Americans, even though they have never met and their homes may be thousands of miles apart.

Islamist extremist groups–such as al Qaeda and ISIL–seek to create an imagined community of Muslims too. But because they reject the notion of the modern nation-state, they must construct an imagined community of a singular Islamic ummah without relying on the usual tools. There is no specifically "Muslim" currency, or Muslim military, or Muslim media, because these are all part of the current

nation-state system. So extremists rely in large part on the vision of the Caliphate to accomplish the same thing. In other words, the Caliphate effectively bypasses the usual state-based features that would construct an imagined community.

In order to do this, they must rely on *strategic ambiguity*. They accomplish this by creating unified diversity (Goodall, Trethewey & McDonald, 2006). This means proposing something in a general way that everyone can agree with, but avoiding details that could cause conflict. For example, US politicians call for "smaller government" almost never give details about what parts of government would be cut. That would lead to disagreement among people who want smaller government. The parallel situation for extremists is how the Caliphate will be constructed and who will lead it. Prior to ISIL's declaration of al-Baghdadi as Caliph, Islamist extremist groups never named potential Caliphs or gave details about how the Caliphate would be structured. In this way, their audience could agree with the general goal of establishing a Caliphate, without coming into disagreement over the particulars.

The imagined community and strategic ambiguity are supported by the extremists' *romanticized history* of the Caliphate, described above. The historical Caliphate is presented as a shining example of how good things could be, something everybody can agree with. The messier details are suppressed, in particular the conflict over who is Caliph, because talking about this would cause people to question the details and upset unified diversity.

Counter-Messaging Strategies

Because the imagined community, strategic ambiguity, and romanticized history all depend on one another, the ideological system is brittle. Degrading one or more of these devices would make the whole package less persuasive. Recommendations for accomplishing this are as follows.

*Deconstruct the Imagined Community***.** The Muslim community is much bigger, more diverse, and more geographically distributed than it was in the time of previous Caliphates. Accordingly, there are significant differences between Muslims populations in the Middle East, Asia, the United States, and Europe regarding interests, religious beliefs/practices, and support for a Caliphate. For example, European Muslims tend to have lower baseline support for establishment of a Caliphate. Southeast Asian Muslims support religious practices (for example the veneration of Saints) that Wahhabis in the Middles East consider to be against Islamic law. The more people are made aware of these differences, the less likely they are to imagine themselves as part of a unified community.

Challenge Unified Diversity. In order to maintain strategic ambiguity, Islamist extremists treat the Caliphate—and especially the Caliph—as an abstract idea. This allows people to support the goal in general and maintain their own diverse ideas about what the Caliphate will be like and what kind of person will be Caliph. Any effort to push more concrete discussion of the matter helps undermine this unified diversity. This can be seen in the Islamic State's naming of al-Baghdadi as Caliph. In the weeks following ISIL's announcement, there was a flood of arguments from Sunni Muslim groups and scholars, detailing religious, sociocultural, and political arguments against recognizing the declaration (MEMRI, 2014). So a useful strategy would be to press questions like: Who is qualified to be Caliph and how is this

person to be located among 1.6 billion Muslims? What are the religious requirements for appointing a Caliph? Who should make the appointment?

De-romanticize the History of the Caliphate. The romantic history of the Caliphate is accomplished by editing inconvenient details from the narrative. Reminding people of those details (or informing those who were not aware) will help to de-romanticize the story. The goal would be to make people question how the institution can be ideal when in the past its subjects rose up against it and murdered its leaders. It is also clear that a Caliphate does not automatically equal unity, as there were instances of simultaneous, competing Caliphates. Why should we expect a modern one to be any different? The historical Caliphates also did not protect the Muslims from invasion and domination.

We note that these are delicate matters in the case of the Rashidun Caliphate, which is viewed by many Muslims as a glorious period and whose caliphs were, after all, "Rightly Guided." That this can be so despite the accepted history described above illustrates the power of ideology to obscure contradictions (Trethewey & Corman, 2009). It may be that the message strategy we propose would only be effective if targeted at more progressive members of contested populations, and/or focused only on the later Caliphates. A different tack suggested by a colleague in response to our white paper (Moaddel, 2014) would be to show how the Islamic State's actions are at odds with the practices of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, particularly the third, Omar. His rule was consultative, not authoritarian, and marked by freedom of religion and lack of persecution of non-Muslims.

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Combining Police and Military Response to the ISIL Threat (Mr. Andrew Bringuel[136] and Ms. Natalie Flora, FBI[137])

Abstract

ISIL is a criminal enterprise terrorist organization, whose members use unlawful violence against people and/or property to coerce a government and/or segment of population in furtherance of a political and/or social objective (NIJ, 2011). ISIL is also an insurgency whose aim is to employ the jihadist agenda while exacerbating existing cleavages and weaknesses of the state in both Syria and Iraq (Smith, 2012). In order to effectively combat the spread of ISIL's influence among US citizens, the United States government needs to develop a comprehensive strategy involving both military and police agencies. These agencies need to share intelligence developed INCONUS as well as OCONUS related specifically to how ISIL is a magnetic and inspirational group that deeply resonates with a specific, but large, portion of Islamic population allowing it to draw recruitment of foreign fighters; money & weapons; advocacy; general popularity; and finally support from other groups such as AQAP and BOKO Haram.

There has been much discussion regarding the militarization of policing and the policing of the military. The reality is that both professions, as extensions of government, serve to protect a nation against enemies both foreign and domestic through the use of trust and control mechanisms. A simple model to understand is that all relationships, including geo-political ones, seek stability and balance where there is predictability of behavior against a baseline of expected norms. For example, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab's attempted shoe bomb at an airport led to the public losing trust in airport security and therefore the TSA increasing their measures of control. The process of trust building becomes more difficult when a group and/or members of a group disregard any reasonable baseline often resulting in increased use of controls including violence.

This paper will demonstrate how:

- A combined military and police response is necessary in order to mitigate the threat caused by ISIL and identify, infiltrate, and neutralize individuals inspired by ISIL's message
- A combined military and police response can build on public trust, improve resiliency, leverage restorative justice, and facilitate identification of emerging threats
- A combined military and police response will improve policy, training, and development of research-based structured professional judgment tools (SPJTs)
- While the missions, methods, and rules of engagement (ROEs) are different between police and the military, there is much that that the two share in terms of processes

Combining Police and Military Response to the ISIL Threat

There has been much discussion regarding the militarization of policing and the policing of the military. The reality is that both professions as extensions of United States Government (USG) serve to protect a nation against enemies both foreign and domestic and do so using trust and control mechanisms. All

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[137] Views expressed are not those of DOJ and/or FBI, but only those of the author.

one has to do is look at the Army's Counterinsurgency manual to see that much of the material is similar to police practices (Department of the Army, 2014). This paper defines police as any sworn officer required by oath to uphold and defend the nation's laws. This definition includes local, state, and federal police as well as intelligence agencies that have arrest powers. The police may investigate the criminal and the military may defend against an enemy of the state, but the two both use a combination of soft and hard power to maintain stability and balance where there is predictability of behavior against a normative baseline.

In policing, this results in policing practices that range from the least intrusive, like engagement as community-oriented police officers, to more intrusive policing practices of intelligence-led policing to the most intrusive forms of policing as law enforcement officers. The military similarly uses multiple tools to establish security, connection to governance, and meaningful development. When this process is successful, the community takes ownership of the baseline of expected norms for behavior resulting in stability and balance where there are higher levels of predictability of behavior. This in turn builds public trust through the connection to governance requiring less social controls.

Social Movements

A social movement is a broad community whereas groups are subsets of that community with some law abiding and others law breaking. Social movements can originate from a religious, political, cultural, or ethnic base and, as the group defines its goals and objectives, the type of social movement group it becomes depends on the methods the group chooses to move society's baseline. There are two types of social mass movement groups including inclusive mass movement groups (IMMGs) and exclusive mass movement groups (EMMGs). The differences between inclusive mass movement groups and exclusive mass movement groups have less to do with the personalities of the members than the characteristics of the groups themselves.

Inclusive Mass Movement Groups (IMMGs):

- Requires actions for the common good, but allow for self-determination or self-actualization (in practical organizations)
- Recruits and retains members who are critical thinkers who are tolerant and accepting of alternative truths or tolerant even if they are unaccepting of alternative truths
- Promotes tolerance
- Discourages hatred
- Allows for violence only in a "just cause"
- Allows for violence only as a "last resort"
- Allows for introspection/reflection and debate that leads to reform and peaceful change
- Strives to be a "practical organization"
- Operates with "virtue"
- Promotes law abiding behavior
- Promotes rational behavior that is self and social helping or constructive.

Exclusive Mass Movement Groups (EMMGs):

- Requires actions only for the common good, and suffers from group think and behavior
- Recruits and retains members who are static thinkers who are intolerant and unaccepting of alternative truths
- Promotes intolerance
- Encourages hatred
- Advocates violence in furtherance of a political or social objective (preferred end state)
- They cannot support a just cause argument and not as a last resort
- Does not allow debate or questioning of "groupthink;" change often comes from violence, and reform comes from "splintering" leading to factions.
- Can never be a "practical organization" without evolving into an inclusive mass movement first.
- Operates without "virtue" (might be the right thing the wrong way)
- Promotes law breaking behavior
- Promotes irrational behavior that is self or social defeating and therefore destructive

Criminal terrorist groups like ISIL disrupt, defy, and resist the baseline for community norms in order to create dissonance. These criminal groups often originate from the same social movements as law abiding social movement groups. Mass movements or social movements are defined by themes, faiths, beliefs, and principles. The groups that form from these movements can be flat networks, tall hierarchies, or an amalgam of the two defined by their message, messenger, and methods. ISIL has displaced al Qaeda Core (AQC) as the largest threat to an already destabilized region. In spite of drawing past criticism from al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, because of their tactics, ISIL has grown more powerful in Iraq and Syria (Mendelsohn, 2014)**.** The two groups are different types of EMMGs and only share their origins in the Islamic social movement. While their messages seem similar, there are significant differences in their narratives and both use different types of messengers with different criminal methods. Reports from news media outlets are that ISIL has thousands of Sunni Syrian, Iraqi, and foreign fighters and has established an Islamic caliphate with Abu Brakr al-Baghdadi as the leader.

The fundamental differences between IMMGs and EMMGs within a single social movement can and should be exploited by both police and the military. Both groups have members with similar personalities because they recruit from the same population. While the IMMG seeks critical thinkers, it is inevitable that some of the members will become contextually static thinkers allowing them to see the necessity for acting against others whom they no longer tolerate or accept. While EMMGs seek static thinkers who believe absolutely in the group's narrative, the reality is that some members will remain less than absolute believers and may even be tolerant and accepting of alternative truths. Therefore, it is possible to exploit these "gaps" between individual member's mindset and the group's baseline. It does not have to be through constructing counter narratives, but rather by developing and managing trust-based relationships with key communicators within IMMGs while targeting vulnerable members in EMMGs for disengagement. In terms of promulgating a broader counter narrative, it is critical that IMMGs identify reasons to create their own counter narratives that resonate with members of EMMGs within the social movement. It is all about identifying the right message, messenger, and method that

will build toward community ownership of a baseline promoting stability and balance where there is predictability of behavior.

Police Processes

When initiating an investigation, police first look at the structure of the criminal enterprise, which determines their tactical response. The hierarchical criminal enterprise is often targeted using the Enterprise Theory of Investigation (ETI), while the flat-based criminal network is often targeted through "honey-pot" operations that draw out potential criminals. The ETI encourages a proactive attack on the structure of the criminal enterprise. Rather than viewing criminal acts as isolated crimes, the ETI attempts to show that individuals commit crimes in furtherance of the criminal enterprise itself.

The police processes of combating criminal violent extremists (CVE) includes a program with 4 distinctive parts consisting of

- engagement through dialogue using communication-based policing as peace officers for the purpose of increasing public trust,
- identifying key communicators within the community for the purposes of crisis planning and resiliency building,
- using conflict resolution processes for restorative justice, and
- threat assessments within the area of responsibility (AOR) in order to identify emerging threats and intelligence gaps.

The challenge for police during this process is to create environments wherein the community takes ownership of the baseline and accepts accountability for violating the expected norms for behavior.

The future of policing will include scientifically validated SPJTs that are designed to augment the officer's thought processes. These tools are not intended to replace the officer's judgment, but rather to provide structure to their cognitive processes. These SPJTs will include hardware as well as software that are designed to assess wetware function, or how human brains interact with their environment**.** These tools will be designed to measure potential indicators of violence as well as protective measures that may act as inhibitors for criminal behavior. These indicators may include biological, sociological, and/or psychological measurements as well as measurements for context (time & space). The intent of the tools will not be to predict violence, but rather to augment the police officer's assessment of a suspect and decision to use prevention methods (peace officer), predictive methods (intelligence officer), or response methods (law enforcement officer) to mitigate the opportunities for criminal behavior.

This police process is similar to the mission of Military Information Support Operations (MISO) that attempt to identify key communicators who assist in establishing connection to governance through presence, patience, and persistence. As a police officer engaged in prevention, the message may be important, but the messenger is equally important as is the method of delivery. In the mission of MISO the process includes security first, connection to governance, and then development. However, security without a strong connection to governance, including "ownership" of an acceptable baseline for expected norms of behavior, only invites dissonance. So if there is no ownership or connection to

governance when the troops are pulled out of the environment, the insurgency regains momentum. This has been seen in both Afghanistan and Iraq after the US military pulled back troops. This phenomenon is not new to policing, where zero tolerance programs often include larger numbers of patrols resulting in predictable drops of criminal activity. However, with a lack of ownership by community members, the criminals return after the police are pulled out and any development quickly deteriorates. The goal should be stability and balance where there is predictability of behavior; this requires the community to participate in a fair and equitable process of establishing an acceptable baseline for behavioral norms.

Despite earning the fury of even the al Qaeda Core (AQC) leadership for its methods, ISIL has expanded to control vast areas of Iraq and Syria as it seeks to establish a new Islamic caliphate. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, aka Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim al-Badri, has rebranded ISIL with a broader-based image projecting his group across nationalities, ethnicities, and borders. He issued a statement in April 2014 stating that al Qaeda was "no longer a base of jihad," adding that its leaders had "deviated from the correct path." Under al-Baghdadi's leadership, ISIL has killed thousands of Kurdish militia, Syrian rebels, and Christian and Muslim civilians who were not opposed to ISIL's strict interpretation of Islam.

Moving Forward

ISIL's appeal and influence with potential foreign fighters and female supporters can be countered by police and the military through coordinated development and exchange of information. This includes exposing ISIL for their criminal behaviors. An example is an FBI posting a request from the public to identify an ISIL criminal with an American accent killing civilians (FBI, 2014). The FBI, the intelligence community, and the military should identify sources of financial donations to ISIL including those states that are sponsoring this terrorist organization.

The idea that foreign fighters are influenced by personal, economic, social, and/or political motives in joining criminal enterprises is not new. In 2012, a Chicago man was imprisoned for planning to travel to Somalia in 2010 to join al-Shabaab. Similarly, an Albanian man living in Brooklyn was sentenced to 15 years in prison for attempting to travel to Pakistan to engage in criminally violent jihad. There have been at least seven Americans in 2014, including a Chicago teen, who have attempted to travel to Syria to join ISIL. It is unknown if all these individuals were ideologically radicalized or motivated by personal and/or economic motives.

The FBI has proactively established hotlines and used engagement processes in field offices like Minneapolis in attempting to identify community leaders asking for information about anyone who might be planning travel—or had already traveled—to a foreign country for armed combat. The outreach campaign also highlighted similarities in foreign traveler recruitment efforts to those employed by gangs, which adulterate themes like fraternity and a greater purpose to sell themselves to disaffected individuals (FBI, 2014).

Combating these homegrown violent extremists, or domestic terrorists, police and the military have to be engaged in the community and have systems designed to share information. While there have been attempts by Ted Cruz (R-Texas) to introduce legislation to revoke US citizenship for any American who joins ISIL, they were blocked by Democrats in 2014. It is likely now that the Republicans control the

Senate, the legislation titled the Expatriate Terrorist Act will be reintroduced. The legislation would strip US citizenship if one became a member of, fought for, or provided material assistance to a designated foreign terrorist organization that the citizen has reason to believe will terrorize the United States (Rogers, 2014). If this legislation passes, this information would be valuable to both police and military analysts. Like police, the military should use all its resources to identify, infiltrate, and neutralize the effects of ISIL and its influence on US citizens.

The police and the military have come a long way since September 11, 2001 in terms of operational cooperation and coordination. Today, FBI agents are students at the military's War Colleges and military officers attend the FBI's National Academy. FBI Agents train MISO soldiers at Ft. Bragg as well as Quantico, Virginia. FBI Agents have also taught Marines at Camp Lejeune's Combat Hunter Course. It is constitutionally less challenging to embed FBI Agents and Intelligence Analysts in Iraq and Afghanistan than military soldiers in FBI field offices throughout the US. The military and the police need to continue working together in training, sharing information, and developing research that assists operational processes in order to respond to ISIL's influence today and combat the criminal EMMG that takes ISIL's place in the future.

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Identifying ISIL Support Populations and Persons Vulnerable to Recruitment: Implications for Force Protection (Mr. Jeff R. Weyers and Dr. Jon Cole,[138] Tactical Decision Making Research Group, University of Liverpool)

Abstract

The use of social media by terrorist groups poses a unique situation for researchers in that it allows for examination of live samples at every stage on the spectrum from extremism to terrorism. Utilizing the Identifying Vulnerable Persons (IVP) guidance (a screening tool for identifying terrorist involvement and potential recruitment behavioural cues), a yearlong analysis of persons self-identifying as members of ISIL and JN was conducted. In total, over 3000 cases were screened using the IVP guidance, which identified over 355 foreign fighters and individuals at risk of recruitment to the terrorist groups. Recent attacks on western targets in Europe and North America have focused on military personnel that are outside their bases and mostly unarmed indicating that the early identification of such individuals has implications for force protection.

Key Points:

- IVP is a structured guidance tool developed for UK Government after the 7/7 attacks
- It is ideologically neutral in its ability to be used on wide range of terrorist groups
- It has 5 years of applied testing screening persons on live terrorist social media sites
- It has identified 355 individuals with ISIL and JN of concern to intelligence agencies
- It has the potential to be used for force protection both overseas and domestically

Introduction:

Many people have speculated how the Islamic State of Iraq and al Shaam (ISIL), has grown so spectacularly over the last year in its campaign to seize Syria and Iraq. It seems at least part of the answer lies in the extremist group's ability to advertise and recruit over social media. Whether in English, French, Danish, Spanish, Dutch, German, or Arabic, their global approach toward social media has been massive and all inclusive. While initially Twitter and Facebook appeared slow in recognizing the growth of ISIL on their platforms, as the group became more violent and extreme in their message, a sudden urgency developed in the need and capacity to restrain the group on social media.

On Twitter, ISIL began using sophisticated apps, bots, and the power of their supporters to generate a significant propaganda campaign. Compared to the next most powerful group in Syria, Jabhat al Nusra (JN), ISIL was growing on Twitter at a rate of four to one supporters (Berger, J., 2014).

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On Facebook, that number was even higher as ISIL supporters began dominating the platform. During the summer of 2014, ISIL began creating sites targeted at specific countries in the local language of the population (Figure 1., Below). Facebook sites supporting ISIL in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, France, Germany, Holland, Kashmir, and other western countries became a regular occurrence. (Weyers, 2014)

Examining terrorist use of social media, it becomes apparent that terrorists have learned that there are advantages to using social media over traditional forms of web expression. In the last nine months, ISIL and JN, while being targeted by law enforcement and the social media companies, have been able to maintain a presence despite these attacks. On Facebook, "We are all ISIL" restarted their very popular campaign 48 times. In many cases, both on Twitter and Facebook, ISIL was creating mirror sites in anticipation of their sites being torn down.

Figure 1. ISIL Social media pages targeting multiple countries and languages

Since 2009, Facebook has continually been evaluating and improving its ability to remove terrorist content; however, ISIL has clearly been a challenge for the company. ISIL has continually evolved in its strategy and development of the social media landscape. In some cases, this has been through sheer persistence and, in a much more concerning way, ISIL has demonstrated a clear strategy for countering the attacks on its social media presence. Even as this paper was being written, ISIL launched the 100th edition of its Bilad al Shaam media Facebook site (Site name: Bilad-al-Shaam-100-Baqqiyah-Wa-Tatamadad-BiznAllah).

Twitter, on the other hand, initially approached the subject of terrorism from the perspective of freedom of speech. Many terrorist groups utilized Twitter as a propaganda and recruiting tool unobstructed for many years. All of this changed with the Westgate shopping mall attack in Nairobi, Kenya in September 2013. During this attack, al-Shabaab live tweeted their terror attack to the world. Twitter came under wide condemnation for not being able to control and remove the group from its

platform. It was only then that Twitter. along with law enforcement, began an aggressive campaign to remove terrorist groups from Twitter reducing their ability to use it as a tool for propaganda, recruitment, and terrorizing.

Perhaps the greatest benefit of social media platforms for law enforcement and intelligence agencies are the opportunities to screen individuals and groups for potential threats. Preventing violent extremism and terrorism relies on successfully identifying and proactively intervening with people who are vulnerable to being targeted for recruitment before they engage in violent extremism. The early identification of vulnerability should afford opportunities to provide constructive intervention and referral pathways to support 'at risk' individuals. Such activities are considered routine in both public health and education with numerous examples of successful programs. Reactive strategies to the identification of maladaptive behavior evolve into a system where resources are poured into a small number of individuals, only once they have been identified, often after the maladaptive or destructive patterns have already become established. Therefore, the prognosis for any intervention is poor while their capacity for harm to the wider community is high. Therefore, it is necessary to develop methods of identifying vulnerable individuals before those maladaptive behaviors are present. The IVP guidance was developed specifically for this purpose for the UK Office for Security and Counter Terrorism in 2009 (Cole, B., Cole, J. Allison, L., Allison, E., 2009). The IVP guidance was designed from the outset as an ideologically neutral, structured professional judgment guidance for practitioners from elementary schools through to prisons.

In its current form, the IVP guidance consists of 16 criteria, which can be classified into three levels of increasing and cumulative concern (yellow, orange, and red) determined by the extent to which the criteria move from beliefs to observable (criminal) behaviors. The IVP guidance criteria indicate vulnerability to future involvement with violent extremism and acts of terror. It is important to recognize that vulnerability does not imply certainty and the point of identifying vulnerability is to afford the opportunity for practitioners to intervene before the individual engages with violent extremism. In addition, violent extremists will not necessarily display all of these factors, and the presence of even a single risk factor should prompt the practitioner to seek advice from their line manager. Practitioners must feel confident raising such issues even when there are gaps in their own knowledge about particular issues and/or events that give cause for concern. They must feel able to ask difficult questions and identify key information that emerges from the participant's responses that should indicate what action (if any) to take.

By their very nature, prevention interventions will generate a large number of 'false positives' (i.e. individuals who do not go on to display the target behavior will be treated as if they will). This raises legitimate ethical concerns about unfairly 'labeling' individuals who may not pose a genuine risk. Actions that label or target individuals as negative, criminal, or dysfunctional serve to alienate and ostracize them from the rest of society and may actually strengthen an anti-social identity. In order to circumvent this problem, we have been using the IVP guidance with individuals who are publicly associating with banned terrorist organizations (i.e., 'true positives'). In this context, over the last year, we began screening public domain ISIL and JN social media on both Facebook and Twitter for individuals

vulnerable to recruitment and individuals self-identifying as engaging in support activities towards ISIL and JN.

From over 3000 individuals that have been screened on ISIL and JN terrorist social networks, there have been numerous examples of criminality that have provided actionable intelligence for agencies from multiple countries (Figure 2., Below). This "Criminally Active" group represents approximately 10% of the sample. This group included foreign fighters who are actively fighting with either ISIL or JN, individuals who are actively supporting the group (fundraising, propaganda, recruitment), or those espousing specific threats towards western countries.

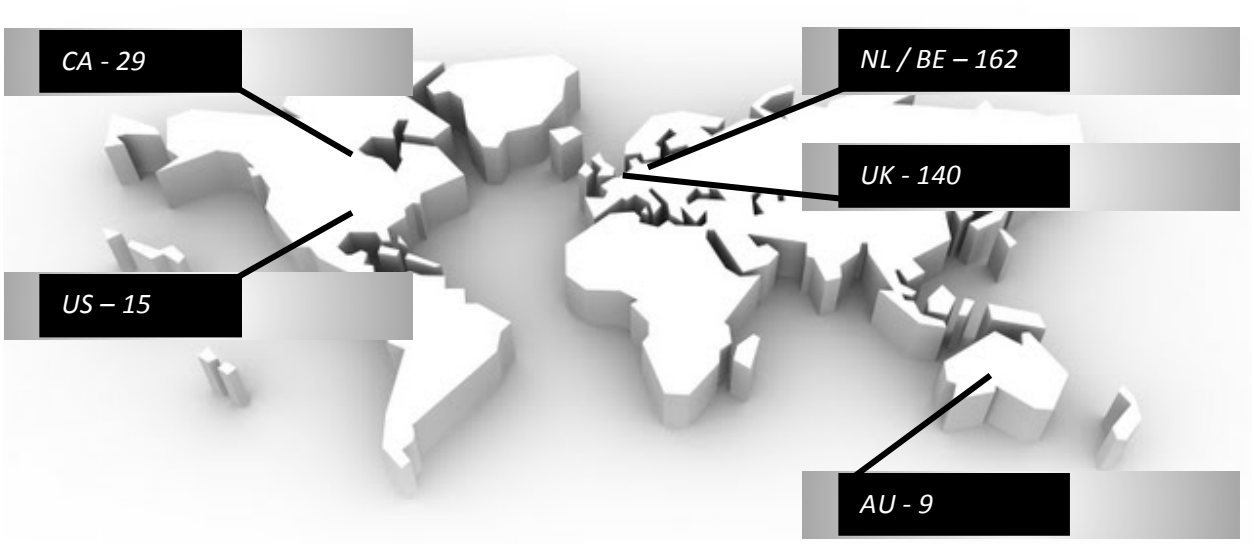

Figure 2. ISIL and JN extremists identified using the IVP in multiple countries

The remaining individuals are best described as at risk of recruitment into or support for ISIL or JN. However, in many cases, there was additional evidence in their personal narrative, imagery, or further affiliations to justify passing the individuals' information on for further scrutiny by law enforcement agencies. A majority of the cases that were forwarded to law enforcement were dealt outside of the criminal courts. In some cases, due to criminality or immigration issues, the individuals were charged or had restrictions placed on their movements. In several cases, firearms belonging to persons demonstrating extremist intent were taken away and they were prohibited from further access.

Conclusion:

This research clearly indicates that screening tools, such as the IVP guidance, can be utilized to provide an early decision regarding the potential danger posed by an individual or a group. As the communities in which these individuals live are the most likely to spot the behavioral indicators of radicalization, it is essential that any screening tool is acceptable to those communities. As mentioned above, screening

tools that target or label whole communities as criminal and/or dysfunctional will only serve to alienate and ostracize them from the rest of society and reduce the flow of intelligence. Therefore, an ideologically neutral approach is required even if ISIL is perceived to be the largest current threat.

A key impediment to the widespread use of screening tools, such as the IVP guidance, is the concern that law enforcement agencies will be unable to cope with the increased amount of information coming to them. Austerity measures in many countries have led to a reduction in staff numbers that has potentially compromised the ability to collate and analyze such information. An alternative approach is to rely on the correct use of the screening tool to identify the 'true negatives' and for the identifying agencies, such as schools and religious institutions, to intervene early to prevent individuals from progressing down the path to violent extremism and terrorism if they are 'false positives'. The key should be to avoid the identification of 'false negatives' and enhance the identification of 'true positives' before they do anything. In this sense, a 'whole of society' approach towards preventing violent extremism is adopted and the burden is shared across the stakeholders.

One of those stakeholders will be the military as it is necessary to provide force protection at home and abroad. The internal lone actor, such as Major Nidal Malik Hasan, poses a significant threat and it will be difficult to prevent their access to military personnel. In addition, military personnel will be vulnerable whilst in the communities surrounding military installations. In both cases, early identification of threats will enhance force protection and the widespread use of screening tools, such as the IVP guidance, will afford the opportunity to do so.

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A Tale of Two Caliphates (Mr. Bill Braniff [139]and Mr. Ryan Pereira, DHS, University of MD, START Program)

Chapters in this volume outline both endogenous explanations for the magnetic appeal of ISIL (see Ligon et. al), as well as explanations that highlight the relative appeal of ISIL given exogenous factors, such as anti-Assad sentiment or the presence of porous borders in Turkey. This chapter spans the two, arguing specifically that ISIL's appeal is based on a more compelling vision, operational menu, and strategy in the post-Arab Spring context relative to that of al Qaeda and its Associated Movement (AQAM). AQAM primed the global jihadist community to mobilize; ISIL has created a destination that is inspiring, accessible, and appropriate for the historical moment.

The Caliphate

For al Qaeda senior leadership, "the Caliphate" is a master-frame that it dangles well out in front of violent Islamist groups the world-over, hoping to align their otherwise dispersed and diverse violent campaigns on azimuths that converge in the triumphant, albeit distant, future. The Caliphate is a conceptual destination; a grandiose victory that signals the onset of global conquest in which all of the world's territories will be governed by al Qaeda's interpretation of Islam.

For the Islamic State, by comparison, it is the reality of an extant Caliphate and its associated obligations that will purify Islam, rally dispersed actors to make the *hijra*, and ready Muslims for the apocalyptic military battle with the West in the Levant. The Caliphate's growth in size and strength is seen as the means to the end of a final decisive military confrontation with the West. Where al Qaeda and its associated movement summons fighters to active jihadist fronts, Caliph Ibrahim called upon doctors, jurists, and engineers to build the institutions of the caliphate. Primed by the online discourse of the last ten years, aided by person-to-person social media interactions, and inspired by the Islamic State's advances on the ground, fighters claiming that "We Are All ISIS" mobilize to join the Islamic State independently or from within existing Islamist political networks (i.e., Sharia4Belgium and al-Muhajiroun in European states), without the Islamic State having to establish an extensive network of on-the-ground recruiters in European and American cities.

Operations

Al Qaeda's kinetic operations target the "far enemy," the West, above all other targets. Viewing their organization as the vanguard of the jihad movement, al Qaeda seeks to use spectacular, mass-casualty terrorist attacks to incite a heavy-handed military response from Western governments. These state responses would seemingly evidence the War on Islam that al Qaeda portrays in its propaganda, thereby polarizing the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds and enabling the jihadists to mobilize resources for a civilizational conflict. Al Qaeda strategist, Abu Bakr Naji, famously referred to this process as "awakening the masses." For al Qaeda's provocation to be effective, foreign governments must play their scripted roles in this cycle of violence, hence al Qaeda's preference for sensational attacks that are politically difficult for Western nation-states to ignore.

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Before, during, and after the Sunni awakening in Iraq, al Qaeda senior leadership discouraged Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's internecine violence in favor of attacks against the occupying forces. In recent years and in various countries, amorphous front groups with names like Ansar al-Sharia have worked alongside of other Sunni jihadists and insurgents, many with divergent ideological orientations. These front organizations are designed to provide basic social services to local populations and to engage in da'wa, the promulgation of their religious ideology. For al Qaeda, it is not yet time to purify Islam by force. Even attacks against the Shi'a should be moderated until the jihadists can regain Muslims' loyalties.

By contrast, the Islamic State has thus far opted to deter full-scale Western intervention in Iraq and Syria while engaging in aggressive internecine violence to purge local challengers. When President Obama deployed US military advisors to Iraq, the Islamic State threatened that #CalamityWillBefallUS via Twitter should the US escalate its involvement in the fight. In response to recent US airstrikes, the Islamic State released a video of the murder of journalist James Foley and threatened to murder journalist Steven Sotloff should airstrikes continue. While limited intervention may serve to bolster the legitimacy and recruitment efforts of the Islamic State, as it can weather such a storm, baiting a large-scale intervention is not in their best interests.

Instead of the far enemy, the Islamic State's military operations have focused on attacking competitors in their midst who do not submit to their ideological and organizational primacy, and seizing the resources necessary to build the institutions of the Caliphate. Operations are not only used to seize important border crossings, dams, and oil fields or to weaken competing militias in territorial strongholds, but also to purify Islam by force, using brutal public executions and amputations to intimidate and deter potential rivals. The caliphate's construction is predicated upon the rigid enforcement of the Islamic State's interpretation of Islamic law in strongholds like the city of Raqqa in Syria. Unlike al Qaeda's more accommodating stance in the post Arab-spring world, which resembles Abu Bakr Naji's guidance for "managing savagery" in it the early stages of a security vacuum, the Islamic State has continued the practices of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who attacked the Shia, secularists, non-violent Islamist parties, and Sunni-tribesmen that did not subordinate themselves to al Qaeda in Iraq. These practices reflect Naji's guidance for how to deal with "other gangs and parties" farther along in the process of managing these tumultuous places. Naji argues, "We must drag everyone into the battle in order to give life to those who deserve to live and destroy those who deserve to be destroyed."

Strategy

Al Qaeda is waging a protracted war of attrition against the West, specifically aiming to bleed the United States. Given the failure of local terrorist groups to overthrow their respective apostate regimes in the 1980s and 1990s, al Qaeda senior leadership reasoned that American support was the apostate regimes' "center of gravity." If they were able to attrite the American economic, military, or political will to remain engaged in the Muslim world, local jihadists could overpower the apostates. To wage this war of attrition, al Qaeda aims to reorient the violence of militant organizations and individuals in various locations around the world, refocusing their wrath on far-enemy targets like Western embassies, businesses, and tourist destinations within their own states. Al Qaeda's operations focus on the far-

enemy because they need the US to respond militarily in as many locations as possible, overextending itself, and spending precious resources, all the while generating greater levels of anti-American sentiment from local Muslim populations in return, until continued US engagement in the Muslim world becomes prohibitive.

The Islamic State is not currently waging a strategy of attrition, but one of outbidding. It is using its military superiority to eliminate or subjugate rival insurgent groups and non-violent communities in Iraq and Syria that could eventually pose a threat to the authority the Islamic State seeks to impose. Instead of inviting Muslim vs. Western violence and banking on that conflict to polarize communities and mobilize resources, it is benefiting from the resources already being mobilized by the sectarian polarization that is taking place in Iraq, Syria and beyond, which they actively seek to exacerbate. The Islamic States is willing and able to use extreme violence to carve out control at the expense of its rivals and then to consolidate its hold on the resources pouring into the conflict.

Conclusion

Given this comparison, ISIL's relative appeal can be distilled into five points.

- Sectarianism: Whereas al Qaeda "far-enemy" strategy bet on provocation to polarize and mobilize the masses, ISIL is ratcheting up already elevated levels of sectarian tension in the post Arab-Spring world and benefitting from the resulting resource mobilization.
- Righteousness: While al Qaeda emphasizes the importance of doctrine in its rhetoric, ISIL has evidenced a fervent desire to enforce an uncompromising interpretation of Islamic law through its behaviors.
- Obligation: Al Qaeda relies on an abstract argument—that Islam is under attack everywhere—to convince Muslims that it is their individual duty to defend Islam everywhere, obfuscating offensive tactics with notions of classical or defensive jihad. ISIL has established a physical Caliphate and, with it, the pragmatic obligation to defend the Caliphate and build its institutions.
- Strength: Al Qaeda is a cautious and nomadic terrorist organization that has shied away from equating terrain with success, trying instead to reorient extant militant groups from the periphery of their respective conflicts in a slow war of attrition with the West. ISIL, by comparison, appears decisive, confident, and contemporary as they opportunistically seize terrain, antagonize their enemies, and publicize their exploits.
- Urgency: ISIL sees the Caliphate as the means to the final apocalyptic battle between Muslims and the non-Muslim world. For those ideologically inclined individuals, it is essential to participate in ISIL's campaign now, before the opportunity passes. Without the Caliphate, al Qaeda's call to arms lacks the same urgency.

Implications

If sectarian conflict proves to be a greater means for insurgents to mobilize resources and destabilize apostate regimes than al Qaeda's far-enemy centered war of attrition, the model presented by the Islamic State will supplant that of al Qaeda. The Islamic State's rapid military successes against the "Safavids" and their allied Shia militias is portrayed to resemble the Prophet Muhammad's rapid military

successes after leaving Medina to conquer Mecca, causing the Islamic State's dedicated foot soldiers to see their efforts as favored by God. As sectarian conflicts spread, jihadist groups will foster and exploit them. The West will be relegated to the role of observer, less frequently targeted (at least initially) but poorly positioned to take any meaningful action to protect itself or others. The difficulty of coordinating and resolving the competing interests and actions of numerous external actors like Iran and Hezbollah, not to mention among America's Persian Gulf allies, complicates any potential US intervention. Sectarian violence may paralyze the West's ability to engage in the Middle East (as it has in the Levant) where the Sunni-Shi'a demographic split would allow for larger scale sectarian conflict, severing regional ties more successfully than al Qaeda operations to date. In this case, the Islamic State will also serve as an agent of change for al Qaeda and its associated movement, which will have no alternative but to evolve in potentially unforeseen ways, or perish.

If the Islamic State's caliphate project fails, however, their presence on the fringe of the radical spectrum may serve to make al Qaeda and its associated movement look more legitimate by comparison. This fringe effect could benefit al Qaeda in two ways. First, as the international security community hones in on the Islamic State, it could result in increased freedom of maneuver in the short-term, the very time when the crisis of legitimacy brought on by the Islamic State has created a tremendous incentive for al Qaeda to conduct a successful attack against the West. The US military withdrawal from Afghanistan and ongoing instability in the Pakistani tribal belts may provide the requisite safe-haven for al Qaeda to hatch such an attack. Perhaps ironically, the presence of large numbers of foreign fighters in Iraq and Syria drawn in by the Islamic State and other organizations may also provide al Qaeda with an opportunity to turn one or more of these individuals around to attack the West, as was the alleged mission of the Khorasan group within Jabhat al-Nusra. Second, an al Qaeda organization perceived to be more legitimate, discerning, and focused on the "true enemies of Islam" may secure greater funding and popular support in the long-term.

The Devoted Actor, Sacred Values, and Willingness to Fight: Preliminary Studies with ISIL Volunteers and Kurdish Frontline Fighters (Dr. Scott Atran,[140] Lydia Wilson, Richard Davis, Hammad Sheikh, ARTIS Research, University of Oxford, Minerva researchers)

Executive Summary

1. Who Joins ISIL Today?

- More than 15000 foreign fighters have joined the jihad in Syria over the last three years, about 20 percent from Europe. Since 1945, only the Afghanistan conflict in the 1980s has mobilized more foreign fighters than this conflict, and that was over a period of ten years. It is likely, then, that the Syrian conflict if not ended soon--a distant prospect—will mobilize the greatest number of foreign fighters in modern history.

- The networks being formed among these fighters now likely will be decisive for future terrorist attacks against Western countries, given that the networks formed during the 1980s jihad in Afghanistan were vital for the attacks committed against the West in the early to mid-2000s.

- ***Western volunteers for ISIL are mostly self-seeking young adults in transitional stages in their lives—immigrants, students, between jobs or girl friends, having left their native homes and looking for new families of friends and fellow travelers. For the most part, they have no traditional religious education and are "born again" into a radical religious vocation through the appeal of militant jihad***.[141]

- In our studies of al Qaeda (AQ) volunteers from the diaspora, we find about 70-75% join AQ and its affiliates through friends, about 15-20 % through family, and the rest through other means (discipleship, on their own, etc.). The Foreign Fighter database from ICSR (International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, King's' College, London) indicates very similar numbers for volunteers to Syria and Iraq, mostly to ISIL. [142]

- A July 2014 poll by ICM Research suggests that 16 percent of people in France, and more than one in four youth (27 percent), have a favorable or very favorable opinion of ISIL, although only about 7 percent of France is Muslim.[143]

- Dialoguing with foreign fighters on social media (e.g., ask.fm) indicates that the principal cause motivating the first wave of foreign fighters was tightly linked to a humanitarian concern to end the apparent genocide by Assad's government against Sunni Muslims. The volunteers were

[140] satran@umich.edu
[141] Atran S (2011) *US Government Efforts to Counter Violent Extremism*, US Senate Armed Services Committee, 2010-2011 (Testimony, Response); www.jjay.cuny.edu/US_Senate_Hearing_on_Violent_Extremism.pdf
[142] Bond, M (2014) Why westerners are driven to join the jihadist fight. (*New Scientist*, September 10).
[143] ICM (2014) ISIS poll, July 11-21; www.icmunlimited.com/media-centre/press/isis-poll-for-rossiya-segodnya

confused and upset by the unwelcoming locals they were supposedly coming to save. However, for about a year now, the narrative and cause has shifted markedly among a second wave towards fight for the Caliphate and Sharia show little concern for local sentiment. For the most part, current volunteers from Europe and North Africa believe that they are part of a great historical movement that has reestablished the Islamic Caliphate, and now must fight to the death if necessary to secure and expand it against Alawite and Shi'ite apostates in Damascus and Baghdad, then move to take Medina and Mecca, Jerusalem and Cairo, from the Jews and corrupt Sunni regimes and the foreign powers that support them.

- The case is different for ISIL fighters from Syria and Iraq who appear to be motivated more by instrumental concern and grievance: reaction to the power and perceived abuse that the Alawites and Shi'ites have exercised over them and a fervent desire to turn the situation on its head, fear, and hatred of Iran (especially among former Baathist military) and belief that Iran's nuclear program is primarily aimed at them, and support for ISIL because they think it is winning.[144]

- Yet, despite the disparate motives of those joining ISIL, in the end, the foreign fighters who come mainly for adventure with their friends, whether to save Syria or secure the Caliphate, as well as local fighters who join for material advantage or to avenge hate, have radicalized together in combat into a formidable fighting force. And here ISIL leadership appears to be critical: Al-Baghdadi and company are able to manage very different groups and bring them to devotion their sacred cause: a Caliphate hallowed by combat, caring for one another under fire, and partaking of blood rituals that tightly bind a band of brothers while terrorizing enemies. ***Foreign fighter sentiment suggests that Bin Laden is akin to John the Baptist in preaching the Caliphate's coming, but al-Baghdadi is a messiah who has made it true.***

- Thus, ***prior interrogation of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (now self-proclaimed "Caliph" of the Islamic State) and his close circle by ARTIS associate General Douglas Stone, who commanded Camp Bucca where they were held, indicates "absolutely committed purists, completely devoted to their idea of Sharia and the Caliphate, and willing to do anything for it, to use violence to instill blood lust among their followers and terror among enemies who were no match for them, and to build trusted networks among Baathist military officers. They are ruthless, and patient, and 5 steps ahead of their enemies."***

- ***In our preferred world of open democracy, tolerance of diversity and distributive justice, violence—especially extreme forms of mass bloodshed—are generally considered pathological or evil expressions of human nature gone awry or collateral damage as the unintended consequence of righteous intentions. But across most human history and cultures, violence against other groups is universally claimed by the perpetrators to be a sublime matter of moral virtue. For without a claim to virtue, it is very difficult to endeavor to kill large numbers of people innocent of direct harm to others.***

[144] Loubna Mrie VM, Whitt S (2014) The motivations of Syrian Islamist fighters. *CTC Sentinel* 7(10):15-17

2. The Devoted Actor: "Fighting Spirit" and Willingness to Die and Kill

- What inspires the willingness of humans to make their greatest exertions, to fight unto death with and for genetic strangers—a propensity to which no creature but humans is subject? What determines the "fighting spirit" that enables one group of combatants to defeat another, all other things being equal? And what allows revolutionary and insurgent groups to survive and rebound in the face of seemingly catastrophic losses in infrastructure, firepower, manpower, and leadership? These are basic questions about human nature and warfare that our research endeavors to address through a combination of anthropological fieldwork, psychological experiments and surveys in select trouble spots of worry to national and international security.

- These issues bear directly on some of our military's current and most pressing concerns. For example, in recent remarks, President Obama[145] endorsed the judgment of his US National Intelligence Director: "We underestimated the Viet Cong… we underestimated ISIL [the Islamic State] and overestimated the fighting capability of the Iraqi army…. It boils down to predicting the will to fight, which is an imponderable."[146] Yet, if the methods and results that our research suggest prove reliable and right, then predicting who is willing to fight and who is not, and why, could be ponderable indeed and important to the evaluation and execution of military strategy.

- Among American military historians, psychologists, and sociologists, the conventional wisdom on why soldiers fight is because of leadership and, even more important, group loyalty resembling love of family but perhaps even stronger.[147] They tend to chalk up "the semi-mystical bond of comradeship" to rational self-interest,[148] and to dismiss the notion of sacrifice for a cause as a critical factor in war. In Vietnam, for example, American soldiers told interviewers that the cause of democracy was "crap" and "a joke." And yet, they described the selfless bravery of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese "because they believed in something" and "knew what they were fighting for."[149] Perhaps, then, some do fight and die for a cause, as well as comrades, and that is why they win wars.[150]

- Our overall framework concerns "The Devoted Actor," who is a moral agent markedly different from most notions of rational agent, who is fairly immune to material tradeoffs, and whose character we have been researching and composing over the last several years. Our research indicates that when people act as "Devoted Actors,"[151] they are deontic actors (i.e., duty-based)

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[145] Payne, S (2014) Obama: US misjudged the rise of the Islamic State, ability of Iraqi army. (*Washington Post,* September 28).
[146] Ignatius, D. (2014) James Clapper: We underestimated the Islamic State's 'will to fight'. (*Washington Post,* September 18).
[147] Smith R (1983) Why soldiers fight. *Quality and Quantity* 18:1-32.
[148] Moskos C (1975) The American combat soldier in Vietnam. *Journal of Social Issues* 3:25-37.
[149] Spector R (1994) *After Tet*. (Vintage, New York).
[150] Atran S, Sheikh H, Gómez Á (in press) Devoted actors fight for close comrades and sacred cause. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, USA.*
[151] Atran S, Axelrod R, Davis R (2007) Sacred barriers to conflict resolution. *Science* 317:1039-1040.

who add another dimension to thought and behavior that is distinct from instrumental rationality (i.e., cost-benefit). ***We find that devoted actors who are unconditionally committed to comrades, in conjunction with their sacred cause, allow low-power groups to endure and often prevail against materially stronger foes***.[152] Thus, ***since World War 1, revolutionary and insurgent groups (e.g., Bolshevists, Nazis, Viet Cong, ISIL) have beaten foes with up to an order of magnitude initial more firepower and manpower because of devotion to comrade and cause rather than to typical reward structures like pay and promotion***.[153]

- In our previous DoD-supported work involving in-depth case and field studies of jihadi terrorist groups,[154] of how they developed and how their attacks germinated, we also find that militants kill and die "for each other… their imagined family of genetic strangers—their brotherhood";[155] however, our studies of seemingly intractable conflicts (Israel-Palestine, Iran-USA, India-Pakistan) also show that they do so for a sacred cause.[156]

- Our research indicates that when people act as "Devoted Actors," they act in ways that cannot be reliably predicted by assessing material risks and rewards, costs and consequences. Devoted actors act are not chiefly motivated by instrumental concerns. Instead, they are motivated by "sacred values"—as when land becomes "Holy Land"—that drive actions independent, or all out proportion, to likely outcomes.

3. An Empirical Illustration: Probable Factors Motivating ISIL Volunteers from Morocco

To illustrate the relationship between sacred values, identity fusion of individual self concepts into a unique collective concept, and willingness to fight, I briefly report results of surveys in two Moroccan neighborhoods (N = 260, face-to-face interviews, 50% males, M_{age} = 31 yrs). Both places were previously associated with militant jihad and where we had done intensive anthropological fieldwork: Jemaa Mezuak (a rundown barrio of Tetuan, home to 5 of 7 principal plotters in the 2004 Madrid train bombings who blew themselves up when cornered by police, and to a number of suicide bombers who died in Iraq), and Sidi Moumen in Casablanca (a densely populated shantytown, source of terrorist bombing campaigns in 2003, 2005, 2007). Upwards of 2000 Moroccans have joined jihadi groups in Syria, primarily the Islamic State, and our field discussions with Moroccan officials indicate that scores of volunteers are now leaving monthly from northern Moroccan towns such as Tetuan and Larache. Systematic analysis of dialogues in social media among hundreds of foreign fighters over the last three years indicates a marked shift in motivations during the last year from saving co-religionists in Syria to establishing Sharia and securing the Caliphate regardless of the wishes of local folk. Moroccan volunteers conform to the pattern.

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[152] Atran S, Ginges J (2012) Religious and sacred imperatives in human conflict. *Science* 336*:*855–857.
[153] Arreguín-Toft, I (2001) How the weak win wars. *International Security* 26:93-128.
[154] ARTIS (2009) *Theoretical Frames on Pathways to Violent Radicalization*. Prepared for the Office of Naval Research; www.artisresearch.com/articles/ARTIS_Theoretical_Frames_August_2009.pdf
[155] Atran, S. (2010) *Talking to the enemy.* (Harper-Collins, New York), p. 33.
[156] Ginges J, Atran S, Sachdeva S, Medin D (2011) Psychology out of the laboratory: The challenge of violent extremism. *American Psychologist* 66:507-519.

As previously with al Qaeda volunteers from the diaspora, about three out of every four foreign fighters in Syria volunteer in clusters of friends, some attuned to the cause through social media and arriving in groups and some being drawn to the cause by friends already in place or who have returned to their point of origin. Results indicate that fusion with family-like groups may be driving costly sacrifices for the sake of comrades and cause (Sharia and the Caliphate) among foreign fighter volunteers, but only for those who hold a sacred value. When sacred values are at the core of motivations to make extreme sacrifices, it becomes clear how people can sustain commitment and continue to fight. This is so even when most of the group they were fused with has perished, as Darwin intimated in *The Descent of Man* when discussing heroism and martyrdom under low initial probability of victory or even group survival.[157]

Figures 1A and 1B show that two factors, identity fusion and sacred values, interact to determine who is likely to become a devoted actor based on expressions of willingness to make costly sacrifices, including fighting and dying (aggregate of five items: "If necessary, I would be willing to lose my job or source of income/go to jail/use violence/let my children suffer physical punishment/die to defend the full imposition of Sharia/Democracy," where 1= "strongly disagree" to 7 ="strongly agree," Cronbach's α = .94).

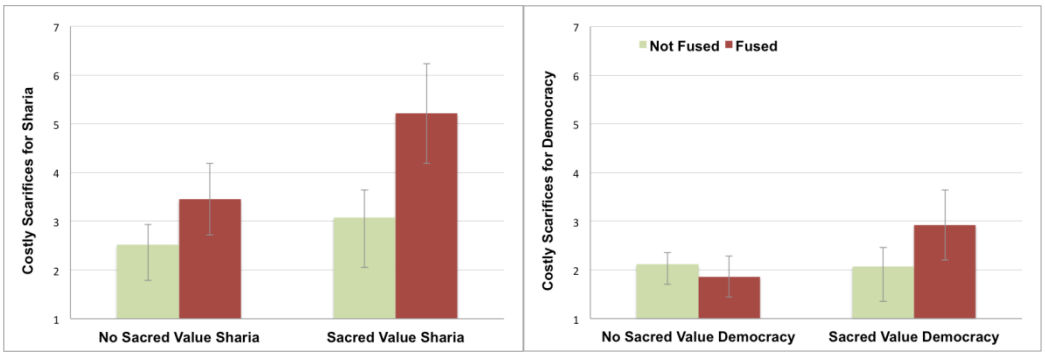

Fig. 1A Sharia, Fusion, and Sacrifice **Fig. 1B Democracy, Fusion, and Sacrifice**

Only those subjects who were fused with a family-like group and considered Sharia a sacred value were more willing than not to make costly sacrifices, being above the midpoint of a 7-point response scale from strongly unwilling to strongly willing. We found a similar effect for support of militant Jihad (5 items, e.g., "All countries that are not ruled by Muslims and do not observe Sharia should be considered *Dar al-Harb* [abode of war]," same response scale, α = .90). ***Although an interaction between fusion and sacred values also predicts costly sacrifices holds when values concern democracy (using various measures of "democracy," including tolerance of diverse opinion, individual liberty, independent judiciary, competitive elections, etc.), effects are much weaker and less widespread in these Moroccan populations.*** By contrast, in a survey of 1465 Spaniards, only when asked to think about the day of the

[157] Darwin, C (1871) *The descent of man*. (John Murray, London), pp. 163-165.

March 2004 Madrid train bombings (threat prime as compared to a control condition), did fusion with the country (rather than close friends) and democracy considered as a sacred value interact in expressed willingness for costly sacrifices, perception of the in-group (Spaniards) as strong, and the out-group (Muslims) as weak (e.g., a condition x fusion with country x SVs repeated measures MANOVA on intergroup formidability yielded a three-way interaction, $F(1,1439) = 8.38$, $p = .004$).

> *Sample Fusion Measure:* The diagram below (fig. 2) consists of two circles. The small circle represents you (I) and the big circle represents your [close circle of friends/religion/country]. You can click on the small circle and move it closer to the big circle (dragging it to the right) or you can move it away from the big circle (dragging it to the left). Please move the small circle to the position that best captures your relationship with [close circle of friends/religion/country].

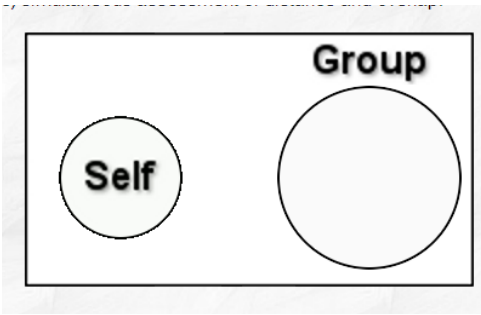

Fig. 2 Fusion Measure

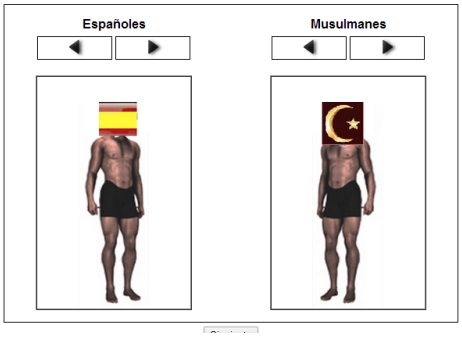

Fig. 3 Outcome Measure (Intergroup Formidability)

> *Sample Outcome Measure (Intergroup Formidability):* In the above diagram (fig. 3) are two human bodies that represent the strength of two groups: Spaniards and Muslims. You can increase or decrease independently the size and strength of both bodies to indicate to what extent you believe a group is stronger or weaker than another.

4. Ongoing ARTIS (Self-Funded) Studies with Kurdish Fighters on the Frontlines in Mosul

Our self-funded studies aim to assess the fighting spirit of the various Kurdish forces and their perceptions of what is needed to defeat ISIL. We use experimental designs and measures similar to those described above. However, we are in mid-study and cannot report statistical details as yet, only apparent trends.

Beginning in the fall of 2014, we have been conducting research with various Kurdish combatant groups (primarily PKK, PUK, KDP and Communist Peshmergas, and the Iraqi Army) and non-combatant controls on the frontlines in the fight with ISIL around Mosul. “Peshmerga" is used in common parlance to mean any Kurdish fighter, official or not. The Ministry of Peshmergas (i.e., Ministry of Defense) sees things differently: any Peshmerga from the battles of the 1980s and 90s or earlier automatically have a place in the government’s force. Then there are separate groups that are party-affiliated: if you want to fight, you go to your party to join a particular group. This greatly affects the structure of command and coordination. Although our interviewees try to give an impression of unity, when pushed most admit it

does not work too well. Who is ultimately in control? Who coordinates the action across the 1,050 miles of frontline? Why does, when a PUK detachment get sent to Makhmour, does a KDP contingent get sent to the PUK area? Who decides? To these questions we do not yet have clear answers.

With the mortal threat of ISIL hovering over the Kurds, the question is to what extend the Islamic State has unified the Kurdish factions in Iraq, or in what is known as the "Greater Kurdistan," including Kurdish factions from Turkey, Syria, and Iran, in Kurdish national discourse? The short answer so far is "Not very much." A member of the elite Republican Guard who, under condition of anonymity, told us that the ongoing conflict between the PUK and KPD has allowed ISIL to retake territory they had lost around Jalawla after they had won it, though greatly outnumbered, with snipers, creative tactics, and bravery. The British army is now in the area to help with training, which he and others think will make a difference as there is considerable respect for the training and fighting and discipline of the Brits.

Yet, most young people we have talked to express willingness to help in the fight and with whomever they can. Many are desperate to fight but will settle for taking food to the front. The PKK are refusing most volunteers: not for political reasons, but because PKK combat success depends on tight military discipline and close camaraderie forged over time. Nevertheless, they do let some very experienced Peshmerga join them. The PKK also took in 15 communists into one unit fighting at Makhmour when the Communist Party forbade fighting (degrading support for communists in the general population). The PKK has strict rules in times of relative calm. One such rule is that the parent of a martyr must be spared from fighting. When a member of our team interviewed the father of a martyr who was refused on these grounds and went back to Makhmour, he cried with shame. Then his wife joined up with the PKK without telling them she had lost a son; his daughter was already with them (he hates the PUK with a passion and would not re-join this group although he had previously fought with them). Finally, a contingent of communists in Makhmour who were fighting alongside the KDP let the man in to fight without informing party leaders.

People consider the PKK the very best fighters, but the fighting prowess of the PUK Peshmergas is also well regarded. The KDP has been deeply disregarded following its failure to prevent ISIL from taking Mosul and leaving the Christians and Yazidi to their fates, then watching the battle for Makhmour, returning to Erbil at night and only fighting when Erbil was threatened. A few KDP battalions are now re-gaining respect. Most people believe that the PKK, helped by some older Peshmergas, prevented Erbil from falling and eventually of all of Kurdish Iraqi territory. One critical problem of the Iraqi Kurdish army is that, for the sake of appearance of political unity, if a unit as a PUK leader it must also have a KUP vice-leader and vice versa. This paralyzes rather than unifies.

Crucially, people do not seem that intimidated by ISIL. Most respondents contend that it would not take long if the international community would help with new weapons. They believe that if the PKK and Peshmerga swapped arms with ISIL, then ISIL would be defeated in a matter of weeks.

But, literally, for every Kurd we have interviewed so far—from whatever faction, combatant or not, man or woman, rich or poor, well-educated or functionally illiterate—the greatest perceived challenge to victory over ISIL is lack of unity. Everyone bemoans this lack of unity yet no one foresees unity in the

near term. So a new Salah ed-Din (the Kurdish warrior chief who liberated Jerusalem from the Crusaders) would be welcome who could unite the Kurdish people and raise a Muslim army that would destroy ISIL while helping secure the dream of a unified Kurdistan. The problem is that the PUK and KDP have also divided history, each claiming certain heroes as their own, and so cannot really imagine a leader that commands unity.

In sum, despite the persistent fragmentation of political and military command, there is a strong sentiment among Kurds throughout the area that unity is essential to destroying ISIL and ensuring the long-term survival of the Kurds as a people. As our studies are beginning to show, willingness to fight and die for the sacred value of Kurdish unity, and sentiments of fusion with Kurdistan, trump even family and close comrades in producing expressions of willingness to make costly sacrifices, including fighting and dying. Indeed, many young volunteers are coming to the front asking to fight with any group that will take them. But

- No Kurdish respondents want an American army on the ground to try to do the job for them.

5. General Summary: Theory and Hypothesis

- ***Much prior research indicates that close camaraderie with a family-like group (band of brothers) is critical to the "fighting spirit" of combatants, and recent studies among combatants (in Libya)[158] and supporters of militant Jihad (in Morocco)[159] suggest that identity fusion is a key mechanism, providing a sense of invincibility and special destiny to the group and motivating willingness to make costly sacrifices, including fighting and dying.***

- ***Yet, historical studies (of the American Revolutionary and Civil Wars, the Lincoln Brigade of American volunteers in the Spanish Civil War, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese) and our own preliminary studies of foreign volunteers for ISIL and frontline Kurds fighting ISIL indicate that for some groups, commitment to sacred values ratchets up fusion and fighting spirit beyond the close family-like group to an extended ideological group defined by a sacred cause (Advancing The Caliphate, Defending The Kurdish People).***

Thus we propose the following hypothesis (for which we have some preliminary support:

> If sacred values are more strongly associated with a larger group, then combatants will fuse with that larger group and consider that larger group, defined by its sacred cause, to be what they are most willing to defend and fight for, even unto death.

By researching this process, we hope to provide both a mechanism for fusion extension beyond close "bands of brothers/sisters" to larger groups, as well as an account of why ideologically committed revolutionary and insurgent groups beat out armies and police that also have committed brothers in

[158] Whitehouse H, McQuinn, B, Buhrmester, M, Swann, WB (in press) Brothers in arms: Libyan revolutionaries bond like families. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, USA.*

[159] Atran S, Sheikh H, Gómez Á (in press) Devoted actors and willingness to fight. *Cliodynamics: The Journal of Theoretical and Mathematical History* 5(1).

arms at the small family-like group level (commando units, special forces), but lack the more overarching unity and commitment.

Even from our initial studies, it is clear that both ISIL foreign fighter volunteers and Kurdish frontline fighters exhibit this wider fusion and commitment, whereas the Iraqi and Syrian armies likely do not.

6. Implications for Current Strategy: Cost-imposition upon the enemy likely will not work, and even backfire.

Arguably, the most memorable conclusion in the 9/11 Report was that America suffered such a disastrous attack because of a "failure of imagination" at all key levels of government. Are we suffering from a similar problem today? Not that there is any shortage of speculation about apocalyptic plots. But there may be a real failure to think our way into the heads of the enemy from a psychological and ideological point of view and, also perhaps more importantly, from a practical and tactical vantage. Clearly Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi "imagined" his caliphate and moved to make it real long before most in the West were able to grasp what this entailed. What do we imagine he imagines now in his war with America? ...

If we consider successive iterations of the US Defense Department's Quadrennial Defense Review, the central concept is "strategic planning" focused on seeking what could be termed a "cost-imposing" strategy: lessening costs to our side while making costs unsustainable for adversaries. This, of course, is a throwback to the realpolitik of the 19th and 20th century European nation-state struggles, and up through the US-Soviet Cold War rivalry.

Yet, as Tom Schelling (the Nobel economist) warned in *The Strategy of Conflict* in 1960,[160] this was not even a reliably good national security for nation states: "If we confine study to the theory of strategy, we seriously restrict ourselves by the assumption of rational behavior—not just of intelligent behavior, but of behavior motivated by a conscious calculation of advantages, a calculation that in turn is based on an explicit and internally consistent value system. We thus limit the applicability of any results we reach. If our interest is the study of actual behavior, the results we reach under this constraint may prove to be either a good approximation of reality or a caricature."

The US has certainly tried to formulate an internally consistent value system, namely, a utilitarian "cost-imposition" strategy. The problem is that it is unclear whether that is actually a good approximation for what the US itself is about (although there is a good argument to be made that utilitarian calculations can be of overriding importance in many contexts). More important, however, is that its patently not the same value system, or mix of value systems, that our adversaries think about

[160] Schelling, T (1960) *The strategy of conflict.* (Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge MA).

and act upon. ***Our empirical evidence shows clearly that for value-driven groups, cost imposition strategies are more likely than not to fail, and even backfire.***[161]

Of course, it is necessary to understand the instrumental calculations and requirements of friend and foe alike. ***With regard to ISIL, there seem to be two components to its success: managerial organization and value-driven vision***. On the instrumental-managerial side, a Minerva project led by Princeton's Jake Shapiro has data from US military raids showing that the managerial structure of AQ in Mesopotamia remained fairly intact during the surge in Iraq, despite 60-80 percent loss in operational personnel and despite having 40 to 50 of their high-valued targets hit every month for 15 consecutive months. This structure was able to take root in Syria owing to the tacit alliance that Assad made with ISIL to fight the Free Syrian Army. ISIL was able to establish a territorial base in Syria, which served as a safe haven from actions against them in Iraq, and them to exploit more lucrative sources of revenue. In Syria, oil refineries were not well defended, and Assad even paid off ISIL to kept the oil flowing. ISIL then returned to Iraq along the 1990s oil-for-smuggling routes that had enabled the Baathist regime to remain afloat in the face of international sanctions.

The second, less understood component of ISIL success is its "vision" and, most importantly, the sacred cause of the Caliphate. This is often viewed in Western military, policy, and popular media circles as simply bizarre and opaque to reasoned analysis. Such a view precludes insight into how ISIL organization, tactics, and strategy are tethered to cause of the Caliphate: for example, in appreciating that ISIL's managerial structure is only a tool for securing the Caliphate by establishing a concrete territorial and financial infrastructure. It is precisely the power of messianic values and ideals that enables ISIL to exercise extreme violence, and even suffer it, without remorse or fear and with utter confidence in eventual victory, however improbable. That belief and commitment is likely key to why a hodgepodge of people of mixed nationalities and mostly strangers to one another is able to defeat police and armies with an order of magnitude greater firepower and manpower.

Even more overwhelming firepower may be able to defeat ISIL in the end (as it did the Nazis in WWII), but then an alternative moral vision still will be needed to fill the void lest radical Islam, with its clear conception of moral virtue, arise again as a powerful force.

Democracy has been historically very poor at adjudicating across confessional boundaries, which dominate in Syria and Iraq, and local peoples clearly do not want to see America or any outside power again trying to impose its norms. Neither are appeals to "moderate Islam" likely to work inasmuch as the call to adventure and glory is critical to mobilizing the younger generations to make costly sacrifices for or against ISIL.

The heroes, armies and sacred ideals needed to defeat ISIL, and radical Islam, in general, will very likely have to come from within the Muslim communities threatened by ISIL. Currently, there are many

[161] Dehghani M, Atran S, Iliev R, Sachdeva S, Ginges J, Medin D (2010) Sacred values and conflict over Iran's nuclear program. *Judgment and Decision Making* 5:540-546.

millions of Muslims who vehemently oppose ISIL and the brutal current in Islam that it represents. We might do well to support rather than attempt to direct their autochthonous yearnings and development with arms, information, and ideas and relinquish control to vanquish.

V. Objectives and Scenarios for ISIL (Drs. Ali E. Abbas, Richard S. John, Johannes Siebert, Detlof von Winterfeldt,[162] University of Southern California, Center for Risk and Economic Analysis of Terrorism Events [CREATE], DHS)

Abstract

This study addressed the following three questions:

1. What are the objectives of ISIL?
2. What are the objectives of ISIL's followers?
3. What are the scenarios and associated uncertainties for the success or failure of ISIL?

To address these questions, we analyzed the transcripts of interviews with 59 subject matter experts, and we also conducted an extensive review of Internet and other open sources. The results indicate that ISIL pursues four strategic objectives "*Establish a Caliphate in Iraq and the Levant,*" *"Control and Govern the Caliphate,"* "*Expand Islam and Sharia Law Worldwide,*" and "*Recreate the Power and Glory of (Sunni) Islam.*" The followers' objectives can be partitioned into three strategic objectives: "humanitarian fulfillment," religious fulfillment," and "personal fulfillment." The scenario analysis identified several key events that may lead to the success or failure of ISIL, including the success of the Iraqi government to include Sunnis and the fate of the Assad regime in Syria.

Introduction

Understanding the values of ISIL and its followers is critical to predict their future actions and ISIL's eventual success or failure. We characterize values in terms of strategic and fundamental objectives, and contrast them with means (or tactical, instrumental) objectives. While means may evolve to fit the resources and terrain of the moment, strategic and fundamental objectives are relatively stable and less susceptible to change over time. Such strategic and fundamental objectives provide a lens through which ISIL and ISIL followers evaluate possible outcomes of all actions and future events. In addition to identifying and structuring ISIL objectives, we also identified key uncertainties to represent how the future of ISIL depends on critical future events and the resolution of incomplete knowledge.

Specifically, we addressed the following three questions:

1. What are the objectives of ISIL (i.e., what does ISIL's leaders want to achieve)?
2. What are the objectives of ISIL's followers (i.e., why is ISIL attractive to followers)?
3. What are the scenarios and associated uncertainties for the success or failure of ISIL? (i.e., what are the uncertainties about achievement of their objectives)?

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To address the first two questions, we used a decision analytic methodology for identifying and structuring strategic and fundamental objectives and related them to the means and actions to achieve these objectives. In particular, we conducted two separate efforts, one based on transcripts of interviews with 59 subject matter experts (SMEs) and one based on statements by ISIL leaders published on the Internet and selected open source reviews of ISIL by Western academics and journalists. To address the third question, we reviewed the same SME interview transcripts and used this information to develop an event tree representing possible future scenarios for ISIL. ISIL objectives and scenarios should be useful for developing plans and strategies for countering ISIL's efforts to establish and expand a stronghold in the Middle East.

Methodology

Objectives are usually identified in personal interviews with decision makers and stakeholders (Keeney, 1992; Keeney and Raiffa, 1976; von Winterfeldt and Edwards, 1986). However, direct personal interviews with ISIL leaders and their followers were not available to us. Instead, we used an indirect methodology of reviewing existing source materials, similar to studies that were previously used to identify and structure the objectives of al Qaeda (Keeney and von Winterfeldt, 2010) and Hezbollah (Rosoff and von Winterfeldt, in preparation).

Keeney and von Winterfeldt (2010) state, "*Strategic objectives provide guidance for all decisions. They serve as the mechanism by which leaders can guide decisions made by different individuals and groups within an organization*." In contrast, "*fundamental objectives concern the ends that decision makers value in a specific decision context*" (Keeney 1994). Strategic objectives can be achieved by pursuing fundamental objectives. Means objectives refer to actions that can be pursued to promote fundamental and strategic objectives.

Two independent efforts were conducted to identify and structure objectives. The first effort used only the transcripts of interviews with 59 SMEs, conducted for the overall study described in this white paper. We identified and highlighted every statement of each SME that referred to a value, a goal, a preferred direction, a grievance or a desired end state. We then used standard decision analysis techniques to sort these statements into strategic, fundamental, and means objectives. Finally, we structured an objectives hierarchy, with strategic objectives at the top, fundamental objectives just below them, and means objectives below the fundamental ones. The second effort used the same technique but examined only open source materials of publications or statements by ISIL leaders, ISIL Internet postings, as well as articles by mostly American-based media that were available in the Internet. After completing the two separate efforts, we combined the two objectives hierarchies into a single hierarchy. We highlighted differences between the objectives derived from the two approaches and related them to the five intangible factors of ISIL support assessed throughout this white paper.

To identify and structure uncertainties and events that influence the eventual success of ISIL in achieving its objectives, we reviewed the transcripts of the SME interviews only. In these transcripts, we highlighted any SME statements related to events and uncertainties. We then structured these statements in the form of an influence diagram and an event tree (Clemen and Reilly, 2014).

Results

The raw data of the review of the SME transcripts consists of approximately 270 statements referring to ISIL's and its followers' values, concerns, and objectives. These statements were structured into a hierarchy of strategic, fundamental, and means objectives using standard decision analytic techniques. The open source review resulted in a similar set of statements directly attributable to ISIL and its followers.

Figure 1 shows the combined objectives hierarchy for ISIL. The high level strategic and fundamental objectives (in light blue) reflect the long-term goals of ISIL as stated by the SMEs and by ISIL leaders. Moving from top to bottom, the objectives become more specific. Moving from left to right, we see a changing emphasis from establishing and governing the caliphate (left) to religious objectives (right). Generally, the objectives obtained from the SME interviews were very similar to those obtained from the open sources. Both approaches identified the strategic objective "*Establish Caliphate*." However, the objectives hierarchy derived from open sources emphasizes that ISIL does not only want to "*Establish a Caliphate*" but also want to "*Control and Govern the Islamic State*." Regarding the means objectives, there were quite a few objectives that were identified only in the open source review (shown in Figure 1 by the red border). These included several means objectives related to military strength and to radicalize followers. In contrast, there was only one objective found in the SME interviews, but not in the open sources literature: the objective to "*Provide Military Leadership and Resources*" (shown in Figure 1 with the green border).

We related the objectives in Figure 1 to the five key intangible factors of support for ISIL that provided a framework for the overall study. The question we asked was: Are these objectives consistent with one or more with the five key factors. This is indicated by color-coding the objectives. For example, the green colored objectives are consistent with attempting to obtain Umma support. All objectives could be related to the five factors.

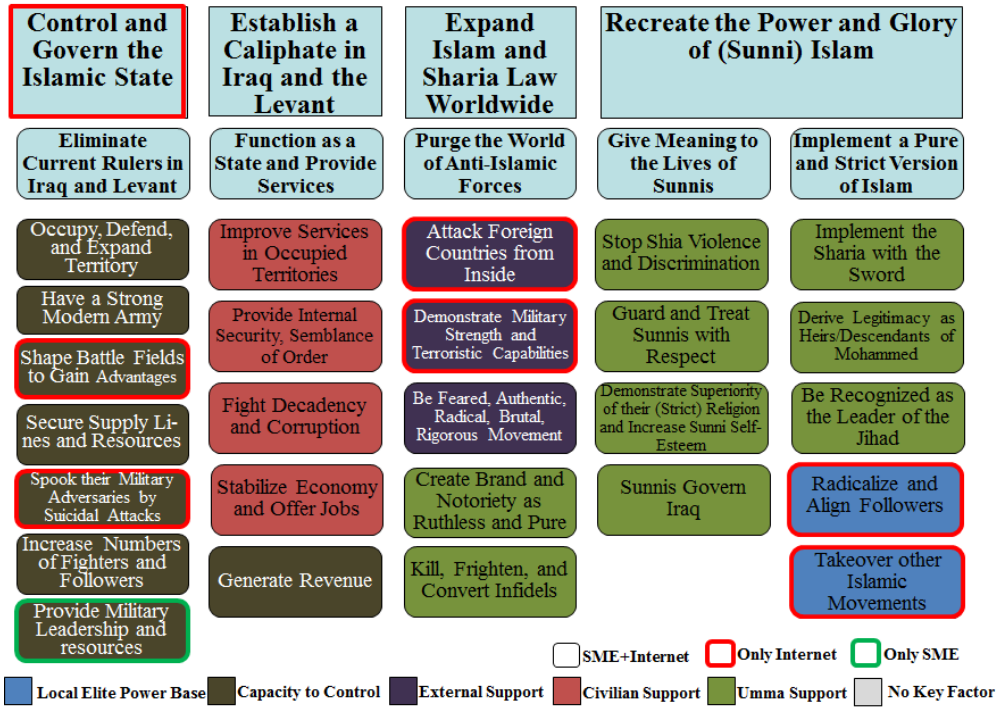

Figure 1: Combined Objectives Hierarchy (from SME Interviews and Open Sources)

We were not able to assess relative importance of the objectives in Figure 1. It is interesting, though, to note that the SMEs did not seem to agree on the importance they thought ISIL attached to some objectives. For example, there is an open question about the relative importance of regional occupation and control (left side of Figure 1) vs. expanding the caliphate and Sharia law worldwide (right side of Figure 1). It is also interesting that neither SMEs nor the open sources provided much support for objectives related to attacking Israel or aiding the Palestinian cause.

Figure 2 shows the combined objectives hierarchy for ISIL followers. The highest-level objectives relate to the fulfillment of an otherwise unfulfilled life. The open source search produced more followers' objectives than the SME search. The SMEs did not make any reference to humanitarian objectives for the followers (left side of Figure 2) and very few SMEs referred to personal objectives (right side of Figure 2). Examples of humanitarian objectives obtained from open sources are: "*End the War in Syria*" and to help "*Alleviate the Humanitarian Crisis in Syria and Iraq*." Examples of personal objectives are to "*Improve Material Situation*" and "*Improve Self-esteem*."

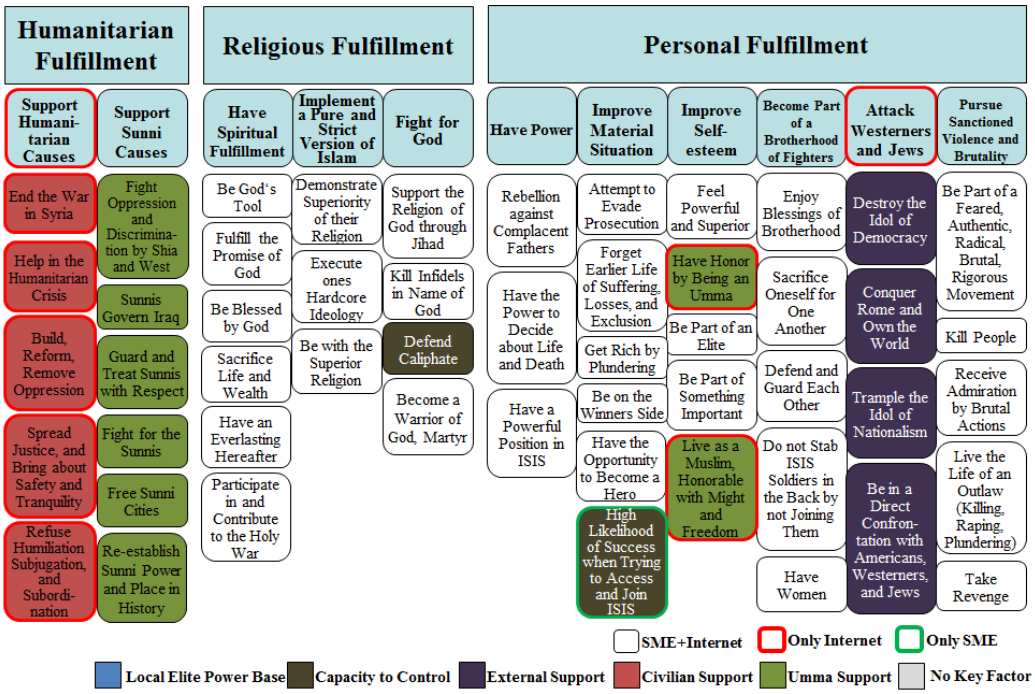

Figure 2: Objectives of ISIL followers

Another important observation is that only a few of the followers' objectives could be related to the five intangible factors of ISIL support used in the overall framework of this White Paper (as indicated by objectives with filled in colors relating them to the five factors). Many other objectives (in white) have no direct relation to the five factors of support.

The results of our third analysis are shown in event tree form in Figure 3. A review of the SME transcripts revealed nearly thirty uncertainties relevant to the future of ISIL and more specifically to the five intangible factors of ISIL support. While many of the uncertainties concern lack of current knowledge (limited intelligence) about ISIL, most involve uncertainty in predicting future actions, events, and outcomes related to ISIL. Seven key uncertainties were identified upon which the future of ISIL is contingent. These uncertainties are represented in an event tree, in which each node represents one of the uncertainties. The tree presented is simplified, in that it does not show all possible combinations as paths through the tree. (Note that for only 3 outcomes for each uncertain event node, there are over 2000 unique paths.) Instead, a schematic version of the event tree is presented, in which only extreme endpoints for each uncertainty are labeled.

One can think of a "worst case" scenario, represented by the lower branches for each node, in which (1) the Iraq central government remains divisive, (2) Northern Iraq Sunni tribes support ISIL, (3) moderate Arab nations remain uninvolved in resisting ISIL, (4) Assad is deposed and ISIL establishes control in Syria, (5) Iran remains uninvolved in resisting ISIL, (6) ISIL funding increases, and (7) ISIL recruitment increases. Conversely, a "best case" scenario would include the upper branches for each node, in which (1) the Iraq central government becomes more inclusive, (2) Northern Iraq Sunni tribes oppose ISIL, (3) moderate Arab nations actively oppose ISIL, (4) Assad remains in power in Syria, (5) Iran actively

opposes ISIL, (6) ISIL funding is disrupted, and (7) ISIL recruitment is severely attenuated. For each unique combination of future event outcomes, a different future scenario for ISIL is realized. The future strength and threat level from ISIL will depend on the unique path through the event tree, defined by the particular combination of events that eventually occurs.

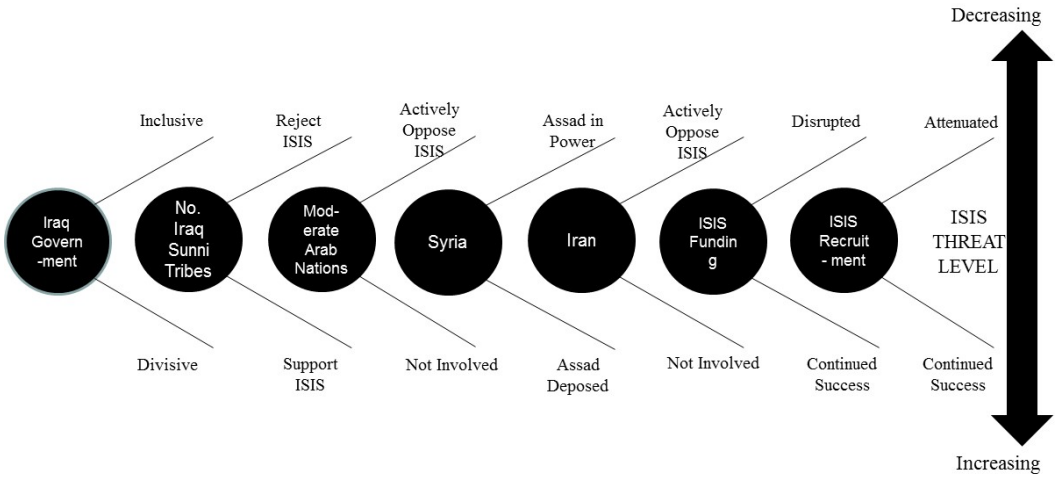

Figure 3: Event tree of possible scenarios for the future of ISIL

Conclusions

ISIL pursues four strategic objectives "*Establish a Caliphate in Iraq and the Levant,*" "*Control and Govern the Caliphate,*" "*Expand Islam and Sharia Law Worldwide,*" and "*Recreate the Power and Glory of (Sunni) Islam.*" Their aspiration for power and control can also be seen in several means objectives. ISIL wants to "*Derive Legitimacy as Heirs/Descendants of Mohammed*" and wants to "*Be Recognized as the Leader of the Jihad.*" Furthermore, they have clear ideas about how they want to achieve their strategic objectives and how an Islamic State should be structured. ISIL wants to "*Implement a Pure and Strict Version of Islam.*" Instead of collaborating with other Islamic groups that are not as radical as ISIL they try to "*Radicalize and Align Followers*" and "*Take over other Islamic Movements.*" ISIL's key means objectives are "*Generate Revenue*" and "*Kill, Frighten, and Convert Infidels.*"

The followers and recruits of ISIL have a complex set of objectives that can be partitioned into three strategic objectives: "*Humanitarian Fulfillment,*" "*Religious Fulfillment,*" and "*Personal Fulfillment*." This is consistent with many observers' opinions that potential followers and recruits are "damaged," "empty," or "unfulfilled" in a very personal way. The humanitarian objectives are often overlooked by observers, who mainly focus on the abnormal and vicious aspects of ISIL. This may be due to a selection bias and the unwillingness to attribute any "good will" to people who are essentially perceived as evil.

The open source search produced a much richer picture of the followers' objectives than the SME search. In particular, the open source search found many personal fulfillment objectives, not explicitly mentioned by the SMEs. Personal fulfillment objectives like "*Have Power,*" "*Improve Self Esteem,*" and "*Become Part of a Brotherhood*" suggest that we are dealing with people who are disenfranchised, feel discriminated against, and are often marginalized in their own environment. The personal objectives

"*Improve Material Situation*" and "*Pursue Sanctioned Violence and* Brutality" suggest that followers are poor and often have criminal backgrounds. The religious and humanitarian fulfillment objectives provide a romantic rationale for these personal objectives.

One specific means objective is "*High Likelihood of Success When Trying to Access and Join ISIL*." It suggests that joining ISIL is more attractive to followers than, say, joining al Qaeda or Hezbollah, because followers have relatively easy access through Turkey and a fairly simple process of gaining access to and being accepted by ISIL.

Possible future steps of this analysis of the objectives of ISIL and its followers are

1. Validation of the objectives by interviewing analysts and ISIL recruits
2. Construction of a utility function for ISIL and its followers, including an assignment of the relative importance they attach to the objectives
3. Use of the objectives and utility function to determine consistency with past ISIL actions and to predict future actions

The SMEs identified a substantial number of variables (both present states and future events) that are potentially critical to the future of ISIL. Furthermore, these experts identified substantial uncertainty related to each identified variable. They were not asked to quantify or otherwise characterize the identified uncertainties, but there is no indication of consensus among the SMEs regarding likely outcomes. It is clear that the seven uncertainties identified map directly to the five intangible factors of this White Paper and that there are complex dependencies among the five uncertainties.

Possible future research on uncertainties and events are:

1. Characterization of dependencies among key uncertainties
2. Estimation of uncertainty, i.e., rank ordering likely outcomes for each node
3. Identification of information sources that could be used to better estimate likelihood of outcomes
4. Determination of the value of information for different characterized by both the cost of information and the diagnosticity of information at each node

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VI. Connecting the Continua: The Dynamics of ISIL Success (Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois,[163] NSI)

A survey of media reports, current research, and indeed this volume, generates a wide range of explanations for ISIL's apparent magnetism and successes. While nearly all acknowledge the multi-factor complexity of the issue, owing to the choice of analytic approach, prior experience or intuition, most of this work focuses on a single or a very few explanatory factors. Having looked in depth at individual explanations of ISIL's appeal and durability along the five continua of the Evolution & Longevity Framework, this paper employs causal loop diagrams[164] to combine these and to provide an easily digestible, multi-factor summary of the diverse efforts described in this volume. In addition, creating loop diagrams forces us to examine the direct and indirect relationships among the factors associated with ISIL successes and, in so doing, uncover both the dynamics that drive continued success and those that encourage failure. A clear grasp of the dynamics of the situation is the key to devising effective countering strategies and operations.

Qualitative Loop Diagrams. Loop diagrams consist of entities, or "nodes" and "edges." In this case, nodes consist of the five continua from the Longevity Framework plus the factors that explain variation in each. Edges are the lines that connect nodes and indicate the relationships between them. As used in this paper, edge lines should be interpreted as representing correlative rather than strictly causal relationships. Unless indicated by a minus sign (-), all edges indicate positive relationships between connected nodes, meaning that as the antecedent or "parent" node increases or decreases, the successor does likewise. Edge lines carrying a negative sign indicate that the antecedent node has a reverse impact on its successor; as it increases or decreases, the successor does the opposite. As a result, feedback loops representing recursive relationships between nodes can take two forms: they can be either negatively or positively "reinforcing" (indicated by an "R" in the diagrams below) where change in one node propagates through a single or series of other nodes that ultimately return to magnify the effect on the initial node or "balancing" (indicated by a "B") in which the impact of change on a node is dampened or its direction changed as it propagates through the system.

Caveats. The loop diagrams presented below are neither predictive nor computational models but graphic depictions of the work produced by the SMA effort. They are concept "maps" intended to illuminate complex relationships among explanatory factors on multiple levels of analysis. The relationships are unweighted, conditional, and there is no precisely delineated scale of time in the models. It is also important for readers to note that for the purpose of presentation, the diagrams discussed below are shown as simplified portions of the larger and more complete system diagram.

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[164] While these types of diagrams are often referred to as "causal loop" diagrams, no presumptions of direct causation are made in these analyses.

The Dynamics of Encouraging Regional States to Oppose ISIL

The loop diagram shown in Figure 1 highlights a few of the more interesting relationships connecting the intangible elements of support or sympathy for ISIL among regional populations and the factors that drive support or opposition from regional states.[165]

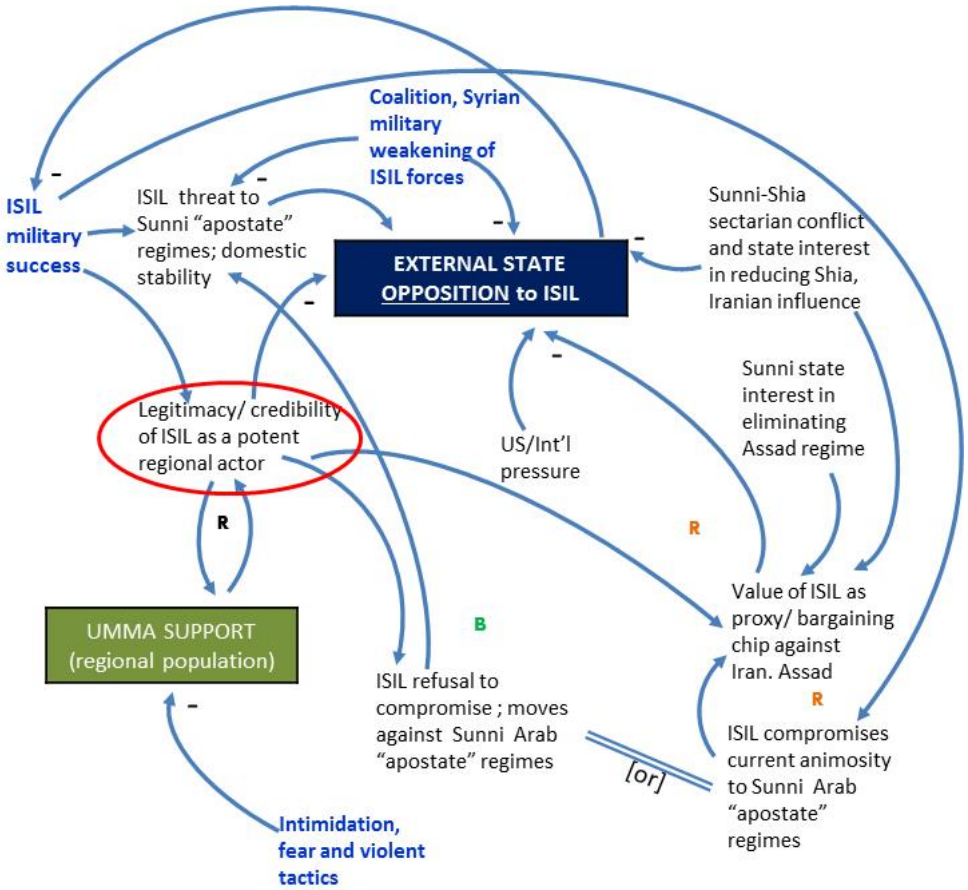

Figure 2. Factors connecting ISIL support among regional populations to willingness of states to oppose

A number of feedback loops demonstrate the dynamics of this system. The first is a reinforcing loop (indicated by a black R) that links ISIL support among regional populations (i.e., those outside Iraq and Syria) with the legitimacy ISIL gains as a potent organization. Akin to a bandwagon effect, popular sympathy or support among the broader Sunni community enhances the general perception of ISIL as a credible force, which in turn generates more support among those populations. (Some of the reasons this occurs are detailed in the discussion surrounding Figure 3 below.) ISIL legitimacy/credibility also is indirectly connected to the unwillingness of some regional Sunni states to oppose ISIL (orange R in Figure 1) via its usefulness to those states as a proxy force against the persistent perceived security threat from Iran or Iranian influence in the region. In fact, ISIL's value as a proxy force acts as a counter weight to US or other international diplomatic pressures to engage in activities to defeat the group. The dearth of forceful opposition from local states makes ISIL success on the ground relatively more likely. Moreover, the more ISIL succeeds militarily, the greater its apparent potency and the greater its value to Sunni states. Because ISIL has value as a proxy in the Sunni battle against Shia/Iranian influence in the region, the vigor (or lack of vigor) with which these states engage in opposition to ISIL is conditioned by the balance between the direct threat to their

[165] Please refer to "Introduction to the Conceptual Organization: Longevity & Evolution Framework" starting on page 15 in this volume for definitions and thorough discussion of the five framework continua: external state support, umma support, capacity to control, civilian support, and elite power base support.

security posed by ISIL and their long-standing regional security interest in curbing Iranian influence and activities.

Coalition, Syrian, or Iranian military gains against ISIL further diminish Sunni state incentives to oppose ISIL. This effect could be magnified if, for example, these gains convinced ISIL leaders to take action to keep local Sunni states out of the fight; namely, moderating their antagonism toward those regimes, thereby reducing the downside and retaining its value to Sunni states' efforts to retain a favorable Sunni balance of power in the region. In other words, coalition actions that weaken ISIL, reduce its ability to directly threaten local Sunni Arab regimes, which removes one of the key reasons these states might oppose ISIL. This is a subtle balance, but one that so far Sunni states seem to believe they can manage.

"Tipping" or obstructing the dynamic that disincentivizes sincere opposition from regional Sunni states requires that these states see ISIL, its program, and ideology as posing a greater threat to their regime security than its value as a tool in regional power struggles. In general, this might occur in two ways: 1) continued growth in ISIL legitimacy and potency fuel its capacity and willingness to engage directly with Sunni regimes, e.g., by deploying fighters beyond Iraq and Syria and by seizing territory or assets; or 2) ISIL's successes arouses sympathy among the segments of their populations at odd with the regimes to the degree that they pose a direct threat to the domestic stability of Sunni states (green B). A key vulnerability for ISIL then rests in the balance involved in maintaining its growth including the support it has gained among important segments of the Sunni populations in states it considers apostate on the one hand and threatening those regimes credibly enough to cause them to seek ISIL's destruction on the other. In terms of readily observable indicators then, this analysis suggests that moderation in ISIL rhetoric condemning the local regimes it currently demonizes may be an indication that ISIL leaders are becoming concerned about the group's durability or longevity.

ISIL's Reputation and Credibility: a Source of Resilience to Military Setbacks

It is not uncommon that the appearance of a revolutionary movement's success itself breeds further support for the cause. As shown in Figure 2, this dynamic appears to be at play with ISIL. One of the key features of the relationship between ISIL appeal to the local elite power base and the intangible sources of its ability to control populations and territory are the number of reinforcing loops (black R's in Figure 2) that flow through ISIL's reputation and credibility as a potent fighting force. A positively reinforcing loop (center bottom R) magnifies the effect of ISIL's credibility as a force has a positive impact on local elite belief that ISIL's presence will endure for some time—one of the key factors encouraging elite support—and, in turn, ISIL's capacity to control the population. This is important for two reasons: 1) a reputation for effective and credible authority allows an organization such as ISIL to maintain control over populations farther afield than its material capacities alone would support, and 2) it allows the organization to begin to institutionalize its control or governance and begin to provide services like education, security, justice, etc., that enhance its capacity to govern without using as much violence and intimidation.

Although there are factors that can diminish the effects of those reinforcing loops (i.e., the degree to which intimidation and violence are used to control populations and the stringency with which its interpretation of Islamic practice is imposed), by this point in its campaign, ISIL leadership has the power to regulate two of the three negatively related factors; it basically controls this dynamic. The implication

is that ISIL has an untapped, intangible source of resilience in this area should its reputation as a potent and inevitably victorious movement begin to wane. Moreover, this portion of the analysis suggests that even if ISIL is weakened militarily, it has other ways of retaining local elite support and its ability to control the populations in its areas that can be enhanced by its own decisions to limit violence and/ or ease up on harsh interpretations of its version of sharia. In addition, and as will be discussed in the subsequent section of this paper (see Figure 3), there is a psychological element tied to Sunni grievance that could actually enhance ISIL legitimacy as it suffers certain types of military losses.

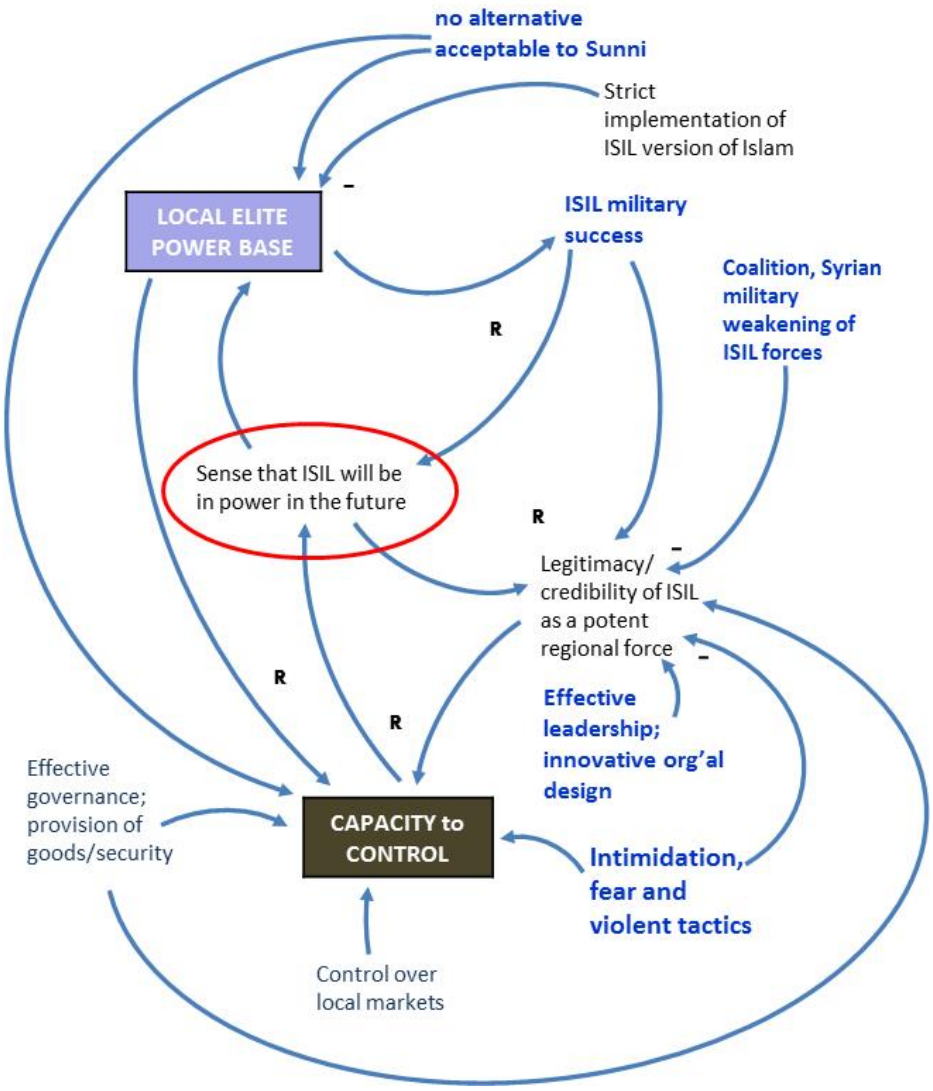

Figure 3. Linking ISIL Capacity to control to support from local leaders

Why is ISIL legitimacy important? The perceived legitimacy of a group's or government's authority—even if it is not popular—is a key factor in its ability to control populations (and institutionalize that control) over the long haul. At present, the intangible feature of ISIL control over populations appears to be centered in intimidation or coercion rather than a popular preference for its leadership (although in areas of Iraq this may be aided by a popular sense that there are no viable Sunni-led alternatives). Control by means of intimidation and fear, however, is a double-edged sword: while it indirectly enhances legitimacy by demonstrating "victory," it directly diminishes governing legitimacy as well. This suggests that unless other control capacities (e.g., patronage to elites, provision of social services, control over markets, etc.) can be expanded, ISIL's basis for governance over a widening area will remain weak. Conversely, one indicator of ISIL's confidence in its legitimacy and ability to control an area is evidence that ISIL is switching from demonstrating its legitimacy as a fighting force or revolutionary movement to growing its governing legitimacy, for

example, by putting increased energy and resources into providing public services and other things that governments do. As these endure and become institutionalized, the legitimacy and, perhaps, staying power of the Caliphate becomes more likely. This is not to say that an ISIL-led caliphate would necessarily look like any government that Western analysts would call "legitimate;" it means that ISIL succeeds in convincing populations not to resist without its suffering the negative consequences of prolonged violence and oppression.

Sympathy and Support for ISIL among the Broader Muslim Community

The diagram shows that sympathy/ support among regional Sunni communities will grow as ISIL military successes can be claimed. Once again, however, military success is not ISIL's only path to gaining this support; as shown in Figure 3, there are intangible factors that drive support for ISIL from the Sunni community both in the region and more broadly that are independent *of its military successes and failures*.

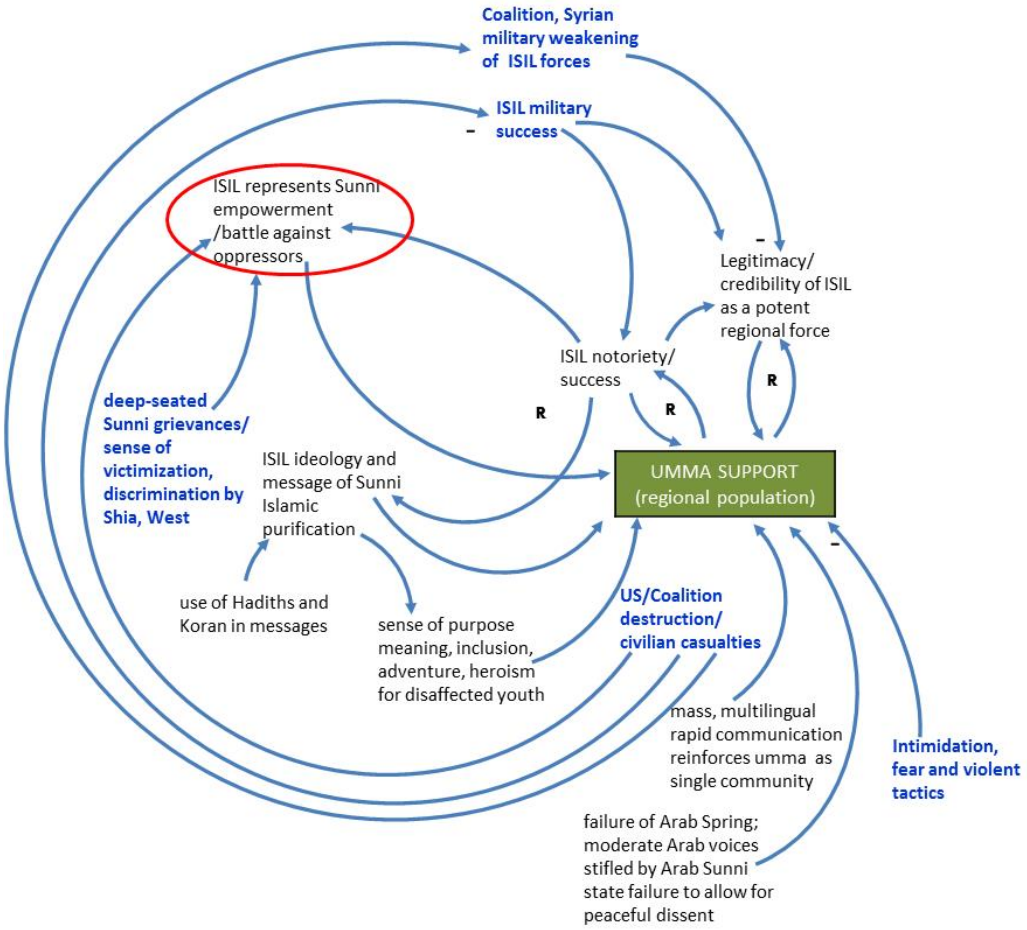

Figure 4. Dynamics of ISIL support from regional Sunni populations

The depth of Sunni grievance and the perception that ISIL represents Sunni empowerment, even if its tactics are not ideal, are very important sources of sympathy and support. Indeed, common themes of Sunni Arab angst or grievance were highlighted in the SME interviews and thematic and social media analyses conducted for this SMA effort. These include a deep-seated sense of Sunni Muslims having been denigrated or oppressed by Shia governments in Iraq, the Assad regime in Syria, and, particularly in Europe and North America, by discrimination based in Western arrogance and presumptions of cultural and social superiority. It is clear to see how these grievances easily could be fueled by certain Western military activities. The implication is that simply

"killing members of ISIL" or even significantly degrading its militarily forces is likely to be sufficient to neutralize the movement; other reasons for support must be addressed as well.

Although not part of a reinforcing loop, news of Sunni casualties either caused by, or attributed to, coalition, Iranian, or Syrian government forces feed the positive loop that magnifies the credibility of ISIL's branding as warriors against Sunni oppressors, which in turn can generate sympathy if not support for ISIL among members of that community. As depicted in Figure 1 above, up to the point that it poses a direct domestic threat, as sympathy for ISIL grows within regional populations, state willingness to engage in direct opposition to ISIL falls. This dynamic also relates increased coalition kinetic activity and "success" with hesitance from Sunni states either to oppose ISIL forcefully or to bar its citizens from supporting the group.

ISIL's Psychological Appeal Allows it to Control the Dynamics of its Success on the Ground—<u>Even While Suffering Military Failure</u>

Figure 4 depicts the intangible factors driving civilian support/ acquiescence to ISIL, elite support, and ISIL's non-material means of controlling populations. As discussed previously, key vulnerabilities in ISIL's bid to establish governance (i.e., a durable caliphate) appear to be tied not so much to what it represents, as to how it implements its program. In other words, while its message has psychologically appealing aspects for a potentially wide audience across the region, its reliance on fear, intimidation, and harsh application of its version of Islamic principles may neutralize its appeal; ISIL's own tactics

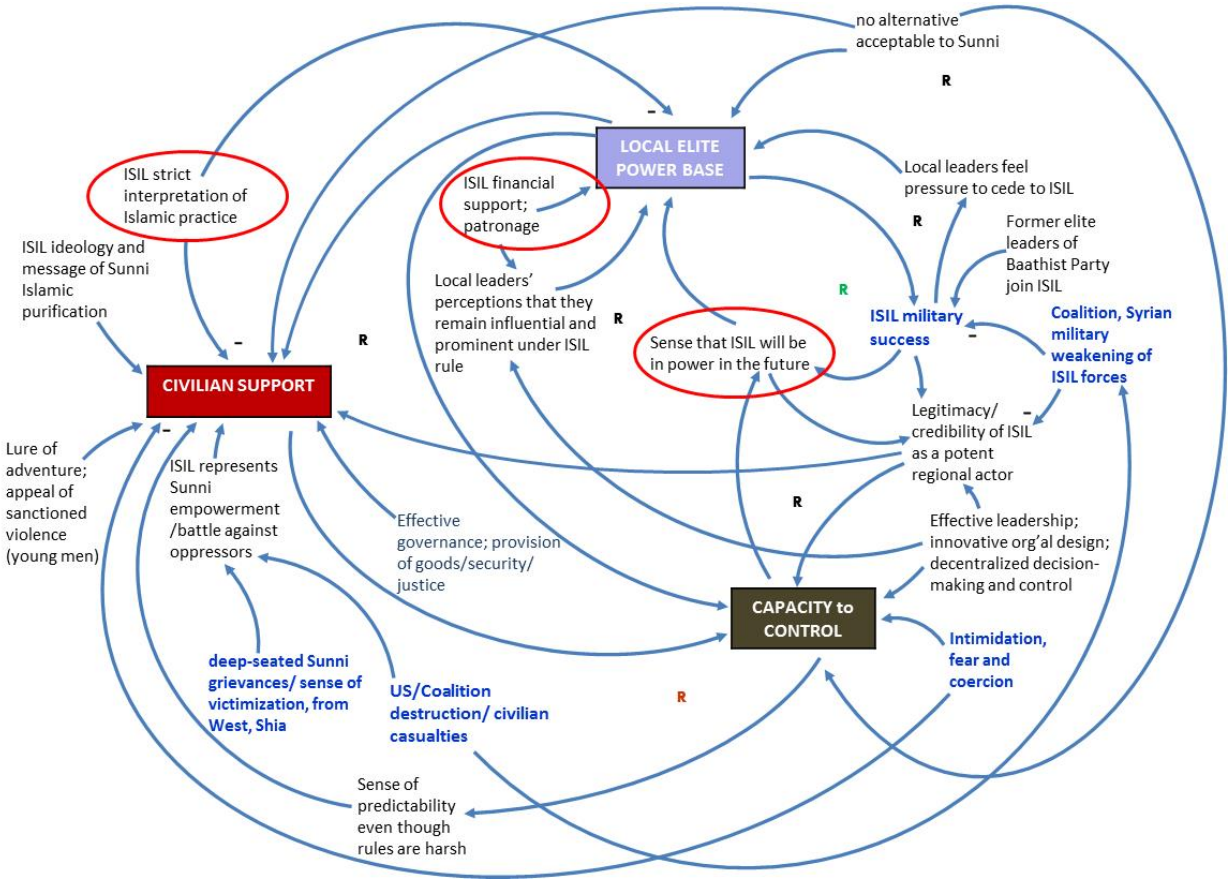

Figure 5. Intangibles linking local elite and civilian support to ISIL capacity to control

represent possible vulnerability in its ability to achieve one of its stated aims: establishment of durable governance.

The perceived lack of a viable, pro-Sunni alternative authority is only one source cited to explain civilian support for or acquiescence to ISIL, especially in Iraq but as ISIL gains against other groups in Syria as well. ISIL messages of Islamic purity and its ability to tap into highly resonant Sunni grievances, plus the perceived inevitability of its victory are additional drivers of ISIL's appeal to civilian populations. Pertaining directly to efforts to arm alternative fighting forces, these intangible sources of local support are ones that newly-strengthened "moderate fighters"—even if militarily successful, may not be able to claim as credibly as ISIL and so would have a difficult time supplanting these aspects of ISIL appeal. Related to this, efforts to encourage young Sunni males to join and remain loyal to the fight against ISIL may be more successful if they offer the same types of psychic benefits to recruits (e.g., a means of acting on long-standing grievance, regaining lost Muslim glory, dignity, respect) without the down sides associated with ISIL.

Regardless of the absolute popularity of its rule, ISIL leaders will need to achieve some degree of civilian support or acquiescence in order to expand over territories beyond its material capacity to occupy. As shown in Figure 4, because local Sunni populations and elites have other reasons to accede to ISIL authority, ISIL leaders could advance local support or acquiescence in the short term by softening its tactics on the ground. Disturbingly, however, the dynamics of the intangibles of the system shown in Figure 4 also suggests that civilian acquiescence also might be achieved over the course of time *without ISIL having changing its tactics*. This is because even when civilian acquiescence or control is based in coercion and violence, it feeds a reinforcing loop where ISIL's demonstration of control reinforces popular belief in its ultimate success, reinforcing and enhancing and ISIL's claims to legitimacy (what one study participant called the "legitimacy of winning"). ISIL legitimacy spurs civilian support both directly and indirectly via local elite leaders. The implication is that the longer ISIL is in control in an area, it should have less need for fear and intimidation tactics in order to maintain control, potentially freeing up fighters to move to new areas.

While there are many positive reinforcing relationships underpinning local support/acquiescence, the analysis suggests two dynamics that might dampen their impact. The first involves the impact of ISIL's strict interpretation of Islamic practice on local elite support. If ISIL's capacity to maintain elite support is diminished, the relative likelihood of ISIL military success wanes and along with it, popular perceptions of the inevitability of ISIL victory (green R) and pressure on local leaders to give in to ISIL control lessens as well. How this would play out, however, is dependent on the dominance of the other factors that promote elite support, namely ISIL capacity to provide a consistent flow of patronage and other material support as well as the availability of acceptable alternatives. Second, weakening ISIL's credibility as self-proclaimed defender of Islamic purity and the Sunni cause can also propagate through the model to reduce the sources of civilian support.

Conclusion

The goal of the broader SMA effort was to investigate, gain knowledge and insights, and engage in a competitive analysis of this incredibly complex social movement. We cannot know if we are succeeding if we do not understand the root causes of conflict and the social dynamics that support and sustain it.

This effort represents one way to push through traditional analyses based on capabilities and motivations to reach into the underlying dynamic emotional, organizational, psychological, and cultural explanations of ISIL's success.

As demonstrated above, constructing loop diagrams is useful for integrating findings to discover unanticipated or non-intuitive interaction effects among the "intangible" drivers of a group's popularity and success. Illuminating these dynamics may help reduce strategic surprise and the likelihood of taking actions that unintentionally strengthen an adversary's hand. Another way these loop diagrams can assist planners and decision makers is to help identify indicators of variation, successes or setbacks. Clearly no single indicator can or should be used to draw conclusions about issues and relationships as complex as those reviewed in this paper. Nevertheless, indicators implied by these analyses would add nuance to the physical measures of coalition "success" versus ISIL that are currently in use. Examples of these types of indicators based on the four loop diagrams discussed in this paper are shown in Table 1 below. Additional measures could be derived from examination of the complete model.

Table 1 Linking indicators to effects

Effect ***(If this is true …***	**Observables/Indicators** ***… we may see this)***
ISIL Leaders Feeling Weakened ISIL leadership feeling weakened; concerned about the durability of the organization; capacity to control local populations	• ISIL leaders moderate antagonism in rhetoric aimed at Sunni Arab states • ISIL military activities avoid attacks on Sunni states • ISIL leadership easing ferocity with which it institutes Islamic law, especially where local power elites (e.g., tribal heads, etc.) are concerned • Relative shift in emphasis on recruiting "fighters in place" or alliance with local groups (who do not require ISIL supplies, logistic support, etc.)
ISIL Leaders Feeling Strengthened ISIL leadership feeling more confident in their ability to control an area/ population	• More resources spent on providing social services than on violence and intimidation measures in areas under ISIL control • Institutionalization of services and governing processes, e.g., courts, schools, even tax collection, currency control • ISIL rhetoric emphasizes the immediate need to overthrow Sunni "apostate" regimes • Deployment of core fighters to new areas inside or outside Syria and Iraq

Appendix A: Summary of Key Findings (Dr. Larry Kuznar, Indiana University–Purdue University, Fort Wayne, NSI; & MAJ Jason Spitaletta, JS/J-7 and JHU/APL[166])

The bulleted list below summarizes findings relevant to the Evolution & Longevity Framework (see Section I) generated to orient all efforts in the SOCCENT ISIL effort. This broad framework represents a top-down approach to synthesizing the various contributions to this effort. The result is a supportable estimate of the current instantiation of ISIL. It is not meant to be predictive as both the organization and the environment in which it operates are dynamic (even volatile), nor is it meant to be comprehensive. In the process of assimilating the information necessary to develop the framework, a number of outstanding issues were identified. A discussion of those issues follows List 2. The author and/or affiliation is offered as a reference for each supporting or disputing piece of evidence so that a reader can trace back the source of the evidence in the document more easily.

Broad Framework Factors Used in SMA SOCCENT Effort: List 1

ISIL **Capacity to Control** is relatively strong and derives from strong organizational skill and fear.

- ISIL controls critical infrastructure and key resources, allowing them to offer services to the local population; ISIL has established an effective and elite leadership team, as well as an advanced organizational structure (Ligon University Of Nebraska, Omaha/START)
- ISIL effectively juxtapose messages of extreme brutality with care and provisioning, and back up at least the brutal message with action, enabling their messaging to effectively control the population (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)
- If ISIL is successful in using oppressive social controls, they can force conformity without acceptance to their group (FBI Radicalization)
- ISIL has acquired strategic evolutionary force in critical areas of security and social control capability (Venturelli American University)

Local Elite Power Base (particularly in Iraq) is driven by elite desire to retain power and ISIL patronage, not by ideology

- Organizational legitimacy ISIL has garnered in the local population, with tribal elder elites, and with the broader Umma indicates that this organization should have the capacity to become a viable caliphate in the geographic regions it now controls (Ligon University Of Nebraska, Omaha/START)
- ISIL messaging appeals to local elites with grievances against Shia and others, and to religiously conservative local elites (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)

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- Based on their beliefs, ISIL has little broad based appeal in Iraq. Their two key Iraqi allies—Sunni Tribalists and Neo Baathists—are allies of convenience against the Government of Iraq (GoI), rather than allies of ideology. (TRADOC ATHENA)

External Support – Sunni Muslims states' main objective is power—not ideology. Support or opposition to ISIL could change rapidly based on new developments (e.g., if a serious Shia threat emerges)

- External support will be limited and not include states (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)
- The reality is that extremists tend to be the most effective in combating the Syrian regime. Hence, extremists are often the recipients of aid, much of which is channeled through the Kuwaiti financial system (JHUAPL Johns Hopkins APL Team)

Civilian Support is driven by coercion and fear, belief that ISIL offers security/ better governance, and lack of viable alternative

- ISIL effectively juxtaposes messages of extreme brutality with care and provisioning, and back up at least the brutal message with action, enabling their messaging to effectively control the population (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)
- ISIL's master narrative includes an alternative to chaos and an alternative to the modern nation-state (JHUAPL Johns Hopkins APL Team)

Ummah Support –Radicalization is a very individualized process; there are many reasons why people sympathize, support, or join ISIL. Moreover there appears to be little popular support in regional social media for ISIL as an organization or for its methods, although there is sympathy for the themes it raises including a strong belief in Western hypocrisy – a key theme in social media around the world.

- The cyber technologies facilitate internal coordination (e.g., command and control) and focuses information flow externally with the broader Umma and potential foreign fighters…"ISIL Sells Success". The broader Umma and international support is currently estimated to be moderate-to-low…; ISIL organization is turning into a social movement, which is highly attractive to the broader Umma and local populations (Ligon University Of Nebraska, Omaha/START)
- There is relatively little popular support (0.005%, of the global Muslim population) but despite the low appeal the support in the form of foreign fighters traveling to the region is military significant (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)
- Baghdadi's charismatic authority provides sufficient credibility to a small yet psychological vulnerable percentage of Sunni males struggling with the crisis of identity versus role confusion (Spitaletta JHUAPL Johns Hopkins APL Team)
- ISIL's hermeneutic methodology exceeds all previously known levels of interpretive power in formulating expressions of doctrinal legitimacy and categorical imperative for commission of individual and mass ritualized murder as an essential tenet of the practice of authentic Islam. (Venturelli American University)

List 2 addresses the three issues implicit in questions posted to the OSD-SMA network by SOCCENT; is ISIL magnetic (and if so, why), how broad is their popular support, and how resilient is ISIL? The list presents brief statements that lend support or dissent to the respective questions along with references to the specific chapters from which the statements were drawn. During the analytic process that produced these lists, areas of convergence were identified; they were that ISIL is indeed magnetic (although the rationale for why that may be the case is as varied as the methods employed), that the proportion of the Umma that supports ISIL is relatively low, but militarily significant, and that ISIL is a resilient organization and not simply a flash in the pan. This convergence is not to suggest unanimity in the opinions or the lack of disputing evidence; however, while there are dissenting opinions and/or research findings those holding them were unable to contribute a paper and, therefore, their positions are not suitably represented. As this project evolves, it is our hope (and intent) to ensure those positions are not only represented but also supported with empirical evidence where possible.

Summary of Findings that Address SOCCENT Questions to OSD-SMA

ISIL is magnetic

- Strategy of promoting itself as a successful organization and with a pure mission leads to a perception of organizational legitimacy, which is particularly magnetic in an environment that is rife with corruption, poor governance, and distrust of existing institutions (Ligon University Of Nebraska, Omaha/START)
- Magnetic, but only to a vanishingly small portion of the umma, but given the size of the umma and other discontented people, their magnetism is adequate to sustain the forces and support they need to achieve their goals to date; uncertain if they can garner enough support to extend their control; Themes that promise excitement, a destined, noble purpose, achievable with violence are attractive to young men cross-culturally, and ISIL messaging emphasizes these themes (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)
- ISIL's rapid success has proven to be a potent attractor (University of Virginia)
- Appeal is a function of its connectivity and brokerage the greater the audacity of ISIL actions, the more appealing players found them (Jensen Marine Corps University, Command and Staff College)
- Target audiences who perceive a consistent message and believe that ISIL has produced substantive proof on these claims may feel inclined to support ISIL and its objectives (Steckman MCIOC)
- Success has created a snowball effect in that many flock to ISIL simply due to its success to date (JHUAPL Johns Hopkins APL Team)
- Glorification of life under sharia and a celebration of the virtues of life within "the caliphate". (Texas A&M)
- ISIL meme builds upon … the narrative that Islamic lands, people and the religion itself is under attack from Western powers and that "defensive jihad" is therefore justified and an obligation of all Muslims (Speckhard Georgetown)

- ISIL present restoration as a solution to all the Muslims' problems, that will unite the ummah and end discrimination based on color and nationality (Arizona State University Corman)
- Much prior research indicates that close camaraderie with a family-like group (band of brothers) … is a key mechanism, providing a sense of invincibility and special destiny to the group and motivating willingness to make costly sacrifices, including fighting and dying (Atran ARTIS)
- The followers and recruits of ISIL have a complex set of objectives that can be partitioned into three strategic objectives: "Humanitarian Fulfillment", "Religious Fulfillment" and "Personal Fulfillment." (CREATE)
- ISIL targets adolescents (identity vs. role confusion) young adults (intimacy vs. isolation) and middle adulthood (generativity vs. stagnation) with the same narrative simultaneously (Spitaletta JHUAPL Johns Hopkins APL Team)
- Disputing evidence: Magnetic, but only to a vanishingly small portion of the umma, but given the size o the umma; uncertain if they can garner enough support to extend their control (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)

Portion of Umma supporting is relatively low, but militarily significant

- The broader Umma and international support is currently estimated to be moderate-to-low; ISIL organization is turning into a social movement, which is highly attractive to the broader Umma (Ligon University Of Nebraska, Omaha/START)
- ISIL has attracted approximately 15000 Foreign Fighters, or a mere .005%, of the global Muslim population, so they are magnetic only to a minute fraction of their target population. (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)
- Even if the group only appealed to 1% of the Umma for passive support, the message and corresponding appeal factor were high (Jensen Marine Corps University, Command and Staff College)
- Thus only about 15 percent of US Muslims have a favorable opinion of ISIL, whereas 73 percent have an unfavorable opinion (Bryn Mawr)
- Support for ISIL in the region was limited, yet support for Western intervention and policies was also limited (Texas A&M)
- Western volunteers for ISIL are mostly self-seeking young adults in transitional stages in their lives – immigrants, students, between jobs or girl friends, having left their native homes and looking for new families of friends and fellow travelers. For the most part they have no traditional religious education and are "born again" into a radical religious vocation through the appeal of militant jihad (Atran ARTEMIS)
- Many observers' opinions suggest potential followers and recruits are "damaged", "empty", or "unfulfilled" in a very personal way (CREATE)
- ISIL seems to lack sufficient support in the ummah to build long-term political sustainability. There is no substantive agreement as to what a "caliphate" is and how it would work, both within the larger Arabic Twittersphere, and even among ISIL users (Texas A&M)

ISIL Resiliency

- Support for
    - ISIL should have the capacity to become a viable caliphate in the geographic regions it now controls (Ligon University Of Nebraska, Omaha/START)
    - ISIL resilient in near term (years) due to effective use of brutality, demonstrated success, ability to attract, and then indoctrinate, followers, exploit historic grievances, and craft a Salafist message that touches deep themes in Sunni Islam (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)
    - The result is increasing consistency and coherence in the network of organizational relationships (UVA)
    - The networks being formed among these fighters now likely will be decisive for future terrorist attacks against Western countries, given that the networks formed during the 1980s jihad in Afghanistan were vital for the attacks committed against the West in the early to mid-2000s (Atran ARTIS)
    - ISIL is a durable movement in the geographic region it currently holds because of its rare, unique, and inimitable resources and capabilities; in an environment that is rife with corruption, poor governance, and distrust of existing institutions (Ligon University Of Nebraska, Omaha/START)
    - First, ISIL is a symptom of a larger disease: the dissolution of modern forms of governance in the Middle East in the wake of the Arab Spring and Syrian Civil War and regional sectarian competition (Jensen Marine Corps University, Command and Staff College)
    - ISIL has gained evolutionary network capabilities to reconstruct and transform the tangible and intangible ecosystem of conflict in the Middle East (Venturelli American University)
    - ISIL has evolved powerful resilient traits from a wide range of innovations whose combined effects are not additive but instead enhanced through nonlinear interactions, thereby resulting in robustness in systems growth, and fluidity of responsive and anticipatory mechanisms; ISIL's leaders and its membership demonstrate a cogent recognition that stasis presents a greater existential threat than any powerful military assault… it must maintain a specific bandwidth of operational tempo to generate the force and energy that allows extensions in functional capabilities… (Venturelli American University)
- Argument against
    - One of ISIL's greatest strengths is also one of its vulnerabilities since it has developed a systems bias for those precise resilient traits that are uniquely resistant to stasis (Venturelli American University)

Finally, List 3 summarizes findings relevant to key issues that emerged in the working group's discussions concerning ISIL. In fusing findings from an interdisciplinary multi-method research effort, it is important to not only identify what the research reveals but also what remains unknown as well as what was not (but should be) asked. As identified earlier, it is OSD-SMA's intent to keep the network that contributed to this effort intact and engaged with this topic to the greatest degree possible. As the effort evolves, we

intend to address the below issues that arose during the various workshops. These questions, which remain largely unanswered, could be considered both recommendations for future research by the OSD-SMA network and/or priority intelligence requirements for SOCCENT.

Summary List of Emerging Issues & Key Issues Raised During SOCCENT ISIL Workshops

ISIL is strictly an organization only vs. a broader movement.

- Disputing evidence
  - ISIL should have the capacity to become a viable caliphate in the geographic regions it now controls (Ligon University Of Nebraska, Omaha / START)
  - ISIL rhetoric speaks to a broader movement to establish a Caliphate and regain lost Sunni glory (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)
  - Globally, it has effectively tapped into the deep well on the Sunni 'Umma (Jensen Marine Corps University, Command and Staff College)
  - Dabiq placed more emphasis on the nation-brand identity, the sociocultural aspects of Iraq and Syria (Steckman MCIOC)
  - Based on these observations and analysis, the study predicts that while ISIL itself may eventually be destroyed, the idea of ISIL as a carrier of the moral imperative will remain alive in the Muslim collective conscience and thus inspire even more radical Koranic or doctrinal hermeneutics and ideological innovation to move manpower, resources and inspire jihadist operations. (Venturelli American University)

ISIL Income is adequate to sustain their polity

- ISIL controls critical infrastructure and key resources, which allow them to offer services to the local population; ISIL has established an effective and elite leadership team, as well as an advanced organizational structure (Ligon University Of Nebraska, Omaha/START)
- Even if ISIL income is limited, if local populations cannot organize, ISIL can rule through brutality; consider 1990s Taliban, current Somalia, Anbar under AQI and Zarqawi (Kuznar opinion)

ISIL message is based on timeless themes that appeal cross-culturally to young males (hypothesis A)

- ISIL's strategy of promoting itself as a successful organization and with a pure mission (ideological superiority) leads to a perception of organizational legitimacy (Ligon University Of Nebraska, Omaha/START)
- ISIL messaging emphasizes themes that promise excitement, a destined, noble purpose, achievable with violence are attractive to young men cross-culturally (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)
- The greater the audacity of ISIL actions, the more appealing players found them. There was something to spectacle (Jensen Marine Corps University, Command and Staff College)
- Women celebrated the ability to live in purity, and sympathizers celebrated ISIL brutality and conquest in the present and future (Texas A&M)

- The followers and recruits of ISIL have a complex set of objectives that can be partitioned into three strategic objectives: "Humanitarian Fulfillment", "Religious Fulfillment" and "Personal Fulfillment." ISIL's key means objectives are "Generate Revenue" and "Kill, Frighten, and Convert Infidels (CREATE)

ISIL message is primarily a religious one (hypothesis B)

- Support for
    - People with only a superficial understanding of Salafism can easily be attracted by more timeless themes; ISIL then, however, is in a position to indoctrinate; they attempt "moral outbidding" by taking a more extreme, higher moral road in their rhetoric (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)
    - Globally, ISIL has effectively tapped into the deep well on the Sunni 'Umma (Jensen Marine Corps University, Command and Staff College)
    - ISIL's rhetoric shows that it is shaping its identity and crafting a new narrative based on this pre-modern history and its own interpretation of Islam (Steckman MCIOC)
    - The ISIL meme builds on already existing and accepted Islamic dogma that most Muslims treasure (Speckhard Georgetown)
- Evidence against
    - By targeting the fundamental ontological and epistemological layers of being, belief, identity, community, order, collective will, and doctrinal reasoning on validity, authority and legitimacy, ISIL has gained what no other jihadist organization, including Al Qaeda, has yet been able to achieve in categories of network-formation, high-quality human capital and skills, tactical victories, and the production of new forms of order and strategic realignments (Venturelli American University)

Is the religious message actually understood and internalized by recruits? If not, why do they join?

- People with only a superficial understanding of Salafism can easily be attracted by more timeless themes; ISIL then, however, is in a position to indoctrinate (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)
- ISIL has successfully married Arab Sunni [trans]-nationalism to militant Islamism while also retaining, on the surface at least, a wide international, inter-ethnic Sunni appeal (Jensen Marine Corps University, Command and Staff College)
- ISIL's master narrative. These include victimization, the plight of Iraqi Sunnis, the Sunni-Shia divide (and broader regional proxy war), an alternative to chaos and an alternative to the modern nation-state (JHUAPL Johns Hopkins APL Team)
- Muslims are far more contagious than non-Muslims to the ISIL meme, as they are taught from a young age to feel a responsibility for their "fictive kin" –The meme can also infect any lost person who is experiencing a cognitive opening to new ideas, (i.e. experiencing a trauma, looking for a purpose or seeking religious conversion to Islam (Speckhard Georgetown)

- In the end the foreign fighters who come mainly for adventure with their friends, whether to save Syria or secure the Caliphate, as well as local fighters who join for material advantage or to assuage hate, have radicalized together in combat into a formidable fighting force (Atran ARTIS)
- ISIL's hermeneutic methodology exceeds all previously known levels of interpretive power in formulating expressions of doctrinal legitimacy and categorical imperative for commission of individual and mass ritualized murder as an essential tenet of the practice of authentic Islam (Venturelli American University)

Are hypotheses A and B mutually exclusive?

- No (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)
- No (Jensen Marine Corps University, Command and Staff College)
- No (Texas A&M)
- No (Atran ARTIS)

People will exist in a minimally functioning, impoverished state w/o rising against their oppressive state

- If local populations cannot organize, ISIL can rule through brutality; consider 1990s Taliban, current Somalia, Anbar under AQI and Zarqawi (Kuznar opinion)

Worldviews can be changed through communication and counter-messaging

- Support for
    - This is a brittle ideological system that can be pressured by deconstructing the imagined community, challenging strategic ambiguity, and de-romanticizing the history of the Caliphate (Arizona State University Corman)
    - Having the message come from the Arab world with Arab voices as messengers is equally necessary (FBI Radicalization)
    - ISIL's appeal and influence with potential foreign fighters and female supporters can be countered by police and the military through coordinated development and exchange of information (FBI Policing)
- Argument against
    - Worldviews are extremely difficult to change. ISIL and other extremist groups are able to "change" worldviews in those who are vulnerable; this tends to include those who are disassociated from their own society or those who already have embraced violent Salafism (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)
    - "The Coalition's message will always sound lame and like an anti-drug ad." Another player observed that "the Coalition cannot counter deep-seated alienation and frustration in target global Muslim youth population in the short-term (1-3 year horizon); it is just too deep-seated." (Jensen Marine Corps University, Command and Staff College)

- Neither are appeals to “moderate Islam” likely to work inasmuch as the call to adventure and glory is critical to mobilizing the younger generations to make costly sacrifices for or against ISIL (Atran ARTIS)
- This “Criminally Active” group represents approximately 10% of the 3000-person sample [of Jihadist supporters]. This group included foreign fighters who are actively fighting with either ISIS or JN, individuals who are actively supporting the group (fundraising, propaganda, recruitment), or those espousing specific threats towards western countries (Weyers & Cole London University) ISIL is a product of its environment; difficult to replicate this organization.

ISIL is a product of its environment; difficult to replicate this organization

- Support for
  - ISIL is a durable movement in the geographic region it currently holds because of its rare, unique, and inimitable resources and capabilities; in an environment that is rife with corruption, poor governance, and distrust of existing institutions (Ligon University Of Nebraska, Omaha/START)
  - First, ISIL is a symptom of a larger disease: the dissolution of modern forms of governance in the Middle East in the wake of the Arab Spring and Syrian Civil War and regional sectarian competition (Jensen Marine Corps University, Command and Staff College)
  - This study concluded that ISIL's ascent was the result of a confluence of favorable conditions – a perfect storm (JHUAPL Johns Hopkins APL Team)
- Argument against
  - ISIL has created momentum through a ‘moral imperative’ in the region and beyond, forging, perhaps for the first time, a collective consciousness within the Islamic public sphere, which itself comprises a powerful dimension of the Global Information Commons. This will strengthen its legitimacy, recruitment of high-quality human capital, and a growing support base in Muslim communities. Other networks have been far less proficient in creating ‘moral-exegesis’ on the playing field of the Islamic public sphere (Venturelli American University)

Appendix B: Authors & Subject Matter Experts

Major General Michael K. Nagata

Major General Michael K. Nagata serves as Commander, Special Operations Command Central; a sub-unified command of CENTCOM. He and his wife Barbara have five children.

Commissioned as an Infantry Officer in 1982, he served with the 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry in South Korea until 1983. In 1984, he joined Army Special Forces, and served in 2nd Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) until 1987.

After attending the Infantry Officers Advance Course, he again served with the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) in Okinawa, Japan. In 1990, he joined a Special Mission Unit where he served as a Troop Commander until 1994.

After attending the U.S. Marine Corps Command and General Staff College, he returned to the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) in Ft. Lewis where he served as the 3rd Battalion Executive Officer and the Group Operations Officer until 1997.

He then served in a Special Mission Unit as an Operations Officer until assuming command of 1st Battalion, 1st Special Warfare Training Group at Ft. Bragg in 1999, where he was responsible for the Special Forces Qualification Course. From 2000 to 2002, he served as a Squadron Commander in a Special Mission Unit.

After graduating from the National War College, he served in the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence until 2005. He then assumed command of a Special Mission Unit, and served there until 2008.

He then served within the Intelligence Community as a Deputy Director for Counter Terrorism until 2009. From 2009 to 2011, he deployed to Islamabad, Pakistan where he served as the Deputy Chief, Office of the Defense Representative to Pakistan (ODRP).

From 2011 to the summer of 2013, he served as the Deputy Director for Special Operations and Counter Terrorism (J-37) of the Joint Staff.

Major General Nagata has deployed extensively throughout his career, participating in contingency and combat operations in such varied locales as Somalia, the Balkans, Iraq and elsewhere.

Ali Abbas

Dr. Ali Abbas is the director of the University of Southern California's National Center for Risk and Economic Analysis of Terrorism Events (CREATE), the nation's first US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Research Center of Excellence. A leading authority in the field of decision and risk analysis, he received his M.S. in electrical engineering; M.S. in engineering economic systems & operations research; PhD in management science and engineering, and PhD minor in electrical engineering all from the school of engineering at Stanford University. His research interests include all aspects of decision making

under uncertainty (broadly defined), information theory, signal processing, artificial intelligence, and bioinformatics.

Dr. Abbas is widely published in books, journals and conference publications. He has also shared his expertise through television appearances and numerous invited TEDx and conference talks, as well as invitations to the British House of Commons last fall where he spoke on "Decision Making for Financial Governance and Social Innovation."

He is a recipient of multiple research awards from the National Science Foundation including the National Science Foundation CAREER Award, and the inaugural class of the National Science Foundation I-Corps award. He is also recipient of numerous publication awards in decision analysis. Dr. Abbas has organized numerous workshops including the decision analysis tracks of INFORMS 2007, 2008, the Bayesian inference and Maximum Entropy conference in 2005, and numerous workshops with NASA and other individual organizations.

Dr. Abbas also has extensive industry experience with Schlumberger Oilfield Services, where he held several international positions in Wireline logging, operations management, and international training. He also has extensive consulting experience and has taught executive education courses at a variety of institutions such as Stanford University.

Allison Astorino-Courtois

Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois is Executive Vice President at NSI, Inc. She is also co-chair of a National Academy of Science's study on Strategic Deterrence Military Capabilities in the 21st Century. Over the past five years Dr. Astorin0-Courtois has served as technical lead on a variety of rapid turn-around, Joint Staff-directed Strategic Multi-layer Assessment projects in support of US forces and Combatant Commands. These include assessments of key drivers of political, economic and social instability and areas of resilience in South Asia for USCENTCOM, USPACOM and the intelligence community; development of a methodology for conducting provincial assessments for the ISAF Joint Command; production of a "rich contextual understanding" (RCU) to supplement intelligence reporting for the ISAF J2 and Commander; and two projects for USSTRATCOM on deterrence assessment methods.

Previously, Dr. Astorino-Courtois was a Senior Analyst at SAIC (2004-2007) where she served as a STRATCOM liaison to US and international academic and business communities and reviewed documents and analyses related to the Deterrence Operations Joint Operations Concept (DO-JOC). Prior to SAIC, Dr. Astorino-Courtois was a tenured Associate Professor of International Relations at Texas A&M University in College Station, TX (1994-2003) where her research focused on the cognitive aspects of foreign policy decision-making. She has received a number of academic grants and awards and has published articles in multiple peer-reviewed journals. Dr. Astorino-Courtois also has the distinction of having been awarded both a US Navy Meritorious Service Award and a US Army Commander's Award.

She has also taught at Creighton University and as a visiting instructor at the US Military Academy at West Point. Dr. Astorino-Courtois earned her Ph.D. in International Relations and MA in and Research Methods from New York University. Her BA is in political science from Boston College.

Scott Atran

Scott Atran, PhD, received his B.A. and Ph.D. in anthropology from Columbia University. He is co-founder and Director of Research at ARTIS Research and ARTIS International, and Senior Fellow and co-founder of the Centre for the Resolution of Intractable Conflict at Harris Manchester College and the School of Social Anthropology, University of Oxford. Currently, he is also Research Professor and Presidential Scholar, Center on Terrorism, John Jay College of Criminal Justice and Research Professor a the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, University of Michigan.

Scott is tenured as Research Director in Anthropology at France's National Center for Scientific Research in Paris. Previously, he was assistant to Dr. Margaret Mead at the American Museum of Natural History and Coordinator of the "Animal and Human Communication Program," Royaumont Center for a Science of Man, Paris (Jacques Monod, Dir.) He has held prior positions at at Cambridge University, The Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, Ecole Polytechnique and Ecole de Philosophie in Paris.

Bill Braniff

Bill Braniff the Executive Director of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). He previously served as the Director of Practitioner Education and an Instructor at West Point's Combating Terrorism Center (CTC). There he led the practitioner education program, the nation's largest provider of counterterrorism education to federal, state and local governmental audiences.

Braniff is a graduate of the United States Military Academy where he received his bachelor's degree. Following his Company Command as an Armor Officer in the US Army, Braniff attended the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) where he received a master's degree in international relations. Upon graduation, Bill worked in the nuclear counterterrorism field at the Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration, and as a research associate with the CTC Harmony Project at West Point.

Braniff lectures frequently for counterterrorism audiences including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Joint Special Operations University, National Defense University, the United States Attorneys' Office and Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Braniff has also taken a keen interest in the field of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE). He has consulted with the Department of Justice, the FBI and the National Security Staff, playing a key role in an interagency working group dedicated to the topic. In June of 2013, Bill testified before Congress regarding American attitudes towards terrorism and counterterrorism, and in February of 2014 he testified before the House Armed Services Committee on the state of al-Qaida and its associated movement.

Andrew Bringuel II

Supervisory Special Agent (SSA) Andrew Bringuel, II, an Agent Supervisor Instructor at the FBI Academy, has over 24 years law enforcement, professional and academic experience, ranging from investigating public corruption, organized crime, the murder of a federal judge and an abortion clinic bombing to teaching new FBI Agents, new FBI Intelligence Analysts, and National Academy students. SSA Bringuel is

frequently asked to speak at conferences both domestically and internationally as a subject matter expert on intelligence processes, criminal enterprises, and government police response. SSA Bringuel was a certified undercover Agent as well as a negotiator working for over 9 years in the field before being promoted to FBI Headquarters as a supervisor in the Counterterrorism Division. After two years at the National Domestic Preparedness Office (NDPO), SSA Bringuel transferred to the FBI Academy in May 2001 and taught in the Investigative Computer Training Unit until May 2005 when he transferred to the Behavioral Science Unit (BSU) now known as the Behavioral Research and Instruction Unit (BRIU).

As a field Agent, SSA Bringuel has received several awards for his investigative work including an Attorney General's Citation for an investigation involving a landfill that was associated with organized crime. SSA Bringuel was a first responder to the Eric Robert Rudolph abortion clinic bombing, a negotiator during the Montana Freemen barricade, and a first responder to the Pentagon bombing on 09/11/2001.

SSA Bringuel has been in FBI management since 1999 and was the Acting Unit Chief of the Behavioral Science Unit in 2008. Currently SSA Bringuel teaches as an Adjunct Instructor for the University of Virginia, through the FBI's National Academy program. He teaches courses on terrorism, policing in diverse populations, intelligence analysis, conflict and crisis management, and understanding criminal enterprises. SSA Bringuel is the program manager for the Behavioral Informatics and Technology Studies (BITS) program which usurped the Terrorism Research and Analysis Project (TRAP) into research program that studies emerging technologies, criminal enterprises and the government's response.

SSA Bringuel has a Bachelor's degree in Criminology from St. Leo University, and a Master's degree in Adult Education from the University of Virginia.

Sarah Canna

Ms. Sarah A. Canna is NSI Principal Analyst. In this capacity, Ms. Canna applies her open source analysis skills to regions of vital concern to US Combatant Commands, particularly Afghanistan and Pakistan. She has years of experience preparing open source intelligence on political stability in Latin America for SOUTHCOM and researching emergent zoonotic illnesses in Latin America for the USDA. Ms. Canna is a lead editor and integrator of white papers, reports, and proceedings focused on Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs), Homeland Security, Adversarial Intent, and Nuclear Deterrence. Additionally, Ms. Canna created a core technology assessment architecture to support several socio-cultural assessment programs with the DoD including Human Terrain Mapping and the Human Social Culture Behavior (HSCB) Modeling Program. Prior to joining NSI, she was an associate within the Social Science Program at Strategic Analysis, Inc. (SA), where she supported multidisciplinary projects ranging from developing and assessing computational social science models, evaluating state instability forecast models, and developing cultural aptitude taxonomies. Additionally, Ms. Canna provided analytic support to the Defense Science Board (DSB) 2008 task force on Understanding Adversaries, the 2007 DSB summer study on Challenges to Military Operations in Support of US Interests, and the 2006 DSB summer study on 21st Century Strategic Technology Vectors. Prior to joining SA, she was a research associate at Intellibridge Corporation in Washington, D.C. where she provided daily open source analysis to the Commander, US Southern Command and the Commandant, US Coast Guard. She also managed a

network of 200-plus subject matter experts, upon whose knowledge Intellibridge analysts relied. Ms. Canna has a MA degree from Georgetown University in Technology and Security Studies. Ms. Canna holds a translation certificate in Spanish from American University.

Jocelyne Cesari

Jocelyne Cesari is a senior fellow at Georgetown University's Berkley Center where she directs the Islam in World Politics Program. She teaches on contemporary Islam at the Harvard Divinity School and directs the Harvard interfaculty program "Islam in the West".

Her research focuses on religion and international politics, Islam and globalization, Islam and secularism, immigration, and religious pluralism. Her new book, *The Islamic Awakening: Religion, Democracy and Modernity* (2014, Cambridge University Press), is based on three years research on state-Islam relations in Egypt, Turkey, Iraq, Pakistan and Tunisia, conducted when she was the Minerva Chair at the National War College (2011-2012). Her book, *When Islam and Democracy Meet: Muslims in Europe and in the United States* (2006) is a reference in the study of European Islam and integration of Muslim minorities in secular democracies.

Her most recent books include: *Why the West Fears Islam: An Exploration of Islam in Western Liberal Democracies* (2013).

She coordinates two major web resources on Islam and politics: Islamopedia Online and Euro-Islam.info.

Jacquelyn Chinn

Jacquelyn Chinn is a Fourth Year Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Communication at Texas A&M University. She works as a Research Assistant for the MMS/CAMMI Project, a real time international broadcast transcription and translation system with web and social media capabilities. She has produced a number of white papers and reports for the Strategic Multilayer Assessment group in the Joint Staff conducting media analysis for key geopolitical issues.

More broadly, her research examines how governmental and civil sector organizations interact with their publics and each other, primarily through new media platforms. Specifically, she investigates state production of media narratives for international audiences, and how they move and are shared on new media platforms. She focuses on regions such as Israel and other nations in the Levant and Persian Gulf, using media, organizational, and international relations theory to examine the geopolitical impact of new media.

Jon Cole

Jon Cole, Ph.D. is Professor of Tactical Decision Making at the University of Liverpool in the Institute of Psychology, Health and Society. He is a recognized expert in prevention science and has worked in preventing violent extremism since 2007. He has a background in public health and the application of prevention interventions at different levels in the community around reducing problematic behavior in 'at risk' youth. He also works on both police and terrorist decision making. He was co-author of Martyrdom: Radicalisation and terrorist violence among British Muslims.

Jon was the principal investigator on the project that developed the IVP guidance for the UK Office for Security and Counter Terrorism. The IVP guidance has gone through years of practitioner and community engagement activities that have refined its utility for preventing violent extremism. This has led to a unique insight into the complexities of creating and using such screening tools in the community. The IVP guidance is currently the only publically available screening tool for preventing violent extremism that is in use in multiple countries around the world.

Steven R. Corman

Steven R. Corman is a Professor in the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication and Director of the Center for Strategic Communication at Arizona State University. Since 2001 he has served as an invited participant on numerous national and international workshops and symposia on counterterrorism, strategic communication and public diplomacy. In 2011 he was a Distinguished Visiting Fellow at the Centre of Excellence for National Security, Nanyang Technological University (Singapore) and Senior Consortium Research Fellow at the Army Research Institute. In 2003-2005 he was a member of the Scientist Panel for the Strategic Operations Working Group at US Special Operations Command. He has given invited presentations and briefings for, US MISOC, NATO SACEUR, the NATO 2012 Strategic Communication Conference, the NATO Center of Excellence for Defense Against Terrorism, USJFCOM/USSOCOM, Asia Pacific Program for Senior National Security Officers, Marshall Center for European Security Studies, Army War College, and the US State Department, among others. Corman is author, editor and/or co-editor of the books *Narrating the Exit from Afghanistan* (Spring, 2013, CSC) and *Master Narratives of Islamic Extremism* (Spring 2011, Palgrave), *Weapons of Mass Persuasion: Strategic Communication to Combat Violent Extremism* (2008, Peter Lang). Since its establishment in 2011, the Center for Strategic Communication (http://csc.asu.edu) has received more than $10 million from the Department of Defense for research on extremist strategic communication, and won an award for exceptional scientific achievements from the DoD Human Social Culture Behavior modeling program.

John Crowe

John Crowe is completing his second year as a doctoral student in Industrial and Organizational Psychology at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. After serving in the military, he graduated cum laude from Creighton University with a major in Psychology and a minor in Sociology. During his tenure at UNO, John has worked with area high-reliability organizations such as local fire departments and the military. His main areas of interest are violent extremist groups, deterrence, after-action reviews, leadership development, and radicalism. Contact information: johncrowe@unomaha.edu

Craig Giorgis

Maj Craig Giorgis is an artillery officer. He has served with the 1st, 2nd, and 4th Marine Divisions and deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. He is a graduate of the Virginia Military Institute and Boston University.

Mackenzie Harms

Mackenzie Harms is completing her fourth year as a doctoral student in Industrial and Organizational Psychology at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. She holds a bachelor's degree in English Literature

and Psychology, with a minor in Mathematics. In her time at UNO, Mackenzie has worked with Dr. Gina Ligon and Dr. Pete Simi on several projects applying principles of organizational science, collaboration, and leadership to the study of ideological and other non-conventional organizations. Harms has assisted on the L.E.A.D.I.R. project funded through START (Study for Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism), in which she helped Dr. Ligon develop a historiometric content coding scheme to analyze the leadership of violent extremist organizations, including facets of performance not previously looked at, such as brand image, malevolent innovation, and organizational sustainability. She has presented this research at several national and international conferences, including the International Studies Association, the American Psychological Association, the Academy of Management, and the Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychology. Harms has also worked on projects co-funded by the United States Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) and the National Strategic Research Institute (NSRI) applying leadership, organizational, and innovation frameworks to both state and non-state actors. Upon completion of her PhD, she plans to pursue a career in the intelligence and national security community. Contact Information: mharms@unomaha.edu

Ben Jensen

Dr. Benjamin Jensen is an Assistant Professor of International Relations at the Marine Corps University, Command and Staff College. He runs the Advanced Studies Program for the US Marine Corps, selecting top field grade officers to study future war for a network of defense agencies including the Commandant of the Marine Corps Strategic Initiative Group, Marine Corps Combat Development Command and Office of Net Assessment. Dr. Jensen holds a dual appointment as a Scholar-in-Residence at American University, School of International Service where he coordinates the undergraduate program in Peace, Global Security, and Conflict Resolution. He has published multiple opinion editorials and journal articles on the changing character of war. His book, *Forging the Sword: Doctrinal Innovation in the US Army*, will be published by Stanford University Press in 2015.

Richard John

Richard John is associate professor of psychology and risk perception co-theme leader at the Center for Risk and Economic Analysis of Terrorism Events (CREATE) at the University of Southern California. His research focuses on normative and descriptive models of human judgment and decision making and methodological issues in the application of decision analysis and probabilistic risk analysis (PRA). Richard has consulted on a number of large projects involving expert elicitation, including analysis of nuclear power plant risks (NUREG 1150) and analysis of cost and schedule risk for tritium supply alternatives. Richard has over 60 refereed publications, including top journals published by The Institute for Operations Research and Management Science (*INFORMS),* The Society for Risk Analysis (*SRA)* and the American Psychological Association (*APA*). Richard received his PhD. in quantitative psychology from the University of Southern California in 1984, M.S. in applied mathematics from the University of Southern California in 1983, and B.S. in applied mathematics (summa cum laude) from the Georgia Institute of Technology in 1976.

Randy Kluver

Randy Kluver is Executive Director of Global Partnerships for Texas A&M University, and Associate Professor of Communication. He is co-PI of the MMS Project, a real time international broadcast

transcription and translation system, and is actively engaged with university faculty to develop research protocols and research studies using this pioneering technology, especially through the Global Networked Media Archive, an initiative to create online, searchable databases of online media. Dr. Kluver's current research interests include digital and cultural diplomacy, the role of the Internet in Asian societies, Asian political communication, globalization, and the political and social impact of information technologies.

Lawrence Kuznar

Lawrence A. Kuznar (Professor of Anthropology, Indiana University-Purdue University-Fort Wayne ,NSI, Inc.) Dr. Kuznar's experience spans database and ontology development for social science data to agent-based modeling of conflict in different cultural contexts to studies of political discourse. His modeling research includes simulating the environmental basis for genocide in Darfur and the development of tribal factions in New Guinea, and his database development research involves integration of socio-cultural databases for predicting illicit nuclear trade and bioterrorism. He has conducted Discourse analysis to understand subtleties in the expression of conflict and enmity in Arabic, Farsi and Pashto, and Natural Language Processing studies of relief organization efforts in humanitarian aid and disaster relief. Dr. Kuznar's recent research has been funded by academic sources, the Office of the Secretary of Defense Strategic Multilayer Analysis, Air Force Research Lab (AFRL), the Human Social Cultural Behavior (HSCB) modeling program of the Department of Defense, and by the US Army Corps of Engineers. He has also served on the HSCB Technical Progress Evaluation panel, and currently serves on a panel for the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC).

Gina Ligon

Gina Ligon joined University of Nebraska at Omaha in 2012 to lead research and development for the Center for Collaboration Science, an interdisciplinary academic center devoted to examining complex issues of collaboration. Prior to joining UNO, she worked as an assistant professor at Villanova University and as a management consultant at Psychological Associates, where she partnered with public, private, and not-for-profit organizations in the pharmaceutical, retail, medical, and energy industries. She applies this experience in leadership development to examine leaders of both conventional and unconventional groups, with a particular focus on requirements to lead innovative organizations. She joined the START (Studies of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism) National Consortium in 2010 and has developed the LEADIR (Leadership of the Extreme and Dangerous for Innovative Results) study to examine the interplay of leadership and organizational structure in violent groups. She has published over 40 peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters on the issues of violent organizations, leadership, and innovation. She recently won Best Paper at the International Conference on Consumer Brand Relationships for her work on Violent Ideological Branding. She is the Principal Investigator on grants and contracts from USSTRATCOM, DHS, and IBM Business and Government. Contact Information: gligon@unomaha.edu

Leif Lundmark

Leif Lundmark joined the College of Business Administration as an Assistant Professor in Fall 2014. Leif holds a Ph.D. from the David Eccles School of Business, University of Utah. Dr. Lundmark's areas of expertise include strategic management and entrepreneurship with a specific focus on the cognitive and

behavioral foundations of strategic problem formulation and decision-making. Dr. Lundmark's research explores: cognitive biases in the IPO process, how problem formulation impacts the development of solutions to complex and ill-defined problems, and the role of affect in altering knowledge search and recombination. Dr. Lundmark's research has also examined macro-level phenomena including the determinants of formal and informal entrepreneurship as well as the influence of social media on organizational legitimacy and IPO performance. His research has been presented in numerous academic conferences and has been published in the Journal of Management. Contact info.: llundmark@unomaha.edu

Clark McCauley

Clark McCauley is Professor of Psychology and co-director of the Solomon Asch Center for Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict at Bryn Mawr College. His research interests include stereotypes, group dynamics, intergroup conflict, and the psychological foundations of genocide and terrorism. He is a consultant and reviewer for the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation for research on dominance, aggression and violence, and a principal investigator of the National Consortium for Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (NC-START). With Dan Chirot he is author of "Why not kill them all? The logic of mass political murder and finding ways of avoiding it" (Princeton University Press, 2006). With Sophia Moskalenko he is author of "Friction: How radicalization happens to them and us" (Oxford University Press, 2011). He is founding editor of the journal, Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict.

Dan Meyers

Maj Dan Myers received his commission from the United States Naval Academy and reported to the Basic School in Quantico, Virginia in 2002. Upon completing The Basic School, he was assigned the military occupational specialty of Ground Intelligence Officer. After completing Infantry Officer Course and Ground Intelligence Officers' Course, he was assigned to 1st Marine Division in August of 2003 where he served as an Analysis Officer in the G-2. In November 2003, he was re-assigned to 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment and served as the Reconnaissance and Surveillance Officer as part of the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit. In 2005, he was given orders to 1st Reconnaissance Battalion and served as the Assistant Operations Officer and as a Platoon Commander in Company C. His next assignment came in 2008, where he served as an Inspecting Officer and Operations Officer for Region 5, Marine Corps Embassy Security Group located in Frankfurt, Germany. In 2009, he took over as Executive Officer and served in that capacity until receiving orders to the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit in the spring of 2011. He served as the Assistant Intelligence Officer until August of 2013 when he was promoted to his current rank and took over the billet of the Intelligence Officer. In July of 2014, he reported to Marine Corps University where he is currently a student in the Command and Staff College.

Sophia Moskalenko

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

Dr. Moskalenko received her Ph.D. in Social and Clinical Psychology from the University of Pennsylvania in 2004. Her research focuses on psychology of radicalization and activism, inter-group conflict, and self-

sacrifice. In collaboration with Clark McCauley she has authored *Friction, How radicalization changes them and us*, as well as a number of research articles on political radicalization and terrorism.

Ryan Pereira

Ryan Pereira is an Advanced Researcher at the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). There he is a member of the Advanced Research section. He focuses on the Iraqi insurgency, the Syrian civil war, takfiri jihadist groups, and the "global jihad" movement.

Pereira is a graduate of the University of Florida, majoring in Political Science and Arabic language. He is currently a first-semester Masters Student at Georgetown's School of Foreign Service in the Security Studies Program. He is majoring in terrorism, sub-state violence, and the Arabic language.

Pereira's recent research interests have included the Islamic State, military-political developments in Syria and Iraq, counterterrorism and counterinsurgency, and different Western European states' approaches to Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and preventing the departure and/or return of Western foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq. Pereira has previously worked for ARTIS Research and Risk Management and the Brookings Mountain West Institute.

Phillip Potter

Philip Potter is an Assistant Professor of Politics at the University of Virginia specializing in foreign policy and international relations. His published work has appeared in International Organization, Journal of Politics, International Studies Quarterly, and the Journal of Conflict Resolution. His book War and Democratic Constraint (coauthored with Matthew Baum), will be published by Princeton University Press in Spring 2015. He has been a fellow at Harvard University and the University of Pennsylvania and holds degrees from UCLA and McGill University.

Johannes Siebert

Johannes Siebert is a post-doctoral scholar at the University of Bayreuth, Bayreuth, Germany. He holds a Diploma in Business Administration focusing on Banking and Services. His dissertation on multiattributie value theory was acknowledged as one of the three best dissertations of the University of Bayreuth in 2009. He is secretary of the Section on Multicriteria Decision Making (INFORMS) and Member of the Executive Committee of the International Society on MCDM. His main research interests are generating of objectives and alternatives by individuals as well as companies, identifying and structuring of objectives, and conceptualizing and validating a scale to measure proactive decision-making. He also works as a business consultant, for example, he identified and structured the strategic objectives for a large European energy provider, he identified the fundamental objectives of a large US government agency to allocate funds for maintenance fair and transparent and he created a balanced scorecard for a regional newspaper by applying value-focused thinking. For the latter, he was acknowledged as finalist in the practice award of the Decision Analysis Society (INFORMS) because of the high degree on innovativeness of the applied procedure. Furthermore, he served in important conferences in the field in local and program committees and in the Board of Directors of the University of Bayreuth representing PhD-students and post docs. Johannes Siebert has visited several European and American Universities respectively research centers for invited talks and research

Pete Simi

Pete Simi joined the University of Nebraska at Omaha in 2003 after completing a PhD in sociology with an emphasis in social psychology, social movements, and violence. He is primarily interested in how the development of self-concept shapes the nature and prevalence of violent behavior and, in turn, how self-concepts change over time. His research has been funded by the National Science Foundation, National Institute of Justice, Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security, and Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation. As part of his project with the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), Pete is studying recruitment and radicalization among US far right terrorists. For the past 17 years he has conducted extensive fieldwork with far right extremists across the United States and is currently expanding this work to include indepth life history interviews with former left-wing and jihadi extremists. A second edition of his award-winning co-authored book *American Swastika: Inside the White Power Movement's Hidden Spaces of Hate* is forthcoming in 2015. Prior to academia, he spent ten years working in the mental health profession where among other things he helped conduct risk assessments related to violent and other anti-social behavior. Contact info: psimi@unomaha.edu

Anne Speckhard

Anne Speckhard, Ph.D. is Adjunct Associate Professor of Psychiatry and of Security Studies at Georgetown University in the School of Medicine and in School of Foreign Service. She is author of Talking to Terrorists and coauthor of Undercover Jihadi. She interviewed over four hundred terrorists, their family members and supporters in various parts of the world including Gaza, the West Bank, Chechnya, Iraq, Jordan and many countries in Europe. She also was responsible in 2006-2007 for designing the psychological and Islamic challenge aspects of the Detainee Rehabilitation Program in Iraq to be applied to twenty thousand detainees and eight hundred juveniles.

Jason Spitaletta

Jason Spitaletta is a Major in the US Marine Corps Reserve currently assigned to the Joint Staff J7 Deputy Director for Joint and Coalition Warfighting. In civilian life, he is a researcher at The Johns Hopkins University-Applied Physics Laboratory. He holds a bachelors' degree in biochemistry from Franklin & Marshall College, masters degrees in human factors from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and applied experimental psychology from Catholic University, where he is currently a doctoral candidate. He also holds a graduate certificate from Stanford University's Summer Institute for Political Psychology.

Laura Steckman

Laura Steckman holds a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She has provided foreign language online media analysis, socio-cultural analysis, and social science research and support to Information Operations (IO) at the DoD's command and service component levels. She is a fellow with the University for Wisconsin-Madison and currently works for Whitney, Bradley and Brown as the Command Social Scientist at the Marine Corps Information Operations Center (MCIOC).

TRADOC/G2 OEL

The core mission of the TRADOC G-2 Operational Environment (OE) Lab (OEL) is capability and prototype development of OE related models, simulations, and simulators within the Constructive and Gaming environments across all Army M&S domains, assistance to Virtual and Live domains as needed; support to Army and Joint exercises, experiments, and directed studies as part of the larger Army and Joint M&S enterprise; collection, validation, and transformation of Human, Social, Cultural, and Behavior (HSCB) data as well as Political, Military, Economic, Social, Infrastructure, Information, Physical Environment, and Time (PMESII-PT) data to develop models and databases; and verifies, validates, and accredits OE-related behaviors and functionality across all domains within Army M&S.

Shalini Venturelli

Shalini Venturelli is Associate Professor of International Communication and International Relations, in the School of International Service, American University, Washington, DC. She conducts comparative international sociocultural field research and complex qualitative analysis on the information and communication environment of international conflict, culture and international security, strategic communication, sociocultural drivers of conflict, cultural studies analysis of global social media networks, identity narratives, ideology-formation, information-related strategies of extremist groups, and critical underlying intangible factors in promoting governance, security and stabilization. Professor Venturelli's research projects investigate the sociocultural and information drivers of conflict environments in the Middle East, Southwest Asia, Eastern Europe, and the Asia-Pacific region. Her work is based on first-hand field investigation and observation using in-depth interviews, participant observation, and narrative identity-formation among key populations, near-peer states, insurgent networks, and civilian and military organizations within conflict regions. Prof. Venturelli recently returned from a year of field research in Afghanistan, where she investigated the sociocultural evolution of insurgent networks, the cultural production of civilian sanctuary for jihadists, the complex information environment of the conflict across multiple communication platforms, forms of cooperation, contestation and communication among local national leaders in civilian and security organizations, the challenges of strengthening governance and security, and prospects for stabilization. Drawing from these extensive and long-term field investigations efforts, and to better inform policy and research, she is currently developing a deeper analysis of information-related sociocultural lessons for current and future conflicts and strategic threats, particularly in terms of sociocultural and communications innovations for asymmetric, intangible advantage in threat environments. For her front-line research efforts in support of US & NATO forces on the ground in Afghanistan with field investigation and analysis of the information environment and sociocultural drivers of conflict, Prof. Venturelli was awarded the US Army Commander's Medal for Civilian Service, and the Secretary of Defense Medal for the Global War on Terrorism. Prof. Venturelli also conducts comparative field research and directs the Global Public Media Research Project studies on the role of new digital media technologies and social media in sociopolitical transformations in different world regions, and the Global Knowledge Society Project that focuses on the role of global innovation, communication and knowledge systems in shaping asymmetric advantage in geopolitics and strategic relations. She is the author of many publications on the sociocultural dimensions of information networks, the global communication and knowledge revolution, and culture and international relations. Professor Venturelli received a Ph.D.

from the University of Colorado at Boulder in International Communication & International Relations, an M.A. from the University of Chicago in Interdisciplinary Social Science, and a B.S. from Illinois State University in Economics.

Jeff Weyers

Jeff Weyers is a 15 year police veteran and Ph.D. candidate in the Tactical Decision Making Unit at the University of Liverpool, in the United Kingdom. He is also a consultant with iBRABO, a private intelligence firm focusing on terrorist social media and threat evaluation. He has taught terrorism studies at the Wilfrid Laurier University in Canada.

Jeff received his Counter-Terrorism Trainer designation in 2008 with the Bureau of Justice Assistance in the United States. Jeff is a recognized expert in the areas of Preventing Violent Extremism and the use of Social Media by Terrorist Groups and has presented internationally on both subjects. He is currently a writer for the Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium (TRAC). Through his use of the IVP guidance tool Jeff has identified several hundred at risk individuals which are the subject of his current research.

Jeff holds a Post-Graduate Certificate in Intelligence and Security Studies from the University of Ottawa, a Diploma in Law and Security Administration from Conestoga College, a Diploma in Basic Constable Training from the Ontario Police College, a B.A. in Psychology and Biology from Wilfrid Laurier University and finally a M.Sc. in Investigative Psychology from the University of Liverpool. Jeff has trained throughout North America in the areas of Criminal Profiling, Drug Enforcement, Forensic Interviewing, Major Crime Investigation Techniques and Counter-Terrorism Training.

Detlof von Winterfeldt

Detlof von Winterfeldt is a Professor of Industrial and Systems Engineering and a Professor of Public Policy and Management at the University of Southern California. From 2009 to 2011 he was on leave of absence from USC as Director of the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) in Vienna, Austria. Concurrently with his term at IIASA, he was a Centennial Professor of Operational Research at the London School of Economics and Political Science. In 2003 he co-founded the National Center for Risk and Economic Analysis of Terrorism Events (CREATE), the first university-based center of excellence funded by the US Department of Homeland Security, serving as CREATE's director until 2008. For the past forty years, he has been active in teaching, research, management, and consulting. He has taught courses in statistics, decision analysis, risk analysis, systems analysis, research design, and behavioral decision research. His research interests are in the foundation and practice of decision and risk analysis as applied to the areas of technology development, environmental risks, natural hazards and terrorism. He is the co-author of two books, two edited volumes, and author or co-author of over 120 journal articles and book chapters on these topics. As a consultant he has applied decision and risk analysis to many management problems of government and private industry. He has served on numerous committees and panels of the US National Academies and the US National Science Foundation, including an appointment to the National Academies' Board on Mathematical Sciences and their Applications. He is an elected Fellow of the Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences (INFORMS) and of the Society for Risk Analysis. In 2000 he received the Ramsey Medal for distinguished contributions to decision analysis from the Decision Analysis Society of INFORMS. In 2009

he received the Gold Medal from the International Society for Multicriteria Decision Making for advancing the field. In 2012 he received the distinguished achievement award of the Society for Risk Analysis.

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