Cultural Drivers of Radicalization

Jordan/5.1 Country Report

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Glasgow Caledonian University

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List of Abbreviations

AQAP: Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
IS: Islamic State
ISIL: Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant
ISIS: Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISN: Islamic State News
ISR: Islamic State Report
JAF: Jordanian Armed Forces
RJAF: The Royal Jordanian Air Force
PSD: The Public Security Department

About the Project

D.Rad is a comparative study of radicalization and polarization in Europe and beyond. It aims to identify the actors, networks, and wider social contexts driving radicalization, particularly among young people in urban and peri-urban areas. D.Rad conceptualizes this through the I-GAP spectrum (injustice-grievance-alienation-polarization) with the goal of moving towards measurable evaluations of de-radicalization programmes. Our intention is to identify the building blocks of radicalization, which include a sense of being victimized; a sense of being thwarted or lacking agency in established legal and political structures; and coming under the influence of "us vs them" identity formulations.

D.Rad benefits from an exceptional breadth of backgrounds. The project spans national contexts including the UK, France, Italy, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Finland, Slovenia, Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo, Israel, Iraq, Jordan, Turkey, Georgia, Austria, and several minority nationalisms. It bridges academic disciplines ranging from political science and cultural studies to social psychology and artificial intelligence. Dissemination methods include D.Rad labs, D.Rad hubs, policy papers, academic workshops, visual outputs, and digital galleries. As such, D.Rad establishes a rigorous foundation to test practical interventions geared to prevention, inclusion, and de-radicalization.

With the possibility of capturing the trajectories of seventeen nations and several minority nations, the project will provide a unique evidence base for the comparative analysis of law and policy as nation-states adapt to new security challenges. The process of mapping these varieties and their link to national contexts will be crucial in uncovering strengths and weaknesses in existing interventions. Furthermore, D.Rad accounts for the problem that processes of radicalization often occur in circumstances that escape the control and scrutiny of traditional national frameworks of justice. The participation of AI professionals in modelling, analyzing, and devising solutions to online radicalization will be central to the project's aims.

Executive Summary/Abstract

This report aims at detecting and analysing the cultural drivers of radicalization in Jordan as being mainstreamed through media objects (digital platforms and social media). We take ISIS as our case study for two main reasons. First, ISIS has become a new phenomenon in the world of terrorist propaganda and media production. Second, it is responsible for triggering potential radicalized behaviors among Jordanians, who experience injustice, grievance, alienation, and polarization. Despite its military capabilities and control, ISIS heavily depends on using the media to project its self-image, promote its cause and agenda, and recruit youth from all over the globe. The report exposes the impact of the religious and political discourse spread by ISIS on the Jordanian receiving audience. We analyze two YouTube videos that act as cultural drivers of radicalization and extremism in Jordan. The first and more extreme video is the execution video that features the immolation of the Jordanian Pilot Lt. Moa'th Al-Kasasbeh, advocating ISIS violence and power. The second video features the Karak events which were carried out by Jordanian men influenced by ISIS discourse disseminated through digital platforms. The report also features the measures taken by locals and government to encounter the attacks. The content of both videos will be discussed thoroughly and this will be accompanied by an analysis of the reception of the messages conveyed in the videos by commentators.

1. Introduction

The aim of this report is to delineate the cultural drivers of radicalization in Jordan, and to investigate the ways media objects attracts audience. In "Stakeholders of (De)-Radicalization in Jordan,"[1] we have identified Jihadism as the dominant strand of radicalization in Jordan. We have also divided the radical threats into internal and external threats. While the internal radicalization is manifested in state-led actions, Muslim Brotherhood, Salafi-Jihadism and lone-wolves which is also seen as a threat to Jordanian's welfare and peace, external radicalization is depicted through Al-Qaeda in Iraq and ISIS in Syria. This report investigates the role of new tools of media, affiliated with ISIS in mainstreaming radical ideas.

Since 2014, IS, The Islamic State, has shockingly occupied territories in Iraq, Northern Syria and beyond. Apart from the military battle IS was carrying on, there was another battle of ideas and concepts taking place on social media and digital platforms. These platforms, including YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and others, have empowered IS. These online platforms have helped IS to recruit soldiers as the organization "has reached unprecedented levels of recruitment – no other organization in modern history has managed to recruit more fighters. Its professional and tactical use of media, propaganda and communication tools has far surpassed the strategies of other Jihadi movements" (*The Secret of Attraction*). In other words, to advance its military progress and accelerate the rhythm of its project, IS "increased reliance on international media and common man upon them." (Khawaja and Khan, 2016: 106). The circulation of the widespread IS discourse that has mainstreamed on media platforms directly and indirectly triggers injustice and grievance in Jordanian society, especially that the narrative presented by IS polarizes local communities and delivers messages to justify violence as a tool to address socio-political grievances.

As a new indicator of Jordanians' passion and their increasing use of various social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and others), a global study by the Pew Research Center puts Jordan first in the world in the index of the ratio of the number of people using social media platforms and networks to Internet users. This was confirmed by the consultant and trainer in the field of social media, Khaled Al-Ahmad, who said that a recent study and a list of countries in the world by (Pew Research Center) showed the superiority of Jordan, when it ranked the first in the indicator of the ratio of the number of adult social network users to the number of Internet users, where the percentage reached was 90% (Almobaideen, 2016). Al-Ahmad said that this percentage means that about 90% of Internet users in Jordan through various means and tools, especially smart phones, are users of social networks, pointing out that the most used social networks in Jordan are Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, and LinkedIn. and others (Almobaideen, 2016). According to local official figures, the number of Internet users in Jordan is estimated

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[1] This report was compiled for D. Rad WP 3. 1 by Glasgow Caledonian University.

at 8 million, and based on the global ratio, the number of users of various social networks in the Kingdom is estimated at about 7.2 million users. Al-Ahmad explained that the global study stated that Jordan ranked first in the world in the ratio of network users to Internet users by 90%, Indonesia came in second place with 89%, the Philippines by 88%, then Venezuela by 88% and Turkey by 87%.

Another study, conducted in the framework of the Networks of Mediterranean Youth project (NET-MED Youth) implemented by UNESCO with funding from the European Union in 10 countries of the Western and Eastern Basins of the Mediterranean (including Jordan), provides a quantitative analysis on Jordanian youth's media and technology consumption patterns, and their perceptions regarding Jordanian and regional media. The age group interviewed are between 18 to 29 years old. The selected sample is of Jordanian public and private community colleges and universities. The total sample is of 1018 youth, divided between 45.8% males and 54.2% females (p.7).

The study reveals that between home and personal ownership of PC's, laptops, tablets and smartphones Jordanian youth under study, in their overwhelming majority, are generally well equipped and connected to use and surf the Internet on daily basis from home or university, and partly through mobile broadband. Internet consumption is mainly divided by audio/video entertainment and downloads - primarily music clips - but more so for chatting and Internet search and browsing. *Religious content is claimed to be a top third preference*. As to social networking, Facebook, Google and chatting apps are primary tools for the overwhelming majorities of youth under study.

To approach the topic empirically, we are going to analyze two videos that features two main events taking place in Jordan. The first is about the execution of Moath Al-Kasasbeh and the second is about the Karak events. Both videos are broadcasted on the platform YouTube which is among the most used social networking sites in Jordan. The first video is important because it has attracted media coverage and shocked Jordanians to see one of their youth imprisoned, humiliated, caged and burned to death. Although Jordanians condemned the criminal act of ISIS, others have condemned Jordan's involvement in the assuming international coalition against terrorism which in reality targeted civilian targets killing women and children. This is evident from the reaction of the commentators on the video. The second video is about the Karak events which took place a year after the execution of Al-Kasasbeh. The Karak events are considered important in understanding the pattern of radicalization in Jordan for several reasons. First, the perpetrators are all from well-know Jordanian tribes. They belong to middle-class families, and their affiliation with ISIS took place via media tools and intermarriages. In what follows, we will give an overview on the methodology of the report and the cultural and political context of radicalization in Jordan, before we present the analysis of both videos.

2. Methodology

The report draws on (a) the cultural circulation model of Stuart Hall (1997), (b) the critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 2010, Gee 2014) of the selected media objects, and (c) the media ecology approach (Scolari, 2012) to study the cultural drivers of radicalization and to analyze the patterns of representation. In other words, we fellow close analysis of the videos by studying the elements of representation, circulation and consumption. This enables us to understand how media functions as a cultural driver for radicalization by affecting viewers and the wider society. Understanding these media objects as cultural drivers of radicalization and extremism, we argue that the alliance between IS' propaganda campaign and the feelings of grievance, alienation and injustice among Jordanians trigger and encourage patterns of radicalization and even the practice of terrorism in the national context.

To achieve this purpose, we have chosen two videos that contain violence, which were uploaded on the platform YouTube. The rational behind the choice of videos and platforms is the events both videos represent. The murder of Moath Al-Kasasbeh is a controversial event that raises questions in Jordanian public sphere regarding Jordan's involvement in the international coalition against terrorism. The second video is important also because it shows that there are sleeping cells in Jordan affiliated with ISIS whether directly or indirectly. We have downloaded both videos and made detailed transcription of the images and sounds. We then collected data to contextualize both events. To study the circulation and consumption of the chosen media objects, we have highlighted the agenda that both videos attempt to defuse, on one hand, and then analyzed the comments by the consumers or viewers.

3. Media landscape, cultural and political context of Radicalization in Jordan

The rise of IS in Jordan's political sphere is closely tied to the country's involvement in radicalization. As we have stated earlier, it is apparent that the Islamic State has become a phenomenon in the world of terrorist propaganda and media production disseminating its ideology and model to the Arab and the Western world. What distinguishes IS employment of media is the diversity and violence of its media campaign and the professionally produced media objects. Before IS, however, Al-Qaeda carried out successful attacks in Jordan, mainly Amman bombings.

It is well known that both Al-Qaeda and IS are ideologically and religiously similar as they are motivated by political Islam. The division happened when Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi officially declared his break with Al-Qaeda in February 2014 (Barrett, 2014, p. 13). On June 29, 2014, Abu Bakr announced the reestablishment of an Islamic Caliphate, with himself as the elected Caliph. Barrett claims (2014, p. 13) "The

declaration was also a direct challenge to the authority of Zawahiri and the role of Mullah Omar, who until then had been the undisputed Amir al Mu'minin (Leader of the Faithful)". Both organizations have relied on modern media tools. For example, Al-Qaeda, exploited the communications revolution to spread their ideology in the 1980s and 1990s, and it also utilized the internet since the mid-nineties by creating jihadist websites. However, IS relies on a variety of social media, like Twitter and Facebook. It also published link and literature on Justpasteit.it, which is a Polish site for sharing films and data. Al-Qaeda has banned beheading of captives publically, the area which IS concentrated on as a mark of power and authority. The filmed executions of American journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff in 2014 were not the last to be used as propaganda by ISIS and they were examples of the multiple executions that they perform daily.

Muslims who support organizations like Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood hold an unfavourable view of IS. In a poll carried out by *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy* in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon, only 5 percent of Saudis and 3 percent of Egyptians expressed a favourable opinion of ISIS. In Lebanon, not one Christian, Shiite, or Druze respondent expressed a positive view of ISIS, and only 1 percent of Sunnis expressed an approval of the Sunni jihadist group that has overrun portions of neighboring Syria and Iraq (Parker, 2014).

Other leading figures in Al-Qaeda such as Nasr Ibn Ali al-Ansi, a senior spokesman for Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), condemned the beheadings and executions carried out by IS calling them "barbaric," and that "filming and promoting it [beheadings] among people in the name of Islam and Jihad is a big mistake and not acceptable" (Masi, 2014). He went on to say, "therefore, I assert that whoever does such actions [beheadings], he has violated the command of Sheikh Osama" (Coghlan, 2014). Although Al-Qaeda has previously filmed their beheadings of western captives earlier, like the execution of American journalist Daniel Pearl in 2002 (Masi, 2014). Al Qaeda's leadership now does not see this as the correct way to move forward now, at least publicly. Moreover, its condemnation of such acts of violence reveals the tension between them and IS.

Despite these public condemnations of IS's media campaign, others were inspired by the propaganda, especially the youth and more impressionable age groups, which also happen to be more looked-for because of their age. The "newness" of the nature of social media such as Twitter and Facebook also enables IS recruits to network with others and become unified to create worldwide "lone wolf" terrorists through its media such as online magazine *Inspire*, founded by Anwar al-Awlaki before he was killed by a US drone strike. For example, the twelfth issue of *Inspire*, published in spring 2014, contained instructions on how to make a car bomb out of basic household items, and another issue was used as a source of inspiration for the bombers at the April 2013 marathon in Boston (Ryan, 2014).

Such published instructions have been used by the newly recruited youth, who are inspired to carry out separate attacks as "lone wolves". For example, the Salt attacks that took place in Jordan in 2018 reveals that the participants are motivated by the ideology and beliefs of ISIS. In a video released by the Jordanian government containing the confessions of the perpetrators shows that most of the attackers are middle class, educated young men who have no religious affiliations. However, because of their deep feelings of injustice, and the systematic marginalization by their government over decades, they have become active recipients of the ISIS extremist online content (Almamlaka TV 2018).

In addition to Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram, Twitter is also considered to be one of the largest sources of decentralized media and propaganda output by the Islamic State (Vitale, Keagle, 2014, p. 7). They are not alone in this, as most other terrorist organizations make wide use of the tool as well.[2] The main appeal to militants towards using Twitter, however, is how it is so difficult for both site and governmental authorities to permanently eliminate extremist messages. As soon as one account is shut down or a post is blocked, the same message or post will spark up on several others (Altman, 2014). In one example case with the hour long video "Flames of War," links were tweeted out to tens of thousands of online supporters, who then re-tweeted the links, and, importantly, created new pages and links on justpaste.it. The video was also uploaded on YouTube on many accounts in order to overcome the inevitable suppression of the video for violating the YouTube standards of use. Just one randomly selected page promoting the video among dozens of others, recorded 18,034 views within seven hours on 18 September 2014, showing the ease, breadth, and speed with which The Islamic State is able to spread its message directly to the intended audience. The problems of censoring such a decentralized distribution system were well illustrated by the two days it took the mainstream social media to notice what was happening (Barrett, 2014, p. 51-52).

Posts can include memes, photos, or links to videos showing progress by ISIS in Iraq and Syria. Sometimes, posts also include cartoons. A popular tactic to spread ISIS propaganda across social media is to use "twitter bombs," which target the most popular hashtags of the week and use them in IS-related posts, thereby gaining a larger audience by creating visibility. And "most pages owned or related to The Islamic State tend follow each other, so that the number of tweets and readings increases more rapidly" (Barrett, 2014, p. 55). When not "twitter bombing" and hijacking other conversations, hashtags will read as lines such as "#Baghdad_is_liberated" and "#Iraq_is_liberated" (Irshaid, 2014). On June 20th of 2014, ISIS also launched a local Twitter campaign in which it requested that their supporters film themselves waving the ISIS flag, hashtagging in Arabic, "#theFridayofsupportingISIS" (Irshaid, 2014).

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[2] See https://www.nti.org/gsn/article/why-terrorists-love-twitter/.

To achieve success in its propaganda campaign, IS has a publishing house called Al Hayat Media Center, which targets western audiences (Barrett, 2014, p. 55). Apart from creating and editing the official messages shared on social media sites like YouTube and Twitter, Al Hayat is responsible for for publishing online newspapers and magazines in a variety of languages other than Arabic, including English and French. This includes a six-page pdf file version of a newspaper called the *Islamic State News*, or ISN, as well as a short magazine named the *Islamic State Report*, or ISR. Both sources provide regular updates on ISIS progress and important events occurring in Syria and Iraq. In addition, Al Hayat started producing a much lengthier digital magazine called *Dabiq* in July 2014 (Barrett, 2014, p. 56).

All of these publications are dated according to the Islamic calendar, as opposed to the western calendar. Most of the media objects disseminated by IS focus on current events in the war in Iraq, explains the goals of the Islamic State, why it is justified in its cause, and what it is doing to get there. An effort is made to show readers why and how the Islamic State is making the places it controls a better place for the people living there, even as it slaughters those who do not live up to its strict religious ideology. The magazine also places emphasis on spreading a "correct" version of Islam; spreading Islamic knowledge, and correcting people's understanding of religion.

Dabiq, however, is a more informative and detailed example of IS propaganda in digital magazine format. It was given its name after a physical location which bears the same name. According to the introduction in the first issue, "The Return of the Khilafah," 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. (The Return of Khilafah, 2014, p. 4) The magazine is standardized, with each issue containing "photo reports, current events, and informative articles on matters related to the Islamic State" (The Return of Khilafah, 2014, p. 3). It is meant to be a final product based on the previous Islamic State Report, and runs about forty to fifty pages, rather than the previous six to eight. The same style is maintained as before, with high definition photos taking up sizeable portions of each page. However, *Dabiq* contains much more detailed and lengthy articles, rather than just interviews and short descriptions captioned next to photos.

While the production and use of propaganda videos very much coincides with and is spread through social media tools such as YouTube and Twitter, it is such a big part of ISIS' media campaign. Some of their most well-known videos include Abu Bakr's declaration of a new Caliphate in July 2014, American Journalist Stephen Sotloff's beheading the following September, and a series called "Mujatweets" (Barrett, 2014, p. 51-55). Others include an hour long documentary called "The Flames of War" aimed at intimidating the West, as well as a twenty-minute video leading up to the execution of Jordanian pilot Moath Al-Kasasbeh. Another series of videos which have been

widely viewed in the West were produced by *Al Hayat* and made use of captured British journalist John Cantlie.

ISIS is well-known for employing highly professional techniques in producing videos to depict scenes of slaughter and murder in innovative ways. Take for example, "The Flames of Fire," and "Saleel al-Sawarim (Clashing of Swords)". What is interesting is that the discourse of ISIS disseminated through its media campaign has a short cut into the minds and hearts of Muslim, Arab youth who experience grievance, injustice and alienation in their own countries.

Mohammad Abu Rumman (2015), a Jordanian researcher in terrorist organizations, has put an effort to analyse the secret of attraction to ISIS especially among Arab and Muslim youth. He claims that the reasons could be summarized as the following: (a) to support the Iraqi and Syrian Sunnis in their fight against Shiaʻa and Iranian influence in the region, (b) the weakness of secular and liberal forces and Islamic forces in the region rendering ISIS more appeal, and (c) the chaotic situation and political vacuum in the region stirring the youth to search for meaning and goal in their lives. (Abu Rumman, 2015, p. 8). All these factors made young people susceptible to the various influences of extremist ideologies.

Having said this, it is important to state here that IS's propaganda campaign did not only manage to recruit youth, but also other age groups like professional doctors, teachers, technicians and military personnel, etc. This defies the claim that whoever joins terrorist organization are brainwashed, but rather, they are, as Simon Cottee explains in an important article entitled "The Zoolander Theory of Terrorism", defending what they see as a just cause. (Cottee, 2015).

In a collective of research articles carried out by Frederich Ebert Stiftung entitled *The Secret of Attraction: ISIS Propaganda and Recruitment,* the researchers have agreed on one main point that most of those who are recruited in ISIS are searching for meaning and goals among ideological vacuum and failure of the modern values. IS's propaganda campaign and mythmaking employing different channels and platforms to polarize societies, encourage alienation, and intentionally spread radical ideology influenced the Jordanian society. In an important study published in the collection, Ali Al-Batriri studies the secret of attraction to IS among Jordanian Salafists. Al-Batriri writes that, according to the Jihadi Salafists leader, Mohammad al-Shalabi (known as Abu Sayyaf), there are nearly 5000 Jihadi Salafists in Jordan. Based on the same resource, since the Syrian revolution began in March 2011, about 1,000 Jordanians have gone to fight in Syria pledging their loyalty and obedience to IS, 90% of whom are affiliated with the Jihadi Salafist movement (p. 51). According to an unnamed source, Al-Batriri claims that there are no accurate statistics about the percentages of Jordanian Salafists who have sided with one side or another; however, numerous indicators suggest that a greater percentage of the current has sided with ISIS. Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi claims that 70% of Jihadi Salafists in Zarqa support Al-

Baghdadi's state, and another source close to the current also claims that more than 70% of jihadi Salafists in Jordan are supporters of ISIS (p. 52).

In the same paper, which also helps us in understanding the context of radicalization in Jordan, the researcher examines four cases of Jordanians who have joined IS. All the chosen cases are related to extremist groups in a way or another, and all of them are influenced by videos and other media objects released by IS. What really initiates their recruitment into IS is their admiration of the image IS' propaganda campaign projected thorough its platforms. An image of state is propagated where God's law, not any other law, is applied, a place where the bond of brotherhood unites all fighters from different ethnicities and origins. According to the image circulated in the media by IS platforms, the Islamic State is a place where there is no favourism, water, electricity, food and medicine are free for everyone. This land of dream seduced a huge number from all parts of the glob to join IS.

4. Representation, circulation and consumption context of the media objects

In this part of the report, we are going to present the videos that we have chosen since as Abu Rumman has claimed that ISIS's video production has "surpassed those of the central Al-Qaida organization. Indeed, there is a "big leap" in the organization's use of the media, YouTube, and other social networking sites." (7) Each video will be discussed separately. After contextualizing each video, we summarize the content and the narrative, then we analyze the way each video is represented. Finally, we provide the empirical insight into the circulation and the consumption on the chosen media objects. Part of this section of the report studies the psychology of the viewers who suffer injustice and grievance in their own society and how they endorse extremist views engage in radicalized ideologies, to finally take political action and involve in terrorism.

4.1. Analysis of the Execution of Pilot Lt. Mo'ath Al-Kasasbeh

The video was shared on most social media platforms. On YouTube, for example, the views reached three million. The accompanying text to the video reads as follows: "ISIS burns alive Jordanian pilot". On February 4, 2015, the video was released and on June 23, 2021, it has 2,750,673 views views including 10K likes and 3. 3K dislikes. The length of the video is 2: 30 minutes. This video features the burning of captured Jordanian pilot Lt. al-Kasasbeh. It is professionally produced as it is heavily edited using computer software and video effects, so much so that it looks like it was produced for something akin to a multi-million-dollar budget Hollywood spy film. Apart from that, Al-Kasasbeh was forced to play the leading role in his own execution. The

beginning of the video is a quick survey of a wide range of video excerpts to prove al-Kasasbeh's guilt as a war criminal. This is followed by an interview with Jordan's King Abdullah II declaring the following statement,

> The chief of staff and my brother stepped forward and said to all the pilots, listen there are four strikes against ISIS, we are looking for volunteers, so anybody who wants to volunteer, please step forward. Every single pilot raised his hand and stepped forward. (Fox News, 2015)

Still more footage shows King Abdullah II interacting with western leaders like President Obama, as further proof of Jordan's alliance with the "kafir," the infidel of nonbeliever. In a public political speech, he is shown also saying, "I hope that there will be a global call to action to support countries like my own, at the forefront of the fight" (Fox News, 2015). The next ten minutes consist of footage of Lt. al-Kasasbeh sharing coalition military information with his captors, his orange prison jumpsuit standing out against a black background.

The information shared includes the naming of Arab states allied with the United States and participating in the bombing of ISIS, as well as the various aircraft used by each of those countries. After confessing his participation in airstrikes against ISIS, gruesome photographs are shown of dead and wounded civilians, particularly women and children. This footage is accompanied by audio recording of a baby wailing inconsolably, with the intent of making the viewer feel uncomfortable. Video footage is also shown of emergency crews extracting wounded civilians from collapsed buildings and rubble, and although there is no proof these events coincided with Al-Kasasbeh's bombing mission specifically, it is implied that he is at least responsible for events similar to the ones shown.

Finally, leading up to his execution, Lt. Al-Kasasbeh is shown walking through bombed out area surveying the aftermath of his (implied) work. Well-equipped and identically dressed ISIS militiamen stand guard on each side of the street, silently watching him walk by. The whole scene was specifically set up ahead of time for this propaganda video. "Flashbacks" switch between footage of an anonymous fighter pilot in his cockpit, interspersed with more scenes of injured civilians. Every aspect is meant specifically to implicate Lt. Al-Kasasbeh as a war criminal, before finally showing him meet his grisly fate of being burned alive in a large, square steel cage.

Post-Arab spring revolutions, the Arab world has been accustomed to viewing scenes of blood, dead bodies, violence, killing and burnings which led to a state of apathy and indifference apathy among Arab audience. Nowadays, it is common for citizens, for example, to rush to see accidents on the road, or bomb explosion, or gather around injured just to watch and take photos of the scene to later post them on social media websites like Facebook and twitter. The demand for watching the video of Al-Kasasbeh's burning was due to the lack of feelings, and the habit and addiction of seeing murder scenes.

To understand how this video mainstream radicalization, we need to analyze the commentary which can be divided into two categories or two opposing opposing points of view. The first point of view regarded Al-Kasasbeh as a national hero and a martyr who faced death with courage at the hands of a brutal and a violent enemy. One of the comments read as follows: "May God have mercy on the martyrs of this country". Other comments read: "May God protect our homeland," "Damn Terrorism," "ISIS is like cancer, we need to get rid of it ASAP."

The opposing comments, however, deem Al-Kasasbeh as a traitor who is involved in the satanic coalition against his own people in Syria killing and murdering children and women. One of the comments call those acts as murders and that Al-Kasasbeh received a just punishment for committing mass murders and for following the "Kufar" meaning the Global coalition led by USA. Another comment also explicitly wishes Al-Kasasbeh to be burned in hell. These comments reflect the other side of the story that is adopted by ISIS and who ever affiliates with them. Actually, this video is used as a platform to present this point of view. Most of the comments belonging to this perspective are only presenting ideas and agendas without an assessment of the content of the video. Another point that has to be taken into account is that the exposure of power, authority and violence presented in the actual act of murder sends messages to the world that ISIS is a ruling power that attracts attention of the youth who are searching for meaning and sense of being.

4.2. Analysis of the Video about the Karak events

The accompanying text to this video reads as follows: "A video that was not shown of terrorist snipers in Karak Castle." On December 23, 2016, the video was released and on June 23, 2021, it has 81,617 views including 946 likes and 32 dislikes. The length of the video is 1: 34 minutes. Regarding the comments, 53 had been posted which are sorted by the time of posting.

To put the video in its context, on December 18, 2016, four gunmen carried out a series of attacks on the city of Karak. Police patrol were responding to calls of a house fire in the town of Qatraneh in the Karak district when assailants began shooting at the officers from within the house, wounding two officers. The gunmen drove away from the house and attacked a police station in Karak, where they wounded several police officers and bystanders. The gunmen then went to hide in the 12th century Crusade castle in Karak which is one of the main tourist attractions in Jordan. From the castle the terrorists opened fire on a number of public security personnel and passers-by in Karak. A Jordanian joint security force tackled the gunmen holed up inside the Crusader castle in Karak and has conclude the operation after killing the four terrorists. The Public Security Department (PSD) and the Gendarmerie department said seven of their personnel were killed in the attack, in addition to two civilians and a Canadian

citizen, while 11 PSD personnel, 4 Gendarmerie members, 17 citizens and two foreigners were injured. The shocking moment to all Jordanians is when the identity of the attackers was released to reveal that they were all Jordanians but affiliated to ISIS. The four terrorists were Jordanians, two of the terrorists were from Al-Qasr town, 20 km north Karak and the two others were from Al-Salt west Amman. Their ages ranged between 28 and 34. The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the attacks on police and tourists in Jordan in a statement published on a website affiliated with the group. The statement said that "four soldiers of the caliphate" armed with machine guns and hand grenades carried out the attacks, killing 10 "apostates." It said the four ISIS fighters were engaged in "fierce clashes lasting several hours" with Jordanian forces before being killed. The statement threatened more attacks in anti-ISIS coalition member states. The statement said "We promise the Crusader coalition countries something worse and more severe, Allah permitting". The terrorist group had rented an apartment in the desert town of Qatranah, 30 km northeast of Karak in November 2016 and had told neighbors that they are planning to open a café on the desert road. Instead, the group prepared explosive belts and bombs to commit attacks during the New Year Eve celebrations in several Jordanian areas.

Back to the video that we have chosen it is recorded and uploaded by one of the local residents of the of the city, Karak, who managed to record the shooting between the terrorist snipers at the Jordanian forces along with other men whose voices could be clearly heard in the video. If we take into account the dialogue between the videographers, we find that they are nationalists claiming that the Jordanian forces are in control of the situation although we know later on from the government story that around 10 were killed and 35 were injured apart from the murder of the four attackers. Analyzing the commentary on the video shows that , the following results were found: Most of the comments explicitly condemn the attack on the castle and the police station and criminalize the attackers. The majority of the comments are charged with a national and a regional spirit as most of the posts greet or hail Jordanian military forces and the people from Karak for the heroic deed in confronting the attacks. Sadly, a considerable percentage of the comments is charged with indecent language full of swears directed to the attackers. A comment or two present a different perspective beyond the one presented in the video claiming that the whole attack is staged. Another comment states that the attackers are overtaking the scene not the military forces. Two comments cynically state that the whole event is not but a Pubg Game[3]. Perhaps this reflects the fascination of the internet users of video games as the report shows earlier. To sum up, the importance of the Karak events stems from the fact that Jordan has a considerable number of sleeping terrorist cells that has affiliation with terrorist organization like ISIS and Al-Qaeda. The events also reveal that there was a gap in the balance of power in favor of the terrorist cell.

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[3] An online multiplayer battle game published by a southern Korean company in 2017. The game is known for its violent and addictive by nature.

5. Conclusion

Analyzing the commentary accompanying videos uploaded on different digital platforms reveals the successful function of these media objects as tools of radicalization. People nowadays turn to digital media as source of information since they have lost faith in the traditional media objects especially when it is released by their own governments. In the Jordanian context, for example, people do not trust the government narrative, and instead they rely on other sources for information. The importance of online platforms becomes also obvious when looking at the case of ISIS in terms of mainstreaming and spreading its ideas and narratives, communicating with its followers, and establishing new alliances. Therefore, the big four digital platforms (YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram) have gained importance in Jordanian context especially among the youth age group.

The two videos chosen in this report demonstrate two important events taking place in the Jordanian national context and attracting audience and viewers not only nationally, but also globally. Both videos have a number of commonalities. First, the events the two videos encapsulate are planned and carried out by ISIS aiming at recruiting followers and mobilizing sympathizers. Second, both events are directed against the Jordanian government especially the military body. Third, looking at the events themselves, and the commentary of the videos explicitly show that a considerable number of Jordanians are radicalized or at least have radical sympathies. We can see from the comments how followers and sympathizers of extremist groups defend terrorist action blaming the government for taking the wrong track, the track of "Kufr". Finally, both videos nurture feelings of grievance and injustice while driving polarization and make strategic use of crises.

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