Passive Support for the Islamic State in the Middle East and North Africa: Evidence from a Survey Experiment

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- Why do some people living in Arab countries sympathize with terrorist organizations like the Islamic State?

Existing Theories

- Why do people sympathize with armed insurgencies like the Islamic State?
    1. Material benefits (Flanigan 2006; Davis and Cragin 2009; Berman and Laitin 2008)
        - Provision of goods or services to local population
        - Ex: Hamas, Hezbollah, Tamil Tigers
    2. Emotional benefits (Wood 2003)
        - Insurgents in El Salvador receive outlet to assert agency and moral outrage
    3. Converging interests (Byman et al. 2001; Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Shain and Sherman 1998)
        - Ex: Diaspora community or refugee community offers support for insurgency group
    4. Ideological alignment (Davis et al. 2012; Gates and Podder 2015)
        - Support from abroad is linked with issue congruence

General Hypotheses

1. In the name of the faith (Bloom 2005; Lewis 1990)
   - Radicalized individuals are motivated by messages inherent to their religion (A. Moghaddam 2003; Paz 1998)
   - *H1: Individuals who believe that insurgent or terrorist groups are acting in accordance with or in defense of their faith are more likely to hold positive views about these groups.*
2. Fighting for perceived or actual grievances (F. Moghaddam 2005; Tessler and Robbins 2007)
   - Lack of political or economic opportunities leads to support for extremist groups (Pape 2010; Saleh 2004; Ginges and Merari 2003)
   - *H2: Individuals who perceive that insurgent or terrorist groups are acting in defense of their own identity or objectives are more likely to hold positive views about those groups.*

Specific Hypotheses

1. Alternative to the existing secular state system (Price et al. 2014; Zelin 2015)
   - *H1a: Individuals who perceive that the Islamic State is acting in defense of Islam against secular forces are more likely to hold a positive view about this group.*
2. Defender of the region against the West (Ingram 2015)
   - *H2a: Individuals who perceive that the Islamic State is acting in defense of the Muslim world against Western forces are more likely to hold a positive view of the group.*
3. Defender of Sunnis (Ingram 2015)
   - *H3: Individuals who perceive that the Islamic State is acting in defense of Sunnis against Shias are more likely to hold a positive view of the group.*

Experimental Frames in Arab Barometer 4th Wave

1. Clean control (no text added).
2. As you may know, Daesh has emerged as a potent force in the region and the world. In 2014 it declared a caliphate based in Raqqa, Syria. Daesh's goal is to extend the caliphate across the Muslim world and it has killed many Muslims and non-Muslims in pursuit of this aim.
3. Text 2 + Another of Daesh's stated objectives is to limit Shia influence across the Muslim world as well as opposing Iranian-led Shia forces in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and elsewhere.
4. Text 2 + Another of Daesh's stated objectives is to defend Islam from attacks by secular leaders and other elites whose goal is to limit the role of Islam in government and public life.
5. Text 2 + Another of Daesh's stated objectives is to counter intervention in the region by the U.S. and other Western powers who have engaged in military attacks against it.

Dependent Variables

1. To what extent do you believe Daesh's tactics are compatible with the teachings of Islam? (Certainly represents true Islam, represents true Islam, does not represent true Islam, certainly does not represent true Islam)

2. To what degree to you agree with the goals of Daesh? (I agree to a large extent, I somewhat agree, I somewhat disagree, I disagree to a large extent)

3. To what extent do you support Daesh's use of violence? (I support it to a large extent, I somewhat support it, I somewhat do not support it, I do not support it to a large extent)

Dependent Variables by Country

Table 1: Views of the Islamic State

% who have favorable responses or respond DK/Ref by country

DV	Jordan	Morocco	Tunisia	Palestine	Algeria	Pooled
Compatible w/ Islam	2.4	5.1	9.2	11.6	13.0	**7.8**
Support Goals	1.5	2.9	3.4	7.9	8.5	**4.6**
Support Tactics	1.5	1.5	2.8	7.3	7.7	**4.0**

Support for IS's Goals

Table 2: Tests of Significance for Support for IS's Goals

Country	Text	Sect	Rel.	West
Treatments vs. Clean Control				
Algeria			****-**	
Jordan		***+**		
Morocco				
Palestine				
Tunisia	***-**			
Pooled	***-**		***-**	

Support for IS's Tactics

Table 3: Tests of Significance for Support for IS's Tactics

Treatments vs. Clean Control

Country	Text	Sect	Rel.	West
Algeria				**-**
Jordan				
Morocco	**+	*+	*+	
Palestine	**-		**-	
Tunisia				
Pooled			**-	**-

Support for IS's Goals

Table 4: Tests of Significance on Support for IS's Goals by Religiosity
Reads Quran Daily (left) vs. Doesn't Read Quran Daily (right)

Country	Text	Sect	Rel.	West	Text	Sect	Rel.	West
Algeria							**-**	*-
Jordan	*+	*+						
Morocco								
Palestine						**-**		
Tunisia	*-							
Pooled					**-**		**-**	**-**

Support for IS's Tactics

Table 5: Tests of Significance on Support for IS's Tactics by Religiosity
Reads Quran Daily (left) vs. Doesn't Read Quran Daily (right)

Country	Text	Sect	Rel.	West	Text	Sect	Rel.	West
Algeria								**_
Jordan	**+	**+					*_	
Morocco					**+	*+		
Palestine					**_		***_	**_
Tunisia								
Pooled					*_	*_	***_	***_

Framing Effect on Uneducated Young Men

Table 6: Pooled Effect of Frames on Key Demographic

Treatments vs. Clean Control

Variable	Text	Sect	Rel.	West
Compatible w/ Islam				
Support Goals		***₋	***₋	**₋
Support Tactics		**₋	**₋	*₋

Tentative Findings and Future Analysis

1. By multiple measures, support for the Islamic State is low

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2. Experiment reveals that there are significant effects of the different frames
   - Mention of violent actions often yields lower levels of support for IS
   - Religious frame most consistently leads to lower sympathy for IS than others
   - Western frame yields lower support for IS's goals and tactics among less religious and 'key' demograhpic
   - Sectarian frame yields lower support for goals and tactics among 'key' demographic

Tentative Findings and Future Analysis

1. By multiple measures, support for the Islamic State is low
2. Experiment reveals that there are significant effects of the different frames
3. Effects have greater impact among certain demographics than the entire population
   - Those who exhibit lower levels of religious practice are more likely to be influenced by framing experiment
   - Those in the 'key' demographic are likely to be influenced

Tentative Findings and Future Analysis

1. By multiple measures, support for the Islamic State is low
2. Experiment reveals that there are significant effects of the different frames
3. Effects have greater impact among certain demographics than the entire population
4. Direction of change is opposite of what is predicted in the literature
   - Including 'unpopular' AND 'popular' information about IS consistently yields less sympathy than 'unpopular' information alone